

*Leave of Absence**Friday, March 1, 1991***HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES***Friday, March 1, 1991*

The House met at 1.40 p.m.

PRAYERS[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]**LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

Mr. Speaker: The Member for Port-of-Spain North (Mr. Jenson Fox) has been excused from today's sitting.

SPECIAL SELECT COMMITTEE

Mr. Speaker: Some time ago the then Minister of Social Development and Family Services attended the Second Western Hemisphere Conference of Parliamentarians on Population and Development held in Ecuador and one of the decisions taken was to appoint a local committee to liaise with the Inter-American Parliamentary Group on Population and Development.

The following Members will serve on a Special Select Committee of the House of Representatives:

Hon. Gloria Henry

Dr. The Hon. Emanuel Hosein

Hon. Lincoln Myers

Mrs. Gloria Pollard

Mr. Raymond Palackdharrysingh

Mr. Kenneth Valley

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS (ENTERPRISES) COMMITTEE

Mr. Speaker: There are two vacancies in the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee. Dr. Bhoendradatt Tewarie resigned, effective from July 10, 1990; and Mr. Leo Des Vignes passed away on August 1, 1990. Do we have nominations for those Members?

The Minister of National Security (Hon. Joseph Toney): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the vacancies in the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee created by the resignation of Dr. The Hon. B. Tewarie and the untimely demise of

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the Member for Diego Martin Central (Mr. Leo Des Vignes) be filled by the Member for Port-of-Spain North, (Mr Jenson Fox) and the Member for Port-of-Spain South (Mr. Theodore Guerra) respectively.

Seconded by Hon. Jennifer Johnson.

Mr. Speaker: In consequence of those vacancies, the following Members will serve in their places: Mr. Jenson Fox and Mr. Theodore Guerra.

PETITIONS

Edinburgh Dharmic Sabha

The Minister of Food Production and Marine Exploitation (Dr. The Hon. Brinsley Samaroo): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present a petition on behalf of the Edinburgh Dharmic Sabha who are desirous of introducing a private bill in this House for the purpose of the incorporation of the said organization.

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.

Ophthalmological Society

Mr. Patrick Manning (San Fernando East): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present a petition on behalf of the members of the Ophthalmological Society who are desirous of introducing a private bill in this honourable House for the purpose of the incorporation of the organization.

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.

1.50 p.m.

NATIONAL CARNIVAL COMMISSION BILL

[THIRD DAY]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question [February, 8, 1991]

That the bill be now read a second time.

Question again proposed.

Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Education (Mr. Oswald Hem Lee): Mr. Speaker, I rise to make a short contribution in support of this bill which provides for the establishment of a National Carnival Commission in Trinidad and Tobago. Let me state that I find that this bill is a very positive, forward-looking and forward-thinking piece of legislation which was brought to this House and so ably moved by the hon. Minister and Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Speaker, I say that the bill is forward-looking insofar as it seeks to deepen the organizational structure and promotional aspects of carnival, as well as to strengthen the managerial aspects of carnival and, indeed, to make the whole carnival celebration a more efficient and effective money-earning industry in the overall economy in Trinidad and Tobago.

We all know that in the last few years the carnival celebrations have grown tremendously in Trinidad and Tobago. It has become an international phenomenon and indeed an international celebration, when we take into consideration the impact and effect that it has in the international and Caribbean regional community.

Mr. Speaker, this bill seeks to provide the National Carnival Commission with the type of structure that would be required to take control of, and to handle very effectively, the expansion that we have witnessed of the carnival celebrations over the last few years. Indeed, it is incumbent of the Government, monitoring the situation carefully, looking at its growth and development, to put in place these kinds of structures if we wish to continue to impress those who take part in the celebration and, indeed, to further encourage persons who come to Trinidad and Tobago to participate and to witness this type of celebration we have in Trinidad and Tobago.

You would notice that we have placed in the new structure, persons who come from a managerial background, persons with financial expertise, organizational and managerial capabilities, who we have decided to place at the head of the institution in order to guide the new National Carnival Commission in the kind of way we would want to see it go. As I indicated before, the intention is to make this new commission a financially viable instrument in the overall economy of Trinidad and Tobago.

When we look at the objects of the commission—and I read from the bill:

"The objects of the Commission are—

- (a) to make Carnival a viable national cultural, commercial enterprise;

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- (b) to provide the necessary managerial and organizational infrastructure for the efficient and effective presentation and marketing of the cultural products of Carnival;"

Mr. Speaker, these objects are consistent with the overall thrust of the Government through the years. We have always stated that state enterprises and statutory bodies must, indeed, manage their affairs more effectively and in a more efficient manner. Therefore, with this commission we have come up front and stated quite clearly what is required of them and what we expect of them. We have gone so far, in the composition of the commission to draw persons with the necessary capabilities who we hope would best be able to carry out this Government's policy.

When we look at the bill we see the composition of the commission. I quote:

"5. (1) The Commission shall be managed by a Board of Commissioners (hereinafter referred to as 'the Board') which shall consist of nine persons with experience or training in finance, management, government, international trade, law, export-oriented business, commerce, culture..."

It shows clearly, that the emphasis is placed on the management. Emphasis is placed on setting up a Carnival Commission which would best be able to market the carnival as a cultural product. Emphasis is being placed on making carnival a viable and a self-financing enterprise.

Mr. Speaker, over the years I have noticed that one of the successful shows which is put on by the Carnival Commission and, indeed, by the former body, the Carnival Development Committee, is the Calypso Fiesta which takes place at Skinner Park in San Fernando. I have tried to put my hands on some of the figures concerning the receipts of that show. I have been unable to get some of the later figures, but the figures I have been able to get from the Public Accounts Committee indicated that in 1982, the receipt at that particular show was \$180,000. In 1984, it grew to \$300,000 and in 1984, it was at \$346,000. I have no doubt in my mind that today, it might be in the vicinity of half a million dollars. It seems to me that more could be done with respect to that particular show, which is a very popular pre-carnival show.

