

*Leave of Absence*

*Friday, May 3, 1991*

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

*Friday, May 3, 1991.*

The House met at 1.45 p.m.

**PRAYERS**

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

**LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

**Mr. Speaker:** The following Members have been granted leave of absence from today's sitting: the hon. Prime Minister (Hon. A.N.R. Robinson), the Member for Nariva (Hon. Dr. Brinsley Samaroo), and the Member for Princes Town (Hon. Jennifer Johnson).

**PETITIONS**

**General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous**

**The Minister of Justice and National Security (Hon. Joseph Toney):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present a petition on behalf of the members of the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous of Trinidad and Tobago, of 81-82 Main Road, Montrose, Chaguanas, who are desirous of being incorporated by an Act of Parliament.

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.

**Global Encounter Ministries**

**The Minister of Justice and National Security (Hon. Joseph Toney):** Mr. Speaker, I have the pleasure to present a petition on behalf of the members of the Global Encounter Ministries of the Corner of Sucrier Terrace and Oilbird Lane, Maloney Gardens, D'Abadie for incorporation by an Act of Parliament.

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.

**PAPERS LAID**

1. The Prison (Amdt.) Rules, 1991. [*The Minister of Justice and National Security (Hon. Joseph Toney)*]
2. The Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic Regulations, 1991. [*The Minister of Works, Infrastructure and Decentralization (Hon. Winston Dookeran)*]

**ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS**

**T&TEC  
(Maintenance)**

*The following question stood on the Order Paper in the name of Mr. Ken Valley (Diego Martin Central):*

- 20.** (a) Would the hon. Minister of Settlements and Public Utilities kindly state whether she is aware of the fact that the Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission (T&TEC) is restrained from commencing, continuing and/or completing urgently required scheduled maintenance work because of the lack of funds?
- (b) Would the hon. Minister advise this House of the estimated cost of bringing all T&TEC plant and equipment to a state of repair acceptable to the Commission?

**Mr. Kenneth Valley (Diego Martin Central):** Mr. Speaker, with your permission, I should like to withdraw question No. 20 on the Order Paper.

*Question, by leave, withdrawn.*

**Telephone Services  
(Extension)**

**22. Mr. Raymond Palackdharrysingh (Naparima)** asked the Minister of Settlements and Public Utilities:

Would the hon. Minister state whether the extension of telephone service will be made available to the residents of the villages of Borde Narve and St. John's via Ciperio Road in the constituency of Naparima in 1991?

**The Minister of Settlements and Public Utilities (Hon. Pamela Nicholson):** Mr. Speaker, the Telecommunications Services of Trinidad and Tobago Limited is not in a position to provide an extension of telephone services to residents of the villages of Borde Narve and St. John's via Ciperio Road in the constituency of Naparima this year.

The Board of Telecommunications Services of Trinidad and Tobago Limited has approved a five-year development programme aimed at expanding the public

network to satisfy the capability to service 90 per cent of the demand for basic service throughout Trinidad and Tobago.

The villages of Borde Narve and St. John's via Ciperio Road in the constituency of Naparima will assuredly benefit from the works earmarked for execution in the development programme, but at this time one cannot state precisely when the service will be extended to the said areas.

Mr. Speaker, I hope the hon. Member is satisfied with this.

**Mr. Palackdharrysingh:** Mr. Speaker, supplemental question. Is the Minister aware that the villages of Borde Narve and St. John's are quite heavily populated?

**Miss Nicholson:** Mr. Speaker, I think I answered the question in detail and I am sure that the Member for Naparima is very cognizant of the whole financial situation of the country, particularly of the Telecommunications Services. Thank you.

### **Land Tenants (Regulations)**

**25. Mr. Raymond Palackdharrysingh** (*Naparima*) asked the Minister of Settlements and Public Utilities:

Would the hon. Minister state why necessary regulations expedient for carrying out the purposes of "An Act relating to the security of Tenure of Land Tenants" assented to in June 1991 were not made and which has rendered the purposes of the Act incapable of being implemented?

**The Minister of Settlements and Public Utilities (Hon. Pamela Nicholson):** Mr. Speaker, by virtue of sections 5 (a) and 18 of the Land Tenants (Security of Tenure) Act 1981, the Minister of Settlements and Public Utilities is required to prepare an order for the purpose of specifying matters to be considered by the Rent Assessment Boards in undertaking a review of rent and regulations setting out the procedures in accordance with which such review is to be conducted. The Rent Assessment Boards were created by the Rent Restriction Act, which lapsed in February 1990, as a consequence of which the boards are without legal status.

*Oral Answers To Questions*  
[HON. P. NICHOLSON]

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In order that a review of rent may now be conducted, there must first be the reinstatement of the boards by way of the re-enactment of the Rent Restriction Act, followed by the making of the order and regulations by the Minister.

However, the Attorney General has advised that a bill to re-enact the Rent Restriction Act has been prepared and is expected to be introduced in Parliament shortly—I think I saw it with our documents. Once the bill is passed, the order and the regulations can be made because the Rent Assessment Boards which are intrinsic to the implementation of the Land Tenants (Security of Tenure) Act 1991 will have been given life once more. Thank you.

*The following question stood on the Order Paper in the name of Mr. Patrick Manning (San Fernando East):*

#### **Police Commissioner's House**

**29.** Would the hon. Minister of Justice and National Security kindly state:

- (a) How much money has been expended from 1987 on the Police Commissioner's house which was being prepared for the then Attorney General?
- (b) What new facilities have been added to the abovementioned house?

**The Minister of Justice and National Security (Hon. Joseph Toney):** Mr. Speaker, I have been trying to get in contact with the Member for San Fernando East to let him know that I am not in a position to answer the question today, and I respectfully ask for a deferral of two weeks.

*Question, by leave, deferred.*

*The following question stood on the Order Paper in the name of Mr. Kenneth Valley (Diego Martin Central):*

#### **Winsure (Outstanding Claims)**

- 30.** (a) Would the hon. Minister of Finance state how much is outstanding to legitimate claimants under policies issued by Winsure?
- (b) Would the hon. Minister further state when these claims will be paid?

**The Minister of Justice and National Security (Hon. Joseph Toney):** Mr. Speaker, I ask for a deferral of two weeks for this question. The Minister of Finance is not here today.

**Mr. Valley:** I am informed by my friend, the Member for St. Ann's East, that there is always a Minister of Finance in the country, so one hopes that next week the Minister of Finance would answer the question.

**Mr. Speaker:** It will be deferred until next week and we will see what happens.

*Question, by leave, deferred.*

*The following question stood on the Order Paper in the name of Mr. Raymond Palackdharrysingh (Naparima):*

### **Road Improvement**

**31.** Would the hon. Minister of Works, Infrastructure and Decentralization state:

- (a) What measures, at what costs have been taken within the last two years to improve the conditions of the following roads:-
  - (i) The Colonial Road from the Barrackpore Junction to the number 2 scale;
  - (ii) The Rochard Douglas Road from the number 2 scale to the number 6 scale;
  - (iii) The Papourie Road from Princes Town to Barrackpore Junction;
  - (iv) Hamilton Drive - Borde Narve;
  - (v) The St. Croix Road;
  - (vi) Realise Road;
  - (vii) Cunjal Road;
  - (viii) Inverness Road;
  - (ix) Oropouche River Road (South);
  - (x) Naparima Mayaro Road from Corinth Junction to Princes Town;
  - (xi) Gordon Plantation Road from Light Pole No. 47 to Light Pole No. 58?
- (b) What measures would be taken in 1991 to improve the road and drainage conditions?

**The Minister of Works, Infrastructure and Decentralization (Dr. The Hon. Carson Charles):** Mr. Speaker, I regret that I am not in a position to answer question No. 31 today. The answer will be ready in a few days. If I can have it deferred for one week, I will be able to answer it next week. I am afraid, I was not able to contact the Member earlier.

*Question, by leave, deferred.*

**Arima Hospital  
(Construction)**

**32. Mrs. Gloria Pollard** (*Arima*) asked the Minister of Health:

Would the hon. Minister state:

- (a) Whether or not a hospital will be constructed in Arima, as promised in the manifesto of 1986?
- (b) If the answer to (a) is yes, when will construction of the Arima Hospital begin?

**The Minister of The Environment and National Service (Hon. Lincoln Myers):** Mr. Speaker, I am answering this question on behalf of the Minister of Health.

Steps have been taken for the construction of a new hospital in Arima, as promised in the 1986 manifesto of the National Alliance for Reconstruction.

A contract was awarded by the Central Tenders Board on March 01, 1990 to the Consortium of Banco Bilbao Vizcaya Trade SA/Construcciones Llave-en-Mano SA of Spain for the construction and equipping of a new facility, conditional upon the signing of a financing agreement between Banco Bilbao Vizcaya also of Spain and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

The contract was not executed as the tender of the Consortium did not comply with a requirement of the OCDE for export financing insurance.

On February 7, 1991, Cabinet decided to include the project in the package to be funded under the extended FINCOR financing facility and the sum of \$22 million was provided under that arrangement.

At present, the necessary procedures are being finalized for the prequalifying stage of the tendering process and the award of a contract is expected shortly. Construction is scheduled to commence in the fourth quarter of 1991.

**ADJOURNMENT MOTION**

*Adjournment Motion (Leave)*

*Friday, May 3, 1991*

**(LEAVE)**

**Mr. Basdeo Panday** (*Couva North*): Mr. Speaker, I had indicated in a short note to you before the commencement of these proceedings that I will seek your leave under “Adjournment of the House on Definite Matter of Urgent Public Importance” to deal with the shortage of pipe-borne water that is being experienced throughout the entire country.

The reason for seeking your leave is that complaints have been coming to the Office of the Opposition from almost every quarter and every region of the country—

**Miss Nicholson:** Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The argument being postulated that complaints are coming from every region of the country is not factual, and therefore I would be very pleased if the hon. Member for Couva North can keep it to the areas to which it belongs.

**Mr. Speaker:** The hon. Member is responsible for whatever statement he makes.

**Mr. Panday:** Mr. Speaker, sometimes I think I am in another House. Other Members do not read these rules so they do not understand. I am entitled, as I believe, to give you reasons why I am seeking your leave. If you accept them you will grant me leave, and if you do not you will not grant me leave. I did not know that it is a matter of controversy at this stage. I did not think so myself. But then, you see, some of us read and cannot understand; some of us read and refuse to understand, but it does not matter.

**2.05 p.m.**

We have an official function in this country contrary to the belief of some people. We are not mafia underground and people report to the Office of the Opposition that things are wrong in the country. What has happened is that people have been reporting to us that there is a shortage of drinking water in the country and I thought it was my duty to raise these matters so the Minister may have an opportunity to respond and say what is happening. Not only has it been reported to us that there is a widespread national shortage of water, but even where the water is being distributed by trucks, that there is much corruption where people must pay. I saw in the newspaper that even the Chairman of a county council admitted paying \$40.00 for truck-borne water.

*Adjournment Motion (Leave)*  
[MR. MANNING]

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In my humble and respectful view, this is a matter of urgency since it is not very easy to live without drinking water. I am sure that the Minister would like to tell the country what is the position, why there has suddenly been this problem facing the nation where so many people cannot be supplied with water. Mr. Speaker, that, in my humble and respectful view, makes it urgent in that we are dealing with a basic necessity of human life—water. There is a matter which deals with a specific matter namely; the shortage of the supply of water on a national scale. I am hoping that you would see it fit to grant me leave to raise this matter on the adjournment.

**Mr. Speaker:** The hon. Member is claiming that there is a problem with respect to the supply of water—and I am quoting him—in almost every region of the country. As I said before, there are reports coming to his office in his capacity as Leader of the Opposition. I want to repeat what I said earlier on that whenever any Member makes statements of fact in the House, such a Member is responsible for what he is saying. At this stage, from what the the hon. Member has indicated to the House, I will allow the motion. The Standing Order says that if the Speaker is satisfied, leave of the House has to be given. If that is not given, at least nine Members, by rising, indicate that they support the request. Do we have leave of the House?

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Mr. Speaker:** Then the motion shall stand over until 6.00 p.m. this afternoon when the Member shall address the House and the hon. Minister will respond.

#### **RENT RESTRICTION (RE-ENACTMENT AND VALIDATION) BILL**

Bill to re-enact the Rent Restriction Act, Chap. 59:50 and to validate things done thereunder, [*The Attorney General*]; read the first time.

#### **MUNICIPAL CORPORATIONS (PENSIONS)**

**The Minister of Works, Infrastructure and Decentralization (Dr. The Hon. Carson Charles):**

*Whereas* it is provided by section 3 of the Municipal Corporations (Pensions) Act, Chap. 25:05, that "officer" means *inter alia* a person substantively appointed to a permanent office in the service of the Port of Spain Corporation for which separate provision is made in the annual estimates;



Provided that such office has been declared to be a pensionable office by Resolution of the Council of the said Corporation approved by the Resolution of Parliament and published in the Gazette;

*And whereas* the offices established at the dates specified in the Schedule are permanent offices in the service of the Port of Spain Corporation for which separate provision is made in the annual estimates;

*And whereas* it is expedient that the said offices should be declared to be pensionable offices;

*Be it resolved* that the said offices specified in the Schedule be declared pensionable offices with effect from the dates specified in the Schedule.

