

Leave of Absence

Friday, 21 June, 1991

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, June 21, 1991.

The House met at 1.37 p.m.

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for San Fernando West (Dr. Anselm St. George) has been excused from today's sitting.

PAPERS LAID

1. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the accounts of the Trinidad and Tobago Unit Trust Corporation for the year ended December 31, 1990. [*The Minister of Finance (Hon. Selby Wilson)*]
To be referred to the Public Accounts Committee.
2. Water and Sewerage Authority Progress Report on Project under the Development Programme. [*The Minister of Industry, Enterprise and Tourism (Dr. The Hon. Bhoendradatt Tewarie)*]
3. The Elections and Boundaries Commission Order 1991. (*Hon. Dr. B. Tewarie*)

SPECIAL SELECT COMMITTEE REPORTS

Ophthalmological Society (Inc'n) Bill

Presentation

Mr. Patrick Manning (*San Fernando East*): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the following report:

Report of the Special Select Committee of the House of Representatives appointed to consider and report on a private bill for the incorporation of the Ophthalmological Society of Trinidad and Tobago and for matters incidental thereto."

Televising and Broadcasting Proceedings

Presentation

The Minister of Industry, Enterprise and Tourism (Dr. The Hon. Bhoendradatt Tewarie): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the following report:

Report of the Joint Select Committee of Parliament appointed to consider and report on all aspects relating to the broadcasting and televising of the proceedings of Parliament.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

T&TEC Loan

36. Mr. Kenneth Valley (*Diego Martin Central*) asked the Minister of Settlements and Public Utilities:

Would the hon. Minister kindly state:

- (a) What is the size of the loan recently raised on the local market by the Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission (hereinafter referred to as T&TEC)?
- (b) What are the conditions of this loan in detail?
- (c) What are the anticipated and intended purposes of this loan?

The Minister of Finance (Hon. Selby Wilson): Mr. Speaker, on March 25, 1991, T&TEC borrowed a total of TT \$200 million on the local capital market through the issue of floating rate bonds. Of this amount, 220 employees of the Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission subscribed \$1,885,000. I would like to repeat that, 220 employees of the Commission subscribed \$1,885,000 as follows:

15-year maturities, \$1,665,000;

17-year maturities, \$15,000; and

20-year maturities, \$205,000.

All taken up by employees of the Commission.

The main terms and conditions applicable to the bonds are as follows:

Amount: The aggregate principal amount of the original bonds are TT \$200,000,000.

Composition of the issue: The issue comprises three series of bonds as set out hereunder:

Series A: 2006 (15 years);

Series B: 2008 (17 years); and

Series C: 2011 (20 years).

The initial rate of interest on bonds:

Series A: 10.50 per cent per annum;

Series B: 10.75 per cent per annum; and

Series C: 11.00 per cent per annum.

Changes in the rate of interest: Every six months the rates of interest on the bonds will be re-established in accordance with the floating interest rate formula indicated below by reference to the prime lending rate then being offered by the Republic Bank of Trinidad and Tobago, the Royal Bank of Trinidad and Tobago Limited and the Bank of Nova Scotia of Trinidad and Tobago Limited.

Series A: 2.25 per cent, below prime:

Series B: 2.00 per cent below prime; and

Series C: 1.75 per cent below prime.

Payment of Interest: Interest will be payable semi-annually on March 21 and September 21 commencing from September 21, 1991.

Value of the bonds sold in each category:

Series A: TT \$22.7 million;

Series B: TT \$10. million; and

Series C: TT \$167.3 million.

Management Fee: $\frac{7}{32}$ per cent of the aggregate amount of the bonds.

Underwriting Fee: $\frac{7}{32}$ per cent of the aggregate amount of the bonds.

Commission: $\frac{1}{4}$ of one per cent of the aggregate amount of the bonds.

Government guarantee: Unconditional and irrevocable Government guarantee of the bonds.

Moratorium: A 5-year moratorium on repayment of principal. Optional redemption after the first year (from March 1992).

The funds raised through the bond issue are being applied to the following:

- (i) partial settlement of deferred liabilities;
- (ii) bridging of the shortfall in working capital; and
- (iii) financing of capital works relating to the current year.

Mr. Valley: Mr. Speaker, one short supplemental. I wonder whether the Minister would inform us whether T&TEC funding requirement would have been lower if ISPAT were charged with the correct price for its electricity?

Hon. Wilson: Mr. Speaker, I am not in a position to determine T&TEC's requirements.

**T&TEC
(Indebtedness)**

37. Mr. Kenneth Valley (*Diego Martin Central*) asked the Minister of Settlements and Public Utilities:

Would the hon. Minister kindly quantify:

- (a) What is the size of T&TEC's overdraft for the period January 1991 to March 1991?
- (b) What is the level of T&TEC's indebtedness on its current deficit with special reference to the moneys due and owing to the National Gas Company and to foreign suppliers?

The Minister of Finance (Hon. Selby Wilson): Mr. Speaker, the manner in which the question is phrased seems to betray a lack of understanding of how an overdraft facility operates. By its very nature an overdraft facility fluctuates over time, so that one cannot speak of the size of an overdraft for a period, but rather at the end of a period.

The size of T&TEC 's overdraft at the end of each of the three months for the period ending March 31, 1991 was as follows:

At January 31, \$57,247,029;

At February 28, \$66,539,531 and

At March 31, \$14,789,136.

T&TEC's current liabilities at the end of April 1991 are estimated to be as follows:

National Gas Company, \$123,779,649;

Foreign Suppliers, \$12,138,863;

Other Creditors, \$81,865,503.

Mr. Valley: Mr. Speaker, I want to direct the same supplemental to the Minister, but he does not have the answer to that, so it makes no sense.

**T&TEC
(Tariff Increase)**

38. Mr. Kenneth Valley (*Diego Martin Central*) asked the Minister of Settlements and Public Utilities:

Would the hon. Minister state:

- (a) Whether the World Bank conditions relating to the imposition of a tariff increase by T&TEC have been relaxed?
- (b) What are the original conditions imposed by the World Bank relating to a tariff increase by T&TEC?
- (c) What adjustments, if any, have been made to these conditions?

The Minister of Finance (Hon. Selby Wilson): Mr. Speaker, T&TEC had projected the need for a rate increase and the adoption of other measures to ensure its financial viability. It is in this context that the World Bank included a provision in the structural adjustment loan to provide *inter alia*, that the borrower shall, "adopt measures, including best efforts to obtain tariff adjustments, in order to achieve a break-even position for T&TEC in 1990." This objective is still relevant and desirable.

1.45 p.m.

Mr. Valley: Mr. Speaker, I wonder whether the Minister could direct his attention to part (b) of the question, where I asked what are the original conditions imposed by the World Bank relating to a tariff increase by T&TEC?

Hon. Wilson: It is implicit in my answer. This objective is still relevant and desirable.

Mr. Valley: I am having some difficulty with the Minister's logic. I am asking for the original conditions. I am not really interested whether the objectives are still relevant. I am asking for the original conditions imposed by the World Bank.

Mr. Wilson: Mr. Speaker, for his benefit I will repeat the answer to the question.

T&TEC had projected the need for a rate increase and the adoption of other measures to ensure its financial viability. It is in this context that the World Bank

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included a provision in the structural adjustment loan to provide *inter alia*, that the borrower shall, “adopt measures including best efforts to obtain tariff adjustments in order to achieve a break-even position in 1990.” This objective is still relevant and desirable.

Mr. Valley: Mr. Speaker, I do not mean to detain the honourable House but it is the *inter alia*, that I am interested in. In other words, what are the other conditions the World Bank requested?

Mr. Manning: I wonder if it makes sense asking any questions at all since the Government treats questions in that way. But since you have called, Mr. Speaker, I would like to put question No. 39 to the hon. Minister of Works, Infrastructure and Decentralization.

Cruise Ship Complex (Rental)

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

- 39.** Would the Minister of Works, Infrastructure and Decentralization kindly quantify the rent earned from the rental of booths and stalls at the Cruise Ship Complex for:
- (i) 1989?
 - (ii) 1990?
 - (iii) 1991 to date?

Cruise Ship Complex (Construction Cost)

- 40.** Would the Minister of Works, Infrastructure and Decentralization kindly state the total cost incurred in the construction of the Cruise Ship Complex?

The Minister of Works, Infrastructure and Decentralization (Dr. The Hon. Carson Charles): Mr. Speaker, I am not yet able to answer questions 39 and 40. May I have a deferral of one week?

Mr. Manning: Mr. Speaker, I have no difficulty at all in acceding to the request of the hon. Minister. I wonder if he is prepared to give us the assurance that he will answer these questions on Friday, the next sitting of the Parliament?

Hon. Dr. Charles: Mr. Speaker, I would make every effort to have an answer ready for the Parliament by next Friday.

Mr. Speaker: I did not hear that. Are you prepared with an answer for question No. 40?

Hon. Dr. Charles: Mr. Speaker, I said that I was not able to answer questions Nos. 39 and 40 which are two parts of one question. I wish to have a deferral of one week.

Mr. Manning: Is the Minister prepared to give us the undertaking, since he has asked for a deferral of one week, that he will answer question No. 40 at next Friday's sitting of parliament?

Hon. Dr. Charles: Mr. Speaker, I said I will make every effort to have an answer ready for questions Nos. 39 and 40 at the next sitting of Parliament. I cannot predict when Parliament will next sit.

Questions, by leave, deferred.

Tourists Arrivals/Foreign Exchange

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

- 41.** Would the Minister of Industry, Enterprise and Tourism kindly state:
- (a) How many tourists arrived in Trinidad and Tobago annually since 1987 on:
 - (i) Cruise Ships;
 - (ii) Otherwise?
 - (b) How much foreign exchange was earned annually for the said year?

The Minister of Industry, Enterprise and Tourism (Dr. The Hon. Bhoendradatt Tewarie): Mr. Speaker, I, also, seek a deferral and I give the hon. Member the assurance that the question would be answered next week.

Question, by leave, deferred.

SIR ARTHUR LEWIS

(DEATH)

The Prime Minister and Minister of the Economy (Hon. A.N.R. Robinson): The Caribbean has lost one of its foremost intellectuals and most eminent sons ever with the death of Sir Arthur Lewis on Saturday June 15. Sir Arthur's decease is also for me a personal loss since he was a source of inspiration to me, as to so many others, in my youth and during my first years as Minister of Finance in the early period of our independence.

William Arthur Lewis was born on January 23, 1915 in Castries, St. Lucia, where he received his early education at St. Mary's College. He later attended the London School of Economics and the University of Manchester. After graduating from the London School of Economics with a Ph.D, he served as a lecturer in Economics at his *alma mater* between 1938 and 1947.

In a long and distinguished academic career Sir Arthur also served as Professor of Political Economics at the University of Manchester, London University and at Princeton University.

Sir Arthur was, however, first and foremost a Caribbean man. He demonstrated his profound attachment to his region in a number of ways. As early as 1935, in response to a request from the New Fabian Research Bureau which was assisting the Labour Party in formulating policy on colonial matters, the young Arthur Lewis wrote an article entitled "The British West Indies". In it he described the conditions in the region and outlined a policy designed to ameliorate those conditions. Up until the outbreak of the Second World War he would be one of the major architects of Labour's West Indian policy, stimulating the Party's interest in Trinidad and Tobago and Caribbean political and labour affairs. In 1949 he served as a consultant to the Caribbean Commission. From 1959 until 1962 he was the Principal of the fledgling University College of the West Indies and Vice-Chancellor of the university from 1962 to 1963. From 1970 to 1973 he was the President of the Caribbean Development Bank.