I suggest that with the kind of marketing people and promotional people that we intend to place in this new Carnival Commission, surely, one way I see us moving with that particular show, would be to go along the way of creating videos and indeed maybe making a film of the particular Calypso Fiesta.

2.00 p.m.

I say this because in the 1960s, those of you who frequented cinemas in those days would remember, that there was this music show that came out of the United States that dealt with the Woodstock experience, when the Americans were pushing rock music. Even later than that, we had the Jamaicans with a Reggae Sunsplash Festival that takes place in Jamaica where they made several movies in order to promote their reggae music. At present we have the Brazilians who, in promoting their Lambada dance, made a full-length movie. Because of the amount of music and the kind of jubilation and joy that is experienced at the Calypso Fiesta that takes place in San Fernando, I see no reason why we cannot maximize the amount of money that we make from such a show by promoting more videos and probably making a film from the presentation, so that the marketing side of this new Carnival Commission would have something to take abroad for West Indians to see and, indeed, others to see, so that it would boost the tourism thrust. It is going to boost calypso acceptance on the international market; it is going to buttress some of the work that is already being done by calypsonians who go abroad to earn a living. People understand music; people look for good music and people tend to follow musical shows.

I have noticed a wide variety of music coming out of this 1991 carnival. For the first time we have had a variety of beats and I will name a few of these beats. For the first time on the calypso scene, we have had the authentic vintage calypso beat; the unadulterated soca as we know it; the cross-over between the soca and the tassa; the straight zouk, the zouk with a little rap; the calypso with the salsa. We find that the calypso presents a total variety of music. So based on the wide variety of music that calypsonians present in one particular season, I feel that the opportunity is now there for us to have a better structure in place in order to market the product. This is why the time is opportune for us with the composition of the National Carnival Commission, with the thrust and the emphasis that is laid in marketing and promotion of the carnival product, to take the product and run with it to make calypso a greater money-earning entity for the calypsonians as well as for the country.

I also think that a National Carnival Commission, as set out in the bill, would assist bandleaders who have already been receiving orders to create mas costumes from various Caribbean islands, London and so on—when a commission is set up that is dealing with marketing and dealing exclusively with carnival. This commission could liaise with international and regional bodies to take orders for

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mas costumes. It can then place these orders with local bandleaders in Trinidad and Tobago.

I see this as creating jobs for our people, as well as developing into a great foreign exchange earning enterprise and I see it as creating jobs on a year-round basis because many of the other places hold their carnival celebrations at a time not consistent with our own. Therefore, when we have set up the National Carnival Commission as outlined here and it becomes effectively operational along the lines we would like it to, I see it acting and liaising with organizations and bodies abroad in order to promote that aspect of developing carnival costumes. I see Trinidad and Tobago emerging as a centre that will be creating costumes for sale abroad. That will create many jobs for our artistes and our craftsmen in Trinidad and Tobago on a year-round basis.

I have absolutely no doubt in lending full support to this bill. One aspect of the bill that I would like us to look at is the explanatory note, which states:

"Finally, the funding of the Commission is to come from moneys appropriated by Parliament for the purpose . . ."

I have no doubt that after a period of four or five years, because of the fact that this carnival is a money-earning enterprise and with the type of managerial personnel we want to put on this commission, they should be able to so manage the National Carnival Commission that it should become self-sufficient. And after a period of five years, we should be able to wean this National Carnival Commission from the Treasury. Because of their expertise and enterprising attitudes, they must earn money to earn their keep. I suggest that after a period of time we have the National Carnival Commission being able to generate its fund to continue and run its own business rather than be tied to the Treasury.

2.10 p.m.

I say so because all of us know that carnival is a money-generating festival, it creates many jobs, a lot of income, a lot of cash flow. Once it is managed effectively and properly, any carnival commission that is worth its salt, would be able to so structure itself and its finances that it would be able to make the necessary funds.

With these few remarks, I lend my support to the bill and indicate that I have no doubt that Members on either side of this House would indeed, support this

legislation, as it is a forward-thinking piece of legislation. It deals with creating a commission that would fine-tune carnival for the overall good of carnival and for Trinidad and Tobago. Thank you.

Mr. Eden Shand (*St. Ann's West*): Mr. Speaker, from time to time in this hon. Chamber, matters are brought before us for debate, which are of such a nature that Members are often freed of the shackles of partisan politics and are allowed to exercise their consciences in their contributions and in their final voting patterns under the debate. One such example of a conscience subject, is the question of the death penalty where Members are not expected to toe a given party line. It being such a very, very deeply felt and often, a very personally approached subject. It is also a very sacred subject, having to do with the taking away of life which we did not bring forth.

A similar heavy subject which I think qualifies for conscience voting, is the question of culture in its broadest terms. Culture being defined as the sum total of ways of life: thought and action, behaviour, beliefs, customs and the values underlying them—a very heavy subject area, if ever there was one. Normally, when matters of this kind are brought to the House for conscience debate, it is usually in the form of a motion, not in the form of a Government bill, where it is very important to have a certain alignment of votes to have the bill passed so that it may go to the other place.

Today, we are debating a bill, that though it may seem simple on the surface of things—the regulation and the commercialization of the mas—it really is underpinned by the most serious cultural considerations. For one moment during the course of the debate over the last few weeks, I was forming the impression that it indeed, was a free-for-all when I heard my colleague, the Member for Baratavia/San Juan and my colleague for Port of Spain North, actually raising some serious misgivings and reservations about the bill. When I queried them, I discovered that they had not had an opportunity, via the caucus—one not having been held—to give vent to their feelings.