SCHEDULE

PORT OF SPAIN CORPORATION

OFFICE	EFFECTIVE DATE
Visual Aids Officer	February 23, 1979
Motor Vehicle Driver/Operator	January 31, 1985
Public Health Medical Officer	January 18, 1979
Storekeeper II	September 4, 1975.

Mr. Speaker, the motion which stands in my name is to resolve that offices specified in the Schedule, attached to the motion, be declared pensionable offices with effect from the date specified on the Schedule at the Port of Spain Corporation. The offices in question are: Visual Aids officers, November 23, 1979; Motor Vehicle Driver/Operator with effect from January 31, 1985; Public Health Medical Officer with effect from January 18, 1979 and Storekeeper II, with effect from September 4, 1975.

Mr. Speaker, section 3 of the Municipal Corporations (Pensions) Act, Chap. 25:05, empowers the Port of Spain City Corporation to create permanent offices in the service of the corporation for which separate provision is made in the annual estimates by resolution of the council, approved by resolution of Parliament, and in accordance with this section of Chap. 25:05.

**Mr. Valley:** Mr. Speaker, I need your guidance. We were debating a bill moved by the Minister of Food Production the last time. What is happening?

**Mr. Speaker:** Whenever there is a motion before the House the procedure is that you proceed with the motion and come back to the bill. If there is a situation with two bills for second reading and one is in progress, and the Government thinks it is expedient to do a bill that has not yet had a second reading, then we have to seek leave of the House.

**Dr. Charles:** Thank you. As I was saying, it is a relatively simple motion and in accordance with the provision of Chap. 25:05, section (3) of the laws of the Republic, the Port of Spain City Corporation resolved that these positions listed in the Schedule be declared pensionable and we are now seeking to have the approval of Parliament for that to take effect.

The history of the matter is that Cabinet gave approval to these various positions between the years 1975 and 1985 and subsequently, in November, 1989, the Port of Spain Corporation resolved that the positions be declared pensionable positions. Two of the offices were, in fact, filled by officers who have since retired from the Corporation and therefore, there is some direct benefit to be enjoyed by these officers to which they are entitled, once the matter is handled at this level.

The only unusual matter in this situation, really, is that whereas the Corporation had moved this motion in its own council in November, 1989, the matter had come here last year and would have been handled last year. Some time was lost partly because of the exercise on revision of municipal law which we were not certain would have affected us or not, and subsequently, by the administrative difficulties which followed the unfortunate events last year, so that matter was again taken up this year and it has now come for the attention of Parliament.

As I said, Mr. Speaker, it is a relatively routine and straightforward matter. The Corporation has moved its own resolution and the law provides that once Parliament resolves, these offices will become pensionable offices. They are, in fact, already budgeted for. They are in the annual estimates and there is some immediate benefit to be enjoyed by persons who have held these positions and have since retired. With these words of introduction, I beg to move.

*Question proposed.*

**2.15 p.m.**

**Mr. Basdeo Panday (Couva North):** Mr. Speaker, I am not objecting to the motion at all. In fact, I support it, having regard to my own long history and the

fact that I have fought on the side of the workers all my life. I would not dare to resist a motion that seeks to make certain posts pensionable. But I do need some clarification and that is: Why is it when posts are created, the posts are not made pensionable at the time of creation, so that people who are working will know that "well, I am working and I shall receive a pension because I am in a pensionable post?" Here you are creating a pensionable post for a Visual Aids Officer to be effective from February 23, 1979. Obviously, this person would have been working in that job since 1979. Already, we are dealing with a person here and we are using the device of the job to ensure that this person gets a pension. I think this is what is happening.

First of all, I would like to know why a person should be working so long in a job and not know if it is pensionable. Is there something wrong with the procedure that the jobs when they are being created are not made pensionable, so that people who accept a job, accept a pensionable job, as opposed to a situation where a person goes into a job and does not know what his future is going to be? It would be luck and chance whether he would end up getting a pension or not. That is my first point. One is 1985; another is, Public Officer, 1979; one is even 1975, a Storekeeper II.

The other point I want to ask is that there are so many other posts of people who have been working all their lives, who have retired, and for one reason or the other cannot enjoy the same facility. What is it? Do you have to have a contact? Do you have to know somebody? Do you have to pull a string? What do you have to do? I want to know because we receive those kinds of complaints and maybe you should tell me where these strings are so that I can arrange to have them pulled.

I just wanted to know that when the jobs are created why are they not declared permanent/pensionable jobs? Why do we have make a job pensionable and permanent retroactive to 1975? Secondly, why only these jobs? How do other persons get the same facility of having their jobs declared permanent and pensionable, retroactively so that they may enjoy the same facility? It is just a matter for my own edification.

**Dr. Charles:** I wish to respond to the two points raised by the hon. Leader of the Opposition. On point number one, I certainly agree with him entirely. That is to say that when positions are created in the various municipal corporations, steps should be taken to have the corporations pass the resolutions in their own councils, forwarded to their administrative heads and brought for the consent

*Municipal Corporations (Pensions)*  
[HON. C. CHARLES]

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of Parliament for those resolutions to take effect, and that should be done immediately. I certainly support him in that.

In this case, these positions were created between 1975 and 1985 and I do not know why at that time, those steps were not taken. I certainly would take his advice to ensure that when we are creating positions in the municipal corporations, which in fact we have to do to put the new corporations into effect, we should seek to have resolutions effected in those corporations right at the beginning and bring them to Parliament, so that they can be dealt with. Why they were not done in those years I do not know. In fact, it was not really brought to our attention, until the corporation resolved the matter itself in 1989 and then brought it to our attention to try to have it handled in Parliament. So I support him on that point.

With respect to the second point, I am not really very skilled in the area of identifying strings to be pulled, I am afraid. It is not an area in which I specialize. But it seems to me that the main concern might be, if there are other persons out there whose pensionable benefits are in jeopardy, then there should be some attempt to have such persons identified if they are in municipal corporations.

**Mr. Panday:** For example, I receive such complaints that people are not entitled to a pension. What do I do? What do I advise them to do? To whom should I tell them to apply? That is what I was asking. I did not mean to be rude when I talked about pulling strings and so on. That is the ordinary cut and thrust of politics. You should be accustomed to that by now. I wanted to find out about the procedures. To whom should a person apply? Where does he go?

**Dr. Charles:** Mr. Speaker, I suggest that the hon. Leader advise them and even assist them in making representations to their respective ministries where the matter can be taken up.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Resolved:*

That the said offices specified in the Schedule be declared pensionable offices with effect from the dates specified in the Schedule.

**2.25 p.m.**

**PRISON (AMDT.) RULES**

**The Minister in the Ministry of Justice and National Security (Hon. Joseph Toney):** Mr. Speaker, I beg to move,

*Whereas* it is provided by section 17 of the Prisons Act, Chap. 13:01 that the Minister may, subject to affirmative resolution of Parliament, make rules for the better carrying into effect of the provisions and purposes of the said Act, including rules for amending or revoking the Prison Rules;

*And whereas* the Prison (Amdt.) Rules, 1991 were made under section 17 of the said Act on March 30, 1991;

*And whereas* it is expedient to affirm the said Rules;

*Be it resolved* that the Prison (Amdt.) Rules, 1991 be affirmed.

Mr. Speaker, the motion standing in my name is one for the affirmative resolution by this honourable House this evening and motion No. 2 concerns the amendment to the Prison Rules to increase the period of remittance from one-third to one-half for prisoners serving sentences of one year or less. This is an effort on the part of the Government to minimize the overwhelmingly difficult overcrowding situation that now exists in our prison.

As it stands now the rules permit the period of remittance to one third of prisoners serving sentences for one year and less. What this means, is that if a prisoner is now sentenced to a period of imprisonment for one year, what he in effect serves is a period of eight months. This new rule will allow him or her to serve a period of six months. I must point out that neither this new rule nor the old one provided any period of remittance for persons who have been sentenced to serve a period of less than 30 days.

I think that it is common knowledge that we have an overcrowding problem at our prisons today. This is just one measure that we are implementing to try to relieve the situation. We have also put in place a Cabinet appointed committee which is now preparing proposals on the feasibility of a parole system and personal rehabilitation. A report of this committee is expected very soon and we feel that this is another measure, when it is completed, that will assist us in alleviating the overcrowding situation at the prisons.

*Prison (Amdt.) Rules*  
[HON. J. TONEY]

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You may wish to know that the general principle of parole is that when a prisoner serves half the sentence he is eligible for parole. The actor from Couva North is much better at pronouncing these words than I.

In order to alleviate the situation, plans are well in place for the construction of the maximum security prison, which, when constructed, will house 1200 prisoners. My advice and the advice which I have received from the Commissioner of Prisons, is that similar action was taken in the United Kingdom in an effort to reduce the overcrowding problem there. From our reports, they have had a certain degree of success in that regard.

The reason for this motion being in my name, is that the question of remittance falls within the jurisdiction of the Minister of Justice and National Security and is governed by section 17:01 of the Prisons Act, Chap. 13:01 which reads as follows:

The Minister may, subject to affirmation resolution of Parliament, make rules for the better carrying into effect of the provisions and purposes of the said Act, including rules for amending or revoking the Prison Rules, and without limiting the generality of the foregoing, may make rules providing for—"

and in particular, paragraph (f) which deals with the remission and reads as follows:

"(f) the remission of sentence to be allowed to prisoners and the manner and conditions under which the remissions are to be granted;"

This is the case for the amendment of these prison rules, and in these circumstances, I beg to move that they be affirmed.

*Question proposed.*

**Mr. Trevor Sudama** (*Oropouche*): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I want to say that we cannot look at this question as an amendment to these prison rules in any isolation from the current crime situation in this country. Therefore, we have to place the amendment to these rules against the background of an increasing rate of crime in Trinidad and Tobago, that when these crimes are heard and sentences are passed, will result in an increasing population in our prisons. So we have that situation currently existing—an escalating addition to the prison population in Trinidad and Tobago—since this country has been subjected to an intense crime rate, particularly crimes of violence against persons and property. So much so,

that the various divisions of the police service have to create special units to deal with what is undoubtedly an emergency situation. The situation concerns all people of Trinidad and Tobago. The average citizen is such that people feel that they are not free and safe in their homes even when those homes are fully burglar-proofed and all sorts of security devices are placed in their homes. They are not safe on the streets and in their work places. Nowhere do the majority of citizens of this country feel safe after the rule of four and a half years of this NAR Government.

In such a situation of insecurity, many citizens are very concerned that when you remit sentences, all that you are doing is permitting people to go back on the streets and again engage in commission of similar crimes for which they may have already served sentences. We are very concerned about the rate at which people have been granted bail and while they have been on bail they continue their path of violence and commit crimes. It would have been interesting for the Minister to have told this House to what extent those who have had their sentences remitted have been engaged in the recommission of crimes, because the remission of sentences, I presume, has to be as a result of a certain process which is undertaken by the prison authorities.

**2.35 p.m.**

So, the Government finds itself in a situation where the majority of citizens are concerned that too many people who have been released from prisons are again engaged in the commission of crime. At the same time, this Government is doing absolutely nothing to deal with the anxieties of the population and to deal with this problem of the escalation in crime which eventually results in an enlarged prison population. If they are doing something, then it obviously means, that whatever they are doing—if it is just the cogitations in the mind of the Minister—is having no effect whatever on the crime situation in this country, as in fact, the much vaunted economic policies, having no effect on the economy of Trinidad and Tobago. This economic turnaround, of course, is a turnaround only in the minds of certain front benchers of the Government.

This is a very big problem and cannot only be solved at the level of remission of sentences. It is a big problem as to what you are doing to pre-empt the escalation in prison population in Trinidad and Tobago, which has to do with measures and policies to pre-empt the increasing rate of crime in Trinidad and Tobago.

*Prison (Amdt.) Rules*  
[MR. SUDAMA]

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I know that the Minister will get up and say that crime is not increasing in Trinidad and Tobago, he may even reel out figures. But those figures are at variance with the reality, experience and with the news reports that we get on a daily basis. So, it is obvious that whatever they are engaged in is having no effect, if they are engaged in anything. I myself had cause to approach the Minister on a certain matter of crime and theft in my constituency—the theft of animals. Up to today, not a single action has been taken to deal with that ongoing problem where criminals in this country can do whatever they want to do with impunity.

I went and spoke with him, and the outcome is nothing. [*Interruption*] Do you want to make a statement?

**Mr. Myers:** On a point of information, Mr. Speaker. I simply want to ask the Member if he will go on record as unreservedly condemning all violent crimes.

**Mr. Sudama:** Mr. Speaker, yes. We condemn all crimes as long as those crimes have gone through the process of the court, because we are dealing with a situation where people have been convicted and, therefore, have gone to swell the prison population. What pre-emptive action are you taking to deal with the escalation in violent crimes or any other kind of crime which affects the person and the property of citizens of Trinidad and Tobago? My submission this afternoon is that this Government is totally impotent, ineffective and all it is engaged in is a propaganda exercise. You fellas would have put Goebbels to shame, the kind of propaganda you are engaged in; trying to hoodwink this population. A Government of propaganda. You have done nothing. I am telling you of a personal case where I took a delegation to the Minister and they presented their case to him and all he could tell me is he thinks there is a Praedial Larceny Unit which is under the control of the Minister of Food Production and he has sent a little note to the Minister of Food Production who has not taken the trouble to respond to me or him and that is where the matter rests. That gives you an idea of how they attempt to deal with the problem of crime in this country. People who have sweated in the fields see their labour going down the drain; they see criminals appropriating the fruits of their labour, and this is done without any kind of response or concern by the Government.

