

THE  
**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES**

OFFICIAL REPORT

IN THE FIFTH SESSION OF THE THIRD PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND  
TOBAGO WHICH OPENED ON JANUARY 12, 1987

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SESSION 1990—91

VOLUME 36

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**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

*Friday, February 22, 1991*

The House met at 1.35 p.m.

**PRAYERS**

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

**LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Members, the Speaker of the House is still out of the country and the Leader of Government Business (Hon. B. Tewarie) has sent in an excuse.

**PETITION**

**Orisha Religion (Shango)**

**The Minister of Youth, Sport, Culture and Creative Arts (Hon. Jennifer Johnson):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I seek leave of this House to introduce a petition on behalf of the Orisha Religion (Shango) of Trinidad and Tobago.

I now ask that the Clerk be permitted to read the petition and that the promoters be allowed to proceed.

*Petition read.*

*Question put and agreed to, That the promoters be allowed to proceed.*

**PAPER LAID**

Report of the Auditor General on the Accounts of the National Insurance Board for the year ended June 30, 1988. [*Minister of Finance (Hon. Selby Wilson)*]

*To be referred to the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee.*

**ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS**

**Telephone Services  
(Extension)**

**13. Mr. Govindra Roopnarine** (*Siparia*) asked the Minister of Settlements and Public Utilities:

Would the hon. Minister state whether an extension of telephone services will be made available to the residents of Penal Rock Road between the 3 3/4 mile and 8 mile mark in 1991?

**The Minister of Settlements and Public Utilities (Hon. Pamela Nicholson):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Telecommunications Services of Trinidad and Tobago Limited is not in a position to provide a service to Penal Rock Road, between the 3 3/4 mile and 8 mile mark in 1991. However, the board of the company has recently approved a five-year development programme with the objective of enhancing its capability, so that it could satisfy at least 98 per cent of the demand for basic service throughout Trinidad and Tobago.

Penal Rock Road between the 3 3/4 mile and 8 mile mark will benefit from these development works but it is too early to state precisely when a service will be extended to the area.

**Roads  
(Re-sheeting)**

**14. Mr. Govindra Roopnarine** (*Siparia*) asked the Minister of Works, Infrastructure and Decentralization:

Would the hon. Minister state whether re-sheeting of the following roads will be undertaken in 1991—

- (a) That portion of roadway between Mohess Road and Penal Junction along the Siparia/San Fernando/Erin Road?
- (b) San Francique Road?
- (c) Penal Rock Road?
- (d) Clarke Road?
- (e) Rochard Road?

**The Minister of Works, Infrastructure and Decentralization (Dr. The Hon. Carson Charles):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, the reply to question No. 14 is as follows:

- (a) Resheeting was completed on the Siparia/San Fernando/Erin Road in the vicinity of the Penal Junction on January 22, 1991.
- (b) No resheeting is programmed for the San Francique Road in 1991 because of limited funding.
- (c) In respect of Penal Rock Road, 1.2 kilometres of roadway between the zero and two mile mark was paved in 1991, work being completed on January 26, 1991.
- (d) In respect of Clarke Road, 1.2 kilometres of roadway between the zero and nine mile make was paved in 1991, work being completed on February 1, 1991.
- (e) No resheeting is programmed for Rochard Road in 1991 because of limited funds.

**Coromat River  
(Dredging)**

**15. Mr. Govindra Roopnarine** (*Siparia*) asked the Minister of Works, Infrastructure and Decentralization:

Would the hon. Minister state whether dredging of the Coromat River will continue in 1991?

**The Minister of Works, Infrastructure and Decentralization (Dr. The Hon. Carson Charles):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, dredging of the Coromat River is programmed for implementation in 1991. A total of 600 metres of the river, downstream of the bridge on Clarke Road has been dredged as at December, 1990. The proposed scope of work for 1991 is 200 metres upstream of Clarke Road.

**1.45 p.m.**

**ORDER OF BUSINESS**

**The Minister of Justice and National Security (Hon. Joseph Toney):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wish at this juncture to seek your leave to deal with item (d) on the Supplemental Order Paper which has to do with the Senate amendments to the Supreme Court of Judicature (Amdt.) Bill, 1991. I seek your leave to have this matter dealt with at this stage of the proceedings.

*Order of Business*

*Friday, February 22, 1991*

*Question put and agreed to.*

**SUPREME COURT OF JUDICATURE (AMDT.) BILL**

**Senate Amendment**

**The Attorney General (Hon Anthony Smart):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move:

That the Senate amendment to the Supreme Court of Judicature (Amdt.) Bill, 1991, listed in the Appendix be now considered.

*Question proposed.*

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Clause 2.*

*Senate amendment reads as follows:*

Delete paragraph (b).

**Mr. Smart:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move that the House doth agree with the Senate in the said amendment.

*Question proposed.*

*Question put and agreed to.*

**REGULARIZATION OF TENURE (STATE LANDS) ACT**

**[SECOND DAY]**

*Order read for resuming adjourned debate on motion [January 25, 1991].*

*Whereas* an Act titled "The Regularization of Tenure (State Lands) Act No. 20 of 1986" was duly assessed by both Houses of Parliament and assented to on the August 29, 1986;

*And Whereas* the above-mentioned Act made provision by law for regularizing the status of thousands of residents of this country occupying state lands;

*And Whereas* such regularization is urgent and imperative to bring much-needed relief to these residents;

*And Whereas* high expectation was raised that the plight of the residents would be ameliorated by the passing of the said Act;

*Be it Resolved* that this House call upon the Government to take immediate steps to implement the provisions of the Regularization of Tenure (State Lands) Act, No. 20 of 1986.

*Question again proposed.*

**The Minister of Settlements and Public Utilities (Hon. Pamela Nicholson):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am very happy today to educate the population of Trinidad and Tobago on the very progressive and successful piece of work that this Government is implementing as far as squatter regularization is concerned. I am very humble so I will change the word "educate" to inform. I am from the grassroots, I am one of the people, therefore, the salt of the earth understands when Pamela Nicholson, the representative for Tobago West, speaks.

The Member for Oropouche is now sitting in the seat of the Member for St. Augustine. It seems as though he wants to change his area because he understands that he cannot survive the heat in Oropouche so he is now the representative for St. Augustine. Mr. Speaker, he raised a number of issues—well you know in Tobago there is no breakthrough for them at all, none. We will bring them for the Harvest, and everything else, but I do not want to waste my time. Is the Government proceeding on the assumption that the Act has already been repealed? Is the Government proceeding in a manner which seeks to regularize squatters on state lands while the Act is still current; and doing so under the aegis of the Ministry of Settlements and Public Utilities?

I want to firstly state that this Government is keeping in line with what it said in its manifesto—I have banded mine very beautifully in blue. Under the heading "Squatters" Settlements, page 27 Part 6:

"All squatters on State and State Enterprises land will be given a moratorium period in which not a single house will be demolished. The moratorium period will allow for assessment of Squatters' Settlement areas for upgrading and, where upgrading is not possible, to settle the squatters in new areas.

Upgrading squatters' areas requires the provision of access roads, water, electricity, cost effective sewerage disposal, garbage disposal and the provision of land for basic social infrastructure."

This is the policy of the Government.

I went into the Ministry in the last few days of 1987, so you could say 1988; I looked at the situation and I recognized nothing was done on squatter

*Regularization of Tenure (State Lands) Act*  
[HON. P. NICHOLSON]

*Friday, February 22, 1991*

regularization by that other side. After analyzing the situation we did a number of things:

- (1) We came up with a policy for residential squatting.
- (2) We have set up, in the National Housing Authority, a unit to deal especially with squatter regularization.

I recognized that the problem could not have been coped with otherwise. It is the first time in Trinidad and Tobago that any Government has gone headlong into improving the whole squatter situation in this country.

One government in 1986 hustled into this House, Act No. 20 of 1986—and I was present in this very House—and came here with a very individualistic document. It treats only with squatters who were in occupation of state lands as of December 2, 1977 and ignores—I am pleased that you know your home lessons—the reality that the squatting population had increased by approximately 5 1/2 times during the past decade:

- (1) Under the present Act, it is estimated that less than 5,000 households are eligible for regularization. So, if you use Act No. 20 of 1977 you are only dealing with 5,000 households.
- (2) The voluntary approach inherent in the Act puts the onus on the squatter to regularize his situation and would not extend to those who, for whatever reason, do not come forward. The magnitude of the present squatting problem suggests that it is the responsibility of the state to intervene actively to address this national problem. The present legislation is not conducive to such an approach towards a complete solution.
- (3) The cumbersome and impractical application process creates a situation which could overburden considerably, the adjudicating tribunal and stretch the resources of other agency resources.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what happens in that situation is, if an individual knows about the programme—and that is one person, out of 3,000—he will have his money and so on and somebody educates him, that person could have gone to a tribunal and address his problem; but all they will get is land tenure. What the Government is doing presently goes beyond that, because as we have said in our manifesto on page 27—

"Housing and home ownership constitute an important stabilizing force in the society."

The basis for solving the acute housing problem is an equitable land distribution policy.

With this in mind, we recognize that we have to go beyond Act No. 20 of 1986. You just cannot deal with individuals, you have to deal with communities. So, if you have an area with 400 households when 10 people in 10 years could have their matters resolved, what we will be doing, we are resolving the total community of 400 people.

It is saddening to know that the Member for Oropouche, who has brought a very important resolution into the House, is a party to an underground mafia grouping that interferes right now—

**1.55 p.m.**

**Mr. Sudama:** On a point of order. The Member is imputing improper motives to me and I think that is completely out of order and ought to be retracted.

**Miss Nicholson:** When you feel for the population, when your emotions go out for them to see how people are trying to fool them, sometimes you use too strong words. I withdraw the word "mafia" but I leave the word underground, with their SOPO.

You have a number of these people and what they are doing as the Government goes out to work for the benefit of the population, they go in afterwards and undermine the programme. I will use an example to justify my case that I just made with the Member for Oropouche. The Members for Oropouche and Couva North went to Bamboo Settlement No. 3 and told the people that they will be the Government in 1992.

They told them not to get involved [*Interruption*] I am not afraid of the silver fox. Protection Sir.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order please!