His interests were, however, not limited only to this region. Like many of his contemporaries he was fascinated by the historic developments taking place in Africa at that time. It is, therefore, not surprising that he would put his formidable intellect and skills to good use during that critical period in the evolution of Africa. Under the auspices of the United Nations he worked as an economic consultant to the then Gold Coast Government in 1952 and the Government of

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Western Nigeria in 1953. He returned to the Gold Coast when it became independent as the Economic Adviser to the Prime Minister of Ghana from 1957 to 1958.

Sir Arthur's wide experience of the developing world and his unique blend of theoretical formulation and practical application were evident in his numerous publications which made him a pioneer and one of the foremost minds in the new area of developmental economics. Among the better-known of these publications are: "The Principles of Economic Growth" published in 1955; "Politics of West Africa", in 1965; "Development Planning", in 1966; "Some Aspects of Economics Development", in 1969 and "The evolution of the International Economic Order" in 1978.

Sir Arthur's economic policies helped shaped the economic development of many Third World countries. His intellectual eminence was recognized and respected internationally. This is underscored by his membership in professional societies such as the American Philosophical Society and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. He was also a Distinguished Fellow of the American Economic Association over which he presided in 1983 and a Corresponding Fellow of the British Academy. In 1979 he was jointly awarded the Nobel Prize in Economics for his seminal contribution to developmental economics. He was the first Caribbean person to be so honoured.

With the passing of Sir Arthur Lewis the region has lost, not only a man of action and a scholar, but an exemplar. He was by outlook a "Caribbean Man". He envisaged the West Indies as a unit, as a whole, and not as a scattering of island states which in many ways we still are. This vision must be a source of strength and of inspiration to those of us in the region who soldier along the road to regional integration.

I have, by letter, extended condolences of the Government and people of Trinidad and Tobago to his beloved widow, Gladys, and surviving relatives and do so now publicly in the Parliament. May he rest in peace and may eternal light shine on him and on his monumental contribution to regions and to the the world.

1.55 p.m.

Mr. Basdeo Panday (*Couva North*): I, too, wish to join with the hon. Prime Minister in extending our deepest sympathies to the family, friends and colleagues of the late and great, Sir William Arthur Lewis. It is always sad to refer to the death of anybody, but even moreso to the death of a great son. Yet,

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even in this sadness, there is pride when we speak of Sir Arthur Lewis and the contribution which he has made to the Caribbean. As has been said, his scholarly contributions have inspired many, but most of all they have inspired pride in the Caribbean people, in addition to influencing the policies of Caribbean governments.

His distinguished position has included that of being the United Nations Economic Advisor; Advisor to the Prime Minister of Ghana; Deputy Managing Director of the United Nations Special Fund; Vice Chancellor of the University of the West Indies and Lecturer-Professor at Princeton University. Indeed all these have placed him in a position of prominence and has endowed him with international greatness and international respect. He was also instrumental in the establishment of the Caribbean Development Bank between 1974 and 1976. The ultimate respect and recognition was bestowed upon him when he was awarded the Nobel Prize in the late 1970s. Sir Arthur Lewis truly demonstrated his ability and academic scholarship.

I thought on this occasion, I would share with the House something I came across the other day. It was really contained in an autobiographical note of Sir Arthur Lewis which was published in one of the Journals of Social and Economic Studies. In that article he says of himself:

"From my undergraduate days I had sought a solution to the question: what determines the relative prices of steel and coffee? The approach through marginal utility made no sense to me. And the Heckscher-Ohlin framework could not be used, since that assumes that trading partners have the same production functions, whereas coffee cannot be grown in most of the steel producing countries.

Another problem that troubled me was historical. Apparently, during the first fifty years of the industrial revolution real wages in Britain remained more or less constant while profits and savings soared. This could not be squared with the neoclassical framework, in which a rise in investment should raise wages and depress the rate of return on capital.

One day in August 1952, walking down the road in Bangkok, it came to me suddenly that both problems have the same solution. Throw away the neoclassical assumption that the quantity of labour is fixed. An "unlimited supply of labour" will keep wages down, producing cheap coffee in the first case and high profits in the second case. The result is a dual (national or world) economy, where one part is a reservoir of cheap labour for the other.

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The unlimited supply of labour derives ultimately from population pressure, so it is a phase in the demographic cycle."

We all know that he received both praise and condemnation for his thesis that won him the Nobel Prize. However, today we are proud on this side to stand and say that we honour him even in his death. Once more I wish to extend my condolences on behalf of the Opposition to the economic community and to the family of Sir Arthur Lewis.

Mr. Kenneth Valley (*Diego Martin Central*): Mr. Speaker, I would like to join my colleagues on both sides of the House to pay tribute to the life of the only Caribbean person, who has so far been able to receive the Nobel Prize.

Sir Arthur Lewis was perhaps best known in the Caribbean for his work on industrialization by invitation for which he has been praised in the early period. Later on, I remember as a student at university we thought that would do us more harm than good. However, Sir Arthur Lewis was one of our prolific writers in the Caribbean with respect to development planning.

He had made some very important observations. For example, it was Sir Arthur who informed us that it is always more likely that raw material would move to the source of fuel, rather than moving the fuel to the source of the raw material, if one is interested in industrialization.

His writings have informed my party's economic policies since 1956, as they did in most of the other Caribbean countries. On Wednesday, the newspapers reported some of his writings, but I think in so doing they missed what I consider one of the important contributions in the area and that is his "Economic Survey of the Inter-War Years 1919—1939", in which he sought to determine the causation of the fluctuation in economic activity and growth of the main industrial countries during that period.

I think all West Indians, not only the economists in the Caribbean can be justly proud of the life of Sir Arthur Lewis. I join in paying condolences to his bereaved family. I thank you.

Mr. Speaker: I shall direct the Clerk to send an appropriate communication to his bereaved widow. We shall stand in silence for one minute as a mark of respect.

The House stood.

2.05 p.m.

ELECTIONS AND BOUNDARIES COMMISSION ORDER

The Minister of Industry, Enterprise and Tourism (Dr. The Hon. Bhoendradatt Tewarie): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move,

Whereas it is provided by subsection (3) of section 72 of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago (hereinafter referred to as "the Constitution") that as soon as may be after the Elections and Boundaries Commission (hereinafter referred to as "the Commission") has submitted a report under paragraph (a) of subsection (1) of section 72 of the Constitution a minister designated by the Prime Minister for this purpose shall lay before the House of Representatives for its approval the draft of an Order by the President for giving effect, whether with or without modifications, to the recommendations contained in the report;

And whereas the Commission has submitted a report to the Prime Minister and the Speaker in accordance with the provisions of paragraph (a) of subsection (1) of section 72;

And whereas the draft of an Order entitled "The Elections and Boundaries Commission Order, 1991" giving effect without modifications to the recommendations of the Commission was laid before the House of Representatives on the 10th day of May, 1991:

Be it resolved:

That the draft of the Elections and Boundaries Commission Order, 1991, be approved.

Mr. Speaker, throughout the term of office of this Government, we have demonstrated our unequivocal adherence to the rule of law and our deep and abiding commitment to the protection of the institutions of democracy and the democratic way of life in Trinidad and Tobago. It is against this background, therefore, that a report of the Elections and Boundaries Commission needs to be viewed.

Mr. Speaker, section 71 of our Constitution provides for the establishment of an Elections and Boundaries Commission for Trinidad and Tobago. That section further provides for the appointment of its chairman and members by the President, after consultation with the Prime Minister and the Leader of the

Opposition, and that in the exercise of its functions, the Commission shall not be subject to the control or the direction of any person or authority.

The Commission is therefore a creature of the Constitution. It is a constitutionally independent body insulated from political influence and control. It is this constitutional independence and autonomy that it brings to bear on its responsibilities for the proper conduct of elections in Trinidad and Tobago. The laying of the 1991 report of the Elections and Boundaries Commission and the review of the constituency boundaries therefore represent the recommendations of a constitutionally independent and autonomous body accounting to the people.

Mr. Speaker, in accordance with section 72 of the Constitution which establishes the procedure for review of constituency boundaries, and set out in the Second Schedule to the Constitution, the Commission submitted to the Prime Minister and the Speaker, as the resolution states, on May 10, 1991 its 1991 Fourth Report on the review of the number and boundaries of constituencies in Trinidad and Tobago. On that very date, moments later, that document was laid in this House for all members of parliament to receive a copy.

Paragraph 20 of the Report sets out the recommendations:

- “(i) The number of constituencies should be retained at thirty-four in Trinidad and at two in Tobago;
- (ii) Trinidad and Tobago should be divided into thirty-six constituencies bearing the names and containing the number of electors allocated to each of them, as set out in Appendix (C);
- (iii) the boundaries of the thirty-six constituencies of Trinidad and Tobago, as recommended to be divided at (ii) above, should be described as in Appendix D and delineated as in Appendix F.”

Mr. Speaker, in justifying its recommendations, the report noted that based on the data contained in the annual list of 1986 and 1990, the total number of qualified electors decreased in Trinidad by 102,652 and in Tobago by 2,067.

Paragraph 13: In 1986, the figure was 861,621; in 1991, the figure is 756,902. Hence, the report noted at paragraph 9:

"If the present number of 34 constituencies in Trinidad is retained, then the average number of electors per constituency will amount to 21,429."

Paragraph 10 of the report provides the reasons for retaining the status quo of 34 constituencies and indicates: "that despite the increases in the electorate between 1981 and 1986. . . ., Parliament considered it prudent to maintain the number of constituencies unchanged at the level of 34."

Mr. Speaker, for purposes of the record, paragraph 14 of the report indicates that "decreases are recorded in every constituency in the country except in the constituencies of Arouca South and Caroni East."

"In the northwest section of Trinidad, the decreases have been significant enough to depress the average number of electorate to a point below the permissible minimum. As a result, as many as nine constituencies in the northwest section fall below the permissible minimum level. They are:

Diego Martin West;	St. Ann's West;
Diego Martin Central;	Laventille;
Port of Spain North;	Barataria/SanJuan;
Port of Spain South;	St. Joseph;
Port of Spain East;	

The report at paragraph 16 states that:

"To rectify this depletion, the Commission was driven to make a number of adjustments. It did so by starting in the northwest and by moving generally in an easterly direction and used, as far as practicable, the Caroni River as the southern boundary of the northern constituencies. Wherever it was found possible to keep existing boundaries in that exercise, they were retained. The new areas delimited by the boundaries of the constituencies of Port-of-Spain East and Laventille, persuaded the Commission to recommend the change of their names to Laventille West and Laventille East/Morvant respectively, so as to reflect more appropriately their geographical locations. Additionally, a new constituency designated as Port-of-Spain North/St. Ann's West is recommended to replace Port-of-Spain North and St. Ann's West as separate constituencies. Based on the total electorate for the North and the average number of electors for the island of Trinidad, the Commission decided and so recommends that the subsisting number of 17 constituencies in the North be reduced to 16..."

Mr. Speaker, the truncation and amalgamation of constituencies because of a decrease in the electorate is nothing new. In 1986, when the third report of the Elections and Boundaries Commission was debated in this honourable House on June 20, 1986, one may well note that the then San Juan constituency was so truncated because of the shifting of boundaries to compensate for the decrease in the electorate in the St. Ann's West, Laventille, Barataria and San Juan constituencies, that the Commission then recommended that what remained of it should be amalgamated with Barataria and called the Barataria/San Juan constituency, a recommendation which was accepted by this honourable House in 1986.