I merely raised that as a point of illustration because to come to this House and to say that this action is taken in the United Kingdom—and it seems to have some kind of beneficial effect there—does not really tell us anything about what is going on in Trinidad and Tobago. It is always somewhere else, as if they are concerned with the governments of other countries and not with what is



transpiring in Trinidad and Tobago. It is being done in the United Kingdom, therefore they slavishly follow what has been done there and hope that it will have the same results here.

Is the Minister, saying that the reason for introducing these rules, to be approved by the House today, is to limit and cause a decrease in the prison population? Is it or is it not an act of expediency? All he wishes to do is to decrease the prison population, without any concern for the effect of this decrease, by the release of those prisoners who have served, without any concern about the population at large and the possibilities and propensities of those who have had their sentences remitted, committing more crimes when they are released.

It is not just a limited question that we are facing here. It is one of our most serious problems. Apart from the economic problems which we face in Trinidad and Tobago, apart from the horrendous unemployment problem that we face, the question of security and crime commission is the most significant and important question that the average man in this country is facing and he wants solutions from the Government. He does not want old talk, he wants effective solutions from the Government. This matter will not be solved by increasing provision for more prison places. You may do that as a short-term measure.

What you have to do is attempt to tackle this problem at the root. How do you put in place measures to prevent an increase in the commission of crimes which has—after those people who have committed crimes and have been brought to the court, and have been convicted and are required to serve prison sentences—the inevitable effect of increasing the prison population?

Does the Minister have a view on that question? Or is it just that he thinks his responsibility is to come to this House and merely, with their majority, pass laws as a matter of formality and not use the occasion to inform the population of what this Government is capable of doing and what it is not doing at all?

**2.45 p.m.**

I would have liked him to have presented to this House an analysis of those who have had their sentences remitted after they had gone back to the general population and what has been the follow-up. He talked about rehabilitation. Cabinet is still sitting after four and a half years. This is a sitting Cabinet. It sits. It is sitting to consider the question of rehabilitation. So therefore, if you have no programme at this point and time, but you are increasing the number of people

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whose sentences are remitted and who are going back out there to join the general population and you have no programme of rehabilitation—if you have one I do not know about it—what exactly are you telling the population? That you are concerned about nothing else except the physical problem of limiting the prison population in this country?

This question of giving greater discretion, I believe, this is the reasoning behind amending these rules, and I am told that there is no provision in the rules for remitting sentences for less than 30 days, and therefore these rules which are now going to be put into effect will allow some greater discretion in that regard. I am told as well that there is the discretion to allow the commuting of a sentence from one year to eight months and then from eight months to six months.

You see how peripheral the perspective and the focus of this Government is, when you look at these minor matters; how very peripheral to the larger questions with which we were confronted, in trying to govern Trinidad and Tobago to the satisfaction of the majority of citizens of this country, where crimes are being committed on a daily basis. Everybody is complaining. Some businesses have just closed their doors because they cannot cope with the crime situation.

There is an increase in the prison population; a stalemate in the processes of the judiciary, in the expeditious processes of having matters heard. All this is going on in this country and they come in this House to pass a rule to remit sentences which may have been passed for one year, to give the discretion to have an eight-month sentence served or a six-month sentence served. That is the level of concern and thinking of this Government when it is confronted with these very large issues of governance. Then, they go around and tell other people they are not fit to govern, but after four and a half years this is all they can come up with in an attempt to deal with the problem of the prison population, the problem of crime, the problem of the judicial process, and of passing sentences. This is all they are concerned with. This is all they can come up with. I said the mountain called the NAR only succeeds in labouring to produce a mouse in terms of action.

I hope that the Minister would be kind enough to inform this House as to what is going on with the crime situation; what this Government is doing with respect to reducing the rate of crime; the unacceptable and rapid increase in the rate of crime, which eventually will have an effect on the prison population of Trinidad and Tobago.

With these few words I want to thank the House for its indulgence.

**Mr. Kenneth Valley** (*Diego Martin Central*): Mr. Speaker, I had no intention whatsoever of speaking on this motion until I heard the Minister. I had no intention of speaking on the motion for the simple reason that when I saw it, one thought that the Government had put a programme in place and was acting in accordance with that programme and so they had come to the decision to remit sentences.

One thought that a rehabilitation programme was a fundamental part of that programme, but in his opening address the Minister informed us that really what he wanted to get rid of was the overcrowding in prison, so that the objective is simply to get rid of overcrowding in prison and to do that it is going to put prisoners back on the streets earlier, in a period of rising crime level.

As a fact, we know that prisoners who are serving up to 12 months are really there for petty offences. As the economy declines one understands that there would be an increase in petty crime. Since 1986, we know exactly what has been happening with the economy, so that we see the relationship with respect to the increase in petty crimes.

Some of these ordinary citizens in certain cases, through no fault of their own, found themselves in difficulty with the law, simply because of the economic situation brought on by an uncaring Government.

We say that if you are doing it, do it with some caring. Do not do it simply on a question of dollars and cents. In other words, rather than building more prisons, put them back on the streets to avoid an overcrowding problem. We are informed that Cabinet is now looking at a parole system, therefore, it seems to me that we are putting the cart before the horse. If that committee has not reported as yet what are we really doing?

We ask the other question, what about the magistrates? Will they now be getting involved in compensating sentencing, so that for example, if they believe that for certain offences one should spend six months behind bars, the guy gets 12 months rather than the six months that he would have gotten in the first place? Would we have that type of compensating sentencing? What are we really doing?

I remember in 1987, I said this Government acts by vaps; the first thing that come to their head and this is another example. We see it, a simple case without caring, simply dollars and cents. We have an overcrowding problem, put those petty offenders back on the street so that they would commit crimes again and go back there. So, it becomes a dollars and cents question, of course, because there are two alternatives; either you are going to spend money on rehabilitation or on more prisons if you have an overcrowding problem or you are going to put half of the prisoners back on the streets. But that is not going to solve the problem of petty crime.

**2.55 p.m.**

We ask the question, Mr. Speaker: What would happen with respect to repeaters? We ask further, how many prisoners are we talking about? How many prisoners would the Minister be putting back on the street in a one-year period? The more you look at the Minister's motion, you see more and more questions. I want to counsel the Minister to reconsider what he is doing, to wait on the Cabinet appointed committee to do some work with respect to rehabilitation.

Mr. Speaker, given we are talking about petty crime, petty offenders, persons normally who are unemployed, one can see the importance of an unemployment relief programme in a situation like that. Today we have an unemployment relief programme, and all over the country, whether it is Diego Martin Central or Mayaro, you hear that the only way you can get employment in an unemployment relief programme is if you have a party card. [*Interruption*] That is what they would say whenever you mention it. You know, they are perfecting the art of cover-up, because whenever you tell them the truth you get a flurry of letters in the newspapers saying, "No, not true." This is all over the country, people know it. It does not matter what it is. They have perfected the art of cover-up so that the Prime Minister can go up to John John and then say that it has nothing to do with electioneering, you know; perfecting the art of cover-up, that has nothing to do with electioneering. If they cannot fix the economy, they fix the figures.

I am making the point that we have got to have an unemployment relief programme as part of the rehabilitative work with respect to petty offenders. If we want to help them, if we want to show some caring, we would see the importance of making sure that there is something for them to do, to earn an income. When you bring them out, just do not put them on the streets; get some social workers to deal with them, make sure that they can get ten days without

having to show a party card, and then you would get our wholehearted support. Simply to come with this motion and argue that there is overcrowding in the prison and therefore you want to do this shows a level of incompetence which one would not normally associate with the Minister of National Security. I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Basdeo Panday** (*Couva North*): I have come to the conclusion that when you do not intend to speak in this House, you must not speak, because then you end up putting both feet in your mouth. The hon. Member behaved as though he arrived from Mars on December 16, 1986. It is really a sad reflection on the morals of this country and the morals of the party to which he belongs that he could talk about having a party card, to get a ten days on DEWD. That is sickening, that is sick.

I must warn the Member—he is a friend, a nice fellow, and I like him, but he must not demean himself like that.

**Mr. Valley:** On a point of order. Let me just correct my friend. I said you have to have a party card to get a ten days on LIDP. Never did I say one had to have a party card because that was not a fact.

**Mr. Panday:** The Member must explain why \$20 million in back-pay to DEWD has not been collected. They cannot find the ghosts who worked on the team. I just thought I would remind him, because he and his colleagues must not be permitted to get away in this House and to behave as though they are not responsible or that they are any different from what is happening on the other side. I agree with him entirely, that a tremendous amount of corruption is taking place in LIDP and YESS (Youth Employment Support Service) and whatever they call it these days. A tremendous amount of corruption is taking place in the PNM, and he must tell the nation, "We are sorry."

**Mr. Valley:** The Member knows that is not correct.

**Mr. Panday:** A total of 360,000 people said it was correct on December 16, 1986 and voted out the Government, because of its corruption, nepotism and maladministration. He must come to the nation; people will forgive him if he goes down on his knees and says, "We were corrupt, I am sorry. We were guilty of nepotism. I beg your pardon. We were guilty of maladministration and it shall not happen again." Do not come here and pretend that it did not happen, that is to insult the intelligence of the electorate.

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Now, let me come to this motion. Mr. Speaker, I remember there was a thing called a manifesto by the NAR in which we had coined the word “ad hococracy”, and we coined that word because in the run-up to the 1986 campaign, we were condemning the PNM regime for dealing with matters on an ad hoc basis, and we said that this was not democracy or meritocracy or even oligarchy, but this was an “ad hococracy”. That is, they were dealing with things on an *ad hoc* basis. I think we were right.

I want to ask my hon. Friend, the Minister, if this is anything short of the worst kind of “ad hococracy”. It is a pity. I was hoping that we would have changed our style in this session of the Parliament where we do not just spring things on Members like dropping these rules and asking that they be passed immediately. You will recall that there have been several reports on prison reform. Under the former regime, they had an enormous capacity for dealing with problems by setting up a committee to produce a report, and these committees worked well and they produced numerous reports.

I was trying to get these reports from the library, but the time was too short. Several of them have been presented to this Parliament, at great cost, on the question of prison reform. I believe that in not one instance has either the past regime or the present regime acted on a single proposal to deal with prison reform. That is obviously because prisoners do not vote. The institutionalized population does not vote. They do not count in the statistics, as far as the electoral list is concerned, so they are not people. They are excluded from the considerations of governments. You do not introduce prison reform; why introduce that? You would not get more votes for that. So you let those people languish. Those are human beings in there, but you let them languish, nonetheless.

It was unfortunate that the Minister should give the reason for this proposal as trying to relieve the overcrowding. He does nothing about prison reform for four years, and he comes in the dying moments of the Government and says there are too many prisoners, we cannot contain them anymore, the prison walls are bursting at the seams; the prisoners will soon have to be standing one on top of the other, so we must do something; let us let out some of them. If they really want to solve the problem, why not let all of them out? If the philosophy is that in order to resolve the problem of not enough space in the prisons, they have to let some of them out; they might do a better job. The more that are let out, the more they can solve the problem. Surely that cannot be the answer to the problem.

So my first objection to this proposal is that it does not deal with the problem really confronting the country. I need not state what those problems are; they have been stated in several reports which have been presented to this House, that there is need for tremendous prison reform, there is need—if money is the problem, I believe—I cannot recall if that is in the manifesto, but surely if money is the problem, then the prisons should be so organized as to be self-sustaining. Prisoners should be made and set up to work. They should be provided with work where they produce things to be sold, where they are self-sustaining with respect to food. Where hard labour has been a part of the sentence, they should be made to grow food in order that they be self-sustaining.

This is rehabilitative in several respects. Not only is it good economics, but it is good penal philosophy and penal practice. By doing this you do not let the prisoners waste away and you do not permit them to become more and more antagonistic towards the society because you are allowing them to vegetate and decay, but rather as part of the rehabilitation process, you set them to work.

I believe, even under the colonial system—I know from my personal experience and I am sure that being from the country you would know—that there were several people who got in trouble with the law, and they went into prison and they came out and set up their shops as barbers, as shoemakers, and so on. That used to be the old practice where people were rehabilitated to re-enter the society in order to make a living. That is the kind of thing I thought that this Government would have been looking at, making the prison self-sufficient, even making it profitable.

**3.10 p.m.**

Please, do not go and privatize prisons. Do not privatize the prison, I do not think that would work. This is not really going to solve your problems. And as somebody says, if you are going to deal with only people who have been sentenced to terms of imprisonment for less than 12 months, you are really dealing with petty criminals.

**Mr. Valley:** It is not somebody, it is me.

**Mr. Panday:** I give him credit. It is not everything he says that is nonsense. Some of it makes sense and I acknowledge that.

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The other thing that bothers me is that it seems to conflict with another trend of the Government—the society. I heard a call from the highest quarters in the judiciary—for stiffer and stiffer sentences. Whereas on the one hand we are calling upon magistrates to inflict and impose stiffer and stiffer sentences as a means of combating crime, on the other hand we are saying that we are giving the authority to reduce those sentences which we ask should be stiff in the first place. It seems to me to be some kind of contradiction there, and it is because we are dealing with the subject matter on an *ad hoc* basis instead of dealing with it as a whole.