I must admit that I have had the benefit of a properly convened caucus of my party to discuss the bill. At this caucus I raised certain reservations and misgivings which were politely listened to. One of the misgivings I had, which I probably did not utter very clearly at the time, was the pity that we were caucusing the bill, it having already been introduced in Parliament and two days of debate having already ensued. It occurred to me during the caucus and thereafter, that there were

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some larger problems with the bill which did not have to do with individual clauses, with which we were concerned at the time. Maybe it would have been more opportune and more advisable to discuss the merits and demerits of the introduction of the bill instead of the details of the bill.

What I propose to do today, is to make some constructive comments on this matter. I would like to share with the House, some of the comments which I shared in caucus with my colleagues. I would also like to add some further thoughts I have had since we met, because it is my view that in a question of great national interest, it is never too late to make a constructive comment. In making these constructive comments, I assure my colleagues, through you, that if I appear to be critical, it is not that I am not a good partyman, it is not that I love my party less, but I love my country and its culture more.

Reference has been made by other speakers to the manifesto pledge of the National Alliance for Reconstruction, which refer to the formation and bringing into being of a National Commission for Culture, another NCC. I am told that there is on the drawing board now, a revision of that name, so as not to have yet another NCC in our midst, and that a prospective title for such a commission would be the Trinidad and Tobago Cultural Commission.

I would like to add my concern that this legislation to establish this commission, has not yet been brought forward to the House and that the bill before us is being presented and debated before legislation to create the commission for culture has been brought here. There are serious problems that will flow from putting the cart before the horse. A basic philosophical problem, of course, is that we are debating here, the formation of a National Carnival Commission, before the umbrella organization that is to set the stage and set the policy framework, within which a Carnival Commission can operate, has had the chance to do this.

2.20 p.m.

So the National Carnival Commission, actually, if it becomes a body politic, will be operating in a policy vacuum which reduces what we are doing today, to mere adhocism—a practice which is not to be encouraged. But there are specific problems that arise from putting the cart before the horse. One is that this bill will be putting into law a direct linkage between carnival commissioners and the Minister responsible for carnival. If it is envisaged, as I think it is, that the Trinidad and Tobago Cultural Commission will be in place at some time in the future,

we will have the awkward situation of a body that ought to be subordinate to it with a direct linkage, by law, to the Minister. Now there are ways of getting around this by putting provisos in the present bill but this really is an untidy way of going about things.

Another practical problem will be this—and you may call it a problem of semantics. When we establish a National Carnival Commission, we will have gentlemen who will be referred to as commissioners and when we establish the Trinidad and Tobago Cultural Commission, we will also have gentlemen who will be referred to as commissioners. We will have commissioners subordinate to commissioners. *[Interruption]* We are confused but we are trying to deal with our confusion in a practical, constructive way.

Culture is a very, very—*[Interruption]* the Member knows that culture is a very, very intricate, complex phenomenon, especially in plural societies like our own. I do not, for one moment envy the Minister responsible for culture her task in administering from a government's position, the cultural affairs of this country. It is fraught with difficulty, but we have to face the difficulties as though they are challenges, surmount them and move on.

A third practical difficulty that will arise if the cart goes before the horse—as it is now being done—and if the structure of the cart remains in tact, the Minister will be appointing commissioners. When in fact—and to take politics out of the whole thing—it should be more properly done by the larger Trinidad and Tobago Cultural Commission which, I understand, from the original draftings of such a body those commissioners were going to be appointed by the President. If the horse were before the cart, we could have eliminated in one fell swoop, all the criticisms of political “hackism” that have been made by my parliamentary colleagues on the Opposition benches.

You see, what I am basically doing is making a plea for a reconsideration of passing this bill which, in itself, may not be wrong or bad, but passing it before the other one. I recall that in last week's session—Private Members' Day—which unfortunately, I had a commitment that kept me away from the House and I could not inform you, Mr. Speaker—I understand in the proceedings on that day the Member for Tobago West made an excellent point in dealing with the submission from the Member for Oropouche. He was concerned in his Private Member's motion about the implementation of the Squatters Regularization Act. The Minister for Settlements and Public Utilities—I am told from what I have read

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from the reports—rightly corrected that approach, and informed the House that the Act was going to be repealed to be replaced by a more comprehensive, all-embracing Act that deals with the question of squatter regularization. In other words, she rightly condemned the piecemeal approach and favoured the comprehensive approach.

I think we must be consistent in our approaches and I submit that it would be better to have the larger comprehensive legislation in place, legislation that gives life and flesh to a cultural council which sketches the policy framework in all aspects of culture including the mas, then put into place the subordinate body, stripped of its title “commission” and probably called a “committee”—National Carnival Committee—then let that body operate within the policy framework that the Trinidad and Tobago Cultural Commission will no doubt supply.

Also, during the course of this debate, carnival was correctly defended by the Member for St. Ann's East, as a cultural phenomenon that is open to all ethnic persuasions. This, we know to be a fact. He made this remark in response to certain comments from the Member for Naparima who felt that there was discrimination in the kind of support various cultural activities get. In agreeing with the Member for St. Ann's East that carnival is open to all ethnic persuasions, one must also acknowledge at the same time the concern of the Member for Naparima who, no doubt, is perturbed by the fact that in spite of this openness to all, there is not a single member of the existing National Carnival Commission of East Indian persuasion. So while we talk about openness for all, we must also put it—

Mr. Palackdharrysingh: On a point of order. I think the Member is taking what I said too far, when he says that is one of my concerns. I did not say that and it has never been my concern. I think that has gone a bit too far and it has implications. I wish the Member to take that statement away from me. I have not made that statement and he cannot attribute that to me.