Mr. Speaker, the report also notes that in Central Trinidad, increases above the permissible maximum are recorded in five constituencies, namely: Nariva, Caroni East, Chaguanas, Couva North, and Couva South.

In paragraph 17, it is stated that: "Based on the overall number of electors in that area the Commission decided that it was necessary, not only to adjust boundaries but also to increase the number of constituencies from seven to eight."

The Commission therefore recommends in the report that a new constituency be created and that it be called Caroni Central.

Mr. Speaker, the creation of the constituency of Caroni Central seems to be a recognition of new demographic realities in the country. Further, precedent for such an action on the part of the Commission is also as recent as 1986 when the Arouca South constituency was created as a new constituency.

With respect to the constituencies in the southern third of Trinidad, paragraph 14 notes that: "... decreases below the permissible minimum are recorded in San Fernando West, San Fernando East, and Point Fortin; whereas increases above the permissible maximum are recorded in Naparima, Tabaquite, Oropouche and Siparia."

Consequently, adjustments were made to the boundaries of all the constituencies except Princes Town in the report by the Elections and Boundaries Commission.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to Tobago, paragraph 19 notes: "the Commission decided that only a minor adjustment to the boundary separating the two constituencies was necessary in order to keep the electorate in each with the suggested permissible limits of 14,917 and 13,425."

Mr. Speaker, the Commission completed its task, "... against this background of decreases in the electorate, shifts of population, variations in averages, the need to achieve equality in all constituencies as far as practicable and the desirability of not disturbing if possible, the configuration of existing constituencies,... In so doing, it gave due considerations to the principles and directions in the rules, and also took into account other basic considerations such as compactness, contiguity, the clarity of descriptions of constituencies, the preservation of communities and the need for facilitating convenient access to polling stations."

Mr. Speaker, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago is unequivocally committed to holding free and fair elections when they are constitutionally due. It is our abiding faith in the will of the people, to let the people decide. On September 15, 1987, local government elections were held in this country under this administration. On November 28, 1988, the Tobago House of Assembly elections were held. On May 1, 1989 the Guaico-Cumuto local government by-election was held; on December 17, 1990, the Diego Martin Central by-election was held. Mr. Speaker, today we are debating the 1991 report of the Elections and Boundaries Commission which is laying the basis for the administrative machinery for the conduct of free and fair general elections in Trinidad and Tobago.

2.20 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, the track record of our Government, the NAR Government, is exemplary in holding free and fair elections and in the protection of our democratic institution. We believe that we should propose, for the approval of this House, the report as outlined by the Commission without change.

I therefore beg to move, Mr. Speaker.

Question proposed.

Mr. Basdeo Panday (Couva North): Mr. Speaker, it is a pity that the Member for Caroni East in introducing this motion had to go out of his way to make an untrue statement, that is, to try to belabour an allegation of the Government's unequivocal adherence to the rule of law. Then he finishes off by saying that they have some kind of track record which is exemplary in the holding of elections. I am sure the Minister cannot possibly be referring to the local government elections which were due last year, and this must be a part of their track record. I just thought I should put that on record and get that out of the way before I begin this debate.

The first point I would like to make about this report that it is advisory. The report itself alludes to that. It says in paragraph 5:

"With respect to the periodic review of the number and boundaries of constituencies, it is important to note that the Commission's role is purely an advisory one, since section 72 of the Constitution prescribes, *inter alia*, that—"

And it goes on to say what it prescribes. The point I wish to make from the outset is that these are recommendations and they are not set in cement. We must, first of all, examine what are the powers of Parliament with respect to the report of the Elections and Boundaries Commission. If we know what our powers are, then we shall know how to deal with the report that is before us. If, for example, we are belabouring under the mistaken belief that we can do nothing about the report, but that we must either accept or reject it, then we may take the wrong decision. I think it is my duty to bring to the attention of the House, first of all, what is its power in dealing with the motion. Section 72 of the Constitution says:

"(4) Where any draft ..."

As the one before the House,

"... made under this section gives effect to any such recommendations with modifications, the Minister shall lay before the House of Representatives together with the draft a statement of the reasons for the modifications.

(5) Where the motion for the approval of any draft made under this section is rejected by the House of Representatives, or is withdrawn by leave of that House, the Minister shall amend the draft and lay the amended draft before the House of Representatives."

So that, Mr. Speaker, this House has the power to reject the draft, and unlike other documents and recommendations that come out of other bodies similar to this, it can amend the draft. For example, I do not believe that this House had the power to amend the Salaries' Review Commission Report. It was my view that we could send it back but we could not amend it. There is specific provision in the legislation that provides for the amendment of this report which is before the House.

Having said that, I would like to examine, in some detail, the report that is before us. I think the first point that strikes anyone is the fact stated in this report

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that there has been a decrease of 102,652 electors from the list. I am referring to paragraph 13 which says:

"The distribution of the electorate in subsisting constituencies, based on the data contained in the Annual Lists of 1986 and 1990 is shown in Appendix A of this Report. It reveals, *inter alia*, that the total number of qualified electors on the list decreased in the Island of Trinidad by 102,652 and in the Island of Tobago by 2,067."

I think this House ought to examine what this statement means, what that decrease implies. Where are these people? Where have they gone? Have they died? Have they left the country? Are they all refugees? I do not know. Or they have been taken off the list because they cannot be found.

When the Elections and Boundaries Commission was carrying out its enumeration, we had complaints, and they may be true. I want to make it absolutely clear that I am not casting any aspersions or allegations upon the Commission. In fact, I think they did a fine job, as best as they could, having regard to the staff that was allocated to them. Having regard to the quality of enumerators that were allocated to them, they may have done an excellent job. But that is not the point. The point I am making is that some 90,000 persons' names have been removed from the electoral list. I think that has serious implications for the exercise we are about to undertake because we do not know where these people are. I would have loved to have some information from the Elections and Boundaries Commission which would break down this figure, and tell me where these people are. Have they died? Have they migrated, abroad or internally? Their names have been taken off. How many of them actually exist in the society today?

I will tell you why this is going to be of extreme importance. The Elections and Boundaries Commission states that among the criteria being used by it in order to arrive at this report, includes the criterion that the electorate shall, as far as is practicable, be equal in all constituencies. Indeed, theoretically, from what has been published there has been an attempt to do that, in that the electors vary between a maximum of 22,557 and a minimum of 20,301. When you look at the data from which this information is being arrived at, you see—and I shall take any constituency; I take Diego Martin West because that is the first one on the list on page 1—in 1986, there were 23,191 electors on the list. In 1990, when the Elections and Boundaries Commission did its survey that figure was reduced to 18,428, a decrease of 4,763.

2.30 p.m.

Does that figure include new people who have come up on the list, people who have attained the age of 18—since 1986 to 1990? It has to. If it does include new people on the list, then the number of people who have been taken off the list is very much more than 4,763. So, when you remove the total number of names of 102,652 from the list, that figure is very much larger, because it adds new voters to the list, and it is taking off the list people who could not be found. It is for this reason I propose to amend this motion, asking that the report be sent back to the Elections and Boundaries Commission to inform this House, in greater detail, what has happened to the persons whose names have been removed from the electoral list.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at the figures on page 1 of this report, you see that in a place like Port-of-Spain East, there has been a decrease of a minimum of 7,000 people who could not be found. If you add to what was there before, those young people who were younger than 18 in 1986, and who were added to the list, then that figure is more. We are going to take off 7,000 people from the list in Port-of-Spain East, 5,000 in St. Ann's West, 6,000 in Laventille, 7,000 in Barataria/San Juan, 6,000 in St. Joseph—and those appear to be the largest numbers.

Let us assume that those people who have been removed from the list are still in Barataria/San Juan, and they go and register between now and the elections, then that is going to make nonsense of what appears on page 3; that is for Barataria/San Juan the recommendations are that the number of constituents are 21,016. Theoretically and according to the records on the books, that is the number that is here. That does not include the number of people who have been taken off—7,000. Suppose those 7,000 are there, living in the constituency, and suppose they go and register between now and the next election, then that 21,000 would have, at least, increased by 7,000. So the real number of electors in the constituency of Barataria/San Juan would be 27,000, which would be 5,000 more than the maximum.

The point I am making is that unless we can be sure where these people are, whose names have been removed from the electoral list, then the recommendations before this House are meaningless. That is, we are not voting for Appendix (C). Appendix (C) states the recommendations as to how many people should be in the constituency. It would seem to me therefore, that the best thing we can do is to send back the report—no criticism; I want to make that

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absolutely sure. I am not criticizing the Elections and Boundaries Commission. I repeat, they may have done the best job they possibly could have done in the circumstances, having regard to the constraints and finance, and having regard to the quality of people who were allocated to them—we know the kind of thing that went on there. I am not putting blame upon them. I am saying this House is making a fool of itself if it is not sure where these people are before it approves the recommendations of the Elections and Boundaries Commission. It will certainly throw out of complete compliance the criterion that there should be equality in the constituencies. Mr. Speaker, that is the first point I wish to make with respect to this report.

The second point I want to make is a point made by the Commission itself. The Commission says that in redrawing the boundaries, it paid attention to several matters. I refer to page VIII which states:

“8. The recommendations made in this report on the number and boundaries of constituencies are accordingly based on the list of qualified electors contained in the annual list published on 1st July, 1990. . . The total electorate of the country is accordingly 756,902.”

Which is the point I am making. That figure is really not correct unless we know what has happened to the people they took off the list. Maybe they are still there. They are not on the list, but they are still physically there.

"The Delimitation of Constituencies Rules (the Rules) in accordance with which the constituencies of Trinidad and Tobago are required to be delimited under section 72 (1) of the Constitution are set out in the Second Schedule..."

With respect to Tobago, we know that there must not be less than two seats there, but among the criteria used, as I have just pointed out to you, there must be equality in the constituencies in terms of electors. I am now referring to (d) which states:

(d) " 'Special attention shall be paid to the needs of sparsely populated areas which on account of size, isolation or inadequacy of communications cannot adequately be represented by a single member of Parliament'..."

That criterion makes several assumptions, and one of those assumptions is that one function of a Member of Parliament is to adequately represent his constituency. I would take the opportunity to say that if a Member of Parliament is supposed to represent his constituency, then several things must follow. That is to say, the Member of Parliament must not only be provided with adequate staff,

office, infrastructure, equipment and resources in order to do his job, but the Member should be respected enough that there is response from the Government when he seeks to represent his constituency, if that is the case. The fact that a Member of Parliament, if he is not in the Government, is treated with contempt continually by the Government, for its own political purposes, ignoring him and so forth, has led to one of the most degrading and disgraceful acts we see being perpetrated on the political scene these days, where people are going to look at every Mandir to see if there are any broken boards and say: "I come to fix your Mandir; elections are here." It is very, very sickening indeed. One Minister, went to open a dust bin. All this is only the result of the fact that the Members of Parliament are not committed to representing their constituency during the five-year period. Whether a Member is from Government or whether he is from the Opposition, he should be treated with equal respect when he makes representation for his constituency, and we would not have seen this nonsense of people rushing around saying, "Phagwa" and all kinds of things like that. It is so degrading and humiliating; disgraceful conduct, handing out patronage and giving a little "10 days" here and there. It is really disgusting. It is exactly why we voted the PNM out of office. *[Interruption]*

Hon. Member: Who is "we"?