What is important is that it is not the magistrate who is going to decide whether a sentence is reduced. The magistrate imposes a sentence, and, most likely, he imposes a sentence having regard to all the circumstances: the antecedents of the person charged; his mental attitude; whether he was contrite to the court; whether he was speaking the truth; whether he pleaded guilty and so placed himself at the mercy of the court. All sorts of things are taken into consideration when a magistrate is imposing a sentence, and the sentence is supposed to fit the crime. Now what is going to happen? Are we putting power in the hands of somebody else to reduce that sentence? If we are putting power into the hands of somebody else, who is the somebody? I was looking at the prison rules and they speak of the superintendent. I imagine this must have been changed maybe to the Commissioner of Prisons. Whoever it is, would there be a judicial process by which the sentences would be reduced as there was a judicial process by which they were imposed? If the process by which the sentences are reduced are not judicial, then are you not undermining the judicial process? Where are the checks and balances? Where is the protection against abuse, discrimination, favouritism and even downright corruption when we put in the hands of one person to make a non-judicial decision to reduce a sentence?

I want to make it absolutely clear that I am making no accusations against anyone. I am talking about systems here, not people. I might add, however, that those of us who are not in prison do not live in the sky, we live in a society and we cannot escape what is being said in the society and many are the reports of what takes place in prison. I do not know the facts because I have not investigated. I have merely read the reports and the letters and the writings in the press. I have heard from people relating what obtains in the prison. One hears that there is enormous racketeering taking place in the prison.



There is a prisoner who came out the other day, he came to my office because he could not get a job. I do not think I should call his name I will embarrass him. He had been in prison a long time and he wanted help to set up a little business and so on. That happened only last week. He was telling me that there is a whole system of corruption inside the prison where you can buy cigarettes and drugs, and those who complain get beaten up. Those who do not comply—homosexual activities and so on taking place. As I say, I do not want this to be interpreted as if I were saying what I know, I am saying these are the complaints that are made and they are contained in reports of people who have investigated. If that kind of system obtains in the prison, how are you going to ensure that the reduction of sentences does not become part of the corrupt prison system? So that, might you not be aggravating the crime situation instead of alleviating it? For example, 15 people are charged with offences below 12 months, one is let out on the basis of favouritism, corruption, whatever, are you not laying the foundation in the other 14 to be even more bitter against the society than when they went in? Might you not be aggravating the whole social question of crime by introducing a system like this without checks and balances?

I want to tell you that I am in favour of the system of parole. As a matter of fact, in the years that I have been in this Parliament, the parliamentary records will be replete with examples of calls from this side, calling for reform of the prison sentence to introduce the system of parole. This is not the system of parole. This is a system in which you reduce the sentence and you let the person out. Parole has very many more implications. After you keep people in prison for a length of time, what happens is that their whole social life is destroyed. You put them in prison and they lose their homes, their wives; they are alienated from their children; they have no jobs, and you just simply let them out of prison. Sometimes they have no food. One of the great contributing factors to the question of recidivism, people returning to prison that is, is that they go back to prison in order to get a square meal and a place to sleep because life outside there could be so hard for them, they not having been re-introduced into the society. I believe that is the essence behind parole. Parole is, after people have been in prison and they have lost everything because they have been in prison, you re-introduce them to the society. As a matter of fact, it may be that you let them out during the day and demand that they return in the evening or night, so that you are sure that you are letting people back out into the society and not letting them out which may result in an encouragement of time. Rather they are able to take their place in the society and they are able to be useful citizens. Many people are

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in prison who do not have a criminal mind. There are many people in prison like that. Sometimes they are the victim of circumstances. Indeed, people have complained that there are innocent people in prison. The French are more intelligent than we. They have something called "*crime passionnel*" where they distinguish between crimes in which people premeditate and injure or kill someone and where, because of an explosion of human passion, a crime is committed. They distinguish between that. That is to realise that all the people in prison are not criminals. There are many of them who are capable of being rehabilitated. In fact, many of them become criminals while in jail. If that is the case and we are really concerned about dealing with the question of crime as raised by my colleague from Oropouche, we really have to start looking at the prison system in this light. This is not going to help at all. I believe that this may well aggravate the situation. Really, it is not even scratching the surface. I was looking up the original 285, and in the original rule it says:

"285 With a view to encouraging good conduct and industry and to facilitating the reformatory treatment of prisoners, arrangements shall be made by which a convicted prisoner serving imprisonment, whether under one sentence or consecutive sentences or under any such sentence or sentences and the remanent of a previous sentence, for a period exceeding one month, may be eligible for discharge when a portion of his term of imprisonment, not exceeding one-third of the whole term of imprisonment, has yet to run: Provided that nothing in the said arrangements shall authorize the reduction of any period of imprisonment to be served to less than thirty days."

Instead of that what we are saying now, we are inserting after that and creating a 285(A).

"285A. Notwithstanding rule 285,...

Which I have just read;

"...where a prisoner is sentenced to a term of imprisonment, whether under one sentence or consecutive sentences the aggregate of which does not exceed twelve months, he may become eligible for discharge when a portion of his term of imprisonment, not exceeding one-half of the whole term of imprisonment, has yet to run, save that nothing in this rule shall authorize the reduction of any period of imprisonment to be served to less than thirty days."

**3.20 p.m.**

Would the hon. Minister tell me that whereas Rule 285 was intended to encourage good conduct and industry and so on and to facilitate the reformatory treatment of prisoners—Rule 285 does not seem to say so. Rule 285A says merely "Notwithstanding Rule 285 ... " Are there going to be rules which will govern the reduction of sentences? That is the first question I want to ask. Secondly, who really is going to exercise the authority of reducing the sentences? Thirdly, what are the checks and balances against the abuse of such power? Fourthly, is there any redress for any prisoner who feels he has been discriminated against or who feels he has been treated unfairly? What is the protection for prisoners who so protest, if indeed, there is any avenue for protest? I would be most grateful if the hon. Minister would answer some of these questions so we would be in a better position to determine whether or not we should support this.

**Mr. Jenson Fox** (*Port of Spain North*): Mr. Speaker, there is a bit of virtue and a bit of mischief coming from the Opposition Benches and I think we should objectively approach the matter before us. I cannot help remembering in recent times, an advertisement on CNN where Charlton Heston, I think it is, speaks about how wonderful it would be to have more policemen take criminals off the streets and more prisons to house these prisoners. I do not think—and I beg to differ from the hon. Minister—the population should be faced with the situation of weakness. I believe that now is the time to be tough and to be strong. It is true that this country has experienced harsh economic times and that contributes to crime. Yes, and on the streets there are criminals and crimes are sweeping the country. Nothing unusual in that, those things have happened throughout history and certainly it has been happening in the last 30 years. At some point in time during that period, crime had been much higher than at present but that is not the issue here and we should not labour too much on that.

While I support the whole idea of reintroducing prisoners to the streets, I object strongly, merely to the consideration, especially at this point in time of turning criminals loose on the streets of Trinidad and Tobago. There is a committee sitting and I would want to think that certainly the voice of that committee should be heard before we venture any further in terms of decisions that can have a drastic effect on the peace-loving citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

The fact that we are dealing specifically with people who are in prison for periods of 12 months, it is my conclusion that many of those persons should not be in prison at all. I would have loved to see that committee come forward,

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perhaps, with a recommendation that suggested strongly, that the whole idea of community sentencing be introduced in Trinidad and Tobago, specifically the first-time offenders, if we are concerned about relieving the pressure of overcrowding in the prisons. Many first-time offenders should not be in prison, especially with the web that stems within our prisons systems. It is my conclusion that many petty offenders are turned into hardened criminals during their first three months behind prison walls.

What has happened to the idea of hard labour? We hear people being sentenced to hard labour in prison but we do not see hard labour being dispensed. I distinctly remember when coming or going to school, it was a sight to see prisoners in their prison outfits doing hard labour in the streets and in the parks of Port of Spain. Why are we not developing an imaginative approach to the whole question of hard labour? The hon. Member for Couva North has raised a similar question to what, I hope many of you remember—I raised sometime ago in this House, about the whole question of the economics of prison and the question of making it pay. Not only for the reduction of the costs of maintaining prisons, but more importantly, the effect it would have on the prisoner—and my friend from Barataria says the image it would have on the prison system.

Why must we have 4,000-odd human beings behind bars when the streets of our country remain with potholes? When the majority of the streets in Trinidad and Tobago create further economic hardships for the people who work hard to gain money to buy a car? Why do Government buildings remain in a state of disrepair? Why is it that a paint job on the government buildings or other buildings for that matter, cannot be done by prisoners? Why do estates remain abandoned? Why can prisoners not go out there and grow food for themselves; and not only for themselves, but for the hospitals, the rehabilitation centres where drug addicts are being dried out; and where the Government finds difficulty in obtaining funding for the orphan homes? We are talking economics and we are talking about ways and means by which a government can find the funding to put more policemen on the road to make our citizens feel safer. If there is a problem in finding money to build the prisons, then certainly this is one way to go. We are talking about good prison management: economics, finance, dollars and cents.

**3.30 p.m.**

Why are not prisoners, at whom we have taken a very good look and whom we ascertained have the potential to return to civilian life and make a worthy contribution, not being introduced to things like fish farming? Why are we, when

we put prisoners back on the streets, not looking at the whole question of putting them in batches in the form of a co-operative, based on the training that they would have had? They are painting buildings—we can organize that. We are the people who are in charge; we should demonstrate that we could manage them behind bars and put them back on the streets where they are left to themselves.

So when they come out of prison we will do our best to ensure jobs from the state. That is true. Many people come out on the streets and they do not have a meal. They do not know where the next dollar is coming from. I am saying, not only make prisoners work for themselves and other institutions, but at the same time they must work for enough money so that when they come out of prison they would have a chance.

What about community service, community sentencing? An unfortunate chap who finds himself in difficulty for the first time, is very brought before the court and sentenced to six months in prison for the first offence. Perhaps my Friend from Diego Martin Central is quite correct. The cart is before the horse. That chap, why is he not made to go and scrub the steps and the floors of the hospital under the watchful eyes of the supervisor, who will file a report to the Probation Officer? Why is he not made to sweep the streets? That has its effect on people. It also permits the very same measure while obtaining some degree of return from the individual, it also helps to reduce the intake of the prisons. So you want less people in prisons.

Mr. Speaker, in a country like Trinidad and Tobago where crime, to my mind, is not something that happens strictly because most people wish to commit crimes, but where influences and where, yes, the economic kickbacks, affect the thinking of people, the question of keeping people out of prison must be looked at from a different perspective. Whenever people are brought before the courts and sentenced, they should be put into an environment to make a meaningful contribution, in terms of reducing the economic burden on the state, at the same time, creating a situation where they themselves realize some economic return in a controlled system. Upon their return to the streets, they would be in a position to not only look after themselves, but perhaps, have the opportunity of going back to their families. All these things contribute to keeping an individual out of trouble and out of jail.

I think that the committee, should be given the opportunity to file its report and that report debated by Parliament. I am sure that at the end of the day, rational thinking people, as we ought to be, we would have developed a strategy

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and a decent, mindful approach—one that cuts the burden of the state—in terms of the economics and in terms of a reduction in crime in our country. Thank you.

**3.40 p.m.**

**Mr. Raymond Palackdharrysingh** (*Naparima*): Mr. Speaker, I have no doubt that there is a direct relationship with what is happening in the prison population and what is happening in the larger society. As unemployment rises, so too, would the prison population, and in that respect, you would have a direct relationship. At the same time, you would have another type of relationship in the prisons, in that while the rate of those who are committed to prison is on the increase, the overcrowding in the prisons would suggest that there are not enough provisions made to deal with the situation.

In one way, the institutionalized set-up is not matching the demands of the society and so something has gone extremely wrong. To come to the Parliament and say that sentences are going to be reduced because of overcrowding is to send out signals to the community that would put us in an extremely uncomfortable position.

Can you imagine what people in the community might be thinking on hearing that prisoners are being sent out earlier because of overcrowding? They are going to recoil in some way, that those being sent out would have again received a signal that the society is not ready to accept them. Do you not see in the wider context what would happen to the society? It would put tremors in the nervous system of the society. Therefore what it amounts to is that the present administration has failed to deal with the problems in the society.

I am not in a position to pass judgement upon matters that might have been, in the first instance, not acceptable in the society and hence conviction. What I do know, is the fact that if members of our community are deviants, they are deviants because of several reasons—more than one maybe—or characters or attitude. What we do is conditioned partly by the environment in which we grow and the lifestyle we experience. If that is the case, a society with a soul would not merely have been bent upon passing convictions, and then when the prisons are overcrowded you reduce the sentences, perhaps to accommodate another intake of prisoners. A society, with a soul would wrestle with some of the fundamental problems that exist at two levels. The fundamental level of the weaknesses in the society that would impact directly upon the behaviour of members of its population, and secondly, upon the individual.

What do I mean by that? All the factors that impinge upon our lives both from the community and as individuals need to be constantly under surveillance. It is a fact that, for the community, there are certain expectations; that the resources of the community must be so distributed as to subserve the common good. Therefore, when those resources are not so well distributed that they create need and want, then individuals would respond in one way or another to satisfy those needs.

I was extremely disappointed that the hon. Minister did not attempt to justify what he was seeking to do by this measure, by indicating the number of prisoners, the space available and a breakdown of the figures as of the respective age groups. More than that, there should have been an analysis on the background of those prisoners; from whence they came and some of the factors that were responsible for their deviance in the first instance. But these things have not been done and it would seem that the approach of the Government, again, is one of not being able to cope with the situation. I do not know if the budgetary provisions to the prisons cannot now take care of their needs, but one would have hoped that such an analysis would have been made so as to give a correct understanding of the type of persons who are in the prisons.