Mr. Shand: Mr. Speaker, I apologize to the hon. Member if he was under the impression that I was attributing that statement to him. I was not doing so at all.

Mrs. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, I just want to clarify for this honourable House that the statement just made by the hon Member for St. Ann's West is untrue.

2.30 p.m.

Mr. Shand: I am grateful to the hon. Minister for correcting me and to complete the correction I would sit and await the name that would make my statement untrue. I do wish to complete my record but maybe I will get that name at some other time. To continue, and what I am doing is, I am making my comment based on the comments of other people during the course of this debate. One of the causes for concern was clause 12 (3) which states that no Commissioner or Officer shall be subject to the discretion and powers of the Auditor General.

Having had caucus with my colleagues, this clause does not bother me, because firstly, the commission itself is properly subject to the scrutiny of the Auditor General and I am told by the hon. Minister that there is ample precedent for such a clause in other organizations, commissions and boards of the kind we are dealing with here today. I believe that the Minister, in winding up, will present these precedents to the House for the—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Toney: Could I ask if the hon. Member thinks that it is proper that he should discuss what took place in a caucus of his party?

Mr. Shand: In order not to embarrass my colleague, I would not answer the question. I was satisfied in that caucus that there is no cause for concern over that clause. I am sure that my colleagues who have uttered concern would be comforted when they hear the precedent that the Minister would be presenting and I presume that the precedent would be worded in a very similar fashion as this particular clause is worded.

I can understand the concern of some of my colleagues about whether commissioners should be subject to audit or not, because when one scrutinizes the list of the present commissioners one would notice that three of them were involved in the football massive fiasco about which questions and eyebrows have been raised.

One other item in the bill which caused some concern was the question of locating branch offices abroad. I think it is clause 16:

- "(1) The Commission shall have its Principal Office in Trinidad and Tobago.
- (2) The Commission may establish branches in or outside of Trinidad and Tobago."

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When I read those clauses, I could not help but remember the old Tourist Board that the present Government inherited from the previous Government; a Tourist Board that had its principal office in Trinidad and Tobago and branches in strategic cities all over the world. I could not help but remember. *[Interruption]* Mr. Speaker, would you protect me from these cross-talks.

Mr. Speaker: Do not distract the Member.

Mr. Shand: I was saying that we would do well and even the Attorney General would do well to remember the situation in which we found ourselves when we inherited this Tourist Board. It was a recipe for wastage of public funds and I remember when the Minister of Industry and Enterprise completed his tour of branches of the Tourist Board throughout the world and returned to Trinidad and Tobago, his basic recommendation was “close them down” which is what happened because the Tourist Board was a den of PNM party hacks at home and abroad. We have to look now at whether we are making the same error by setting up a similar organization to waste public funds.

Finally, by way of reference to comments from other speakers in this great debate, the question was raised about the decency or otherwise of putting into the law a quorum of five, when six of the commissioners are appointed by the Minister. Well, my point of view on this matter is that if the horse goes before the cart, and politics is eliminated from the appointment of commissioners in a cultural activity, then the question of decency of number of quorum does not arise at all.

Now, I come to my own additional comments on this bill. My first comment has to do with clause 5, the composition of the commission:

"(1) The Commission shall be managed by a Board of Commissioners (hereinafter referred to as ‘the Board’) which shall consist of nine persons preferably with experience or training in finance, management, government, international trade, law, export-oriented business, commerce, culture or the arts..."

My own view is that with the composition of this board—if it is to be drawn from people of that range and if the bill is to be literally implemented and applied—we would have ended up with a board of commissioners that is too heavy to the non-cultural side. I think there is need for more balance, and perhaps at the committee stage, we can reword that particular clause to give more balance to the composition of the commission. If it is the general will that the commission be deliberately weighted in this way, then one might draw the unfortunate conclusion

that artistes are not desired at the highest policy-making and implementation bodies to do with culture in this country.

I believe that artistes, in spite of their idiosyncracies, must be properly represented at that level, and once they are represented within a framework of balance I am sure we can get the best out of them and, indeed, out of the non-artistic types.

Another clause that concerns me has to do with the termination of commissioners. Subclause (2) states:

"A Commissioner appointed under subsection (1) shall serve for a period of two years, but his appointment may be terminated by the Minister:

- (a) where the Association that nominated him requests in writing that the Minister revoke the appointment and appoint someone else; or
- (b) where the Commissioner resigns."

2.40 p.m.

In other words, Mr. Speaker, there is no provision in this law for whoever appoints the Commissioner to unilaterally terminate that appointment for cause. The law only provides for if the body that nominated him revokes his nomination or if the Commissioner resigns. So that the six appointments of the Minister will serve their two years, "come hell or high water", no matter what they do.

I believe that additional power should be given to whomsoever appoints commissioners to revoke those appointments for cause because we may end up with a situation, God forbid, but let us assume that the PNM governs this country again and they saddle the incoming government for two years with their own commissioners who may or may not be savoury. The minister of the day cannot revoke their appointments. I think the principle of not saddling one administration with the political appointments of another must be maintained.

Mr. Speaker, I now come to perhaps my most basic problem with the bill, and it does not have to do with any individual clauses, though some of the individual clauses are cause for concern. My basic problem with this bill is the frightening flavour of totalitarianism that permeates it. In this bill one cannot help but discern the very heavy hand of the state in the running of a cultural activity.