Mr. Panday: The gentleman I refer to, Mr. Speaker, is called Shingar Pundit in another place, but I would not call him that here.

The point I was getting to was, if you look—remember it is said that a Member of Parliament is supposed to look after his constituency and so on; I read out the criteria.

2.40 p.m.

There is a map which is attached to this report and in this map there is a constituency of Arima which is bordered on the north by the North Coast. That constituency stretches from the North Coast and goes right down to the boundary of Caroni East. Now, if we are thinking of having Members of Parliament represent their constituency adequately, then I would have liked to see some kind of attention paid to this fact so that a Member of Parliament would be able to represent his constituency adequately. I think it is going to be extremely difficult and very unfair to any Member for Arima. Where is my beloved Member for Arima? That is an extremely difficult and unfair situation if you compare it with the tighter constituencies of Port-of-Spain: Central Port-of-Spain, Port-of-Spain

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East, Laventille and so on. You will notice that those constituencies are very tight, and naturally so, because of the population there. But maybe some other kind of configuration can be arrived at—and that is the point I wish to make—whereby constituencies are delimited in a way that facilitates representation.

Another one that I noticed is Ortoire/Mayaro which is bounded on the east by the sea and on the west by Barrackpore, the valley-line. That is not the reason the present Member has failed to represent them. He will fail in any circumstances. That is not the point. I am not batting for him or anything like that. He does not even know where Barrackpore is. I recognize that between the sea on the east and the valley-line on the west, there is the vast Forest Reserve. But could an attempt not be made to rationalize what takes place in Ortoire/Mayaro and Nariva? You will notice that Nariva suffers a similar problem, whereas on the one end Nariva comes down to Rio Claro *[Interruption]*

Mr. Sudama: The Member for Nariva is not going back.

Mr. Panday: He would not care. Whether he is there to represent them or not; I notice he is not making any representations for them. He has packed it up. He has given up, and rightly so.

Mr. Speaker, you will notice that the southern boundary of the Nariva constituency borders the northern boundary of Ortoire/Mayaro and that, I think, is the Naparima/Mayaro Road going on to Mayaro. That is on one end. At the other end, it goes right up to the southern boundary of Toco/Manzanilla. It is a boundary really, if you look at it, not as the crow flies, but as the motorcar drives, it goes from Rio Claro to almost Sangre Grande. That is difficult.

I was just wondering—and I do not know, I do not pretend to know—whether it is not possible to so arrange a new constituency that can deal with the problem of the electors of Ortoire/Mayaro and Nariva near the northern boundary of Ortoire/Mayaro and the southern boundary of Nariva and so develop a constituency that has as its consideration a commonality of interests between those people. For example, Rio Claro, which is the population centre, is divided in two. One sees a tendency of dividing populations with a commonality of interests in two, and we wondered whether forests and that sort of thing could not be used as boundaries. If there are to be imaginary lines, they might as well be imaginary lines through the centre of a forest. I look at those two constituencies and indeed Toco/Manzanilla. Toco/Manzanilla is a similar constituency with a very vast land space that makes it extremely difficult.

The point I was making with respect to representation, and if you are going to treat the constituencies equally, and with equality, is that maybe we ought to have more information as to whether it is possible for the Elections and Boundaries Commission to rethink its position with respect to the constituencies to which I have alluded.

One of the problems, I think, seems to be that the Elections and Boundaries Commission treat polling divisions as sacrosanct. That is the boundaries of polling divisions are never altered. In order to alter the boundaries of a constituency, they take out entire polling divisions and put them into one constituency, and that has created very serious problems for some people.

Hon. Member: Like Tabaquite.

Mr. Panday: No, no, I was referring to a person in this Parliament who aspires to national leadership saying that "my constituency has become weaker because they have introduced some polling divisions from Naparima, Barrackpore and Oropouche."

Hon. Member: What racist remarks!

Mr. Manning: Mr. Speaker, just so that the records are clear, the statement of the hon. Leader of the Opposition is not correct and I will make the correct statement when I make my own contribution.

Mr. Panday: Mr. Speaker, I cannot recall mentioning the Member's name, the constituency or anything. However, the point I wish to make is, if the Member did not say that—you know I would always apologize to him. I am merely saying what I read in the newspapers when he asked—I am sorry I do not have the newspapers; I think it was the *Express*, if I remember rightly—where he is reported to have said when asked about the new boundaries and so on, "my seat is much weaker." I want to ask him if that is because Indians came into his seat. That is all I wanted to ask him. I do not want to ask him much. That a man who aspires to national leadership will feel weakened because people of another race have come into his constituency, I thought that was disgraceful myself.

That was *en passant*. The point I was making, is maybe—and I wonder myself and maybe the hon. Minister can tell me; I could not find it—why is it just convenient that whole polling divisions are never divided? The boundaries remain constant; whether there is some kind of law or something. Generally speaking—my friend is right—there have been some places where boundaries

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have gone through polling divisions. But the general rule, as far as I have seen from the report here, is that they lift complete polling divisions out of constituencies and into others.

I wonder if part of the trouble is not an adherence to a continuation of the division of Trinidad and Tobago along colonial lines. I refer to Appendix B where you would notice that the Elections and Boundaries Commission—and I am not saying it is their fault because this is a job for Parliament—is constrained in its work by having to adopt and accept, at least conceptually, a colonial division of Trinidad and Tobago.

2.50 p.m.

For example, if you look at Appendix 2, it states, "the Ward of Blanchisseuse". So this country is still divided into wards, the Ward of Diego Martin, the Ward of St. Ann's and the Ward of Naparima and so on. I think it is time for us to get rid of the question of wards. In any case these wards were identified so long ago, when the demographic distribution of the population was totally different from what it is today. The configuration of that demographic distribution is so different that it really makes nonsense of the division of the country into wards—the wards of Siparia Hill and Erin, of La Brea and Cedros and so forth.

Obviously, what used to happen in those days when they labelled and divided the country into wards, is that these were the areas in which there were centres of population all around and they created wards. Those centres of population no longer apply. There has been a tremendous amount of expansion in the population and internal migration and so on. We ought to get rid of that because that may be one of the constraints which the Elections and Boundaries Commission is faced with and it certainly operated upon their minds, otherwise it would not have been included in Appendix B in this report which is before the House today.

As a matter of fact, I would have thought that the fact that we are trying to redefine the local government boundaries, would have been the finest opportunity to really rationalize the local government boundaries in Trinidad, to deal with the situation as we have it today; to deal with the situation as to where the populations are and where the towns and the cities are.

Mr. Speaker, these are the few points which I thought I would raise to the House and as I say, without re-emphasizing as the Elections and Boundaries Commission has no doubt done the best job that it could in the circumstance. I

still feel that we ought not to keep carrying on with this sort of thing and what we ought to do, is to really correct this. The first point, the one about the population where it is really going to turn everything topsy-turvy, if these people should register now and turn up in several other constituencies.

It is in those circumstances and those circumstances only, I am constrained to move an amendment to the motion before the House. Mr. Speaker, leaving the preamble as is, I merely wish to add, first of all, in the resolution itself; "Be it resolved that the draft of the Elections and Boundaries Commission Order 1991 be...."; and the word "approved" be deleted and in its place insert "referred back to the Commission for further consideration of missing electors."

In moving that amendment, I believe that what is likely to happen is that the Elections and Boundaries Commission may ask for an opportunity to look for these people and that is what I think should happen. If they cannot be found, at least, we should have some kind of idea what happened to them. We may discover that those 7,000 people in Barataria/San Juan were really ghosts; that they were padded there; that they were like DEWD, and that is why they had done it only to get more constituencies in the East-West Corridor. We may discover—I am not saying so—that those people never existed at all and maybe the real list is the one that the Elections and Boundaries Commission has.

I only said this because we have been told that the enumerators did not pass by their house. Now that does not mean that the enumerators did not pass. What that could mean, is that when the enumerators passed they were not there. That is a possibility. People have to work for a living and so do the enumerators and they probably start at 9.00 a.m. and finish at 4.00 p.m. or whatever it is. Those are the times when people are not there.

That is my humble and respectful submission. I move this amendment so that we can deal with this question of the missing electors. Mr. Speaker, thank you kindly.

Mr. Speaker: I put the motion as amended before the House, that the draft of the Elections and Boundaries Commission Order 1991 be referred back to the Commission for further consideration of missing electors.

Hon. Members will understand what is before the House—the motion and the motion as amended.

Mr. Patrick Manning (*San Fernando East*): Mr. Speaker, I assure you that I would be very brief. I rise to support the original motion which was placed

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before this honourable House that the draft of the Elections and Boundaries Commission Order 1991 be approved. In so doing, my colleague and I, are adhering to a time honoured position taken by the PNM, that the Elections and Boundaries Commission is an independent Commission. It was set up, in the first instance, to ensure, not only that there is no political interference in the electoral process in the determination of boundaries, but that the independence of the system would be free of political interference.

I was a little taken aback by the reasons given by the hon. Member for Couva North, for the amendment which he has proposed. We have to be very careful indeed, that we do not exercise our authority merely because we have the authority to exercise it. It is most important that we are seen not to exercise our authority merely because we have the authority to exercise it. When the Elections and Boundaries Commission was set up in the first place, it was set up so that it could be seen that an independent group of people are taking the responsibility, subject of course, to parliamentary approval, for determining these boundaries on the basis of criteria which have been clearly set out in the law, and criteria to which, I am certain on this occasion, as indeed, on all previous occasions, the Elections and Boundaries Commission has adhered.

Mr. Speaker, on what basis is the hon. Leader of the Opposition asking that the matter be referred back to the Elections and Boundaries Commission? On the basis that there are names missing from the electoral list and that greater attention ought to be paid to this matter? I draw your attention, Mr. Speaker, and the attention of hon. Members to the fact that by law, the responsibility for having names on the electoral list rests with the individual rather than with the Commission itself. It is a most important distinction. Indeed, in this case, since the law says that not less than two and not more than five years from the last day—the day on which the last report was laid in Parliament—the Elections and Boundaries Commission should make the report available and so forth, the Elections and Boundaries Commission is on very strong ground because the last report was laid on May 11, 1986. Therefore, since this report was laid on May 10, 1991, the Elections and Boundaries Commission used the maximum time that was available, giving citizens the maximum opportunity to take steps to have their names placed on the electoral list. In these circumstances, therefore, the Commission can be said to have acted in accordance with the law and, therefore, there is really no basis for taking the position that this report ought to be referred back to the Elections and Boundaries Commission.

3.00 p.m.

But that is not to say that we are not concerned that a large number of names no longer appear on the electoral list. As indeed you undoubtedly are aware, and as hon. Members are aware, the PNM has embarked on an exercise over the entire country, using the machinery of our party—and I think we are the only political party that has a machinery to do that—

[Crosstalk]

Mr. Manning: Mr. Speaker, you would understand why my friend from Ortoire/Mayaro is a little jumpy this evening. We intend to pay him a courtesy call on Sunday and to spend some time there.

You see, we embarked on an exercise over the entire country. I did a house-to-house campaign as did many of the PNM candidates and that they are finding, as indeed I have found, many names of people who otherwise would be qualified to be electors are not now qualified by virtue of the fact that their names do not appear on the electoral list. We have to understand that what we are really seeking to set up is a system by which a particular franchise can be exercised, that is really what we are after. We are about ensuring that all persons who otherwise would qualify to exercise a franchise are able to do so.