**Miss Nicholson:** I know the silver fox will always be in the Opposition benches. He will remain in the Opposition benches until he dies. They told them that they must not sign the documents; they told them that we will use Act No. 20 of 1986 to try to befuddle the minds of the people. With the lot application survey

*Regularization of Tenure (State Lands) Act*  
[HON. P. NICHOLSON]

*Friday, February 22, 1991*

they told the people that we were using pencilled documents. I came with my documents to prove them wrong.

The next day a number of people from the said area, came into my institution for clarification. When the people's minds were cleared they said that they were going with us. In that section only four people out of over 250 people have not responded to the programme as yet. So they are not befuddling the minds of the people. The people are bright. They are intelligent. The people have sense and they know when these people come there they are coming to upset their situation. They know it is the first time in this country that somebody is doing something for them.

I will tell you something about the progress because I am not here for any negatives today. I am going to do a little of that but I am on the positive side of things. The IDB programme, since we were able to straighten out the loans and sign and so on, we have gone into Bamboo Settlement, and out of 330 households, only four people have not signed completion of site regularization plan; completion of preliminary engineering designs and details which were done originally by NHA; presentation of the programme to the people to which they agreed; completion of household, socio-economic survey; completion of lot application forms. All of that were completed in the area. As I said, only four people have not signed their socio-economic forms. So it means that over 96 per cent of the people are in favour of the programme.

Maturita Triangle, Arima: 301 households, completion of site regularization plan; completion of preliminary engineering designs and details; presentation of the programme; completion of household socio-economic survey; completion of lot application forms. In that area, one of the undergrounds, was chased out of the people's area. The people said, "we do not want any backward people who do not want us to go forward, get our from here. We are in favour of this because it is the first time any government has come out to address our problem." That is Maturita Triangle. These are very beautiful people and they thank us. Here is Maturita:

“Mr. Ed Anderson,  
Project Execution Unit,  
Ministry of Housing and Settlement,  
Sackville Street,  
Port of Spain.



*Regularization of Tenure (State Lands) Act*

*Friday, February 22, 1991*

Dear Sir,

We the members of Maturita Triangle Settlers Action Group Committee wish to thank you for the expeditious and co-operative manner in which your team conducted their survey in our area.

We would like you, on our behalf, to thank the team which comprised Mr. John Soanes, Mrs. Joan Munroe, Mrs. Kathleen Brooks, Mrs. Ottis Soanes and Mr. Cruckshank.

Truly, we appreciated this initial liaison with us as we worked together for the betterment of our community in the future. Also, convey our thanks to the Minister, Ms. Pamela Nicholson and may God bless you.

Yours respectfully,

Mr. Glenfield Prime.

Maturita Triangle Settlers Action Group.”

Another thank you letter—I am only going to read two because I have a lot to tell these people here. Their theme is: "The right to be born is the right to have a home.

"Blitz Village Extension  
Pleasantville Housing Settlement Association

Mr. Anderson,  
Project Execution Unit

Dear Sir,

I wish to let you know of the appreciation felt by myself and other residents with respect to the Ministry's programme to regularize our tenure and upgrade our roads, drains, water and sewerage facilities.

We look forward to the completion of this programme which will ensure the improvement of the quality of life of the residents of Blitz Village.

Our thanks to the staff of the project execution unit and to the Minister of Settlements and Public Utilities.

Very truly yours,

Martha Philips.”

The point that I am really postulating is that the people are very grateful for what the Government is doing. The people are recognizing it is the first time that somebody cares even though they try to make out that this Government is insensitive. I know that the representative for Port of Spain East would not rise here anytime and say that this Government is insensitive.

**2.05 p.m.**

Let me say something about Blitz Village moreso. Blitz Village, Pleasantville, 150 households: presentation of programme, completion of households socio-economic survey, completion of lot application forms, start of perimeter, topography survey and so on. All of that has been done. Social survey and lot application exercise completed, 99 per cent of the people accepted the programme, credit to Martha Philip, Mr Scipio and others for their initiative in community mobilization.

The only problem we have had as far as the IDB programme is concerned, is one area called Bagatelle. We were doing very beautifully in Bagatelle until this underground grouping stepped in. However, we have not given up because we recognize that when the Bagatelle people see the progress that is being made—and I know that some people respond slower than others. We care about Bagatelle, and we will be going back there early in March to push the Bagatelle programme.

Waterhole: We have done some preliminary sites—Waterhole has 500 households—investigation, extensive site planning activities, slope analysis, graduated levels of infrastructure, existing infrastructure, existing land use, construction type, community support, and so on. We have a very strong indigenous and very innovative approach for regularization, and you are getting a very nice feel from the people.

Valencia—and I am sure the Member for Toco/Manzanilla can speak because he was at least at one or two of the meetings. Valencia is a very amicable group. They feel proud. They said that they did not know that this would have happened in Trinidad and Tobago; that they would have had the opportunity to have land tenure and improvement of the infrastructure in their area. In that area, you have 94 households, presentation of programming, January 30, 1991; start of households survey, completion of lot application exercise. At Valencia there is 100 per cent participation, and they have said, “no intervention; no underground can appear,” because they will be just sending them straight home. Valencia also sent thanks to the Minister and to their representative, Minister Toney, for the support

that he has given them. I congratulate you here this afternoon, Minister Toney, for being very, very progressive.

Eastern Quarry, 120 households, presentation of programme, March 6, 1991; start of households survey, lot application exercise. It is voluminous, a very, very big job that we have taken on, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Bad words keep coming all the time, and I do not want to use "scoundrels" and words like that. I am trying my best. These people who are undermining the programme, these detractors of progress remind me so much of what is going on in the Middle East. The people of Eastern Quarry are also very amicable

Zone eight, Arima; well they love us badly: Presentation of programme was done there, households survey will be starting next week, start of lot applications should be on February 25, and the start of their perimeter and topography survey will be next week. They too have been very, very amicable, and almost 100 per cent of the people are supportive of the programme.

Malick: I know that the representative for Laventille will feel very merry about what is taking place here. I think I will be inviting her to come with me soon to meet the people of Malick at a meeting, because I always do these fine things. I am not inviting any detractors. Malick, 250 households; presentation of programme was done on February 8; start of households survey and the start of lot applications will be done on February 25.

One of the very beautiful things in Malick is that our baseline grouping that we started with was Potential Symphony Steel Orchestra, and we must congratulate them. They have given us great support and have been able to assist us in broadening and helped us to do the mobilization. I congratulate Potential Symphony Steel Orchestra for the support that they have given the Ministry in this programme. So we are very progressive and these people are coming here to send the wrong message. I am talking positives today. It is the NAR in action here, no negatives. "Licks like peas" for you all today.

Warden's Road, Point Fortin, 375 households. I want to tell the Hon. Minister that we will be coming into his area in March.

So Mr. Deputy Speaker, these are the areas. Besides the land tenure, we will be doing the upgrading of the infrastructure and utilities and so on. The first three sites that we will begin with are Maturita, Bamboo Settlement, and Blitz Village. Formerly, the first three that we should have really handled were Maturita,

*Regularization of Tenure (State Lands) Act*  
[HON. P. NICHOLSON]

*Friday, February 22, 1991*

Bamboo Settlement and Bagatelle. Because of the problems we are having with Bagatelle because of these detractors, you will find that some of the information that we should have to give to the IDB we are not able to give it in time and, therefore, we have moved progressively forward.

So 98 per cent of the existing households showed an interest to participate in the programme. I think that the programme is going very, very progressively. As I said earlier on, I was very saddened because the way I relate to the Member for Oropouche, I candidly did not expect him to go to Bamboo Settlement to try to—and when I was told he was one, I said, "Not Trevor". Sorry. I said, "Not the representative for Oropouche." I really told the person that.

**Mr. Sudama:** Let me just inform the Minister that I was invited by the residents of Bamboo Settlement to address them on their problems, and this is exactly what I did. My constituency is the whole of Trinidad and Tobago, I am a representative of the people so I go wherever I am called, unlike the Member for Tobago West who can only go to certain places.

**Miss Nicholson:** Well, I have gone to Debe so many times that you have to watch yourself in the next elections.

The same area he just talked about, Bamboo Settlement, over 95 per cent of the people there are supporting the programme. Except the Member for Oropouche, and the few detractors, they come to get their education.

You see, what is good, the people are bright. When these people come and try to fool them, you know they sit quietly and they listen, but do you know one good thing about the population? When they think some people do not understand strategy, the people read strategy, and the next day the people are inside the office to get the facts of life. When they get the facts and they know the programme is for their advantage, they support it.

**Mr. Sudama:** I have to respond. I want to find out what constitutes supporting the programme in her view. What constitutes supporting the programme?

**Miss Nicholson:** I just said 95.2 per cent.

**Mr. Sudama:** What have they done to support your programme?

**Miss Nicholson:** You have asked a non-question. Do not keep me back. I did not disturb you when you spoke. I sat here very quietly and I listened to you.

*[Interruption]* Is it the leather balls you cannot take? Is it the googly, yorker and bouncer, you cannot take? A man like you who should be on the progressive side of things, you are intelligent yet you are allowing somebody who is designed for the Opposition benches to disrupt you. We have a fine relationship, and if problems—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Could you address the Chair, please.

**Miss Nicholson:** Yes, Sir, with due respect, Sir. All I have is a powerful voice. They can say anything they want. I have integrity. I have character which cannot be questioned. Nobody in Trinidad and Tobago can question the character of Pamela Nicholson, the representative for Tobago West, and that is the problem that many people have. They crawled up Main Street and they begged; their memories are short, but my memory is very long. I am not going to waste time with them.

I have told you about the IDB programme. Let me give a status report from the National Housing Authority's perspective, because we are not only dealing with those. The National Housing Authority is right through the country. Five Rivers, Arouca, Phase I, approximately 220 lots. The area lies between Eastern Main Road and 10th Street and comprises of a number of tenants. When we went into Five Rivers, we thought that we would have just had the squatters, but in some of the areas when you go, you will find that there are a number of tenants. So we have a big problem that we have to cope with because you have many encumbrances, and we have to do many searches, and have many meetings with the people.