Only the day before yesterday, the Chairman of the Heads of Governments Conference of Caricom and the Prime Minister of Jamaica, the Right Honourable

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Michael Manley, made a very important point about commanding things in the context of the regional economic conference. He was referring to commanding the economy and he acknowledged to his audience that it was an error. He had been down the road of trying to command an economy before as a government, as a state, and he has acknowledged for all to hear that this question of command of the economy is a wrong avenue to pursue.

If that is a wrong avenue to pursue in terms of the economy, it is even more wrong in terms of culture. For whereas the economy has to be directed in Third World countries to some extent and shaped by the activities of the state, no such justification can be made for culture. For the heavy hand of the state in cultural affairs amounts to social engineering of the most despicable kind. Culture belongs to the people. Culture is spontaneous. It is a way of life. It is what we are. We must be allowed to blossom in whatever cultural path or whatever cultural persuasion that we have come from, and the state must not put its heavy hand on such blooming. Let the cultures bloom, not with the heavy administrative hand of the state, but the facilitating hands of the state. This is my view.

Mr. Speaker, what is also bothering me in total terms about the introduction of the bill is a kind of confusion, a confusion not only in my mind but I am sure, in the minds of the Opposition and even in the minds of some of my colleagues. And what is this confusion? On the one hand, included in the present Regional Economic Conference we are talking about divestment of state enterprises. We are acknowledging that the state must not involve itself in the productive activity of a country or economy where the private sector can do it. This great party to which I belong has adopted a policy of divestment of state enterprises. *[Interruption]* I do not believe anywhere in this document you will find the word "privatization", and I defy the Member there to point out the word "privatization" in this document. We are talking about divestment of state enterprises.

Why does one want to divest state enterprises? One wants to divest state enterprises because state enterprises basically go bust. They do not work. They lose money. That is the basic reason. You divest state enterprises because you do not want them to be a burden on the taxpayer. There are certain state enterprises in key social service and public service sectors that you do not divest for reasons that are both economic and political but, by and large, the divestment of state enterprises that are a drain on the taxpayer is a good policy.

Mr. Ramnath: Would you give way to a question? Are you suggesting that we should privatize the oil industry although it is making a profit?

Mr. Shand: No, I am not suggesting that for a number of reasons. One reason is that this is one of the strategic industries which fall under my category that for certain economic and political reasons you would not divest.

Mr. Panday: Security as well.

Mr. Shand: Yes, I said that. Thank you, Member for Couva North.

Moreover, we will not divest it because it is my view that we have in Trinidad and Tobago, some of the finest professionals in oil technology, drilling, refining, *et cetera*, in the world. If we had our wits about us, the export of that kind of expertise to get foreign exchange coming back to this country would be a prime objective for organization. I have met Trinidadians working in the oil industry all over the world, Mr. Speaker, in the very highest positions, and you know I am a well-travelled man.

To come back to the bill before us, the policy basically has to do with not wasting money. State enterprises by and large waste money, and they waste money for a number of reasons. They lose money for a number of reasons. I do not want to go into the chronicle or the catalogue of the reasons state enterprises lose money, but one of the reasons is indeed what can be referred to as party-hack management. State enterprises lend themselves to party-hack management, square pegs in round holes. We are creating a state enterprise which might lend itself to party-hack management and corruption.

I am a little confused. On the one hand, we are pursuing this policy of divestment, and on the other hand we are creating a state enterprise. For make no mistake, this is what this is. You may call it National Carnival Commission, but you might as well call it National Carnival Company Limited for the objects are that of any limited company:

- “(a) to make Carnival a viable national cultural commercial enterprise;
- (b) to provide the necessary managerial and organizational infrastructure for the efficient and effective presentation and marketing of the cultural products of the festival.”

Efficient presentation and marketing. One of the worst things that a state enterprise does is market or trade. State enterprises do not know how to market or

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trade. Why? Because the marketer/operator or the trader has security of tenure and his job does not depend on clinching the deal, as in the private sector. There are exceptions to the general rule of course, Mr. Speaker, but I am talking about the total picture. By and large, state enterprises do not make money, and I do not think we should go into creating a new one when this activity is more suited to be operated by private individuals and organizations under the general direction and management and policy direction of the state.

I am also confused by conflicting signals that have been sent. On the one hand, if one is to take the experience of last carnival seriously, we have heard pronouncements from the highest levels of the National Carnival Commission, which levels I presume have the blessing of the political directorate. On the one hand we hear talk about the policy of letting the people run their thing with assistance from a centralized government agency, a policy of divestment of carnival, the functioning of carnival to the specialized bodies that participate in the carnival.

I remember hearing the Chairman of the National Carnival Commission, as it is called now anyway, though it is not a body incorporate, in controversy with the National Carnival Bandleaders' Association, announce, "Run the thing. This is what our policy is, for you to run the thing eventually. We are going to get out of this gradually, so that the people can run carnival." On the one hand, I hear this, and on the other, I see this, which is a reversal of what I hear. So I am confused. I want to be clear in my mind that we are sure of what we are doing, we are sure of where we are going, and I want to know that we are not making a serious mistake.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I would like more opportunity for this bill to be discussed within the context of the larger cultural commission that is supposed to be coming to the House. I know there were problems with the establishment of the Trinidad and Tobago Cultural Commission. I know these problems had nothing to do with the efficiency or otherwise of the Minister. I know there has been serious effort by the professionals of that Ministry and, indeed, by the Minister himself to formulate a comprehensive cultural development policy for this country, and I know that up to today—and we are in the fifth year of an administration—that policy has not been formulated. I do not blame the Minister, but I think it is important that it be formulated and that the organs that will be implementing this policy be created, especially the umbrella organization, before we pass this bill. I am appealing for an opportunity for us to look at the bill within that larger context of policy and the establishment of a Trinidad and Tobago Cultural Commission.