It is only when that is done, that we would be able to appreciate the weaknesses in the society and probably take measures to correct those weaknesses. But that was not done at all. So here we have a situation where violence is being done both to the prisoner and those who are not prisoners; those who are looking from the outside and wondering what impact it is going to have upon our safety and security.

I find it heartless not to think about the improvement of the quality of life of people who are in prisons. Make no mistake about it, as members of the wider community, we are all involved with families, or have families, and we can never say the day or time when members of our own families would be in situations like these. So the problems in the prisons will not escape anyone of us.

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

**3.50 p.m.**

What is happening in the prisons? The moment a person is committed to prison what happens? Is he merely shown a room; a place where he is going to put his head in the night; and told how much light he is going to have for the day; how much fresh air he is going to receive outside and how much exercise he is

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going to have? Or, is there a programme in the prison service that would try to analyze the psychosomatic traumas of the individuals who are committed? A programme that would analyze the mental attitude and the inhibitions of the person? Is there a programme that would say an evaluation has been carried out and that from a particular level we can deal with some measure of rehabilitation, as previously spoken about in the Chamber this evening? Those are critical questions. If prisoners are merely sent to spend time and when that time has elapsed they are sent back out to the society, you are saying that the human being has been degenerated into an animal.

I hope that we would not reach that level. Therefore, it is important for the Minister to tell the Parliament what is the real situation in the prisons, with respect to programmes and facilities and resources to be used on prisoners. What is the objective of having people sent to prison for petty offences, if at the end of it they do not return to the society with some measure of improvement? If that is not the objective, I am afraid that the penal system would have been a woeful imposition upon the community. It is only the soulless community that would take an approach like that coupled with a heartless government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am sure that you can empathize with some of the sentiments that I am expressing, because I know fully that you have been involved in the community prior to your stint in the Parliament. Therefore, prisoners, though put aside, must not be isolated from the humanizing influences that are important to the creation of a humane society. If the prisoner goes to prison and is no better off at the expiration of his term, then all the institutions that we have; all of us as members of the community, and all of us who sit in this Chamber would have failed miserably in our stewardship to that community.

The hon. Member for Couva North has pointed out that there are reports of aggravation to the human spirit in the prisons. There are reports of fights among individuals, probably the development of the practice of homosexuality. If there is a further degradation of the human condition, especially his spirit, when he enters the prison, then is it not even more denigrating for him to be back out in the community, where he is being stigmatized as one who must be avoided at all costs? Is that not so?

I wonder if we could really see houses and homes without the burglar-proofing. They are prisoners and when they are out, we inflict imprisonment upon ourselves because we are bewildered; we do not know if we can help or whether we would be the victims of the victims.



To merely say that a measure is before the Parliament on the basis of overcrowding, is to tell the world that we have failed; we do not care and whatever the consequences, it is up to maybe the individuals in the community. It is saying also that there might be those who may have experienced the harshness and difficulty of prison life and would not wish to return, and not wishing to return would like to see themselves as worthy contributors in their own little villages and communities. Do you know what happens? The community has not been prepared to accept prisoners who might have gained some measure of skill and who have resolved not to go back there again, the repentant sinner, and when he comes back to the community he cannot find a place, he is not grounded and hence the rising tide of vagrancy in the society. That is the other choice. To come around not wanting to go back to prison and because freedom is so inherent in our souls, that we would like to stay on the outside, but there is no hope and all that he can do is to join the ranks of vagrancy out in the society.

We are here in this august Chamber, but just walk across a few metres to Woodford Square and you would see the decrepit human beings lying there, not as a condemnation of themselves, but as a condemnation of the society in which we live and of the policies of this heartless Government.

Need I say more about it? There is so much more to be said. Human beings were not created to be alone, or have no desire to be alone. They are gregarious and they like to be in company and that is why we pride ourselves on the practice of family life and upholding the concepts of family, because it is only in family that we can find a certain amount of satisfaction and appreciation and, of course, the sharing of our lives.

**4.00 p.m.**

It is only in that unit, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we find that intimacy. We may work here as a group in the Parliament, but after our functions and roles we dissipate back into the area of our family life. If you look at what happens in many instances, it has been said all over in the open community and even in the courts that people have to be deviant because their families are not sharing in the resources of the country, they are not fulfilling their needs. That is why they took their chances. Some of them said, "It is better to try to feed my hungry children than see them starve, and that is why I acted in a particular way", a very conscious decision brought about by circumstances and the environment. You see what happens in the process. To fulfil an obligation, a man, a youth, whoever it is, in the process to ascertain an identity and to build self-esteem, to look good in the eyes of his family, that was one of his approaches.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the contradiction or the antithesis of his actions will not be even understood by his family, far less the community. He is sent to prison but he has to come back. Where is he going? Tell me. Has the Prison Service dealt with the question of where they are going to send those who came out? Are they going to send him back to their families? Are they going to send them back to their employers? Are they going to find some means of sustenance for them in terms of provisions for them to make a useful contribution in the society?

I have the greatest feeling that the answer is "no". It is my feeling that the Prison Service and administration has not yet attempted to form networks and linkages back into the community and to perhaps also recommend ourselves, the rehabilitated prisoner or the rehabilitated inmate as a body and trusted citizen back out into the wider community. If that has not been done, Mr. Deputy Speaker, then you see what the problem is. The problem or the seed of recidivism is just waiting to explode once more and, therefore, if that prison system has not and will not form linkages with the communities, especially with the employers, then the prison system has not begun to address the problems. To send back the prisoner out into the society without provisions for him to make a useful contribution is to treat him as mere flesh and blood without spirit, without needs, without the will to live in a decent way.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, those matters must be addressed in situations like these. It has not only been on matters of sending an inmate out into the community and not finding jobs. There is also the whole dynamic of psycho-social relationships to be dealt with, and the first place to be looked at is the family unit.

Again, you see, when we deal with families, and when we deal with deviants, and when we deal with estrangement, it is not like we are putting objects into a container and keeping them there. We are dealing with beings that respond in a particular way to the perceptions of other people, be it husband, wife, or children, and that is a crucial variable. It is important because one has to monitor what is happening to the individual's family while he is in prison. He may hope to return to that family, but while he is in prison, that family might be reacting in other ways to satisfy the need for food, shelter, clothing. Very often the perception of the inmate about his family and his nearness to his family would have been history because his own family, in an effort at survival, would have gone a different way.

So you see what is required. There must be the constant touch of humanizing the inmates and keeping the communications open with his family so there would be no rejection on his return. You know very well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, how many prisoners were disappointed on their return to society because they could not find their families as they perceived, and therefore they were further shattered by the reality that confronted them on their return; what should have been a warm and receptive place had become a cold and unwelcome environment. Therefore, what is left for the ex-prisoner? What is left for him? To wander about in the society until there is some impetus in him to do something which might not meet the approval of the wider community?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it would seem that you are sending prisoners out merely because of overcrowding, that you are not able to cope with the nature of the deviants, you are not able to work with them in a fashion to bring to them some human values for assimilation in the society and, at the same time, you are saying that you do not even care if the social workers and even the medical practitioners do not have a look at them. I wonder whether such services are provided. If they are not provided, then what is the point? What is the point of traumatizing the society like this? Therefore, I hope that the Government would take a serious look at some of the critical issues. This "ad hoc" presented today is far from acceptable and, therefore, it is a further indictment upon the Government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me appeal once more for a level of sanity to be pursued by the Government. Let me again appeal that they rehumanize themselves and begin to see the human being as a potentially vulnerable being, if treated without care. Let them inculcate again the spirit of knowing that power cannot succeed unless it is grounded upon the foundation of the needs of human life.

I am sorry that they have shown their shortcomings in such a bold way. It is a pathetic performance, but sometimes it is never too late to take even one measure to bring dignity to the life of people. This measure is far from acceptable and I hope that measures that would fundamentally transform the weaknesses of the system will be sought and implemented. Unless we can deal with the prison system as a humanizing entity, as a productive entity, as a place for transformation, then it will always be a liability upon any nation and even a greater liability upon any administration like the present one.

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Mr. Deputy Speaker, I find it extremely difficult to support a measure like this without the justification for the actions presented. Thank you very much.

**The Minister of Justice and National Security (Hon. Joseph Toney):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me first of all thank the Members of this honourable House who contributed to the debate on this motion.

**4.15 p.m.**

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I listened very carefully to what they had to say, and in some instances it bothered me tremendously to discern from what they were saying, what exactly they were proposing as an alternative measure to the motion that is before the House. Let me say at the outset that this measure only concerns those who have to serve prison sentences of not more than 12 months. The law, as it stands, allows those who are sentenced for 12 months to leave the prison after they have served eight months. This measure reduces it further to six months. At this stage, those who have been—as some members so glibly put it this afternoon—victims of circumstances, the environment has caused them to go along a path of criminality. Those who have come before the courts for petty offences, these people, they are saying, ought not to be given a chance to come back and re-join society.

**Mr. Sudama:** On a point of order. The Minister is deliberately misleading this House. The point we on this side made is that there were no rehabilitative measures in place to re-integrate these people properly, into the wider society; not that they ought not to have their sentences remitted. This is the point we were making. In the absence of such rehabilitative mechanisms and processes, you are then going to put an additional burden on the society. I want to correct the Minister. He does not seem to understand the points very well.

**Hon. Toney:** You will notice, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I did not disturb them when they were making their contributions. I sat and listened very carefully to what they were saying and I took very copious notes. They spoke at length about the reasons for my bringing this motion before the House. I have my record of what I said, and I said that it was one effort to minimize the overwhelmingly difficult overcrowding situation in the prisons. I spoke as well about the parole system that we are trying to have implemented in the country. I also spoke about plans to construct a maximum security prison, but this, of course, very conveniently, went over the heads of those who made their contributions this evening. It is interesting that my good friend from Couva North said that he was

in favour of the parole system, because there are many persons who do not have a criminal mind, victim of circumstances, petty offenders, those who commit a crime of passion. In my contribution I said that the general principle of the parole system is, after a person serves half his sentence, he is then eligible for parole. So even if he felt that he favours the parole system, if it is implemented now, the very results of this measure would be similar to those of the implementation of a parole system as advocated by him. Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me go on to state—I do not know if they do not speak to each other—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order please. The Member is being disturbed.

**Hon. Toney:** I am quite okay. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I listened very quietly to what they had to say and I was not disturbed, I do not think I would be disturbed now. There was a question that was posed in this House during this session from one Sen. Wade Mark addressed to the Minister of Justice and National Security. Let me tell you the question that was asked because I get the impression that—

**Mr. Valley:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point or order. The Minister seems to want to introduce matters which have nothing to do with the House. He spoke about a question posed by Sen. Wade Mark.

**Hon. Toney:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I was saying, in another place the following information was provided for the general population, and I would let you know what this information—

**Mr. Valley:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, could I have a ruling please? Is it allowed that information be quoted here from the other place? I know I was a victim of that in my early days. I thought the Minister was here for a much longer period than I have been.

**Hon. Toney:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is now public information. Let me give you some excerpts of what is now public knowledge. The matter had to do with current reform programmes within the penal system. On that occasion, the Minister of Justice and National Security gave to the population the following information. He said that as far as—

**Mr. Sudama:** Could he tell us the date when that information was provided? That is very important.

**Hon. Toney:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am giving you information that was provided to the population in March of this year by the Minister of Justice and

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National Security for the general consumption of the public. The matter, as I said, concerned reforms within the penal system. The Minister of Justice and National Security said then that there is now within the penal system a form of literacy training to enable the number of illiterates who come into the system to leave with some measure of reading and writing skills. In this regard they have been able—he was referring to the prison authorities—to solicit and obtain the services of trained, retired teachers who have volunteered and are assisting in these programmes. The Minister, at the time, also went on to say that prisoners assist and are trained in plumbing, electrical and all the other skills in the construction field. He went on to point out that it was worthwhile to know that the women's prison which was built in 1989, was undertaken with this form of labour. At the Youth Training Centre, he also pointed out that it catered for young offenders between the ages of 16 and 21, and they have at the Youth Training Centre, programmes in religion, physical education, vocational pursuits, agriculture, culture, welfare and health and these are juxtaposed to a full programme of academic studies. He also went on to point out on that occasion, that the much needed spiritual teaching is met by approved denominational chaplains, and in addition the prison service has allowed other approved organizations to visit and intensify the spiritual impetus.

**4.25 p.m.**

I am very pleased to say that even though we were having difficulties at the ministry to fill the post of psychologist in the Prison Service, only this week we were informed that the Ministry of Finance has given us the go ahead because the funds are available to fill this post.

The Minister of National Security at the time, also went on to point out that the Alcoholics Anonymous Association has carried out several counselling sessions and is continuing to do so within the prison system. Officers trained in drug rehabilitation techniques at NIHERST are at present working at the Youth Training Centre.

When I hear this afternoon that there is no rehabilitation programme within the penal system, as the Member for Couva North said earlier on, I wonder if certain people have just dropped from Mars and they are now acclimatizing and wanting to know what is happening in Trinidad and Tobago.