A social survey has been carried out and completed around June, 1990. A community group has been formed and is presently negotiating terms and conditions of lease. I met with that group, the last time I met with them was late 1990. I received a letter from them about mid-January, I cannot remember the date. I sent off a letter to them to see me again because they are having one or two little problems with our negotiating group and, therefore, they want me to meet with them and the negotiating group to try to resolve the problem. The real problem they are having is that the policy of the Government, if you will read the manifesto, it is a lease of 99 years, and they are arguing for freehold. That is really the major problem. Because we want to be consistent, when we meet, we will have to show them that there is not much disadvantage in 99 years' lease. They are very co-operative—I met them about twice already besides the NHA

*Regularization of Tenure (State Lands) Act*  
[HON. P. NICHOLSON]

*Friday, February 22, 1991*

meeting them, and I am willing to meet them again to see how we can resolve that problem.

The surveys have been submitted to the Director of Surveys for approval, and approval is expected shortly. Planning and engineering designs have already been completed. From the legal perspective, the National Housing Authority has varied the terms and conditions of lease to include the 199-year lease for the tenants. As I said, here is where we have a little problem with the tenants, and we are open, amicable and ready to sit and talk with them to try to resolve the problem.

**2.20 p.m.**

Certain sections of the community have indicated to the National Housing Authority that they are desirous of obtaining freehold while certain sections are saying they are prepared to go forward with the 199-year lease. We are trying to build a community bond with the people. It is not just land tenure and so on.

Five Rivers Phase II—170 lots: This area lies north of 10th Street and comprises of squatters only. Outlined planning approval has been obtained from the Town and Country Planning Division. Proposals for conducting a detailed engineering design are to be submitted by the consultants. A social survey is carded for February 29, 1991; mobilization of the community is continuing; 90 per cent of the people—those who are squatters—have expressed their willingness to be regularized. Legal searches are being carried out to determine whether there are any existing leases in that particular area with the 170 squatters.

Jean Avenue Diego Martin—60 plots: A social survey has been carried out and all have expressed their willingness to be regularized. Further meetings are being held with the community to inform them about the progress of the programme. Outlined planning approval has already been obtained from the Town and Country Planning Division; engineering designs are 90 per cent completed. A title search has indicated that there are no existing leases on this parcel of land. Draft leases have been prepared and submitted to the Chief State Solicitor. The unit is awaiting the passage of the new legislation—which I will talk about later—before any leases can be handed out. A valuation has already been obtained from the Valuations Division.

Maracas Valley, Santa Barbara Lands, St. Joseph—22 lots: A social survey has been carried out and residents have expressed their willingness to be regularized. A meeting with the residents is also carded for March 4, 1991 to update them of the progress of their programme. Outlined planning approval has

been obtained from the Town and Country Planning Division; engineering layout has been designed and approved by the local health authority. From the legal perspective, we are awaiting the new legislation. As I said, I shall talk about that.

**Morvant Old Road:** This is the Member for Laventille's area which has 14 plots. In Second Caledonia, there are 11 plots, in Alexis Street, Morvant, there are 60 plots. Social surveys have been completed at Morvant Old Road and Second Caledonia, Morvant. All the residents have expressed their willingness to be regularized. Social surveys for Alexis Street is carded for March 11, 1991. Planning and engineering layouts have been completed at Morvant Old Road and a revision of the layout at Second Caledonia, Morvant, is presently being undertaken. Proposals for planning and engineering layouts for Alexis Street have been received by a consultant firm and are presently being evaluated. Cadastral surveys have been completed at Morvant Old Road and approvals are outstanding from the Director of Surveys. Surveys at Second Caledonia Road are being revised, while those for Alexis Street have not yet started.

**Dundonald Hill, Port of Spain—800 lots.** A social survey is approximately 10 per cent completed. Final completion is expected by the end of March. We have recognized that in doing that social survey, there is need for a stronger team. By this, I mean more people and, therefore, orientation is now taking place so that you would have more people to do the social survey at Dundonald Hill at a faster rate. The National Housing Authority has engaged a consultancy firm to carry out this planning and engineering exercise, about 30 per cent of the job has been completed and a final report is expected in three months. Preliminary research is being done to determine whether there are existing encumbrances on the land.

**Streatham Lodge, St. Augustine—200 lots:** I am sorry the Member for St. Augustine is not here. Site visit has already been made and discussions are being held with the residents. A mapping of the area is being undertaken. **Engineering and Planning:** Discussions are being held with officers from the Highways Division to determine the extent of land reserved for highway development. A legal search is being done to determine the different types of leases which may have been handed out in the past.

I can go on for the whole afternoon. **Lawrence Wong Road, Longdenville—100 lots; Guayaguayare—30 lots; Madras Settlement—22 lots; Dam Road, Point Fortin.** I will say a little about this. **Social surveys and mobilization:** Several meetings were held with the residents who expressed their willingness to be

regularized. I must say something because when you have a stalwart like Minister Wilson in this country, I have to say publicly what we are doing for his area. Discussions were also held with the Self-Help Commission in order to assist the residents in that area. Already, we have assisted them by giving them a water project in the area.

**Planning and Engineering:** The National Housing Authority has received proposals from consultancy firms to carry out the planning and engineering functions. The award of the contract should be sometime in March. Cadastral surveys will be carried out after the planning layout has been approved by the Town and Country Planning Division.

**Fairfield Estate, Princes Town—220 lots:** The National Housing Authority held a meeting with the community in December with the aim of forming a co-operative. Members of the community are meeting among themselves to strengthen this initiative. A further meeting was held in January with members of Fairfield Estate, the National Housing Authority, Ministry of Food Production and the Ministry of Settlements and Housing, where a decision was taken that a joint ministerial team consisting of the Ministry of Settlements and the Ministry of Food Production would be formed to work out proposals for a joint project, since the estate is basically agricultural.

This is an area where the houses are mainly on the roadway and land is being used by the residents for agriculture. So it was felt that we should really have an inter-ministerial meeting and we are of the opinion that most of the emphasis would be given to the Ministry of Agriculture to deal with that particular area, because it is of an agricultural nature and the people do a lot of agriculture for their livelihood and so forth.

**2.30 p.m.**

**Ackbarali Trace, Arima—60 plots. Social survey and mobilization:** A social survey was completed and 100 per cent of the people indicated their willingness to be regularized. Four meetings were held with the residents to discuss the programme, an interim committee was formed and is functioning.

**Planning and Engineering:** A preliminary lot layout plan has been submitted to the Town and Country Planning Division for outline approval.

**Cadastral Survey:** A perimeter survey of the area is being conducted by National Housing Authority's in-house surveyors for the purpose of vesting these lands into the Authority.



Legal: Preliminary investigations are continuing to determine any existing encumbrances. That is one of our major problems and I want to stress it because those who feel that the task is easy, I want them to know that it is not an easy task. You have endless problems on some of them with encumbrances. People produce just a little paper from a Warden, probably in 1940 and when you go to do searches you cannot find anything on it and so on. It is a tremendous task and I feel very, very good to be a part of this kind of job. That is why I feel a little depressed when my honourable friend from the other side came to the House in this way, and when I learnt that he was part of an underground group trying to stop the programme, by telling people not to sign the forms and so on.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member's speaking time has expired.

*Motion made,* That the Hon. Member's speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [*Hon. J. Toney*]

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Miss Nicholson:** Beetham Estate, Phase 4—I think that will be in the Member for Port of Spain East's constituency. I am not too sure—100 lots. We are now really working in the area. We have held five meetings with community leaders to form a group and then to mobilize the area. This exercise is expected to be stepped up so that more action can be told to be representative as we go along during the year. You will feel the temperature more in April/May.

Jones Town, Arima—100 lots. Preliminary discussions are being held with members of the community and the borough council of Arima. Residents were informed of the National Housing Authority's regularization programme and have expressed their willingness to enter the programme.

You will be surprised to know, the amount of squatting in that area. I think, probably, it is one of the largest squatting areas which we have really come upon. I am talking about the Arima district.

River Estate, Diego Martin—600 lots. Social surveys and mobilization. You will be surprised to know that the first meeting we had, the underground grouping had done some home lesson. When we went in, not a soul turned up, but you know, I am a strategist. So we went in and we did our home lesson again and we let the people know it is for their welfare; that we are working for the country; I am not working for myself but it is for the country, for you. The next meeting they

*Regularization of Tenure (State Lands) Act*  
[HON. P. NICHOLSON]

*Friday, February 22, 1991*

were out in hundreds. I am sure that the representative for Diego Martin Central can tell us that because he was present.

Four meetings were held with the residents and an executive committee has been formed. Residents have expressed their willingness to be regularized and their social survey will start on March 11, 1991.

Planning and Engineering: Mapping of the area is presently being undertaken by the Squatter Regularization Unit and this exercise is expected to be completed by March, 1991. A preliminary study has already been completed by the Town and Country Planning Division and is being amended.

It is really sad to know that we are going to lose some of the best agricultural soils in the country. It is the best area, but even though you go into the cocoa areas, you are going to see the foundations all over the place and the only time you will really know what is taking place, is when you see the roofs are going up. The people have been informed on what it is all about and we have told them that they must try to protect the area that is left, so they themselves would be watchmen.

Legal: We have some business to do with the University of the West Indies and I have to communicate with the Hon. Member next to me before we can address them.

Enterprise: I am now going to deal with some private work, therefore I would go back to Rock City, because that is our pilot in the private approach—people who are on private lands. When I just went into the Ministry, we had a situation where the Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission was taken to court by the owners of those lands. They lost the case, because they were going to put up electricity in the area and the people said, "they did not give anybody permission to put up electricity in our area". We intervened, and I must say that the representative for the area was quite co-operative in that respect. He knows that sister Pam is very solid and he wants to be able, at least, to walk up to Rock City, so I mean he was very co-operative.

We met with the owners, Furness, and they showed great co-operation with the group. They gave us a chance to organize the people into a co-operative and the Co-operative Division was brought in. After a while, which is a good time, we were able to mobilize the people very firmly and we brought a bank into the situation. The bank which is assisting them is a commercial bank and the people were given a proper offer. So based on the price which we were able to

negotiate with Furness, the people were able to accept that price. At this point, the down-payment has already been paid and why the final payment is not made, the bank is making sure that it does its own search. Although I did the search and made them know that it is clean, they are still doing their search and you will find, by the time the month is ended, this particular grouping will own those lands. There is also an acre of land around, which the Government took in order to give them some facilities for hard courts and so on.