2.55 p.m.

I would not ask for the withdrawal of the bill but I should like to endorse the suggestion made by the Member for Couva South, that the bill be placed before a Joint Select Committee of both Houses so that Members can choose whether to keep the bill with amendments or whether to press for the introduction of the larger legislation. In my view, there is no urgency for this bill to be rushed through today. If we do that, we might very well end up in a situation—if I may borrow the words of the hon. Member for St. Ann's East—where we would be making track for agouti to run on.

Thank you very much.

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Justice and National Security (Hon. Joseph Toney): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this House do now adjourn to Friday, March 8, 1991 at 1.30 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Before the question is put, there are three motions on the adjournment. The first and third motions are by the Member for San Fernando East and the second one is by the Member for Oropouche.

The Member for San Fernando East desires to proceed with motion No. 3, so that motion No. 3 will take the place of motion No. 1 and motion No. 1 will take the place of motion No. 3. Proceed please.

**Farmers
(Bon Air West)**

Mr. Patrick Manning (*San Fernando East*): Mr. Speaker, I rise to move a motion on the adjournment, involving the plight of farmers at Bon Air West.

According to my records and information, there are 47 farmers on approximately 106 acres of land at Bon Air West. Each farmer occupies between one and a half to 15-acre plots—the plots vary in size—and they grow such crops as pigeon peas, cassava, ochroe, sweet pepper, tomato, melongene, dasheen, caraille, bodi and other vegetables. These farmers are operating on lands which formerly belonged to Orange Grove Sugar Estates Limited and some of them are descendants of persons who had operated at Orange Grove and who subsequently had been squatting on these lands which belong to the state.

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The Town and Country Planning Division apparently has zoned these lands for housing purposes and, therefore, the question of the relocation of the farmers has arisen. On November 16, 1990, the National Housing Authority gave notices to the various farmers to quit the site. A crop count was done on December 11, 1990. In other words, they were served notice to quit within one month and during that period a crop count was done to identify the cost that will be associated with their giving up the produce that is now on the land.

The problem arises where these farmers who operate at Bon Air West, are being asked to relocate to a site at Bon Air East, but that site is not free of all encumbrances. There are farmers who are squatting on the lands at Bon Air East and the attempt to relocate farmers from Bon Air West unto lands that are occupied by other persons has given rise to a very serious and contentious relationship between those farmers who now exist there and those whom the National Housing Authority are seeking to relocate. In fact, the situation is potentially so serious that the farmers thought that it was a subject that was worthy of the consideration of this honourable House.

Mr. Speaker, the farmers argue that those lands are not immediately needed for housing purposes. Indeed, they argue that on the eastern side of the Lopinot Road there are about 400 acres of land north of the NUGFW project which are available for housing purposes, if it is the wish of the state to embark upon a housing project.

More than that, the farmers argue that the lands on which they now live, and from which they now operate, constitute good agricultural lands and in the context of the infrastructural problems that confront agriculture in this country—the problems of access roads and water supply—they hastened to point out that there is a spring on this particular site which makes it very attractive indeed for agricultural pursuits. Furthermore, there is proper access to the site and it has the distinction of having a proper water supply, which is very rare indeed. Therefore, in circumstances where that kind of situation exists, the farmers are of the view—and the view is one that I think is worthy of consideration by the state—that even if the lands were zoned for housing, that the zoning ought to be the subject of some kind of re-assessment and in the meantime advantage should be taken of available lands nearby, if it is the Government's wish to pursue its housing policy.

I make this case on behalf of those farmers—a case to which I subscribe—and I am asking the Minister involved and, indeed, the hon. Minister of Planning, who

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unfortunately is not with us this afternoon, to have a second look at the purpose for which these lands have been zoned, and to see whether, in the context of the agricultural problems of the country and the fact that farmers already exist on the lands, which have proper access and a proper water supply, whether the use to which those lands ought to be put ought not to be the subject of a review.

More than that, I am asking the hon. Minister whether steps could not be taken to desist from seeking to deal with this matter in a manner that can lead to conflict between brother and brother.

Thank you.

3.05 p.m.

The Minister of Settlements and Public Utilities (Hon. Pamela Nicholson):

Mr. Speaker, the motion brought by the representative for San Fernando East, with respect to the Bon Air West farmers who have been threatened with eviction by the authority, I listened to him and I think that his discourse lacks substance. It is not really a matter of urgent public business. I say this against the background that he was a part of the Government in 1978 which purchased a 1,140-acre parcel of land at Bon Air from Home Construction Limited through an intermediary, International Companies Limited. As part of this agreement, Home Construction Company did compensate 43 squatting farmers who were on these lands. The representative for San Fernando East was a party to this. I want to stress that. The farmers who were squatting on the lands were compensated by the Government at the time.

When I came into the Ministry of Settlements and Public Utilities, we had a situation where Bon Air West was one of the sites chosen from the project 100 programme of the Government of the National Alliance for Reconstruction. The consultants were acquired in July, 1987 to plan, design and implement the project under the same area of which I am speaking. In September, 1987, the consultants recommended the development of Bon Air West for housing with the relocation of the squatting farmers to Bon Air East and Garden Village, which lands would be retained for agricultural purposes. Besides that, you had the other arguments which the representatives raised that the Town and Country Planning had allocated that total area, both Bon Air East and West and Garden Village for residential purposes. But when our consultants went in and saw the number of farmers squatting in the area, the recommendation was that we shift them from Bon Air West to Bon Air East and Garden Village.