Therefore, notwithstanding the fact that there has been great compliance with the Elections and Boundaries Commission of the law under which they operate, as a political party we in the PNM must express great concern with the large number of persons whose names do not now appear on the electoral list, and who, unless some adjustment is made between now and the date on which election is called, will not be able to exercise the franchise to which they would have otherwise qualified. It is important because we are not dealing with law.

We are dealing with a system, a society, a people and if a system is operated in such a way that a significant number of people feel, especially when it comes to the selection of a government, that they have not had equity under the particular system, then the system falls into disrepute. Not only will the system fall into disrepute but since the system under consideration is one which determines the Government, it can lead to a social problem which I will not wish to quantify. I do not want to go into any details on that.

People may feel that the election was not a fair election. It is not a fair election if many persons did not have a chance to exercise their franchise. Our experience in the Diego Martin Central election attest to that. My colleague—and

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the representative for Diego Martin Central—who won so handsomely against all other comers and who reversed, as you know, a lead from a deficit of 3,178 votes to now a lead of 1,357—was in fact a victim of that situation where a number of persons whose intention it was to vote for the People's National Movement were not in a position to do so.

I can call a figure. I can give you an estimate of the figure on which the PNM is working but perhaps I ought not to do that. But since I have made that point about the obvious swing in political preferences from 1986 to 1990 when the Diego Martin Central by-election was called, permit me now to correct the statement that has been made by the Leader of the Opposition, the Member for Couva North, which is made in the newspapers to the extent that my constituency has been weaker as a result of bringing into it five new polling divisions. The real statement was that the constituency was weaker by the addition of five polling divisions on the basis of the voting patterns of 1986.

I also hasten to point out that to assume that the voting patterns of 1986 are applicable in 1991 is to make an incorrect assumption. Indeed the figures for Diego Martin Central demonstrate quite clearly that that is not so. It is not so at all. So it was an incorrect report which I seize the opportunity now to correct.

When a report like this is laid in the Parliament, especially on this occasion, it signals that the last hurdle to the calling of a general election has now been moved out of the way. If we had any doubt about it, that doubt is removed when you take very careful note of the activities of some of the Members on the other side. You see, it is now very fashionable for ribbons to be cut every day, all over the country. Last week I paid a visit to Tobago and I am able to confirm an allegation that has been picked up in the *Magnum* and that is that school children in Lambeau—it gives me no special pleasure in saying it—now refer to the hon. Member for Tobago East as Arthur Scissors Hand. No special pleasure in saying it, but that is the reality.

Miss. Nicholson: You carried that to Tobago.

Mr. Wilson: Mr. Speaker, as a matter of information, what is the *Magnum*?

Mr. Manning: Mr. Speaker, perhaps I can continue to talk to you. At least you can understand.

Mr. Wilson: Is the *Magnum* the organ of the PNM?

Mr. Manning: Mr. Speaker, the thing has been taken—

Mr. Wilson: Can the Member advise me whether the *Magnum* is the organ of the PNM.

Mr. Manning: Mr. Speaker, unlike the hon. Member for Point Fortin—

Mr. Wilson: Mr. Speaker, the point is that if it is the organ of the PNM, then I am not surprised what the Member is saying that the *Magnum* is saying about the Prime Minister.

Mr. Manning: All I can say is that at least we have an organ.

Mr. Valley: A working one.

Mr. Manning: A very well functioning one.

Mr. Speaker, if you believe that the greatest transgressor in all of this is the hon. Prime Minister, I must draw your attention to the activities of my good friend from the constituency of Chaguanas. This week in the *Express*, you would have seen a photograph where the hon. Minister had to bend down, not even stand straight, but he had to bend down, complete with scissors in hand to cut a ribbon to open, you know what? A dustbin. *[Interruption]* What vagrant? It was a dustbin.

That is the hon. Minister who goes to Washington and negotiates with the IMF; who talks to the World Bank; who travels at taxpayers' expense to visit the IADB and attend their meetings in Japan and so on; and who as deputy political leader and Deputy Prime Minister of the country is seeking to build a certain stature. But in the context of an impending election campaign and the frustration and desperation that is now evidenced not only among those Members, but those in the Opposition—the Member for Chaguanas reaching the low level, and I mean physically low, of cutting a ribbon to open a garbage bin. It is reported that one other Minister of the Government attended and paid \$20,000 for the privilege of speaking; paying to talk. I hear the Member for Tobago West grumbling—voices in the wilderness. The Member for Tobago West, and I think it is the Member for St. Ann's East, if you see them fighting to officially open a standpipe.

3.10 p.m.

Mr. Wilson: Is there anything more scandalous than the Member promoting his 20 years of office in Parliament on which he has accomplished nothing?
[Crosstalk]

Mr. Manning: It is relevant because all of that activity is taking place in the context of the elections that would be facilitated by the adoption this evening, of the Report of the Election and Boundaries Commission which is before us for the consideration of hon. Members.

Miss Nicholson: Since I am giving water to the people, I feel very proud. What greater prostitution can we have in the House than what you are doing there?

Mr. Manning: If I were the hon. Member for Tobago West, I would have retained my seat. I think it was her good self and her colleague next to her, the Member for St. Joseph, who were opening a valve this week. It was a valve to provide water as they say. What was not made clear was that it was not any new supply; it was a valve that had been there for a long time that was faulty.

Dr. Charles: I regret to have to rise on a point of order to inform the House that it is being misled by the Member. In fact, the system that was commissioned was a new system put in place about two months before. It was our first opportunity to commission it and it provided water up into the hills of Mt. D'Or, in a place that used to get water out of the ground during the days of the People's National Movement. I also should inform the Member that certain persons saw it fit to tamper with the system the day after it was commissioned because of their own desperation.

Mr. Manning: I do not know how the hon. Member knows of which system I speak.

Mr. Charles: It is only one we opened.

Mr. Manning: You all have been opening it. Mr. Speaker, what is wrong with the hon. Member for Point Fortin? I mean he is nervous! Nervous! Trigger-happy.

I make that point because hon. Members on the other side and not a few on this side, have a way of criticizing the PNM and all that the PNM may have done and like to give the impression that when they came in office they ushered in a new political culture. That was the attitude; that is what they said.

Miss Nicholson: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. We are now dealing with the document produced in the House by the Elections and Boundaries Commission.

Mr. Speaker: What is your point of order?

Miss Nicholson: The Member for San Fernando East is irrelevant. We are dealing with the Report of the Elections and Boundaries Commission and because he wants to be the next Prime Minister and I know he would not be, let him get in line and be well trained.

Mr. Speaker: Let us get back to the draft order, please.

Mr. Manning: I do not know why the hon. Minister did not say that to the people of Bagatelle when they were running her out for telling them foolishness about squatting.

Miss Nicholson: Last week, the people of Bagatelle came to me with a white flag of peace.

Mr. Manning: The people of Bamboo—I do not know why she did not say that about them when they were running her out.

Mr. Speaker: We have the original motion and the motion as amended before the House. We are dealing with the draft order. Let us get back to the debate, please.

Mr. Manning: Yes, I agree. The evidence suggests that the Elections and Boundaries Commission did a very professional job in this report that today is the subject of consideration by this honourable House. The hon. Member for Couva North made a point which I think has to be dispelled, that the boundaries of polling divisions appear to be sacrosanct.

In 1976, a polling division was removed from the constituency of San Fernando East. It is polling division 3870. In 1991, in this report which is before us, what was originally 3870 in 1976, is now polling division 3870, 3871 and 3872, the original polling division being subdivided into additional polling divisions to take into account the migration of persons within that area, between 1976 and the current time. Therefore, the hon. Member for Couva North, the Leader of the Opposition, is not correct at all.

3.20 p.m.

As we examine the criteria by which the Elections and Boundaries Commission operates, and as we examine the report before us, we see that the Commission has adhered to all the criteria that constraints it by law. All those criteria have been adhered to, but we wish to make the point that the Elections

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and Boundaries Commission ought now to be given the resources by the Government, because it is the Government that determines what resources the Commission will spend. The Commission must now be given the resources by the Government to ensure that prior to election day, as many as possible of those persons who are missing from the list whose names have been removed—I think the number is now something like 50,000, it is the net figure of 50,000—can be located and, therefore, can have their names reinstated in addition to bringing on to the electoral list persons who have attained the age of 18 since the last general elections.

If those resources are given to the Elections and Boundaries Commission, and if this exercise is properly done—as I am sure the EBC will do it—prior to election day, then we will remove the one risk that now exists, and that is the risk of sections of the population concluding that they have been disenfranchised for reasons not of their own making. Therefore, in supporting the original motion, I wish to make that recommendation to the Government.

Mr. Kelvin Ramnath (*Couva South*): Mr. Speaker, I was attempting to gather from the Member for San Fernando East. It is a great pity that he has now left the Chamber after having spoken—what he was trying to establish in his argument. On the one hand, as is so common in this Parliament, praises are showered on the independent commissions because it would seem irresponsible if one were to question the independence of the independent commission. On the other hand, the Member for San Fernando East was very concerned about the conduct of elections, and an example of that was the conduct of elections, in the Diego Martin Central district. Clearly what we experienced here this afternoon was a very poor attempt at making a highly political speech on a matter which is very simple.

What the Leader of the Opposition has expressed is the view held by a large number of citizens in this country. I cannot believe that between 1986 and 1991, when it is taken into account that additional persons would have become eligible for registration, that there will be a net decrease of 103,537 voters. I cannot understand that. Because at the same time, the Family Planning Association is extremely concerned about the population growth in the country. The statistics with respect to the rate of population is, in fact, very conservative compared to what the Family Planning Association believes to be the real figures. If even we ignore that, how is it possible to have a decrease in voters of 103,000 in a five-year period? The question naturally is: Where did these people go? The

Government has denied the figures of migration from this county that have been produced by politicians and other persons.

When persons were claiming that as many as 50,000 people left the country, there was a stout denial of that figure. I take it that the Central Statistical Office would have some idea of how many people actually left the country. I do not believe that 103,000 people would have either died or left the country, so something has to be wrong in the system. It is not only an attack on the integrity of the members of the Commission to question how the department functions, because in most cases, you are dealing with employees of the Commission.

I know Members of Parliament and Ministers are afraid to say anything about these sacrosanct commissions, but I know there are people like Jimmy Bain on independent commissions, and I know that Jimmy Bain has a very, very serious problem with the increasing number of Indians in the Public Service, so much so that he had to mention that there will be trouble in the country if East Indians were to continue to join the public service, and he has been on independent commissions since I was born under the PNM.

So that it is not intended in this debate to attack the individuals when we talk about going back to the Commission and seeking to clarify some of these statistics. It is intended to make the system one in which all citizens can have confidence so that at the end of the day no one feels that he is disenfranchised as a result of a system which is not operating in the best interest of the country.

I am surprised that the Member for San Fernando East had to take such exception to what the Leader of the Opposition has been saying with respect to the Elections and Boundaries Commission, because in his statement he gave the impression that to discuss this matter is to attack these goodly gentlemen.

I want to draw your attention to the fact that the Elections and Boundaries Commission is currently undertaking a registration exercise, and they have advertised so that people whose names do not appear on the existing can, in fact, go to registration offices and have their names placed on the list. I know as a fact that people from Waterloo and Calcutta Settlement No. 2 were registered to vote in Mohammedville, that is a fact.