One thing about these people, I must say, is that they are very amicable and grateful. Every meeting they hold, they make sure that the Minister is informed. It is not because they just want to, it is because the people recognize what has been done in their situation and after that, the lands would be surveyed by the National Housing Authority. They have worked out the price with them already and they have gotten the leave from Mr. Furness to go ahead with that. So all the engineering and planning work has been done but after everything is completed, the bank is responsible, along with the co-operative, to straighten out each individual deal.

**2.40 p.m.**

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I must say that because of our perseverance with this programme, we got a very clear perspective as to how we can approach the situation with people who are squatting on private lands, because they are private owners. So what we have to do is to organize the people and come up with a very clear approach to the owners of those lands.

It is against that background we went to another area where we were invited, that is, Enterprise—over 1,000 lots of land. We did not get very far and I cannot expose where we are in this case. Besides that, you have a situation where other private groupings that are assisting squatters, for example, Laughlin and Company did a piece of work in Sangre Grande, they sought our assistance and co-operation and the representative for the area can tell you about that. So we are doing a very outstanding piece of work in the country that was never tackled by anyone.

What is the problem in respect of Act No. 20, 1986? As I said earlier, it is individualistic. Because it is individualistic, this programme would make very little headway under such an Act. It does not provide for comprehensive treatment of the squatting problem, since the procedures encourage a piecemeal approach which preclude the application of adequate and proper planning considerations in respect of physical and social upgrading of settlements, economic and

*Regularization of Tenure (State Lands) Act*  
[HON. P. NICHOLSON]

*Friday, February 22, 1991*

environmental national concerns, because it does not take infrastructural and socio-economic upgrading into consideration.

The voluntary approach inherent in the Act puts the onus, as I said earlier, on the squatter. Since it is the responsibility of the state to resolve the acute problem of squatting, this approach is not conducive to a complete solution to the problem. The cumbersome and impractical application process creates a situation that would overburden, considerably, any tribunal. There will always be endless bottlenecks. It seeks a legalistic solution to a more complex and national squatting problem with too little emphasis on the critical aspects of human habitation, as well as on the social, economic and physical needs and aspirations of the respective settlement.

It was conceived in the absence of a national policy framework for squatter regularization because I argued earlier that it only took care of around 5,000 squatters and there are over 25,000 squatters in Trinidad and Tobago and outside of the context of a national housing policy. That is the way it was done. The terms of the lease contained in section 21(1) to (5) do not enable the criterion of cost recovery to be met; and it is important, especially a country that is going through a very turbid economic situation. As a matter of fact, the state is subsidizing the IDB programme by 50 per cent. The people are not really paying for the land, they are paying for the infrastructural and utility improvement.

More importantly, it does not provide for the rehabilitation of squatter communities through a process of granting tenure and upgrading the physical environment—I said that already—and to really take care of the environment. One of the problems that we have is at the watersheds in the country where we have people squatting and in various areas where there should not be squatters. So, the whole question of relocation is a very important feature of the work in order to save the nation, the water system and so on. Therefore, the environment is very critical and the Minister of Environment has a fundamental role in this work.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the present legislation to this Government is therefore piecemeal in approach, legalistic and individualistic in application, and ignores the more wider and inherent social and technical dimensions of the problem. At this point, I would like to inform this honourable House that our position is, that Act No. 20 of 1986 must be repealed but be replaced by a bill—which will eventually become an Act—that can deal with the programme from a total community level and not from an individualistic, piecemeal, legalistic level. In recognizing the

magnitude of the task, the problems that the squatters face, the inadequacy of current legislation and so on, the Government has been tackling the problem. Our work is with the hon. Attorney General's office and I was informed that very soon the document will be before us and I can assure you—

**Mr. Valley:** Everything is on stream; everything is soon.

**Miss Nicholson:** You just come in, behave yourself.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, he is my hon. friend so I am trying to tell him to behave himself. Being a newcomer, a Johnny-come-lately, he has to know how to shape up.

So, the approved policy with regard to the regularization of residential squatting on state lands has a number of objectives which are outlined to the people. As I said earlier, just a while ago, the matter will be before us soon to be dealt with.

I think that this afternoon, I have given a comprehensive report on what we are doing. We are not sleeping and we care. We are sensitive. What I am pleased about—because I have gone to a number of the meetings and the response of the people—I know that the people of Trinidad and Tobago are responsible people and they recognize when you are doing something for their progress or their advantage.

So, hon. Member for Oropouche, in response to the question that you have asked, for example: Will we be acting while we have the other Act? We are doing the preparatory work but we will not be giving out any lease while that is the law; because we cannot do that. But we are doing all the preparatory work and bringing it up to a level that as soon as we bring the bill to the House—and I am sure everybody will give approval for an Act like that—then we will just be able to give out the deeds to the people.

I hope that I have cleared the air for you. You would not believe, hon. Member for Oropouche, those same groups that are running to you, came to me nearly every month. You would not believe that. But afterwards you must get tired because you have to go forward with the work for the country. I recognize that. Some of them formed groups and charged the people \$8.00 for registration as land tenants or to be in the Squatters' Association, and fleeced the people, but they recognized that their day is ending for their infrastructural improvement.

**2.50 p.m.**

I am not going to waste time with you. If you are not clear as yet hon. Member for Oropouche you will never be clear. Some of these people who have been fleecing and trying to fool the people—but the people are now understanding because of the attack I am laying on the programme—are now recognizing that their days are numbered and ending.

I would like to move the following amendment to the motion:

*And Whereas* the above-mentioned Act did not make proper provision by law for regularizing the status of thousands of residents of this country occupying state lands, and that the Act sought to regularize squatting on an individual basis rather than on a community basis;

*And Whereas* such regularization is urgent and imperative to bring much-needed relief to these residents;

*And Whereas* high expectation was raised that the plight of the residents would be ameliorated by the passing of the said Act;

*Be It Resolved* that this House take note of the action on the part of the Government to repeal and replace the Regularization of Tenure (State Lands) Act No. 20 of 1986.

I hope that I have cleared the air and sent home the message this afternoon with the great work that we are doing.

**Mr. Basdeo Panday** (*Couva North*): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I had hoped that having removed the PNM from government the days were over when squatters and tenants, people who want security of tenure being used as a political football, would have come to an end, but alas [*Interruption*] Well you see there is a spontaneous outburst of approval, please forgive them.

Today the hon. Minister has demonstrated beyond the shadow of a doubt, that when we moved the PNM and we put those on the other side we did not get change, all we got was exchange because from what she has said, has indicated clearly that the Government proposes to continue to use squatters and tenants on state lands as a political football, for political purposes in order to ingratiate themselves at election time. In fact, that is how she concluded. The Minister has actually told this House that there will be no granting of leases until new legislation is passed.

We all know this is an election year and we know exactly when that new legislation is going to be passed. It is going to be passed just before the elections and the exercise of beginning to appear to regularize will commence immediately before the elections. That is a tragedy, because I propose this afternoon to indicate a history of what has happened to tenants and squatters in this country; how callously they have been treated by this Government and the past Government, with disdain and without regard for their human feeling.

I need not go further than the first point that I can recall and we all know that the whole question of squatting really arose with the oil boom and the increase in land prices when people could not afford land. The first attempt to use tenants and squatters on state lands as a political football began for the 1976 elections, that is how far. For the 1976 elections the hon. Dr. Eric Williams, the then Prime Minister, made a statement in the campaign that squatters on state lands would be regularized.

In fact, as a result of that statement sometime around December 2, 1978, a survey was carried out with respect to squatters on state lands. There was a publication, as I recall, in which it was estimated that there were 5,000 squatters in the country. But the intention was then, as it is now, merely to use the issue of squatting callously and deliberately for political purposes, because despite the fact that the statement was made in 1976 and the survey was carried out in 1978, nothing was done to relieve the plight of the people who do not have homes and who must squat as a result.

Today, I have before me the *Hansard* debates that have taken place in this Parliament and I intend to use some with great profusion. The next time we had any hope for squatters was when there was another general election. As you know, after 1976 the next election was 1981 and on December 5, 1980 a document was laid in Parliament and that document was the survey which I talked about that mentioned 7,500 squatting buildings and about 33,000 squatters.

### **3.00 p.m.**

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think the most cruel act of all, the most callous and despicable act was the one in 1983. So you see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I say, they laid the document in 1980 because 1981 is elections. I am sure you will recall what 1983 was; 1983 was the local government elections. In fact, it was the local government elections in which, for the first time, they were going to be defeated. You know what they did, Mr. Deputy Speaker? I refer to this because the

*Regularization of Tenure (State Lands) Act*  
[MR. PANDAY]

*Friday, February 22, 1991*

former Leader of the Opposition must never escape his involvement in this act of cruelty, and it is cruelty.

I have with me a document dated July 21, 1983, and it is a document that purports to grant something that I think no one has ever heard of in legal circles. There are three legal persons on the other side, and maybe they will tell me. It is called a "probationary tenancy agreement". I thought when you get a job, people are put you on probation. I never knew that they put you on probation when they give you a tenancy. But the PNM Government, in order to use the tenants on the Orange Grove Estate in Macoya as a political football, decided that they would grant them something called a "probationary tenancy agreement", and they went out and handed these documents which would give them security of tenure. But do you know for how long? From January 1, 1983 to December 31, 1983, just before the elections to just after the elections.

The Member for San Fernando East, the leader of the PNM, a former Minister in the Government at that time must tell this House how he is different and how the PNM is different from what is happening today in this Parliament. He must tell them. He must explain what he meant and what he intended when he participated in this act of gross indecency, because that is what it is: an act of gross indecency, to tell people elections are coming up and, "We give you a probationary tenancy agreement for one year." It looks so official, headed the "Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. This agreement made the 21st day of July in the year of Our Lord"—they should have crossed out that—"1983 between one Lawrence Grant of the Orange Grove Estate in Macoya" granting him a tenancy for one year. As soon as the elections were over, they abandoned these people with a callousness not experienced in the history of this country.

**Mr. Valley:** I wonder if the Member would be good enough to state who signed the document on behalf of the then Government, and secondly, whether he can lay the document, please. We would like to view it also.