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Over the three-year period—this is the fourth year I am in the Ministry, previous to that, the Minister was the representative for St. Augustine—discussions were taking place with the farmers. When I went into the Ministry, I must say that the farmers were very co-operative in our discourse. We also brought the Ministry of Food Production into the discussion because we wanted to analyze it and do it in a proper fashion. The farmers were co-operative until a grouping called Food Farmers or something, joined the team and there is where the contention began. But we had no problems with the real farmers who were on the land. I want to stress that. We had no problems with the *bona fide* farmers on the land until a foreign grouping joined the team. I believe they were sent by the Member for San Fernando East. I think they are the members of the National Foodcrop Farmers Association. I was very, very co-operative with them.

Besides the several meetings they had with the National Housing Authority, I had a number of meetings with them. I was very, very co-operative, but they were unco-operative, in that they were not giving way to anything, while, as I said, previously, they were. However, based on what I met in the Ministry and the work that had already been done, our work continued for the building of homes. When I went into that area over 820 people were paying their moneys for building lots at Bon Air West. As a matter of fact, it is something like 1,000 persons who are paying moneys on that. With the IADB, the programme continued and all our works have been done. That is one of the sample sites. Bon Air West, Harmony Hall and Couva North are the three sample sites. As a matter of fact, the development in those areas should have already started, but because we had a small problem at the Attorney General's Office, the development works have not been started in those areas. Bon Air West is the number one area. Because of the issues raised by the farmers, I again met with the Minister of Food Production and, with the farmers, and we have come up with a number of alternatives:

- (i) North of the Bon Air lands, 150 acres.
- (ii) Wallerfield, in the Cumuto area, 200 acres.
- (iii) Wallerfield, north of Smith Lands in the heights of Aripo, 120 acres.

We have thrown out all these alternatives. That is to tell you the length to which we are going because we are very concerned about our food farmers. Mr. Speaker, there has been no co-operation.

The farmers complained that the lands at the alternative sites were inferior in quality to those at Bon Air West, but the Ministry of Food Production argues that

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the quality of the lands north of Bon Air West are inferior and that you have sufficient lands of comparable levels in that area, and that the farmers can be removed. I think that we have done everything in our power, I am at the end of it right now—not the term, because I will be back here. I am not like the Member for Naparima. He will not be back here. I am saying that we have done everything in our power to co-operate with the farmers, and I am sure if they are not interfered with, they will co-operate and we will be serving two purposes. Firstly, the farmers will be getting more lands because on the Bon Air East situation we already have plans done and everything prepared. They would not have been getting only a half acre. It was really designed in half acre blocks but they would have been getting one acre, according to the size.

Mr. Manning: I thank the Minister for giving way. Would the hon. Minister be kind enough to respond to the allegation that there are farmers on the Bon Air East lands at this time and the attempt to relocate Bon Air West farmers to Bon Air East has led to a confrontational situation?

3.15 p.m.

Miss Nicholson: I understand what you are saying. The point I was trying to make is that I told you about alternative sites. We have some farmers who are not on all the lands in Bon Air East and Garden Village, and the lands do not belong to them. They are on certain acres of land but there are other acres of land available. We are saying what lands are available should be given to those farmers. I visited these sites and there were very few serious farmers in that area. I could justify my arguments anywhere. I went at various times—in the rainy season and in the dry season. The point I was trying to make is that we have some acres of land in Bon Air East and Garden Village and we also have 150 acres north of that area. The Ministry of Food Production is arguing that those lands are of the same quality as the agricultural lands.

As I said earlier, we would be serving two purposes: One, we would be shifting the farmers and they would be able to get the amount of acreage they need; and two, we would be resolving the same settlements programme that we wish to have resolved. I think that we are on the correct road. I thank you for raising the issue and I hope after these discussions, the points are made clear and we would not be interfered with anymore and progress can go on with the Government's work.

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Mr. Manning: Before the Minister takes her seat, Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the Minister or some appropriate person on the Government side could give the assurance that the point made by the farmers could be looked into. That is, that the site is particularly good for agricultural purposes having as it does, an adequate supply of water and proper access which makes it one of the prime sites in the area. In those circumstances, I wonder if the Ministry of Planning is prepared to review the land use to which that particular site has been allocated.

Miss Nicholson: Mr. Speaker, I am the most appropriate person. I have answered and that is the answer. The Government's work goes on because we have an alternative area of agricultural lands where the people can go and they will have their water and everything, because that is a developed area. Therefore, we do not want any disturbance anymore from the Member for San Fernando East or anyone else. Let the people's business go on. Thank you.

Point Fortin Junior Secondary School

Mr. Trevor Sudama (*Oropouche*): Mr. Speaker, although this matter has been pending for quite some time, I do not propose to be long this afternoon. I was invited by the Parent Teachers' Association of the Point Fortin Junior Secondary School to discuss a problem with them. I met with them on February 6, 1991.

I regard the whole of Trinidad and Tobago as my constituency and wherever I am invited to discuss a problem, to look after the people's business, I find the time to go there. It is in that context I went to Point Fortin. When I got there, if it was not obvious to me before hand, it was then I realized, that Point Fortin had no representative. Therefore, I promised to raise the matter in Parliament with respect to the long-standing problem of the vacancies which exist at the Point Fortin Junior Secondary School. This matter has been raised time and again with the Ministry of Education by the Parent Teacher's Association both verbally and in writing. As a result of the lack of response by the Ministry of Education—that is what they told me—they were driven to take protest action and did so by organizing a boycott of classes from January 28, of this year.

I am informed that there are 16 vacancies that had existed at the Point Fortin Junior Secondary School. These vacancies have existed for over two years and when an approach was made to have this matter resolved, and I understand discussions were held with the Member for Point Fortin, the Member for Point Fortin—

Mr. Wilson: On a point of order. No such discussions were held with the Member for Point Fortin. I want to further say that it is being rumoured in Point Fortin that I was invited to the meeting to which the Member for Oropouche went. I want to say that I was never invited to that meeting.