I can bring the evidence to the PNM, or what is left of it. There was a mass transfer of names—it has nothing to do with the independence of the Commission. It was plain corruption on the part of the PNM—That is why today these goodly gentlemen cannot account for a decrease of 7,000 voters in places

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like Barataria/San Juan, because the party which is so well oiled, the machinery which they boast about that it is capable of carrying out a national campaign, was involved in massive fraud. That Ontario Supreme Court produced enough evidence recently of that—all the evidence. It was the Member for Port-of-Spain East, or what is left of Port-of-Spain East, who had to apologize to the country recently in some public meeting which I read about in the newspaper.

It is as a result of a diligent effort on the part of the present Elections and Boundaries Commission that the truth has been discovered. The decrease we see here is not that these people have migrated or they have died or they have been lost; that has come about as a result of the house-to-house enumeration conducted by the EBC, and they have now discovered that many of those persons who appeared on the list were in fact non-existent. That is the issue. That is why they are so careful not to go back to the Elections and Boundaries Commission, and they are careful to give the impression of their concern about the independence of the Commission. I heard the Member speak about embarking on a national house-to-house campaign to assist in the registration of voters once they are qualified to do this.

We invest a great deal of money in institutions in this country. We pay a great deal of money to people to do certain work. Much money is invested in computerization in institutions like the Elections and Boundaries Commission, and so forth. This is not a case where people did not go to register; this is not a case where somebody has obtained the age of 18 and did not go to register. This is a case where enumerators hired by the EBC went to look for people in their homes, not once, but several times.

They went to these addresses and could not find these people. You cannot blame the citizens of the country for not co-operating with the EBC. The EBC went to the homes of citizens in this country, like what they did in Guyana when they went into Britain to look for all of these overseas voters, they found the addresses in railway lines and post offices, and so on, many years ago when investigations were done. That is exactly what is happening in Trinidad. They could not find these people.

As a people who are involved in political parties, we were issued with a list of voters whose names were on the 1986 list, but whose names could not be found in 1990. I cannot remember the heading. As members of political parties we tried to contact these people and in my constituency, I wrote many of these persons to

find out whether they were alive, and so forth. There is a valid list of voters who could not be found. That was published by the Elections and Boundaries Commission.

The truth, Mr. Speaker, is that if you go through this, you will find a kind of statistical, very interesting, revelation where the large numbers of voters could not be found. You would not find them, for example, in Couva South or Couva North; in Chaguanas, only 760, and so forth. But in Barataria/San Juan, 7,000; Port-of-Spain South, 6,000; Port-of-Spain North, 5,000; Diego Martin West, 4,700. If you go down the list, Mr. Speaker, you will see St. Joseph, 6,000. Clearly, one must conclude that after such efforts are being made by the political parties—including the party to which I belong—and the Elections and Boundaries Commission, there are still over 50,000 persons who cannot be located. I suggest to the Member for San Fernando East that maybe he should consult his former colleagues to find out where these voters disappeared to, and he probably will find out that many of them never existed in the first place.

3.35 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, the Parliament retained the power to decide what to do with these reports for very good reasons. Not because an independent commission submits a report the Members of Parliament must accept it, because to do otherwise would appear to be an attack on the integrity of an independent commission. In fact, one of the problems we have in this country is that we probably have too many such independent commissions who do their own thing without regard to politicians. If you are a Minister, when you have to account to the population with respect to employment practices in the country, you cannot tell the population to go and ask the Chairman of the Public Service Commission. The blame and the accusations are put on the politicians, but the politicians can do very little about those problems because we have given the powers to these so-called independent commissions. This is not a debate to deal with these independent commissions. I am quite sure that there are very distinguished men and women who serve on some of those commissions. I am making the point that for too long certain people have been hiding behind the independence of the so-called independent commissions, and maybe that is one of the major flaws in our Constitution; perhaps it is one of the major flaws in our whole system of government.

You see, certain persons were able to get around these commissions, and I am not suggesting at all that this is the case with the Elections and Boundaries

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Commission. I am aware that every time you ask people what are the employment practices in the police service, the army, the judiciary or in any partiucular area of government operations, they say, "we cannot answer those questions, ask the commission." That is the answer you get from successive governments. Many persons are known to hide behind these commissions so that they will not provide information which is very important to the citizens.

With respect to the boundaries, as the Commission itself has explained, it has tried as far as possible to keep within certain parameters and certain criteria. It claims it operates under certain criteria but, in reality, contradicts itself in many cases. Part of Couva North is south of Couva South, Part of Couva South is north of Couva North. We are told that, as far as possible, what they have done is to use natural boundaries. Part of the community called Mc Bean has now been placed in Couva North; part has been placed in Couva South. These are communities. I know that it is not easy to find natural boundaries in all cases but if one were to look at the map one will see the kind of jigsaw puzzles which exist. In the Tabaquite constituency they have now brought part of Balmain into Couva South but they have divided places like Gran Couva, Pepper Village, Tortuga, Mayo, and so forth.

They are creating even more confusion with these boundaries and it is now imperative on the political parties to carry out a programme of education with respect to these new boundaries. They have created a seat called Caroni Central. It starts in Endeavour and Enterprise and it ends in Claxton Bay, and the way in which the seat has been cut—like in the case of Arima, there is a triangle that has been formed north to south when it was quite possible to use a rectangular method of developing some of those seats. I do not know how it is done. I am sure these commissioners do not spend time doing that. They are not going to do the permutations and computations. They are not going to be doing the computer programmes. They are not going to be doing most of the work there. They look at it and they set general criteria, certain parameters, and then they present the report to the House.

For a very long time there have been people advocating the presence of political parties on these commissions. I want to recommend at the appropriate time that something ought to be done about ensuring the representation of political parties in this country on the Elections and Boundaries Commission. I am not saying that that must be a substitute for the present commision, but if you

have a vested interest in matters which concern you, such as, the Elections and Boundaries Commission and the boundaries and the constituencies and so on, then you should not be denied the opportunity to participate. Participation could be ascertaining views from the parties before these reports come to the Parliament; it could be in an advisory capacity; it could be on the basis of observer status. It is done in other Caribbean countries where there are representatives of political parties.

I am not suggesting that everyone who forms a political party will get automatic representation. Of course, there will be the kind of formula which will make the whole exercise sensible. To continue to operate on this very archaic colonial system, assuming that only certain persons can produce desirable results for the country is not to understand the present realities of Trinidad and Tobago. I believe that we would have a much more acceptable set of boundaries in this country if we were to have representation of political parties on this commission. This is something I throw out for the consideration of Members of Parliament, rather than to simply come here and accept the report without reservation because it is produced by an independent commission.

Mr. Speaker, I want to draw your attention to some of the problems which I myself have faced. There has been a reduction between 1986 and 1990 in the constituency of Couva South of more than 5,000 voters. I imagine in some other constituencies it would be much greater. While I have no objection to the creation of new seats, we must ensure that these figures do in fact represent some kind of equity. I believe that certain persons who were responsible for putting these boundaries together simply wanted to arrive at some national average, and in the process of doing so have simply put the polling divisions into some kind of computer programme to come up with a national average, so that you will have an average of about 20,000 voters in a constituency without considering the kind of impact. I have seen cases where, in one instance, for example, Cedar Hill Road in Claxton Bay is supposed to have been the major dividing line between Central and South but the Commission has gone on the northern side of Cedar Hill Road and taken out the major polling division and put it into the Pointe-a-Pierre constituency. It does not reside there.

3.45 p m.

I am quite sure that if each Member of Parliament were to look at the new boundaries there would be many anomalies contrary to the kind of criteria the Elections and Boundaries Commission has set, or claimed that it has set for the

[MR. RAMNATH]

determination of these boundaries. Since it is not possible for all concerned to be involved in the drawing-up of these boundaries, there is very little we can do, particularly since we have no representation on these commissions.

I suggest that we do not take lightly the fact that more than 50,000 persons cannot be accounted for; and that this House should express, in very strong terms, to the Elections and Boundaries Commission, our concern with respect to the absence of these voters. If, in fact, they do not exist, then what we can probably do is to have published in the newspapers in this country the names of those persons who cannot be found, so that the citizens can have an opportunity to examine the newspapers at some appropriate time to determine whether they have been disenfranchised.

I do not think that it would be very costly to the Elections and Boundaries Commission if it were to publish these names in the national newspapers for a certain period of time. If persons fail to respond then we can assume that every effort has been made to have them registered. But to simply make a statement saying that you should check with the Elections and Boundaries Commission is to assume that you have reached these people and that they will go, as a matter of concern, to the various offices to find out whether their names are on the list.

I do not think, as well, that you can expect political parties to conduct house-to-house surveys in order to determine whether electors' names have been left out. This is a very cumbersome exercise. While we are told by the Member for San Fernando East that the PNM is in the process of doing that, I do not believe that any political party has the resources to have their own enumerators go house to house in a constituency to determine whether people have been registered. That is a function of the Commission. I suggest that the 64,000 voters who, at the moment, cannot be found should be published in the newspapers and let us end this discussion once and for all. If we do that, then I think we can say that the Elections and Boundaries Commission is being fair to the voters.

Mr. Speaker, I want to support the amendment that this report be sent back to the Commission only from the point of view of determining the accuracy of those figures so that we can have some kind of report coming to Parliament, and Parliament can be assured that there have been no errors with respect to the figures which have been published.

We were told by the Member for San Fernando East, that if a system is operated in such a way so as to exclude persons who are entitled to vote there can be serious, social problems. I do not know what the Member for San Fernando

East had in mind when he spoke of social problems. I do not know whether what happened in Diego Martin Central, a constituency in which he claims that certain electors were not allowed to vote, is an example of what he is speaking about, and that is, the system not being operated in such a way to exclude voters.

If, therefore, the leader of a political party can claim that he has the experience of elections being conducted in this country in such a way to exclude voters then, he should have no difficulty in supporting the amendment for us to ask the Elections and Boundaries Commission to clarify this set of figures which has been produced before us.

As I have said, in one breath he is concerned about the independence of the Commission, and in the other breath he is attacking the Commission for conducting unfair elections.

Mr. Manning: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I did no such thing. I never attacked the Elections and Boundaries Commission. What I said was, that there were persons who otherwise would have been eligible to vote who were disenfranchised because their names did not appear on the list.

The legal requirement for a name to appear on the list rests with the individual and not with the Commission. I have not attacked the Commission. Indeed, I have commended them for the professional work that they did in this report.

Mr. Ramnath: Then, Mr. Speaker, it is not that people were not allowed to vote in that election, it is simply a matter of persons not being registered. If he is saying that people were not registered and they failed to have their names registered, that is a different matter. The impression that he conveyed here is, that electors were not allowed to vote.

Mr. Panday: Those were his words. He would have gotten more votes, that is what he was saying.

Mr. Ramnath: Now he is blaming the citizens and claiming that it is the duty of the citizens to go out there and register.

As I have said before during his absence, and as he would know, a house-to-house registration programme was, in fact, conducted and several efforts were made to have these people registered. Why were these persons not registered? Were they persons who had just turned 18? Were they persons who were on the list before? The truth of the matter—he would not admit it—is that there are

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several persons who voted in 1986 whose names did not appear in the electoral list in Diego Martin Central. We had a very important role to play in that election.

The Member for San Fernando East speaks with such forked tongue. "We must not be seen to exercise authority because we have the authority."

Mr. Manning: I did not say that.

Mr. Ramnath: "We must not exercise the authority because we have the authority to exercise the authority."