The Member for Oropouche said that one must look at the crime situation in the country when one is dealing with this issue. Let me say that the Ministry of Justice and National Security has received complaints and in some instances very

vocal concerns about the crime situation in the country. We have initiated measures via the police, and in some instances created very special units to deal with the general situation *vis-a-vis* crime.

The Member for Oropouche also spoke about the issue of bail. I want to make the point that the matter of bail is one which does not fall, strictly speaking, within the purview of the Ministry of Justice and National Security. This is a matter, in the first instance, which falls within the jurisdiction of the police who make an arrest, then of course a justice of the peace, the magistrate and then a judge in chambers as the case may be. So when the Member for Oropouche makes the point that the Ministry of Justice and National Security should go all out to ensure that the discretion in granting bail is exercised in a certain manner, then I am afraid on that score we must part ways.

This Government will not interfere with the powers of the courts, the powers of the judiciary, the powers of the magistracy, and they must be very, very careful when they make statements that give one the impression that if they were in government, they would seek to interfere with the powers of the magistrates, the powers of the judge and the powers of justices of the peace.

He did mention that he came to see me on one occasion about the question, if I may use what is referred to as cattle rustling, in his constituency. Efforts were made to ensure that that problem is rectified. Even though he did not get in contact with me on the matter, within the last two weeks I did receive a telephone call from the Minister in the Ministry of Industry, Enterprise and Tourism telling me that the people who came to see me about the matter are gratified at the efforts the police have taken in ensuring the arrest of the people who are engaged in this type of activity.

**Mr. Sudama:** Could the Minister inform this House who is this goodly gentleman—the Minister in the Ministry of Industry, Enterprise and Tourism.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Members, the sitting of the House is suspended for tea.

**4.30 p.m.:** *Sitting suspended.*

**5.05 p.m.:** *Sitting resumed.*

**Hon. J. Toney:** I just want to deal with one or two matters which cropped up. There is a tendency, for whatever reasons, to label our Government as an uncaring and heartless one. That sounds very good for those who love to hear that

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type of rhetoric. It is, of course, quite emotive and raises passions that one may think are hidden in certain individuals. But when one examines this situation, I wonder if it is just and fair to label the Government as uncaring. *[Interruption]* Mr. Deputy Speaker, you hear them—the emotions.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have a situation where there is a problem of overcrowding in the prisons. I have made that point and I am not sweeping that point under the carpet. It is a fact that we have overcrowding in our prisons and I would not behave like the last Government and attempt to sweep that under the carpet. Everybody knows of it. We must do something to ensure that the problem is in a way, rectified. We are adopting a measure that we are not saying it is going to be the be-all and cure-all of the situation, but it is going to provide a bit of relief, whilst we look at other situations which can assist in remedying the problem.

Also, we have to look after people who are not what you would call, hardened criminals—people who for some reason find themselves before the court and are sentenced to serve time of not more than 12 months. As I said earlier on in my contribution, the law as it now stands, allow these people to leave the prisons after they have served eight months. We are saying that in order that these people, not find themselves amongst hardened criminals; in order that they go back into society and start afresh, and in order to assist us with the overcrowding situation at the prisons, these people should be allowed to have their sentences cut in half. That is all that is before the House this evening.

For example, if a person goes to a cricket match, and because he does not like how the cricket match is going, he strikes another fellow, he comes before the court and is sentenced; would you say that person should be kept in prison for 12 months because he is a hardened criminal? Would you say, that he should be kept within an environment of hardened criminals and that he may not be able to rehabilitate himself? If for example, you are an official of a political party, you are assaulted in the course of your duties, and you have to go before the court, are you going to say that person is a hardened criminal and he should be kept in prison for that length of time? I merely ask these questions because we are making mountains out of molehills.

The Member for Couva North, spoke about “ad hococracy” and I am amazed that he could accuse anyone of practising “ad hococracy”. I do not want to appear this evening to be an expert on his political adventures, but I think that he usually claims that he keeps very close to the people. He knows what they are saying,



how they are feeling. I would ask him, when he makes his next entry amongst the people, to listen carefully to what they are saying about how he practises the art of politics. He would then learn what they regard as “adhococracy” and they would tell him that the politics which he has practised over the last 15 years is compelling proof of “adhococracy”.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Member for Couva North also raised a number of matters that he said were brought to his attention as Leader of the Opposition—a whole litany of complaints about practices within the prison system. I listened very carefully to what he had to say and it is a pity that he did not choose to communicate with me in writing, or by the telephone, or even as we meet from day to day, on these matters to see what could be done to have them rectified. To come here this evening and to air them in the manner in which he did, really demonstrated to me that he was simply trying to gain cheap political mileage on a situation which cries out for attention, not only on the part of the Ministry of Justice and National Security, but on the part of the country at large.

**5.15 p.m.**

My friend from Port of Spain North—he is not here, probably he had to attend to another matter—did mention the point about community work to be done by prisoners. I feel that this is a point that needs to be looked at very, very carefully because I am also of the view that as part of their sentences, doing some sort of community exercises to assist in building the community in whatever form or fashion. It is something that I hope I can get some sort of sentiment about so that we would know in what instances offenders can be sentenced to do community work.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me end my contribution by saying that this is a measure that concerns those who have committed offences and are sentenced to prisons for not less than 12 months. The law as it now stands allows those people to leave the prison after they have served eight months. We have a problem now at the prisons and we feel that one of the measures that can assist in remedying that problem is to allow prisoners who have been sentenced for not less than 12 months to leave the prison after they have served half of the sentence. As I have said before, now they can leave after they have served eight months.

So, that is the measure before you, Mr. Deputy Speaker and I hope that Members would see the wisdom in supporting the motion and that we would all in our own way try to do what we can to ensure that those who, for whatever reason, have had to undergo a prison term, would be accepted back into society. I

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hope we would do all that we can to make them comfortable and make them forget that they served that prison term that they underwent.

I beg to move once more that this resolution be given the affirmative vote of this honourable House. Thank you.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Resolved:*

That the Prison (Amdt.) Rules, 1991 be affirmed.

#### ORDER OF BUSINESS

**The Minister of Industry Enterprise and Tourism (Dr. The Hon. Bhoendradatt Tewarie):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I seek leave of this honourable House to proceed to motion No. 4.

*Question proposed.*

**Mr. Sudama:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, motion No. 4 has a great deal of significance for matters which are before this House. I do not think that this motion should be dealt with in this very flippant manner. It has been introduced only today. Without warning we got a notification that these motions will come up for debate. Subparagraph (a) has to do with the report and recommendations of the Constitution Commission and we do not feel that it is a fit and proper matter to be dealt with without proper notification.

Secondly, the whole question of the range of public holidays in Trinidad and Tobago is another very, very significant issue we have to deal with; to come here and drop this resolution at this point in time is to treat Members of this House with gross disrespect and utter contempt. We cannot see ourselves supporting any proposals to deal with these resolutions this afternoon.

**Hon. Dr. Tewarie:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, as usual the Member for Oropouche is overstating the case. The motion calls for the appointment of a Joint Select Committee to consider these matters. What it means is that it will be a committee of this House and of the other place, jointly sitting together with the obligation and responsibility, if they so require, to call Members. That report will be brought before Parliament and will be fully debated.

**Mr. Sudama:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, the whole question of appointment of a select committee has to be justified and it is in that justification that we want to

have a debate of the issues involved. I do not see that the Member, has the right to come and merely use this House as a kind of formal rubber stamp.

**Hon. Dr. Tewarie:** I do have the right, Sir, and I have the motion before the House.

**Mr. Sudama:** You have the right to use this House as a rubber stamp?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Members, if not for consideration of the selection of a Select Committee, this part of the debate need not have had any extra amount of notice. So we will proceed with motion No. 4.

*Agreed to.*

**5.25 p.m.**

#### JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE

**The Minister of Industry, Enterprise and Tourism (Dr. The Hon. Bhoendradatt Tewarie):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have the honour to read the following motion which stands in my name:

- (a) The Report of the Constitution Commission (1987);
- (b) Request by various Organizations and individuals for public holidays in Trinidad and Tobago.

*Be it further resolved:*

That this House appoint and nominate a select committee to join with a select committee of an equal number appointed and nominated by the Senate to consider the matters referred to above and that the committee be authorized to submit interim reports.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in prior discussions with the Leader of the Opposition, we agreed, if the House decides in favour of this motion, to nominate Members to the Speaker, whose names will be read before this honourable House on Friday.

**Mr. Sudama:** I wish to remind this House, that I have a private motion pending with respect to seeking the approval of this House to have May 30 declared a public holiday; in fact, declared as a day of national historic importance.

Now, I wish that motion to be pursued before this House and I do not want to be pre-empted by this. If he wants to discuss other issues with respect to public holidays, other matters and other representations, that is a concern of his

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but I have a private motion before this House and, therefore, I would like to pursue that in due course.

**Hon. Dr. Tewarie:** It is the tradition of this Government to debate fully, any motion before this House, including all private matters.

At this point, we wish to seek an adjournment of the House, but there is a motion on the adjournment. The hon. Minister is on her way, so we may need a few minutes.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Could you indicate when the hon. Minister would be here?

**Hon. Dr. Tewarie:** I would say in about ten minutes.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Sitting is suspended for ten minutes.

**5.28 p.m.:** *Sitting suspended.*

**5.35 p.m.:** *Sitting resumed.*

#### ADJOURNMENT

**The Minister of Industry, Enterprise and Tourism (Dr. The Hon. Bhoendradatt Tewarie):** Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this House do now adjourn to Friday, May 10, 1991 at 1:30 p.m.

#### Pipe-borne Water (Shortage)

**Mr. Basdeo Panday (Couva North):** Mr. Speaker, the matter I had sought your leave to raise, that is a definite matter of urgent public importance, which has been prompted by the fact that over the past months, intensifying over the last couple of weeks, the complaints against the shortage of pipe-borne water has been rising to a crescendo throughout the country.

At a recent meeting of the parliamentary arm of the UNC, councillors from all over the country reported on the position with respect to water. Mr. Speaker, actually it is because of that request by those councillors that this motion is before the House. I undertook and I promised to raise this matter on their behalf and on behalf of their constituents. The report is that this basic commodity is scarce, for one reason or another, and that people are having to resort to all kinds of devices in order to get water. Some people are using river water, some are using water from old and polluted wells.

There is also the further complaint that a great element of corruption has seeped into the distribution of truck-borne water. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I believe that the Chairman of the Caroni County Council is reported to have said in the press that he too had to pay \$40 for a tank of water. I raise this question because once the water begins to get scarcer and scarcer, obviously people are going to exploit the situation. If they are going to charge people for water, then the poor are going to have none. So that I thought the Minister would like to inform the public as to what measures she is taking to make sure that there is an adequate water supply, and to make sure that when it is being distributed by trucks that there is no corruption taking place.

Mr. Speaker, when I sought your permission, I think the hon. Minister objected on the ground that what I was saying was untrue. I want to tell the hon. Minister that I have not visited every part of the country so I can only report to this House what has been reported to me. If what I am saying is untrue, then I am sure she will indicate to the House, so that those people who are in fact suffering will know what she is saying in this House—that they are lying. That is all right by me. I have no problems with that.

Various reasons are being given for the failure to provide water, and one of the reasons, Mr. Speaker, is that because of the Government's negligence, they have failed really to dredge the dams, so the dams really do not contain the amount of water that they ought to contain. Another excuse that is being given is that water which should have been used for drinking, that is water that is treated at great expense, is being consumed by industry, particularly those industries at Point Lisas.

I recall that in the run-up to the 1986 election, one of the most devastating speeches we made against the then incumbent PNM Government was that after being in office for so long and having spent so much money, they were not able to provide a mere 1.2 million people with so basic a necessity as a regular supply of drinking water. Today at the end of their own term, having spent more than \$6 billion every year for 4 years, this Government still has not succeeded in providing a mere 1.2 million people with the same basic necessity.

We have had complaints from county Victoria that there has been a cutback in funds and they cannot pay the trucks for water. There is much confusion, we understand also, with respect to the tenders that are given for these trucks that are rented on contract to deliver water. Complaints have come from La Romain, Esperance, Debe, Gandhi Village, Realise Road, Cunjal Road, in Caroni; Couva

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where they have complained that for several weeks they have had no water, Freeport, Chaguanas, Chase Village, Carlsen Field; in St. Patrick from Suchit Trace, Gopie Trace, Penal Junction, Rock Road, San Francique. Also, Mr. Speaker, from Springvale, Balmain, Christian Village, Lime Fruit Trace, Chickland. That has to deal mostly with the South. Even from the North: Gonzales, Morvant, Laventille; all along the East-West corridor: people in Diego Martin, San Juan, Barataria, Patra Village. People from all these places have been complaining about a lack of water supply.

Now, maybe I ought to tell the Minister that I do not think people will just tell a falsehood of the ministry—I do not think so—so that maybe if her information is that water is being supplied, she might be tempted to check it out. I do not think people will just vindictively tell lies against the officers in her ministry. In order to substantiate the point I was making, I thought I would refer you to the reported news on this—in addition to what we have heard—and I refer to page 10 of the *Express* of Tuesday, November 6, 1990, "Dry Water Tanks in Fyzabad area." So the problem, as I say, has been going on for sometime. It has intensified over the past two weeks, and over the past week, "Dry Water Tanks in Fyzabad."