**Mr. Panday:** I assure the hon. Member that I will be only too pleased to lay the copy. I am reading from a photocopy. If I may answer the questions he has asked: The document is signed by K.B. Joseph, the Director of Surveys, in the presence of Marcia Smith. The other signature, of course, is that of Mr. Grant himself, who was the man being taken for the ride who thought he was getting security of tenure from the Government at the time.

I shall lay the document on the table, Mr. Deputy Speaker, with your



permission and with yours, God, with yours—they think they are God, you know, tin gods, of course. After the local government elections of 1983, these, people were abandoned, and there was no talk thereafter of their tenancy. Then came 1985 and the game went on. I will refer to the budget speech of 1986 delivered by the hon. George M. Chambers, Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, on Tuesday, December 17, 1985, at page 29. He said:

"I turn, Mr. Speaker, to the very long outstanding matter of the regularization of the squatting problem which was first adumbrated on December 2, 1977."

*[Interruption]* I have no intentions of disturbing the gentlemen at all.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Unfortunately, they are disturbing the Speaker.

**Mr. Panday:** In this case, I shall take serious objection if they are disturbing you.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was quoting from the 1986 Budget Speech of the hon. George Chambers in which he said:

"I turn, Mr. Speaker, to the very long outstanding matter of the regularization of the squatting problem which was first adumbrated on December 2, 1977. In establishing the Ministry of Housing and Resettlement I included among its responsibilities that of dealing positively with this matter. Some Honourable Members will also recall that as Minister of Agriculture, Lands and Fisheries, as that ministry was then called, I tabled in this House on December 5, 1980, a report of the survey of the squatter population as contemplated by the announcement."

You see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am reading this speech because I want to indicate to this House how close it was to the speech that was made today by the Member for Tobago West, almost in identical terms. At that time, the hon. Mr. Chambers was saying:

"There remained, however, a great deal to be done because, as we must all agree, this is a very complex issue..."

The identical kind of words you get here today—

"...with wide social ramifications..."

The same thing that was said in 1986 has been said in 1991—

"...and it cannot be treated except with the utmost care. For example, it is normal for each lessee to be given his own deed after a survey. In the light of the numbers involved in this exercise the procedures had to be carefully considered. At my request a committee of officials was appointed by the honourable Attorney General to examine and advise on the mechanisms best suited for achieving the Government's intent. On the basis of that report which was submitted in October 1985, Cabinet has now agreed to the following principles:

- The regularization will be achieved by legislation;
- There shall be established a Tribunal...

I shall have something to say about that tribunal which was set up by one Government and removed by another, so that it can set up another so that it can use squatters as its own political football.

**Miss Nicholson:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am taking objection to that because I think that the Member is misleading the House. We are not using anybody as footballs. We started our work—at least when I went into the Ministry from 1988 I started my work and I feel that he must not mislead the House. No tribunal was ever set up.

**Mr. Panday:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I shall do exactly like you and ignore her.

"—There shall be established a Tribunal operating from the various centres throughout Trinidad and Tobago with responsibility for determining who are entitled to benefit under the decision and with respect to what parcel of land;"

And it goes on, but I do not intend to bore this House. I think it was already mentioned that if you were squatting on a particular date—and I think the material date is stated here as December 2, 1977—those were the only persons to benefit from this act. And the *Hansard* will show that when this matter came up for debate, we on this side most strenuously contested this provision that only a selected group of squatters shall benefit from any relief on squatting. We could find no rationale for setting a mark-off point, December 2, 1977, and we argued most vociferously against that.

In the promise of Mr. Chambers at that time, he said that beneficiaries shall be granted a 30-year lease with an option to renew for another 30 years. In any event, leases will only be granted on the finalization of surveys.

You know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, having said that, whenever one asked, what is happening to those promises you were making? One was told that there were no surveyors in the country, and because of this, the matter could not be dealt with. So the matter remained until a bill was published for public comment and debated in this House, and that is the history; that is the bill that became Act No. 20 of 1986. That is the Act which I believe it is now the intention of the NAR Government to repeal.

Now, we had argued that Act No. 20 of 1986 was inadequate in that its cut-off point discriminated. That Act was called the Regularization of Tenure (State Lands) Act 1986. At least it did one thing, it granted security of tenure for people who were in occupation on state lands. Those organizations that are resisting repeal of this Act are not doing so because they are mafia. I found that most distasteful. It sounded like the words of a fisherwoman.

**3.15 p.m.**

**Miss Nicholson:** On a point of order. I am not going to remain in this honourable House and entertain the behavioural pattern of the Leader of the Opposition. I am going to resist him every inch of the way, as a black woman.

**Mr. Panday:** But if you speak of mafia, that is all right, that is perfectly in order.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order please. Please continue with the debate.

**Mr. Panday:** It was unfortunate that the hon. Member should feel that anybody who disagrees with her or her Government, is mafia. It is rude and reprehensible. But worst of all, to point out to people in the audience and call them mafia and to call Members of this House, mafia—

**Mr. Toney:** On a point of order Mr. Deputy Speaker, if I can be of some assistance. The word was withdrawn. Are we going to allow debate on a word which is not on the records?

**Mr. Panday:** I am not speaking of the withdrawal; I am speaking of the fact that the word is in the Minister's mind. If you want to expunge it from the book, I am saying that I have evidence that it is in the Minister's mind. I can only know people's mind from what they say.

*Regularization of Tenure (State Lands) Act*  
[MR. PANDAY]

*Friday, February 22, 1991*

The point is that people are looking after the problems of squatters, they are not necessarily wicked and evil and under-grounders. To call people under-grounders, that is all right, that is not rude. That has nothing to do with blackness. It is okay. You could do that. I am saying that it is unfortunate. It is reprehensible conduct because what the people who are arguing against Act. No. 20 of 1986 are saying is, that at least this Act gives security of tenure, “please do not take it away unless you at least replace it with something that provides us with security of tenure.” That is all they are saying. In fact, they have asked for an amendment of this Act, that takes away the cut-off date of 1977, and said, “why not have it for all squatters?” You do not call them under-handers and under-grounders. They may be quite genuine in what they are doing. I find it extremely strange when the hon. Minister actually attacked the people for charging \$6.00, and stated that they were fleecing and fooling people. So an organization to deal with squatters, or whatever, is set up, and they said, “look, we have to look after your problems and if we have to do so, certain expenses will be incurred. Therefore, we are asking you to join the association and pay \$6.00.” Do you know those people are suddenly seen as fleecing and fooling people?

I will relate to this House an incident which took place in the presence of the Prime Minister at the Carapichaima Senior Comprehensive School. *[Interruption]* I certainly did not keep him out of here. I am not going to break the chronological trend with which I intend to carry this afternoon.

Then came Act 20 of 1986, despite that Act which was intended to fool the electorate. It was an Act just before the elections, again. That was the 1986 elections. So we had one in 1976 and one in 1981. Every election time, immediately before the elections, we are having something being done. Now we are having an election in 1991 and there is a flurry of activity.

**Miss Nicholson:** On a point of order. The Member for Couva North is misleading the House. All our works were done and sent in a particular direction—the works we are doing with the people begun since 1988. Several Members can substantiate what I am saying. So he is misleading the House because he is giving wrong information.

**Mr. Panday:** I repeat again, this being an election year, again there is a flurry of activity. Maybe the Member does not understand English but I cannot help that.

While this flurry of activity is taking place, the very people who wish to pretend that they care so much about squatters take action which is in direct

contradiction to stated intentions. Today, you have this great feeling coming from the other side; you have heard how much they love the people; you have heard how much they care. Let me tell you how much they care. I have in my presence a note from the Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission dated August 10, 1988. The Minister was right, it is not only now they are acting, they have been acting a long time. Since 1988 they have been acting. The only trouble is, then they were acting against squatters, now they are pretending to act for them. This note that I have is signed by Mr. N. McConnie, Chief Engineer, Distribution at T&TEC. It reads:

"By letter dated 2nd August, 1988, the Ministry of Settlements and Public Utilities has directed that the Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission should not connect squatters to the electricity supply system.

Please advise the relevant officers of your department of this directive and ensure that it is carried out."

I want to read it again. Maybe the Minister did not hear about it:

"By letter dated 2nd August, 1988, the Ministry of Settlements and Public Utilities has directed that the Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission should not connect squatters to the electricity supply system."

Not squatters on private lands. Squatters. That is English. It is clear; it is unambiguous and it is plain, the directions which were given by the Minister. You cannot get out of it now. That was 1988. You thought elections were far away and you could do that. Now it is 1991, and the elections are here, so you want to renege from that statement now. That is how much they care.

**3.25 p.m.**

I hear that my learned Minister and colleague say, "What is wrong with that? Nothing is wrong with them not giving them electricity. What is wrong with cleaning their drains?" If you give electricity to people who are squatting, that is chaos; if you clean their drains, that will be chaos too; if you clean their latrines that they have, that ought to be chaos as well, and if you provide any little road for them, that ought to be chaos. Anybody with a caring and a feeling heart would know that, yes, it takes time to regularize squatters. Nobody denies that. But while you are regularizing them, do you have to brutalize them? Why do you have to brutalize them? Why do you have to deny them a thing like electricity?

*Regularization of Tenure (State Lands) Act*  
[MR. PANDAY]

*Friday, February 22, 1991*

That is the action of the people who come to this House today; to tell you how much they care. Having done that, I want to show you and demonstrate to you how those with glass houses should not throw stones; those who want to accuse people of being undergrounders, fleecing, fooling people and so on. I also have with me a document entitled, "National Land Tenants and Ratepayers Association, Acknowledgement Certificate" This is a blank certificate. Provision is made for two names—

"...has been occupying lands of Caroni Limited, measuring 50 x 100 before December 15, 1986 with a house on same or in the process of construction. This qualifies him/her for regularization."