Mr. Manning: Mr. Speaker, I stand on a point of order, please. What I said was: "We must not exercise authority merely because we have the authority to exercise it." That is the quotation.

Mr. Ramnath: I am sure *Hansard* will reflect something else, but nevertheless, as I said in his absence, he should try to understand why Parliament retained the power to accept or not to accept reports of the Elections and Boundaries Commission.

We are not simply asking this Parliament to exercise its authority in terms of rejecting the report. We are saying that there are sufficient grounds to send it back to them to ask for further explanations. The Member for San Fernando East would know better.

I also want to quote from what he said:

"The PNM is concerned about the large numbers of names absent from the list."

"The PNM is concerned about the large numbers of names absent from the list", yet he refuses to support a motion to have the matter referred to the Elections and Boundaries Commission. I cannot understand the logic.

3.55 p.m.

He went into Golconda with a microphone recently announcing that Patrick Manning is on a house-to-house walk-a-thon and I am quite sure during his walk-a-thon in Golconda—he is walking about a lot these days, Mr. Speaker—he is all over the place walking about. I am quite sure in his walkabout that he would have found out that many of those persons were disenfranchised, that their names were not on the list as a result. All we are asking him is to support an amended motion for the Elections and Boundaries Commission to take it back.

I find it very interesting that he is seeking to disassociate himself from the statements attributed to him with respect to the recent changes in the boundaries. He was quoted as saying, "the constituency was weaker by the addition of five polling divisions from Oropouche and Naparima based on the voting pattern of 1986." Those were his remarks. Those were the remarks which were published in the newspapers and he will have to account to the electorate of Oropouche and Naparima what he meant by the constituency of San Fernando East being weaker through the addition of those five polling divisions. The Member for Oropouche and the Member for Naparima who now sit here, won those polling divisions and he knows exactly what he was saying when he made those statements, except that he did not think before he spoke. I always remember that it was through our grace he was allowed to sit in this House. If the Prime Minister had followed our advice he would have been out of the Parliament.

Mr. Manning: Too late, too late shall be the cry.

Mr. Panday: We did not want to take that one; you know that. We had 33 and we could not take another one. It looked bad.

Mr. Ramnath: Mr. Speaker, I want to suggest that we, as Members of this Parliament, support the amendment made by the Leader of the Opposition asking the Elections and Boundaries Commission to further provide us with information, with respect to the figures published as far the decrease or the increase in electors as stated in Appendix E of this report, and that should not in any way delay the preparation for the general elections. I do not think that a few weeks would make any difference to the Government nor would it make any difference to the Members on the Opposition benches. What it will do, is provide an opportunity to all citizens who are eligible to vote to have their names registered and therefore exercise that important vote.

Perhaps this is going to be the most important election in the history of this country.

Mr. Panday: It is going to be the mother of all battles.

Mr. Ramnath: It is going to be an election which will determine the future of this country and we would not like anyone to say when they have lost the election that the Elections and Boundaries Commission renumeration exercise was the result of their defeat. I predict that there will be a lot of seats lost by one and very narrow margins, if only for that, we must make sure that those fifty-odd thousand persons are found.

The Member for San Fernando East won by 61 votes.

Mr. Panday: Please, 61 questionable votes.

Mr. Ramnath: There were two ballot boxes in which the stubs and ballots were placed in the ballot boxes which was not permissible under the laws of the land and I could very well understand what would happen to anyone—

Mr. Manning: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. Just for the records, since the hon. Member for Couva South was neither there nor is he apparently aware of what took place. The scrutineers on behalf of all the political parties, mainly the one of which he was a proud member at that time, signed a document indicating that the confidentiality of that ballot had been preserved and, therefore, agreed to the detachment of the ballot from the stub, thereby preserving the integrity of the entire exercise. You have no case.

Mr. Panday: That is not the point.

Mr. Ramnath: I was hoping to end my contribution. But since he got up it is the same argument that they used in the O'Halloran case.

I would not try to get into legal matters like my friend here from San Fernando East but the fact of the matter is that there are certain voting procedures in this country and you must preserve the identity of the voter. Once you put the ballot and the stub in a ballot box, you can identify the voter. I think the matter should end there. To come now and try to defend something that has happened, you should be thankful. I want to tell the Member for Diego Martin Central that I was a proud Member then of the NAR because it is people like myself and others who sit here, who were responsible for the massive victory over you. But I am not sure that the Member for Diego Martin Central can say the same thing about his own party.

Mr. Valley: I am a proud Member of the PNM.

Mr. Ramnath: A party which ravished this country where O'Halloran himself admitted in his dying days that he stole for them; where he admitted that he stole and he gave it to the party. These proud members of the PNM after they saw the film "Money is No Problem" should bend their heads in shame. When the future generations should ask where the moneys went in those glorious days of the oil boom, they will have to answer. The trouble is they may not be around.

Now they want to disassociate themselves from the Member of Laventille. They are now talking about old PNM and the new PNM. I do not know whether the Member for Laventille is an old PNM or a new PNM.

I just want to advise my friend from Diego Martin Central that he must not try to give the impression that they take no responsibility for what has happened in this country. There are other times we will have an opportunity to discuss the merits of those matters.

All I want to say at this time is that this Parliament has a responsibility to ensure that no one complains that the elections were not fair when those results are published. I also want to emphasize that people are becoming increasingly concerned in this country about their rights, particularly their rights to exercise their franchise so that we can make a contribution to the rights of those persons by ensuring that the Elections and Boundaries Commission now conduct a new campaign to ensure that we find those people. Thank you very much.

4.05 p.m.

Mr. Eden Shand (*St. Ann's West*). I rise to support the original motion. I do not support the motion which calls for this report to go back to the EBC because I do believe that our country, from my soundings, is in such a state that nothing must be done to delay the general elections. My soundings indicate that we have a crisis in the country—a crisis which I will describe in greater detail later on in my contribution.

Mr. Panday: On that basis, you are tempting me to withdraw my motion.

Mr. Shand: I want to support the original draft Order, not merely because I believe that the Commissioners of the Elections and Boundaries Commission are independent, honourable people, and I do believe this. I believe they have gone out and done a marvelous job and I do not for one moment question their independence and their sincerity nor the report on which the draft Order is based.

Mr. Speaker, I must confess however, to being in a position where whether this Order is passed as it is or whether it goes back, it really hardly affects me because I am the only Member of Parliament who, as a result of the proposals in this Report, has had his constituency pulled from under his feet. For St. Ann's West is really no more, it will be no more once this House accepts this draft Order and the President issues it.

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So I make this declaration up front that whatever happens to it, it really does not affect me. I accept the decision of the Elections and Boundaries Commission to recommend as they have recommended, to split St. Ann's West asunder, into three parts, attaching one part to Port of Spain North, which still retains its identity largely; attaching one part to Laventille Central and attaching a third part to what used to be Port of Spain East and which is now called Laventille/Morvant, the new name for what used to be Laventille.

I have no quarrel at all with what has been done and I feel a little vindicated or comfortable in my earlier decision not to seek office again, when I have seen that my decision has been accommodated by the decisions of the Elections and Boundaries Commission. But had I not been absolutely confident in the integrity and the independence of the Elections and Boundaries Commission Commissioners and staff, I would have been a little uncomfortable at the coincidence that the two seats which have been combined are presently represented by two of the so-called rebels of the NAR, and that this new seat will probably be represented by the Chairman of the party who—I know and I do not hold it against him—has always wished to be an elected rather than a selected Member of Parliament. I would have found it extremely coincidental because here it is Port of Spain North is really not what it used to be; St. Ann's West is not what it used to be. They have been combined with some polling divisions from what used to be Port of Spain East and the person who is going to run for the seat is the person whom my good friend from Port of Spain North exposed in the daily newspapers for telling lies.

I have here the *Sunday Guardian* of December 30, 1990, big blue headlines; "NAR condemns Shand". The article states:

"The National Alliance for Reconstruction yesterday strongly condemn certain comments made by Eden Shand, Parliamentary Representative for St. Ann's West on his resignation from the Government. A release was issued by Party Chairman, Herbert Atwell, after a meeting yesterday morning at the party's Albion Street headquarters, attended by several Ministers and Members of Parliament including Selwyn Richardson, new Minister of Health. After the meeting, Mr. Atwell met Prime Minister, Mr. ANR Robinson at his St. Ann's residence to discuss the latest developments."

Two days later, there was another headline in the *Trinidad Guardian*, Monday 31, 1990: "Fox to tell all". Because the Member for Port of Spain North was at that meeting and he was the only Member of that meeting who had the guts to

come out and speak the truth. Because this headline is false. NAR never condemned shand at any meeting. It was a fabrication of the Chairman with or without the collusion of others, I do not know and he exposed it.

So you see, Mr. Speaker, when you see acts like these done and these boundaries and things combined and people running unopposed for seat, you begin to worry. But I have every confidence that there has been no collusion between the NAR, its Chairman and the Elections and Boundaries Commission. I think it is mere coincidence.

Mr. Speaker, the article which I just referred to and the meeting that took place at Albion Street, followed upon my resignation from Government in December 1990. I resigned at that time and I made my reasons public, because I felt, and I still do feel so, that the political leader of the party was more a liability than an asset. I do not think it has anything to do with harsh decisions. I think it has more to do with the manner in which the decisions were made and other reasons into which I do not wish to go at this time.

Naturally, it followed, and I did announce in a newspaper interview, that given the circumstances of my resignation from Government and the statements which I made concerning its leadership, that I was not going to be presenting myself for screening or for candidacy on an NAR ticket as the party was presently led. It follows. But this report has clinched it for me and my declining to continue has been confirmed for me by the recommendations of the Elections and Boundaries Commission. So before too long, I will no longer be standing before this plaque speaking as a representative for St. Ann's West.

4.15 p.m.

I would like to take this opportunity however, to announce my intention to resign from other positions. The position I refer to is being a member of the National Alliance for Reconstruction. I think, that it is obvious that the larger body and membership of the party to which I still belong is at variance with me on a crucial issue and I respect their opinion, therefore, I think it the decent thing to do, seeing that I will be a strange bedfellow, to resign from membership in that club where I am severely outnumbered.

I respect every man's choice. I respect the choice of my colleagues and I wish they would afford me the same respect for my own choices. But the reason I have to resign—

[MR. SHAND]

Mr. Smart: Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the hon. Member for St. Ann's West will give way—

Mr. Shand: Only on a point of order.

Mr. Smart: This is a question on a point of information.

Mr. Shand: No, I do not wish to be interrupted. You see, I lose my train of thought when I get interrupted and I have to find it once more. But I was dealing with wishing that my own position was respected as I respect those of my colleagues. Had my position been respected, I would not have been subjected to the most atrocious and horrible harassment over the last few months.

There has been a campaign to discredit the Member of Parliament for St. Ann's West. Not merely the last few months, it started since 1988 when, as you know, I was fired from my position as Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Food Production. Since then I have been the subject of a campaign of discrediting. I knew it all the time and it is now confirmed that the objective of this campaign was to prepare the road for someone else to run for the seat when election is held at the end of this term.

I am still a Member of the NAR, so I cannot go into the gory detail of the dirty linen about this campaign of discrediting. I did not just resign, I am serving notice of my intention to resign once Parliament is dissolved. I was elected on an NAR ticket and I will serve out my term.