Mr. Sudama: I am merely reporting what was told to me at the meeting: that when this matter was raised the PTA formed a delegation which went to the Member for Point Fortin as the Minister of Finance and he said that funds were not available. That I could not understand because these vacancies ought to have been provided for in recurrent expenditure of the Government. So that was a bit difficult to understand. How is it that you frame a budget and yet you do not make provision for recurrent expenditure since these vacancies have been existing for two years now?

Secondly, they were told by the Ministry of Education that there were no qualified teachers available to fill these vacancies. This again, I cannot understand in a situation where you have a high degree of unemployment among graduates of the University of the West Indies and other people from technical institutions and so on, and yet we are told that no qualified teachers are available to fill these vacancies.

The consequence was that you had many idle students around because there were no teachers to teach the classes in a number of these subjects. I would indicate the subjects. In the morning shift, no teachers; the vacancies existed in music, art and craft, Spanish, and physical education. In general science there were two vacancies. In the afternoon shift, there were two vacancies in social studies, industrial arts, and agricultural science, metal work and technical drawing. This is what was reported to me.

As a result of these numerous vacancies what you had was a situation where many students were idle for a large portion of the day. This was creating a great problem for discipline in the school itself where you had a number of students, who, because of the lack of teachers, were unsupervised.

3.25 p.m.

I am told that one of the other consequence was, because of the lack of supervision, the students were damaging furniture and other equipment in the school. A second consequence, was that the teachers who were actually employed had to carry a very heavy burden and some of them had to look after these classes, for which there were no teachers. In a situation where their emoluments cannot be

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dealt with, you will understand the reluctance on the part of these teachers to take on additional work in the school. The parents complained that they suffered a great deal of anxiety, simply because they were not sure what the children were doing; whether, in fact, they were attending school or not. One report was that they left school and were seen idling all over Point Fortin in the vicinity of the school.

Furthermore, the parents have complained that the 14-Plus Examinations are due soon and these students have not had a teacher for years. The questions really are: will these students be in a position to attempt the 14-plus Examination? What would be their fate when they do attempt these examinations? Can they write these examinations satisfactorily? What would happen after the 14-plus Examinations if these students are not successful? The parents in that school are very concerned about the lack of this inability of the Government to fill these vacancies.

Since this motion was filed towards the end of the week on February 6, 1991, two teachers were appointed. It took the filing of a motion in Parliament for debate on the adjournment. Two teachers were appointed on February 17, 1991. Later on, three more teachers were promised in that school and they were supposed to take up duties on February 25, 1991. So it appears that my trip to Point Fortin, at the request of the Parent Teachers' Association of the Point Fortin Junior Secondary School, seemed to have had some results. But the three teachers who were promised on February 25, 1991 have not shown up. So that of the 16 vacancies to date, only two vacancies have been filled and the parents are still concerned about the inadequacy of teachers at the Point Fortin Junior Secondary School. They are determined to carry on their protest and to highlight this matter until such time as the Ministry acts effectively in filling all the vacancies which exist at this school.

I hope, as a result of my intervention; as a result of a protest action by the parents themselves and the students; as a result of giving the matter some much needed publicity, that we will at long last have some positive action on the part of the Ministry of Education. Thank you.

The Minister of Education (Hon. Gloria Henry): Mr. Speaker, I would like to state that the publicity given and the intervention of the Member for Oropouche, had no effect on the filling of vacancies in the Point Fortin Junior Secondary School. The Ministry has been working on the question of vacancies in schools in

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rural areas all through the years and at no time, since the beginning of this school year, has there been 16 vacancies in the Point Fortin Junior Secondary School.

At the beginning of this term, the Ministry of Education identified 11 vacancies at the Point Fortin Junior Secondary School. Officials from the Ministry had, in fact, been having discussions with the PTA since the first week in December. The Ministry officials have met with the PTA on two subsequent occasions.

I have been told that much of the disorder at present, had been caused by political interference in the PTA which is run by a little clique, headed by one Mr. Obika of the NJAC, who had invited the Member for Oropouche and the PNM Mayor of Point Fortin, Mr. Larry Achong to participate in their activities. I have also been told that the Member for Point Fortin has not been invited to their meetings, but at the meetings, the chairman, Mr. Obika, has said, "The Member of Parliament has been invited and he has not responded," which happens to be quite untrue.

Moreover, in order to advertise these PTA meetings, vehicles belonging to the Borough of Point Fortin have been used to advertise these meetings for the Point Fortin Junior Secondary School. That is largely a political activity that does not have any direct bearing on the vacancies which exist in the Point Fortin Junior Secondary School.

Since the beginning of the term, the Ministry has filled four vacancies, one in integrated science; one in agricultural science; one in technical drawing and one in Spanish. Two persons have been interviewed for music and they have refused to serve in Point Fortin. One of the problems which we have had with filling the vacancies in a school such as Point Fortin, is that qualified persons on interview, have refused to go to schools in Point Fortin.

Mr. Sudama: Why?

Mrs. Henry: Because it is too far.

The Teaching Service Commission has given the Ministry of Education the assurance that the following vacancies would be filled before the end of this term: one in metal work; one in art and craft; one in integrated science; one in physical education and one in social studies. In order to fill the vacancies in secondary

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schools in rural areas such as Point Fortin, Cedros, Mayaro and Toco, the Ministry has employed a strategy of advertising for applicants who are interested in taking up appointments in these districts. Thank you.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 3.35 p.m.