This was a letter to the editor by one Mr. Ramnarine who lives there, and his complaint was that for more than one year, water ceased to flow in the taps at Sieulal Trace. The reasons given by WASA, he said, was that the pump has broken down, that the water supply at the reservoir is always very low—the point I made a little earlier on—so that it cannot reach certain areas, although Sieulal Trace is less than one kilometre from the pumping station at the back of Hi-Lo in Fyzabad.

The third reason given is breakdown in electricity supply and the fourth reason is the dry hydrant at Rousillac which would supply the trucks. So that you cannot get pipe-borne water because there is none in the hydrants. The fifth reason given is that there was no transport to supply truck-borne water.

So the point I wish to make is that when the Minister denies this, it is not I who am making these complaints. I am merely relaying the complaints of those people who put her in power.

This gentleman from Fyzabad, if I may quote his letter, says:

"I asked one of the officials from WASA San Fernando about a 'rebate', since we have not received a drop of water for the year, and a very highly irregular

supply of truck-borne water. He says he doesn't know anything about that. Isn't that very unfair? The dry season is around the corner and we are asking for someone to please help us. Our tanks are now dry."

The purpose for reading that line is to show that this was a letter written in November, so that cannot be the dry season. November is part of the wet season in this country. It is a case of "water, water everywhere and not a drop to drink."

October 17, 1990, page 6 of the *Trinidad Guardian*: "Princes Town residents complain of dirty water." In that article it is reported:

"Since 1987, residents have been receiving regular supplies of 'contaminated fresh smelling' water in their taps.

"We are unable to wash our clothes, to bathe, to drink, to cook. Even the animals are suffering. Many children have already become ill from drinking the water. Families who do not own vehicles are forced to drink the water."

I imagine that means that those families who do not own vehicles are able to go to some other district where for the time being there is water. I quote, Mr. Speaker:

"Residents of Princes Town have forgotten what good, clean water is. Hence they are calling on the Minister of Health, Clive Pantin, (God bless his soul) to investigate the problem."

Mr. Pantin has gone, but the problem has remained.

Mr. Speaker, I quote now from the *Guardian* of November 5, 1990, and it reads: "Pam: Let's have evidence on WASA water racket."

Now, the article reads:

"Minister of Settlements and Public Utilities, Pamela Nicholson, last week said that since 1966 allegations of racketeering with respect to the Water and Sewerage Authority, truck-borne water supply system were being made, but she pointed out that up to this date no tangible evidence to support these charges has been forthcoming."

Further in the letter, it says:

"Responding to the latest charges of corruption in the truck-borne water system by House Speaker, Nizam Mohammed, and St. Patrick County Councillor Sheila Lamorelle, Minister Nicholson admitted that there is a problem with respect to this system, but added that despite requests from

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members of the public to come forward with the evidence of the racket, they have refused to do so."

I merely wish to draw to the attention of the hon. Minister that one of her councillors, Chairman of the Caroni County Council is reported in one of the weeklies—I do not have the date on me—to have said that he too had to pay \$40 in order to get a tank of water.

I am sure the Minister has read that because I know she keeps tabs on what is happening. If she wants evidence, or if she was serious about wanting evidence, then there was a source. You see, the trouble with this water problem is that once people do not get water, they begin to raise all kinds of suspicions and reasons why they are not getting water, so they begin to attack one another. It leads to social degeneration.

I refer to an article that appeared in the Guardian of February 4, 1991, Mr. Speaker: "WASA accused of 'vandalism.'" And do you know who is accusing WASA of vandalism?

"Alderman Percy Persad has suggested that the San Fernando City Council take legal action against the Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA) for what he terms the 'vandalizing' of the roads of the city."

I recall distinctly that while the PNM was in power, we lamented and we criticized them about this lack of co-ordination between those who repair roads and those who supply water and telephone. It seemed as though some people got some kind of sadistic joy in waiting until the road was paved and, once it was paved, WASA passed and dug it up, and they would pave it again, and the telephone people would say "I shall have a go", and they pass and dig it up. So that all that we ask is that they simply co-ordinate the work. I imagine Government Ministers speak to one another.

So that this, in my book, would not have led to a sad situation where an Alderman of the ruling party has to accuse a state enterprise of vandalism. That seems to be totally as though the party does not speak to itself.

This article continues, and it quotes the Alderman:

"WASA, by design or accident, waits until the road is fixed to begin work," says Persad."



He referred to Solomon Street in Vistabella and several other streets. Then February 9, 1991, page 11 of the *Express*:

"Residents: We won't pay. We won't pay..."

**5.50 p.m.**

"Residents of Doorbasse Trace in San Francique have threatened to stop paying water rates unless they can be assured of a water supply. About 100 residents met with the Minister in the Ministry of Industry, Enterprise and Tourism, Surujrattan Rambachan..."

Is he in your ministry now?—Pimpernel indeed, scarlet, and they do not know.

"...on Wednesday and asked him to convey that message to Prime Minister, A. N. R. Robinson."

**Mr. Ramnath:** Bhoé has that problem as well.

**Mr. Panday:** Does he work in the ministry at all?

"The residents told Rambachan it was their right to withdraw payment to any of the utilities if they could not be provided with the facilities.

I want to make it public, that a Minister has said that you may withdraw payment to authorities if they do not provide facilities. So we have it from the authority of the Minister, that you do not have to pay water-rates if you are not getting water and that you do not have to pay telephone rates if your telephones are not working. Do you have to pay Ministers if they do not work?

"The residents told Rambachan that they had been complaining about the lack of water for the past 23 years ..."

**Hon. Member:** You will have to refund 18 months' salary as Minister.

**Mr. Panday:** Of course, and you know I will, but I would not give it to you in the dark. That is the only difference. I would not give it to you in the dark.

"The residents told Rambachan that they had been complaining about a lack of water for the past 23 years but these complaints were ignored. Rambachan said yesterday that representations were made to the Water and Sewerage Authorities."

**Mr. Ramnath:** They are very insensitive. I spoke to them.

**Mr. Panday:** Mr. Speaker, I come now to another area. I am quoting these because the Minister tended to say that my information was false and that there was no general complaint and so on. Page 12 of the *Express*, Monday, February 18, 1991 "Villagers lament delay of water project".

"Residents of Brothers Road, near Tabaquite, have blamed both Nariva Member of Parliament, Dr. Brinsley Samaroo and the Nariva/Mayaro County Council for delay in the start of a water project in the district that would benefit 30 families.

St. John's Trace residents have no pipe-borne water and supply. Village spokesman, Lester Jemmot told the *Express* the Brothers Road Village Council had initiated the project since April last year to bring water relief to the people."

There has been some \$39,000. I think they are still without water. That is their problem. "Caratal residents stage protests", "Bills from WASA, but no water"; February 16, 1991 *Express*, page 6.

"Residents of Caratal No. 2, staged a protest demonstration on Thursday before Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA) southern offices for a regular water supply "

I quote this example because in the event that the Minister says, "Well listen, the problem is a problem of distribution, that they do not have lines", these people are saying:

"The villagers said that although the area had water lines they do not receive water in the lines. In fact, the last truck-borne supply to a few people in that area was some three weeks ago. Villagers said they were forced to boil pond water to drink when they cannot pay for water from WASA. Others pay up to \$100 for a 400-gallon tank of water."

I cannot understand how you could say that you do not have evidence. Here it is that the Caratal residents are saying that they are paying \$100 for a 400-gallon tank of water.

"Villagers also claim that they were charged \$20 per load of water at the Retrench WASA station.

Ramesh Ramnarine who had a WASA bill for \$16,800.83, said he received only two tank loads of water since last year. Boysie Lewis has a bill of \$11,069, received truck-borne water supply three times.

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Boodram Baboolal could not pay the rates, because the WASA pump in the area had not worked for more than five years."

I do not know. There seems to be many people here who are willing to stand up and talk about what is taking place. The *Trinidad Guardian* March 8, 1991; "Sunday protest over poor water supply." Christian Village this time.

"Christian Village and Lime Fruit Trace, Calcutta Settlement, have been without pipe-borne water for the last month, and hundreds of dissatisfied residents staged a massive protest demonstration on Sunday afternoon at the Freeport Water Works to send a message to the authorities to: 'Give us some water please.'"

**Member:** That is my constituency.

**Mr. Panday:** "Mr. Jamal Deen..."

A gentleman of the area,

"...explained that in the past week water trickled through the taps three days per week and we tolerated the situation but 'why no water at this point in time?'

He charged that the Freeport Water Works had responsibility of pumping water to the Preysal, Siewdass Road and Three Roads, as well as Calcutta Settlement, Christian Village and Lime Fruit Trace."

And so on.

I want to show my colleague that I am not prejudiced. Some of the placards read: "Under the PNM we got water; Only big boys are getting water; WASA sending bills but no water and so on". I do not know how some people's memories are so short, but we will deal with that at another time.

The *Trinidad Guardian* of March 29, 1991; "Panday demands water for Couva." That must be me. I was really voicing the complaints of residents that for some three weeks they had not received one drop of water. I believe after this complaint was made the hon. Minister visited the area and said that they are not getting water because the industrial complex is using up the water provided for drinking.

**Miss Nicholson:** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. That last statement is misleading. I never said that. I would like the hon. Member to withdraw that statement, please.

**Mr. Panday:** I am sure I said that I was told that the Member said that. If she did not, then, of course, the residents are speaking untruths and I am sure she will tell us what she told them. So we come up to the North, "Water and Sewerage Authority has advised that water will be locked off in Diego Martin."

So the people of Diego Martin claimed—I am talking about a report in the *Guardian*, April 10, 1991 page 6: "WASA under fire." This is the point I was making. When the Minister fails to do her job—

**Mr. Ramnath:** Under fire!

**Mr. Panday:** Yes, not water. People hit out at the things that are nearest to them. So the WASA people are nearer to them than the Minister whom they cannot see, so they hit out at WASA. Disgruntled residents in central Trinidad calling on the Government to privatize the Water and Sewerage Authority in the hope that there will be more efficient management. You see what desperation makes people do. In desperation people are calling for the privatization of the Water and Sewerage Authority. This one is a little laughable because the complaints being made here are by a gentleman by the name of Cedric Weekes. I am sure my colleagues on the other side will know the gentleman of whom I speak.

**Mr. Sudama:** Is Mr. Weekes for privatization?

**Mr. Panday:** I continue:

"Mr. Weekes told the *Guardian* that the supply of water in that area is very irregular. Over the past few weeks WASA has failed to meet its objectives, and they added, we are aware of some of the financial constraints under which the authority is operating but the management of the distribution function leaves much to be desired."

This is the point I wanted to make, whether in fact that was not the real problem. Mr. Speaker, what happens is that when people get so fed up they actually accuse workers at WASA of turning off a stop-cock in order to divert water in some direction, for what reason—there are a variety of reasons. Some people actually accuse the WASA workers of doing that in order that there will be no water in the village and that would encourage the supply of truck-borne water for which their friends would get contracts. What I am trying to say is, by failing to provide this basic necessity, the Government is contributing to the moral decay in the society. So WASA was under fire and it is not because it had no water. "WASA wants backpay from all consumers". In the teeth of this and without

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having any water, WASA demands that they get back-pay. I am quoting from page 1 of the *Express* of April 27, 1991.

"The Water and Sewerage Authority yesterday indicated it would like retroactive adjustment of its rates. But, WASA added, the rates must be retroactive to all consumers.

The point was made by WASA financial director Irma Lee as she continued her testimony before the Public Utilities Commission which is conducting a review of the Authority's rates and charges.

Lee said there were about 16,000 to 20,000 consumers who did not receive bills..."

And that what they should really do is to charge people back-pay for water they have not received.

Mr. Speaker, I refer also to a report coming from Lengua, Papouri Road, Tabaquite, Williamsville and Borde Narvo in the *Trinidad Guardian*, of April 10, 1991, where they are complaining about the lack of water. Of course, once the Water and Sewerage Authority's workers are accused of sabotage they retaliate themselves, and the WASA workers are very angry. Those were sabotage claims by Councillor P. Persad.

**6.00 p.m.**

Mr. Speaker, this is another article—"Squatters denied lights, water, says Ramnath". I think what he was complaining there about was the fact that there is another issue where the Minister of Public Utilities had issued instructions to deny connection of water and electricity to people who are squatting.

Mr. Speaker, this is a problem that affects us all. As a matter of fact, on the television the other night, I was privileged to see you having difficulties with this problem and was able to see people taking water out of a well, being subjected to all kinds of diseases and so on. So this is not a motion, I assure you, that is intended to make political mileage. When I make political mileage, I do not make excuses for it nor do I deny it. I do not visit constituencies and groups all over the place and say, "This has nothing to do with elections." I do not have lunch with school children and then take away their school books—take away their school books first and then have lunch with them and say this has nothing to do with politics. When I politic, I politic. What is important here this evening is that this Government is failing to provide a basic necessity after four and a half years

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in power and has the whole country crying out. The Minister has demonstrated an incompetence in dealing with this whole matter—total incompetence on the part of the Minister. She does not know how to provide water. A member of her own party says that it has to do with administration.

**Mr. Speaker:** Your speaking time has expired.

**Mr. Panday:** If my time is up, then I will cease to speak and hope that the hon. Minister. *[Interruption]* No, I want to give the Minister time to reply. This is a serious matter and I think the Minister owes it to us. If she is incompetent or if she is unable to deal with the problem, in all honesty she should say "Listen, this one is too big for me; I cannot deal with it; let somebody else deal with it." I am not saying this to annoy her. She has demonstrated tremendous incompetence in supplying this basic necessity. She seems confused in that she does not know how to deal with the problem. She just gets up and makes incoherent statements, totally unrelated to the issue.