It is signed by President, Abdool Wahab and C. Kantasingh, Secretary and, dated July 31, 1988." It is a document that was intended to deceive for which they charged people \$25. Is it \$5? That is all I wanted to know, how much they really charged. It is so easy to catch them. I said \$25, but my friend on the Government side shouted out \$5. So that now we know. Five dollars for what? It is an Acknowledgement Certificate, giving people the impression that once their names—and these things are pre-signed—that is the thing about it, pre-signed, Abdool Wahab. Abdool Wahab is well-known, a Member of this Parliament appointed by this Government. He pre-signed a document and gave it out so that anybody can fill in names, and fool people and distributed this in the presence of the Prime Minister at the Carapichaima Senior Comprehensive School in the presence of the Minister of Planning and Mobilization; in the presence of the hierarchy of the Government. They all participated in a fraud. They have the guts and the audacity and the temerity to say about other people that because they charge you \$6 to join an organization, for which service is being provided, that they are fooling people. But they give you a piece of paper that is not worth the ink that is written on it, charge you \$5 for it and say that is their contribution to helping people. Mr. Deputy Speaker, that cannot be right.

**Miss Nicholson:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, why are we allowing misinformation to pervade the House? The Government has not given any certificate to anybody and that has no bearing on this discourse here today.

**Mr. Panday:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, the lady this afternoon is having enormous difficulty in understanding this simple English language. I never mentioned for a single time that the Government gave anybody anything. I read a document and I said, blank Acknowledgement Certificate. What did I say to this House that was

untrue? I said here was a blank certificate; it was pre-signed by Abdool Wahab. Is that untrue? Abdool Wahab is a Member of the Government. Is that untrue? He has been appointed to this Parliament by the present Government. Is that untrue? He distributed this at the Carapichaima Senior Comprehensive School, in the presence of the Prime Minister. Is that untrue? He also did this in the presence of the Minister of Planning and Mobilization. Is that untrue? That is what I said.

**Mr. Wilson:** In his own interest, I advise the Member for Couva North, not to get so excited.

**Mr. Panday:** I am so grateful to "Dr." Wilson for the medical advice which he has given me. I assure him that this heart will bury him, politically. After this certificate was distributed—*[Interruption]* I must be doing very well this afternoon. They will get me conceited. I am getting more and more pleased with myself.

He gets so "bazodee", he decides to give medical advice this afternoon. That is how "bazodee" he is. He gave somebody legal advice and got that person into trouble half an hour ago and, he is now giving medical advice.

**Mr. Wilson:** I like you.

**3.35 p.m.**

**Mr. Panday:** I know you like me. I like you too. I want to show you how I do not like the fraud you perpetrate upon people. When this document was handed out and people were being misled and began going to Caroni saying, "I have a certificate"—they went to Caroni and say, "Now I have a certificate, this land is mine; I want this land"—Caroni was forced to issue a statement on August 5, 1988. It was published in the *Express* and it says:

"Stay Off Our Land—Caroni

Caroni Limited yesterday took objection to a certificate, purportedly issued by the National Land Tenants and Ratepayers Association (NLTRA), seeking to regularize the 'illegal occupation of the company's lands.'

Caroni said the certificate, signed by Abdool Wahab and C. Kantasingh..."

I understand that the reward for this was that he was appointed to the Board of Caroni. I think that is the reward for doing this con job on people—

"...was 'invalid and unauthorized.'

*Regularization of Tenure (State Lands) Act*  
[MR. PANDAY]

*Friday, February 22, 1991*

The Company said it was to emphasize that 'no other organization is empowered to license, permit or regularize the occupation of its lands.'

Persons, a Caroni statement said, 'who have such certificates are warned that those certificates have no validity with the company and will not regularize the illegal occupation of its property.'

The company added that it would take 'such steps as are necessary to deal with the problem'."

Now Mr. Deputy Speaker, tell me if the perpetrator of that act of deceit ought not to be in jail as opposed to being in the Senate. But then, why should I be surprised? We voted for change; we got exchange. How is this different from what I have read or what the PNM has done to people?

**Mrs. Donawa-McDavidson:** Leave the PNM out of this.

**Mr. Panday:** Leave the PNM out of this! You have the country where it is today and you tell me leave the PNM out of this! Thirty years you were in power, 30 years you deceived people, 30 years you gave them something worse than this and I showed this to the Government. You will not escape. You will not escape your wrong doings. Judgment day is about to approach. Judgment day is coming.

You see Mr. Deputy Speaker, at that symposium the Government submitted—they had a big symposium when they shared out the certificates—a document dated September 30, 1989. That is how Government's policy comes about now. It reads:

"A New Policy For Agricultural Development, Land Distribution and Administration and Squatting—

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ARE ASKED TO SUBMIT THEIR WRITTEN  
COMMENTS ON THIS DOCUMENT TO:-

Ministry of Food Production and Marine Exploitation, Agricultural Planning  
Division, St. Clair, Port of Spain."

When you handed out both documents together, the implications were clear that you intended to deceive.

My friend—not so learned, but my friend—speaks about Government's policy. As far as I am aware, Government's policy is so confused that I do not know if the Government knows what it is about. One thing that came out here today, is the



*Regularization of Tenure (State Lands) Act*  
[MR. PANDAY]

*Friday, February 22, 1991*

confusion of the Minister, that the Minister is absolutely confused about this whole question of land settlements.

**Miss Nicholson:** Mr. Speaker, I take umbrage and I am asking for the withdrawal of the statement that the Leader of the Opposition—who will remain in the Opposition—just made. I am not confused. I am very clear, and I made a clear and precise piece of discourse here this afternoon. He is confused. His heart has him confused. Rum has him confused.

**Mr. Panday:** Do not try that in this House.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order please! Let us not have the House degenerate into that, please.

**Mr. Panday:** One thing I can assure her of is that anytime she throws that kind of remark, she is going to get it back straight in her face.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I repeat, she is confused.

**Miss Nicholson:** Mr. Speaker, on a point of order—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The Chair refuses to rule on that. Please continue.

**Mr. Panday:** The Member is confused—

**Miss Nicholson:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. I am not confused and I am asking that the Member for Couva North withdraw the statement.

**Mr. Panday:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, if I may, that is another area of confusion of the Minister, if the Minister thinks—you see, what I am saying is, she is confused because she read one document but she criticizes another. That is why I say that the Minister is confused and I think you ruled on that, so I will continue.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Member read—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The Chair has ruled that he does not think that is unparliamentary language. Your speaking time has expired.

*Motion made,* That the hon. Member's speaking time be extended by 30 minutes [Mr. T. Sudama]

*Question put and agreed.*

**Mr. Panday:** I want to be absolutely clear. To say that the Member is confused in her argument is unparliamentary, you said?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** No, I said that I did not think it was unparliamentary language and I ask, in all humility, that you continue, please.

**Mr. Panday:** I see. I did not want to abuse your ruling, Sir. I am saying this because the hon. Member read from the manifesto. The manifesto's concept is totally different from what the hon. Minister has said today and what they are doing and what they have said otherwise. You see, when we spoke of the manifesto, the Government had said in its early stages, that the manifesto consisted of its policy. That was the Government; the manifesto constituted the policy of the Government. The hon. Minister read from the manifesto. In fact, in reading from the manifesto, she read the position on "Squatters" Settlement, page 27 of the manifesto which, in my view, is absolutely clear—

"All squatters on State and State Enterprises land will be given a moratorium period in which not a single house will be demolished. The moratorium period will allow for assessment of Squatters' Settlement areas for upgrading and, where upgrading is not possible, to settle the squatters in new areas.

Upgrading squatters' areas requires the provision of access roads, water, electricity, cost effective sewerage disposal, garbage disposal and the provision of land for basic social infrastructure.

The NAR will adopt on a National Scale the Sou-Sou Land approach..."

That is the Government's policy. That is why I am telling you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the Minister is confused. I will explain what is the Sou-Sou Land policy. There is only one document that genuinely speaks of the Sou-Sou Land policy—a document produced by the hon. Mr. John Humphrey, the Member for St. Augustine and former Minister of Settlements. The article continues:

"...to the provision of land for housing, agriculture, industry, commerce, recreation, social and cultural activities."

It speaks of developing communities—

"Steps will be taken to acquire with proper compensation land that is tenanted and/or squatted for securing and regularizing affected communities."

Then the Government publishes this *Macro Economic Plan*. The Government must know what it is doing. It says in one breath that its manifesto is its policy and

it says in the other breath that it is the *Macro Economic Plan*. In the *Macro Economic Plan*, at page 219, Government says:

"Squatting:

21.66. Attention has already been drawn to the environmental problems created by squatting. In order to deal effectively with this problem, Government as part of its comprehensive policy on squatting will:

- (i) introduce very stringent measures to contain the incidence of squatting;"

You see a complete change in attitude. In one document they are saying "we will deal in a humane way with squatters. We shall not break down their houses, we shall resettle them and so on because we recognize that people are not squatting because they like to squat". But the moment they get into power and they come up with this scheme, they change their attitude completely—bad John; big bad John.

- "(ii) implement measures to secure the removal of all squatter settlements that lie in the path of development projects, or are situated in an area where they pose an environmental hazard or are threatened by such a hazard;"

Do you notice the accent now? The accent is not a positive one, which is providing for them, but the attitude now is, what kind of action we will take against them.

- (iii) Regularize eligible squatters who satisfy specific criteria as articulated by the policy."

Just as Mr. Chambers had said that his criterion was, that those who were squatting on December 2, 1977, were going to be regularized.

**3.45 p.m.**

The only document that I have been able to find which is not an act to deceive, which is not being done at election time, that seems to make sense of the manifesto, that truly understands the essence of the issue of squatting and what is to be done to relieve it, is a document published in February 1987 by the National Housing Authority called a "Settlements Policy". That, I am proud to say, was published during the very brief period when my friend and colleague, the able, Mr. John Humphrey, Member for St. Augustine was Minister of Settlements. That

document is worth putting on the record because, as I say, it is the only document that I have been able to find which is not a scam. Everything else done by the PNM and by the NAR has turned out to be scam. This is the only document and it was done in the days of Mr. John Humphrey. I quote:

"The Manifesto of the National Alliance for Reconstruction briefly outlined the manner in which the Sou Sou Lands approach would be used as a state initiative in its Immediate Action Plan, Recovery and Reconstruction Plan, its Human Dignity and Social Progress Programme."