I raise this matter so that the hon. Minister can get an opportunity to tell us, why, after four and a half years, her ministry cannot supply so basic a necessity like drinking water to so small a population of 1.2 million. Thank you.

**The Minister of Settlements and Public Utilities (Hon. Pamela Nicholson):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased that this matter was raised today. The only thing I was concerned about is how it was raised. We were not given enough time to prepare, because I like to tell the people the truth. The first thing I would like to tell the Member for Couva North is, that nothing is too big for Pamela Nicholson, the Member for Tobago West. When you are intelligent and efficient, nothing is too big for you. I want to tell the hon. Member that the ladies on this side have the competence to cope with their problems. *[Interruption]* We did not disturb you all, so behave yourselves.

When I raised the issue on a point of order when the hon. Member raised the matter previously and he said "all over the country", I was only trying to tell him it was not "all over the country." There is a problem in a particular area and I wanted him to be honest if he wants to be the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago. It was against that kind of background that I wanted him to do the correct thing. There is no serious water problem in the north of Trinidad. The problem is in the central-southern districts. You would not believe me, but even though there is a water problem in that area, the most water they ever had in their history is since this Government came into power.

The current level of water production in Trinidad now stands at 670,000 cubic metres. This represents an increase of approximately 5 per cent over the 1990 production level. I would not go into all the other details but I would just come to the area that I am sure the hon. Member and the people who represent those areas, are also concerned about.

I myself saw a number of letters in the newspapers and I am very equipped and very aware of the situation. I paid a visit to the Caroni County Council in respect of the problem we were having in Central, because from the major trunk main going from the Caroni Arena there was a very defective valve and we had to address that problem.

**6.10 p.m.**

We addressed that valve problem last Wednesday, therefore, you have to wait for some time for the water to build up for certain areas to really get their due. I feel that is the problem that we have in that area. You also have a problem where the *[Interruption]*

**Mr. Ramnath:** Could you state where the defective valve is?

**Hon. Nicholson:** Mr. Speaker, could I have protection, please? I visited where they were fixing the valve.

**Mr. Ramnath:** Mr. Speaker, I am simply asking the Member, because I have a concern, to indicate where this valve is located.

*[Crosstalk]*

**Mr. Speaker:** Order please.

**Hon. Nicholson:** Firstly, in the face of the projected increase in demand—you have an increase in demand for water, both from the industrial situation, as argued by the Member, which is very critical for the survival of this country, and from the consumer perspective, because of housing developments and change in housing structures and that kind of thing—because of that increase in demand, we also have a problem. In addition to the supply deficit, there were constraints with respect to the transmission and distribution of the available supplies.

The solution to this problem lies in the following:

- (1) There is need for the construction of new transmission and distribution mains.

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- (2) Replacement of old encrusted and corroded mains.

Throughout the country, we have many encrusted mains, some of them over 100 years old.

- (3) Scheduling of existing supplies, that is, alternating supplies between various locations for specific periods of time.

What happened is that, when we recognized that we had a problem, we worked out a schedule service in the country.

I am sure—if they are honest—that it is the first time that all the representatives have ever seen such an aggressive move to improve the water situation in South. The Member for Oropouche, Pluck Road; Member for Oropouche, San Francique; Member for Oropouche, La Romain, going down to St. Mary's.

**Mr. Sudama:** On a point of order. I cannot permit the Minister to mislead the House. There was just a small piece of mains replacement done on the La Fortune-Pluck Road last year, as a result of agitation by me, which is now being claimed by this ubiquitous Minister. For her to say that San Francique and La Romain have mains replacement, is an attempt to mislead this House. I cannot permit that.

**Hon. Nicholson:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, you know I will take your protection. We have the Caroni Arena, the Carlsen Field, Freeport, Las Lomas, supplying water there. We had some major problems in Enterprise, Esmeralda, Longdenville, Balmain—I think it is in your constituency, Member for Couva South.

**Mr. Ramnath:** Could the Minister indicate, whether during the last three weeks there has been water in the area of Balmain? Is she aware that there has been no water in Springvale, Carolina, Basterhall, Milton and Balmain for the last three weeks. So do not talk about mains in La Romain. Why is there no water in these areas?

**Hon. Nicholson:** Problems resulted from defective valves on the main off-takes of the Caroni Area System and that major one is the Cunupia off-take system. That system required attention; repairs were completed on April 28, 1991 and the supply was restored on the same day to these areas. Another area where we had problems are the the same areas you all were talking about a while ago—Christian Village. Those areas were affected by shortage of supplies at source—the Freeport Water Works. The wells have been rehabilitated and a scheduled



supply has been restored to most areas. The remaining areas should benefit shortly from the execution of the rehabilitation works on the distribution system. The group that my hon. friend is concerned about, Balmain, Esperanza, Springvale, Carolina, Diamond, these are affected by problems experienced at the Dow Village Booster Station. Because of public health reasons, there was need to effect necessary repairs to the roof of the Basterhall reservoir. So we had to take it off for two days in order to do some work there. Again, that has to build up before we get action.

**Mr. Ramnath:** Would you give way?

**Hon. Nicholson:** I am not giving way. The Dow Village booster was returned to service early this week and scheduled supplies restored to most areas. Supplies to the other areas would be restored after repairs to the Basterhall reservoir are completed by the end of next week, for example, the Springvale area which is having many problems.

Group B—Las Lomas, Chin Road, affected by diminishing supplies from the Las Lomas well field. Attempts are being made to extend the Caroni Arena System into the Las Lomas area to address the problem and we are having a little problem with that piece of work.

Mr. Speaker, while we are doing all of that and we are trying to deal with the maintenance, I am sure that the representatives are seeing the aggressive movements that we are making, as far as developmental works are concerned. We are doing works from La Romain to St. Mary's; from St. Mary's into Siparia; you have the San Francique Works and we are doing work in Moruga. With respect to the Moruga works, right now we are replacing the small encrusted lines with a 12-inch main.

It is the first time in the South that people are seeing movement and I get many thank you letters from what they are seeing. You will also be seeing us turning on the water in a few months' time. You will be seeing action with the one from La Romain to St. Mary's in two months' time.

**6.20 p.m.**

In Tabaquite—Sir, I am sorry that I have to bring you into the discourse—two projects are going on in that area. The people never got water in those areas although the Navet Dam is in Tabaquite.

**Mr. Sudama:** Will this be done before or after the next election?

**Miss Nicholson:** You know that I am always in line.

Mr. Speaker, the point that I am trying to make is that we have seen the weaknesses in the South. This Government, this Minister is carrying on action. I have done everything in my power to make sure that there is an improvement in Central and South. I am not here for politics because I have no seat in Trinidad. My seat is in Tobago West which I will be bringing home for the National Alliance for Reconstruction and we have no friction there.

We have some complaints from the people at Gulf View. They were affected by the interruption in operation of the San Fernando booster for maintenance purposes. The supply has been restored.

In the Penal area, production—I think it had a bearing on the Member for Oropouche, and therefore he should keep quiet now—has been affected within the last few weeks, by declining production, coupled with mechanical and electrical problems. For example, even today we had a problem, in that we had some electrical problems for the whole day in the Freeport area. While we were working to address the problem that we had in that area—

**Mr. Panday:** You spoke about a production problem. I am wondering what “production” meant? Does it mean that you did not have a supply or that the purification system was not putting out enough? I was not too sure.

**Miss Nicholson:** If I understand you very clearly, Member for Couva North, we always give potable water. We have our chemists checking our water everyday. From all over the world, when the airlines and other people pass through, they take water from Trinidad and Tobago. So, the question of purification does not come into line here.

Two of the—*[Interruption]* I was pointing out the weaknesses at the time and I said we had an electrical and a mechanical problem, that is the point I was making.

Two of the four defective *[Interruption]*. You all chatted for over two months; fighting against each other, keep quiet now!

Two of the four defective wells are back in service. The remaining two are expected to be back in service within the next two weeks. *[Interruption]* I would like you all to love each other.

In the Fyzabad area, a new well is expected to be commissioned during this month and will result in a doubling of production of the plant. This area will then receive an improved and scheduled supply.

What of La Brea? It is an area that the others forgot. Some people tend to forget it, but I do not ever forget La Brea. When we turned on the water at the La Romain/St. Mary's junction it impacted upon those areas, and La Brea will benefit from that. We have other works in progress for that area.

Avocat/Thick Village will benefit from the construction of pipelines from Avocat into Siparia and you know that the action is taking place. The Thick Village booster station would be there.

Look at the other areas of Trinidad and Tobago. We have a few problems in the Toco/Manzanilla area which we are addressing and which we are working feverishly to clean up. Over the last weekend, one of our major wells in Chaguaramas went down. It affected La Horquette and those areas but we were able to bring it back into action, and people were able to receive water. I must congratulate the people who worked feverishly on weekends in order to correct these problems.

Now, the Member for Couva North raised the question of pipe-borne water. It is for that reason why we are in Tabaquite; it is for that reason we are in La Romain/St Mary's, and Siparia; it is for that reason we are on the Moruga Road; it is for that reason why we are in Guaico/Tamana; it is almost complete. Santa Cruz and all those areas, it is because we want to prevent the truck-borne water system which is a very troublesome area to address. As a matter of fact we got complaints.

**Mr. Sudama:** In all her presentations, I am really confused. I want to know whether the problem is one of a lack of adequate water being produced or whether it is a problem of distribution? I would also like to find out what percentage of water was lost in the process of distribution, and what you are doing about that.

**Hon. Nicholson:** As far as the water loss is concerned—I think you are talking about leakages and so on, there is about 40 per cent loss and we are now addressing that situation. [*Interruption*]. Well, the Government is addressing it. We are a new Government. We also have a situation where we are dealing with encrusted mains and we are trying to improve this situation. We are not a dishonest Government. I am telling you the truth. What is worrying them is that in about three months' time, they will not be able to open their mouths in here about water. This is the problem that they have.

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Mr. Speaker, before I was disturbed by the Member for Oropouche, I said we have anything like ten development programmes. Those programmes are really to address the truck-borne water situation because if we do not carry pipe-borne water into the areas, there would always be strategies being used for people to get truck-borne water. I can remember drawing a particular case to the attention of the Auditor General. We asked for people to come with information because we were ready to take action, and she said no one came forward at all.

This is a country that likes to call for action and when action is taken every one is vexed. I sent the information to the Auditor General, and the head of the institution, from the administrative level, had discourse with her on the problem that she said you have with the truck-borne water supply—what people call racket—nobody ever came forward. They will write in the newspapers about the truck-borne water supply, and so forth, but when you say to come forward and give us the evidence, nobody comes forward.

I want to tell you hon. Leader of the Opposition, that we are very concerned with giving the people a proper water supply. That is why I met with the Caroni County Council this week, discussing with all the local government representatives, any improvement in their areas and what other problems they are seeing. For example, Longdonville is an area—I called somebody there just before I came here and they said water is coming through the main. That is an area where it is being said, there is no water.

**6.30 p.m.**

So this generally—[*Interruption*] Well you know I always talk with you. Do you want me to talk with you more? I must say that the management of the institution is addressing the situation. We know that there are certain other areas that we have to look at. We were to have a meeting this evening, on some more improvement works in the Central-South area, but as I was about to leave the House this question was raised and I realized that I had to put that meeting off for another day.

I want to tell the hon. Member for Couva North that we are concerned. We are doing everything in our power. WASA is fighting and we are fighting for the welfare of our people. We want to give you proper potable water. We do not want anybody to go to any pond and that is why we are trying to carry water to the various districts.

I want to thank you very much.

**BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

**Mr. Speaker:** Before I put the question I crave the indulgence of the House. There are three private bills for second reading. It will save some time if I can have your co-operation. It would not take us long.

**ORISHA RELIGION (SHANGO) (INC'N) BILL**

*Question put and agreed to,* That a bill to provide for the incorporation of the Orisha Religion (Shango) of Trinidad and Tobago, be now read a second time.

*Bill accordingly read a second time.*

*Bill referred to a select committee of the House chosen by the Speaker as follows:* Dr. Anselm St. George (Chairman), Mr. Kenneth Butcher, Mr. Eden Shand, Mr. John Humphrey.

**OPHTHALMOLOGICAL SOCIETY (INC'N) BILL**

*Question put and agreed to,* That a bill to provide for the incorporation of the Ophthalmological Society of Trinidad and Tobago and for matters incidental thereto, be now read a second time.

*Bill referred to a select committee of the House chosen by the Speaker as follows:* Dr. Anselm St George (Chairman), Mr. Kenneth Butcher, Mr. Eden Shand, Mr. John Humphrey.

**EDINBURGH DHARMIC SABHA (INC'N) BILL**

*Question put and agreed to,* That a bill to incorporate the Edinburgh Dharmic Sabha and matters incidental thereto, be now read a second time.

*Bill referred to a select committee of the House chosen by the Speaker as follows:* Dr. Anselm St. George (Chairman), Mr. Theodore Guerra, Mr. Oswald Hem Lee, Mr. Govindra Roopnarine.

*Motion made and question proposed,* That the House do now adjourn to Friday, May 10, 1991 at 1.30 p.m.

*Question put and agreed to*

*House adjourned accordingly.*

*Adjourned at 6.35 p.m.*