In the foreword to this document, the authors give credit to the indomitable Mr. John Humphrey. The Chairman of the board at the time was Mr. Ivan Laughlin—he said:

"It is on the basis of these pronouncements that Mr. John Humphrey, Minister of Works, Settlements and Infrastructure and the founder of Sou Sou Lands Limited, mandated the Board of the National Housing Authority, appointed on January 9, 1987..."

The only time there were no elections in the air.

"...to undertake their translation into a policy framework that could be implemented in the shortest possible time."

There will never be a Minister responsible for Housing as the Minister at that time, Mr. John Humphrey. I think they all know it. *[Interruption]* Now they say—I was waiting for them—"he is nothing; he has done nothing". I was waiting for that. I know they would say that. But "ingratitude more strong than traitors' arms will never vanquish him".

The very Minister who says he is nothing and that he has never done anything, let me show you in what eloquent language she referred to him in this House. I quote from *Hansard*, May 21, 1986, from the speech Miss Pamela Nicholson who was a Member on this side at that time. As usual, the PNM was giving us hell and the hon. Member replied by saying, "The hon. Minister"—I think she was referring to the then Mr. Francis, I cannot remember what portfolio he held. It is not very significant enough to remember—"also stated that he is alarmed that the people spoke against the 23-year Government, that has been doing so much for the people". The same thing Mr. Francis was saying about how much they had done for the people, it is the same thing that is happening here today. Who spoke out against the Government using the best agricultural lands for housing in the

country? She was dead against, at the time, the use of agricultural lands for housing. She said:

"I belong to a particular group and I am going to identify my group. The group that I belong to is a group called Sou Sou Lands Limited headed by an able visionary."

I think I have to read that again—"headed by an able visionary", that is the hon. Member for St. Augustine, "who the people of this country should carry on their heads as a hero."

The typical racist remark came from the other side, the PNM at that time.

**"Mr. Donaldson:** Carrying him on their heads?"

That is what she thought of him at that time. But you know he does not belong here; he is nothing. He has done nothing and she does not agree that he has done anything. She went on to say:

"A man who has risen to resolve the problems of the poor, of the squatters in this country and because we have this Government on the run, this Government..." *[Interruption]*

If the Minister wants to talk about me, that is her business.

**"Mr. Donaldson:** Side by side not on their heads.

**Miss Nicholson:** They are on the run. Their backs are up the wall. With what Sou Sou Lands is doing they have come to this House with this document."

I am only sorry that the Speaker is not here. I have his documents here too and I would have liked to read it for him, but since he is not here I will desist. The same Minister who at that time was talking about the use of agricultural lands for housing, is the very Minister who now has reneged completely upon that statement.

**Miss Nicholson:** On a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. For the whole afternoon I have to give denials. In all the programmes that I am doing, I met them in action by the hon. Mr. John Humphrey, Member for St. Augustine and the area that I am sure he is talking about, the Town and Country Planning has marked out that area very clearly for residential purposes. I want that to be made absolutely clear.

**3.55 p.m.**

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I did not go to the people of Bon Air. I want to say that. They came to me. So I am not an undergrounder. When people call me, I go, and if I do not have time, I say, "I am busy doing other work. Will you come to see me?" And they come. What I am about to relate to this House is what was reported to me. I do not and I cannot vouch for the truth or falsity of the statement.

These are people who came to my office, the office of the Leader of the Opposition, and during the course of my duty as such officer, reported to me the following. These are the farmers from the National Food Crop Farmers Association and they tell me that they are being evicted from Bon Air; that these lands which were originally owned by Orange Grove who had given it out to farmers to plant canes, and over the period of time, the farmers ceased planting canes and their descendants continued with them to occupy the lands and began to grow other crops. Everybody in this country knows that Orange Grove contains some of the most fertile agricultural lands in this country. Everybody knows that.

They continued to occupy that land, and in 1970, Home Construction purchased the land. I think the hon. Member for Chaguanas knows a lot about Home Construction. In 1970, Home Construction purchased the land and sometime later sold it back to the state, and the state divested those lands to the National Housing Authority. The NHA by letter dated November 16, 1990 to the farmers gave them notice to quit. They must get off the land. They gave them notice to quit. I believe that this is so even though just opposite to where the farmers are, there are lands which are not as fertile and which can be used for housing. This is what they tell me, I do not know. If the Minister wishes to explain that, fine.

They want to take them to an area which they claim is already occupied by farmers, and great tension has developed in the community when the Government says it is going to put these farmers with those farmers over there; you can imagine what is going to happen. More importantly, when they move, it is the intention to give them half acre plots so as to ensure they are not economically viable. You cannot do agriculture on a half acre plot of land and be viable.

But when they told the Minister—this is what they tell me—that these are agricultural lands, the Minister said that these are not agricultural lands, they

cannot grow any crops there, no crops can be grown there. She actually told them that she does not care. She does not care if there are lands—

**Miss Nicholson:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. I never told anybody that I do not care. For four years I negotiated with those people in a very amicable way. The Minister of Agriculture had alternative lands for those people. Those people just wanted to defy the Government. I never told anybody I did not care, because I deal with the public in a very amicable way, and that statement is very untrue. You are lying and you are misleading the House.

**Mr. Panday:** Sorry. I do not take offence to that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because you see, the lady is protesting too much. This is my brief given to me by farmers. I recorded this statement myself. It is in my handwriting. I have the date on which I recorded it, December 15, 1990 when they came to my office as the Leader of the Opposition. I said they told me that. I thought I made it absolutely clear, that I did not go there. Maybe she knows and that is why she jumped up, because she would not let me finish the statement.

They also told me that she said that she has 40 acres of land in Tobago, and they could put concrete on all the agricultural land in Trinidad. That is what they said. They may be telling lies on the Minister, I do not know, but that is what they said. They could put concrete on all the agricultural land in Trinidad. In Tobago she has 40 acres. Now, I suppose you can only judge people for yourself.

I was told by them to note that it was the PNM who had acquired this land for the purposes of distributing it to them. They say as proof of the fact that the Minister was totally wrong when she said that these are not agricultural lands and no crops can grow there, they presented to me several documents in which an assessment was made by people from the Ministry itself indicating the crops they had.

Bon Air West—I am not going to quote the name of this farmer because I am sure he will be victimized tomorrow morning. That has been the style of this Government—2,802 pigeon peas trees; 1,500 banana plants; one sour cherry and one soursop tree, and they say that is not agriculture; 672 holes of big sims, and they have "bearing"; 1,800 pigeon peas plants; 1,400 tomato plants.

These are all documents which indicate what the people had, and these documents were valued, official documents from the Ministry. If these people are liars, well, I shall simply tell them that "you lied to me when you came to my office

*Regularization of Tenure (State Lands) Act*  
[MR. PANDAY]

*Friday, February 22, 1991*

and you told me that the Minister had said these things. The Minister said that you are liars. So this is a matter between you and the Minister, not between me."

What I do know is that I have a copy of the letter dated November 16, 1990. It is addressed to a farmer obviously, and it says:

"The National Housing Authority has been informed that you use without permission a portion of state lands at Bon Air West for agricultural purposes. This land is carded for residential development and construction will commence shortly.

You are hereby given notice that the National Housing Authority requires you to quit and deliver up possession of the site within one month from the date of this letter. You are further advised that you should cease any agricultural activity immediately as the National Housing Authority will not hold itself responsible for any losses.

Should you fail to comply with this demand, steps will be taken to eject you therefrom."

That is the great Government that cares. How different from the manifesto. Once they got into power, how the arrogance has consumed them; they are consumed with arrogance.

Aranguez Estates: You see, the Minister knows only about one place I went, Bamboo. She does not know I do my work very efficiently, and I am not an undergrounder; when I go, people call me.

Aranjuez Estates: I have a very short time left, and in that five minutes I will go through. Aranguez Estates: Again, this is a caring government. These are private estates. There are people who are again being thrown out of lands. I do not suppose they will interfere because when they find out who the Aranguez Estates belong to, there is one thing we can be sure of, that this Government will let those farmers die at the hands of the conglomerates.

I want also to bring to the attention of this House, the squatters who are gardeners who are occupying agricultural lands at Harmony Hall, opposite the Lady Hochoy Home. I am told that someone fenced around their lands with their crops in it, two acres of it, and they are unable to reap their crops. When they inquired of the people, they were told that these lands were given to the NHA.



But it is the Five Rivers lands I want to talk about. And again, Minister, they came to me. If people who came to me with respect to regularization of tenure on the Five Rivers estate are speaking the truth, then there is a credibility gap between them and the Minister. That is all I can say.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, however, the irony of this situation is that these lands were purchased by the state in 1971 from the Five Rivers Syndicate, and they were purchased at the urgings and promptings of the tenants for the purpose of distributing the lands to them. So that there was a piece of land owned by private owners. I think you will recall the Milne-Home Estate. And after Mr. Milne-Home was killed, his executors decided to get rid of the whole estate and they sold it. It was bought by a little consortium called Five Rivers Syndicate, and they were giving the tenants some trouble, and the tenants urged the Government of the day to buy it and the Government bought the land. They bought it for the purpose of regularizing their tenancies.

Of course, you must not be surprised if I tell you that from 1971, the PNM gave them the runaround until the PNM left office. The PNM gave them the runaround from 1970. *[Interruption]* Who was in power at the time? I was not there. I think I am going to pick somebody out in the audience and say he/she was in power in 1971. Who was in power? The PNM was in power in 1971, and the PNM bought these lands in 1971 for the purpose of distributing them, and the PNM gave these people the runaround until 1986. Why does not the Member admit the truth? Did the Member give them the lands? Was not the Member in Government? What am I saying that is untrue? I do not understand this today. I am not surprised at that. What I am surprised about is that the present Government continues to give them the same runaround.

#### **4.10 p.m.**

On November 7, 1990 a delegation met with the Minister and I am told the Minister expressed her surprise. First of all, she thought they were squatters and then only to discover they were tenants. So she said: "We cannot have this, this matter has to be resolved. I thought these people were squatters but there is a little problem because the Government has a policy on squatters but it has no policy on tenants." This seems to be right. I had not noticed it myself until the people told me that. If the Government has no policy on state tenants, what are they going to do with tenants on state lands, particularly those lands which are privately owned, on which the private owner had tenants and the Government buys the land, now

*Regularization of Tenure (State Lands) Act*  
[MR. PANDAY]

*Friday, February 22, 1991*

becomes the new landlord and yet has no policy of what it will do with those tenants? I did not realize that until it was pointed out to me by the people of Five Rivers, Arouca.

I must give the Minister credit where credit is due. The Minister directed her officials to meet with the tenants and report back to her by November 21, 1990. I would not have known all this if I was just under-grounding, would I? I know all of this because they told me so. However, the officials were to meet with the tenants, report back to her by November 21, 1990 and on November 20, 1990, proposals were put forward and the Minister has been unable to resolve this problem to date because of what she told this House. It is true that the tenants would prefer freehold. That is a fact. Who would not want freehold? Although 199 years may be tantamount to freehold for a couple generations, people like to know that they can give their lands to their future generations forever but I am told that there are people who are prepared to consider the 199-year lease but the Minister is asking \$10,000.00 per lot.

**Miss Nicholson:** For those areas, it is \$60,000 per lot.

**Mr. Panday:** That area is \$60,000 per lot and, therefore, they are just like exploiting land developers.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Your time is up.

**Mr. Panday:** Thank you Mr. Deputy Speaker. There is much more I would have liked to tell this House but in concluding I want to say that I do not believe. When the Minister says that the people in Bamboo Village are participating, let me tell her that what they are participating in is filling a form which asked them if they are willing to pay \$1,000 and they do not know what the money is for.

I have no doubt that this toying with the squatters would go on and on—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Member, your time is up.

**Mr. Kenneth Valley (Diego Martin Central):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I understand that the intention is to adjourn the House at 4.30 p.m. I do not know why that is so but I wish to take the opportunity to say a few words on this issue because if I do not do so today, I would have to wait until the end of next month which is four weeks away. By that time of course, the House may very well be dissolved and I would hate to miss the opportunity of speaking on this issue. *[Interruption]*. I am in form, having just fought an election and I would very much like an early election.

This afternoon, we heard a number of allegations flying across this Chamber. Some Members claimed that the PNM failed to deal with the problem of squatting for 30 years; that the present Government is doing the same and that the issue arises only around the time of an election. It seems to me that as a fact one should realize that the issue of squatting is not an easy one with which to deal. The mere fact that the previous Government made little headway with the problem and that the present Government is experiencing the same type of problems, one ought to realize that it is not an easy issue. Basically, one has to balance the claims of the landless against the claims of the rational development of society.

Squatting obviously cannot be considered a right. One has to ensure that there is some order in society; that in fact persons who wait in line for housing must be considered against those who instead decide to squat on state lands. Having said that however, one must understand that there are some basic essentials in life. Those basic essentials are said to be food, clothing and shelter. Therefore, shelter is extremely important. If we take that view, I think we would see that the issue is one of providing affordable housing. The problem is not simply one of squatting, it is one of providing affordable housing. It would seem to me that we must therefore ask the Minister whether she is providing housing for our people. That is the issue.

#### **4.20 p.m.**

I want to deal with one issue raised by my friend from Couva North. In his contribution, while he was throwing allegations around the place, he pulled out a certain document—he kindly loaned me the document—"Probationary Tenancy Agreement". When one views this document, one sees how easy it is for an individual to misrepresent facts. The document deals with tenancy for a certain purpose, where the landlord was the Director of Surveys.

I should make the point that there are a number of agencies—the Ministry of Agriculture, for example, which has the power of allowing persons to use state lands under certain conditions, and this is merely an example. Here there was an individual given a tenancy for a period of three years, not one year or months as the Member for Couva North so incorrectly stated. The tenancy is for the period, January 1, 1983, "for a period of three years unless the tenancy is sooner determined in the manner hereinafter provided." For a three-year period, for specific purposes. It states:

"THE TENANT hereby agrees with the Landlord as follows:

- (1) To punctually pay the said rent at the times and in the manner aforesaid.

*Regularization of Tenure (State Lands) Act*  
[MR. VALLEY]

*Friday, February 22, 1991*

- (2) To use the rental premises only for the following agricultural purposes, namely..."

In other words, here you have the Director of Surveys giving certain agricultural land for certain specific purposes—having nothing whatsoever to do with the rationalization or the regularization of the normal squatters which we are talking about. The thing is in bold type: "To follow an approved Programme of Work to be fixed by the Ministry of Agriculture, Lands and Food Production."

That is one of the conditions that this tenant must follow in order to have this tenancy. This is why it is probationary. Another condition:

"To plant and cultivate the rented premises in a proper and husbandlike manner and to the satisfaction of the Landlord in accordance with a programme of development previously approved by the Landlord."

I rest my case. The point I am making is very simple, that people come here without any intention whatsoever to stay close to the truth and go off on tangents.

Coming back to the business before us however, let me say, yes, that squatting is a problem. The previous Government, after fighting with this issue for quite some time, enacted Act 20 of 1986 to deal with the problem and the Act deals with persons who were squatting on state lands as at December 2, 1977. That was in fulfilment of a promise made by the Prime Minister, I think, in the 1978 Budget Speech. I think most of us would agree that, perhaps, today we may have to extend that period, because as a fact, new persons started squatting on state lands subsequent to that date.

The question however is, whether as a country we should simply allow persons to squat on state lands without regard to the overall objective or the orderly development of our country. That is the issue with which the previous Government was faced. In February 1982, the then Minister of Housing and Resettlement issued a statement in which he outlined the PNM's policy with respect to this matter. I would like, for the purpose of Members and the public at large, really, to re-state some of the key issues in this statement. It is a radio and television address to the nation by the Minister of Housing and Resettlement on the problem of squatting. It is dated February 12, 1982. The Minister at the time, I think, was Dr. Joseph. It states:

"The problem of squatting has been with us for some time and has been the subject of previous study by various groups and committees. The measures

introduced so far, have had at best, limited success. In the meantime the incidence of squatting has been increasing at such a rate that firm action is now required, not only to protect the environment from permanent damage, but more importantly for the protection of the health and well-being of the population, including the squatters themselves.

The last comprehensive survey carried out in 1979 put the squatting population in Trinidad and Tobago at 7,559 households in 106 squatting areas. Since then, the rate of increase has been an alarming 18 per cent per annum, with heavy concentration in the following areas."

He lists the number of areas. I think we can skip that for the purpose of time:

"In most of these areas there is already serious overcrowding and it is worsening every day. We are witnessing, as a result, increasing confrontations among the squatters themselves and also between the squatters and residents of long-standing in the different areas."

You were having certain problems: squatters fighting with squatters and squatters fighting with residents, looking for land.

"It is important for us to appreciate the link between squatting and some of the other problems affecting the quality of life in Trinidad and Tobago today."

I name some of them—

- “1. The level of sanitation in squatting settlements is generally low. Accumulation of garbage, inaccessible to garbage trucks, provide breeding grounds for flies, mosquitoes and other vermin.
2. The absence of infrastructure services: roads, drains, water, electricity, sewerage, in these squatting settlements, now threaten to inflict permanent damage on the environment.
3. Water catchment areas serving some of our main reservoirs, may now be threatened with detrimental consequences to the entire population if the situation is left unchanged.
4. The indiscriminate building of shacks has denuded the hillsides and the increased run-off of surface water is the cause of severe flooding in the low-lying areas.

I specifically refer to the problems we have been experiencing at the Western Main Road, Cocorite, Bournes Road and Barataria, to name a few instances.

5. Major government development projects have been significantly delayed, resulting in substantial increases in cost of these programmes."

**Mr. Wilson:** I thank the Member for Diego Martin Central for giving way. I appreciate his concern about the Joint Trade Union Movement. I would like to ask the Hon. Member to tell us what actions the then Government of the day took in executing the policy which he has enunciated here today. Furthermore, he might wish also to tell us, how his leader proposes to pay the public servant.

**Mr. Valley:** Always tangential. Always going off on some stray road. Never on the issues. No wonder he is facing that problem from the Joint Trade Union Movement. If you want advice anytime, come to me. You will get it. You know that. You are my friend. I consider you a friend. He knows he can come to me anytime. The problem in our country—here we take people with a history of failure and put them to run our Ministry of Finance. What do we expect? I continue Mr. Deputy Speaker. That is one side of the picture. He continues:

"The Government is however, particularly concerned with the social consequences of squatting as they affect both the squatters and the public at large. Perhaps the greatest damage is to the social fabric of the nation, particularly the effects on those of our citizens who were forced to live in these squatter settlements, under conditions that are insanitary and where overcrowding does not allow for some basic privacy within family units. Our health institutions will continue to wilt under the strain if the deteriorating conditions in squatting settlements are not arrested. Government is aware that squatting is a manifestation of the larger housing problem.

#### ADJOURNMENT

**The Minister of Justice and National Security (Hon. Joseph Toney):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is with some relief, I ask that the House do now stand adjourn to March 1, 1991 at 1.30 p.m

**4.30 p.m.**

**Mr. Sudama:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have a motion on the adjournment pending. What I am deeply disturbed about is the tendency of the Government to adjourn this House on Private Members' Day, after only a certain portion of our sitting time has elapsed. It has happened on the last Private Members' Day and,

*Adjournment*

*Friday, February 22, 1991*

therefore, we do not have enough time to debate the issues before this House. I have a motion on the adjournment. I understand it was at your request that we asked for an early adjournment. I am willing to agree to your request but I want to make it absolutely clear that come March 1, 1991, my motion on the adjournment must be taken because we have had a long deferral and I really take serious objection to this.

On days of Public Business, if the Government wishes to have an early sitting, it is quite free to do so, but on Private Members' Day we have a responsibility to the private Members of this House, that our issues are fully discussed and we do not have a curtailment of the time of debate. I want to make that statement very clear.

**Mr. Toney:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, if I could be of some assistance in clarifying this. First of all, the Government does not adjourn the House. The House is adjourned on a motion that is put before the House. All Members can vote either yea or nay.

On the second issue, I had spoken to my friend earlier on and I explained to him, my predicament and he, quite kindly, consented to the adjournment at 4.30 p.m. So I cannot understand his protest at this stage. I agreed with him, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that next Friday he will have his motion on the adjournment.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The Chair records both sides of the discussion and argument.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*House adjourned accordingly.*

*Adjourned at 4.34 p.m.*