[Laughter]

So, I cannot go into great detail but I can quote from the *TNT Mirror* of Friday, January 18, 1991. There was a headline "PNM taking a firm grip on St. Ann's West". The writer of the article quoted an NAR officer who is identified as the Vice Chairman of NAR party branch 10 in the constituency of St. Ann's West, his name is given as Abdul Gafoor. The article states:

"...as supervisor of the Self Help Programme Gafoor said that he fully supports Shand's views that he (Shand) was marginalized. He said at no time did the MP get the support of the constituency Chairman, Khalid Raman nor of another NARite Ivan Williams who lives in the area."

For those of you who do not know, Mr. Khalid Raman is a LIDP Regional Manager, so is Mr. Ivan Williams. Because this man spoke the truth, these people victimized him. He could not get a 10 days after that. They even accused him that Shand paid him to put this in the papers. This is a blatant lie. The man did this of

his own accord. I was surprised to read it in the *Mirror*. They victimized him but he was reinstated because he took his problem to Minister Pantin who ordered his reinstatement; so he is working now.

4.25 p.m.

Let me give you some of the less controversial aspects of this discrediting that I am talking about, this undermining. I remember shortly after my resignation, we had a Commonwealth Parliamentary Association meeting.

Miss Nicholson: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The discourse this evening is on the Report of the Elections and Boundaries Commission. I am stating that the hon. Member for St. Ann's West is irrelevant and I would like you to take actions necessary to bring him in line with the motion.

Mr. Shand: I do not know why the Member is so nervous. Why does she want to muzzle me? Can you not take the truth?

Mr. Speaker: Order please! Order please!

Mr. Shand: The hon. Member for Couva North, in his contribution, made reference to the treatment of MPs with contempt. He was allowed to speak. I am on that same theme for the same reasons.

Mr. Speaker: Can you refresh our memory in the context of which the statement was made by the Member for Couva North?

Mr. Shand: The Member for Couva North drew reference to the report where it recognized that the representation of the people in large constituencies, large geographic areas, sometimes might be better represented by two MPs and was making the point that the EBC was concerned about proper representation for constituents and quality of representation, and for this reason he said, that MPs must be treated with respect. They must not be undermined especially by party hacks. In the course of my contribution which, unfortunately, will be interrupted for refreshment, I will bring to the attention of this House sordid evidence and details about how this Member of Parliament, because he did not toe a certain party line was not only discredited and undermined but disrespected in the most vicious way.

Would you permit me to continue, Sir?

Mr. Speaker: Go ahead. I am listening.

Mr. Shand: I was saying and I believe the Member for Tobago West probably got up to stop me when she did because I mentioned the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. It was at a CPA meeting to elect the executive of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association for a new term, something that has been traditionally non-partisan, a non-political affair. Members of Parliament are elected to serve on an association of parliamentarians. It does not cross party lines.

I remember I was nominated to be on the executive of that committee by Members of this Parliament. You do not have to classify them by whether they were PNM, UNC or whatever. I was really, really astonished to see how seriously these people took my stand because they came in there with a vengeance, united with a vengeance to make sure that Shand does not go anywhere on any CPA executive. When the vote was cast the Member for Tobago West said, "Mr. Chairman, can I stand up to cast my vote against him?" That lady!

Miss Nicholson: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I know nothing about the discourse that the Member for St. Ann's West is talking about. He is being false. He is misleading the House and with due respect I request that you ask him to withdraw that statement and also vote that the statement is irrelevant.

4.30 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.08 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Mr. E. Shand: Mr. Speaker, I shall miss the fare provided at 4.30 p.m. on Fridays because the refreshment that one has just completed imbibing was of the usual high standard. So I will certainly miss the fare served by the tea ladies and I would like to pay public tribute to the people who provide it. It is the kind of fare that assists one in his duties as a Member of Parliament, the kind of fare that clarifies the mind, the kind of fare that buffets one when one needs buffeting, as I was just now in the tea room when, true to form, I was the subject of some ridicule, one calling me a little boy, the other one saying—but that is beside the point. What took place in the tea room, Mr. Speaker, is really important, although the Member for Toco/Manzanilla might laugh, because it has made me realize I ought not to just serve notice of resignation, I should resign forthwith.

Mr. Speaker: Order please. I will ask the operators of the television cameras that under no circumstances should that kind of demonstration be allowed for

public viewing. The Member will get back to the draft order that is before the House.

Mr. Shand: Mr. Speaker, before the interruption, and having clarified through your good self, Sir, the reason that I was following the line of discussion and debate developed by the hon. Member for Couva North—

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member did not develop any debate. He made mention in passing, and he spent less than three minutes, as far as I can recall. We are debating the draft order that is before the House and, obviously, the draft order is based on the 1991 report, and these are the two documents that we will address ourselves to at this stage. Sometimes the Speaker allows a little leeway, and the next thing is that the House is brought into contempt and ridiculed. Total abuse. We shall stick to the rules.

I want hon. Members to understand, this is one of the first election documents before the House, and one would expect Members to make reference to a number of things. The Member for San Fernando East did, the Member for Couva North did, also the Member for Couva South. The Member for St. Ann's West is going on some kind of personal journey, where I do not know.

Mr. Shand: Mr. Speaker, I prefaced my contribution by underlining that the constituency of St. Ann's West is a very unique one, as far as this report is concerned. It is unique in that it is the only constituency that virtually has been removed as a constituency in the 36 constituencies of the country. The number 36 has been maintained, one seat is less in the East-West Corridor, and one seat is more in central. There is a new seat created called Caroni Central, and the seat of St. Ann's West is no more. Because of this unique position of the constituency in the report before us, and because of the impact of this fact on the representation of the people of St. Ann's West, it is for this reason that I was describing to this honourable House some of the problems to do with representation of the people, especially representation of the people of St. Ann's West who have suddenly found themselves split in three. It was because of some of the problems that I personally encountered in representing the people of St. Ann's West, and it is because I abhor what I have been subjected to, and I do not wish it on any Member of this Parliament, be it present or future, that I decided to share with this House and the national community some of my personal experiences to do with the representation of the people of St. Ann's West, especially seeing that this unit—*[Interruption]*

[MR. SHAND]

Mr. Speaker, everyone has heard accusations being flung at me about abandoning my constituency for one year. As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, they are just parroting what someone else wrote in the newspaper. Just like the person who gave this false report to the *Guardian* that I abandoned my constituency, they are parroting it, and when I try to defend my name—

Mr. Speaker: I would like to draw the attention of the hon. Member to Standing Order 36(1):

"Subject to the provisions of Standing Order No. 12, (Adjournment Definite Matter of Urgent Public Importance), debate upon any motion, Bill or amendment, and a Member shall confine his observations to the subject under discussion."

I wish to emphasize:

"... a member shall confine his observations to the subject under discussion."

The resolution is very clear. It says here that "the draft of the Elections and Boundaries Commission Order 1991 be approved". I hope that I will not have to again remind the Member that he is being irrelevant.

Mr. Shand: I am very thankful for your guidance, Mr. Speaker, but I did note when the Member for San Fernando East was speaking, he said something which I believed and which I alluded to when I opened my contribution. I opened my contribution by saying that I support the original motion because I do not wish to see any further delay, a delay which would result, if this amended motion is carried by this House. I do not wish to see any delay in the holding of general elections so that the crisis which I feel in our country can be resolved.

The Member for San Fernando East did say that this represented the last hurdle for the holding of general elections. What we are debating today is the last hurdle, getting over the last hurdle for the holding of general elections. As a matter of fact, this kind of concern for getting rid of hurdles and for having the people express their votes through a general election in an organized, fair and free way; similar words that the Member for San Fernando East used, similar, excellent words were used by the Prime Minister and the Member for Tobago East.

If I may quote from *Caribbean Man* from a speech that he made in August, 1970 when he was describing the conditions of the time, and when he made a call

for getting rid of all hurdles and holding general elections, these were the words he used:

"The first requirement for us to move out of the present situation and for the restoration of confidence among the people is that the Prime Minister should place the resignation of Government in the hands of the Governor-General.

The electorate must be permitted to determine in a free and fair election at the earliest opportunity whether one who has let us into the present situation can lead us out again."

5.20 p.m.

You see, the Prime Minister who was correctly concerned about democracy, about the expression of the will of the people, of getting rid of the last hurdles before our elections can be held, made this plea, made this call, identifying the first requirement. He made this because of the sensing of the situation of the day. He made some very astute observations, as documented in that same speech, and I shall just refer to one or two of them. He talked about the current national crisis which I alluded to at the beginning of my speech. He mentioned nine, and I do not think I will bore the audience here with the nine tell-tales signs of current national crisis but I will mention one or two. At that time, and I quote:

"1. There was a breakdown of communication between the Government and the people. There were no press conferences held by the head of government."

Do we have a similar situation today?

"2. There was a breakdown of confidence between the Government and the people."

Do we have that kind of situation today?

"3. The continuing high level of unemployment and the fact that no one seems to have any clear idea regarding what is being done about it.

4. The bad relations between the Government and the labour movement, and in particular the bad personal relations of the head of government with labour leaders."

These are not my words, these are the words of an astute patriotic observer of the day. I continue:

"5. The rapid increase in the cost of living."

Is that describing today or 1970?

- "6. The ineffectiveness of government machinery; over-centralization; discouragement of initiative. Personal interference from the top in all ministries have all created a situation of uncertainty, insecurity and fear in the public service and insecurity even in Ministers themselves.
7. The apparent incapacity of the authorities, in particular the head of government, to act effectively on evidence of corrupt practices in the governmental machinery."

Hon. Member: Valley does not like that one.

Mr. Shand: I will skip the others but I will come to the last one.

"9. The general impression of inconsistency, unreliability and unpredictability in crucial areas of government policy. For example, with respect to the role of government in the economy. Today it is sell wholesale; tomorrow it is buy wholesale, and hardly anybody seems to know the full details of the transaction."

Mr. Panday: Today they are buying and selling men.

Mr. Shand: This makes such interesting reading. I thought I would read into the record the description of the current national crisis of that day so that Members will determine for themselves whether a similar crisis is at hand and whether we need to get rid of the last electoral hurdle for free and fair elections so that we could determine once and for all who has the legal and moral authority to run the affairs of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. That is my interest.

I am not really unduly disturbed by the undermining that has taken place in my own personal case. It does not disturb me really because I know what the truth is. God knows what the truth is. I stand by the truth especially when lies are spread about me. As you said, Mr. Speaker, and correctly so, that I seem to be deviating on to some kind of personal defence and you do not know where it was heading, I wish you would forgive me for deviating in this manner. Mr. Speaker, who steals my purse steals trash but he who robs me of my good name robs me of that which is very precious to me indeed. When people of unsavoury character try to malign my good name, especially when they try to malign my good name as a representative of the people, I must react. I have not been a perfect representative. Which one of us has been a perfect representative? I have done what I have done,

and that which I have done may God judge me for it. I really find it repulsive, when one who is about to leave this Parliament tries to get things off his chest, in as decent a fashion as possible, is subject to ridicule by his former colleagues—the same kind of undermining that I was referring to before the teabreak; undermining from the highest levels—

Mr. Speaker: The Member is wandering again.

Mr. Shand: Not the Prime Minister. I have no evidence of that. I absolve the Prime Minister from this wandering—but from the highest levels. When one uses the term highest levels one has to absolve the highest levels.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members will note that I have been extremely lenient with the hon. Member. At this stage, I quote from *May's Parliamentary Practice* which states:

"If any Member wanders from the question under discussion the Speaker will interrupt him and remind him that he must speak to the question. If a Member persists in irrelevance or tedious repetition either of his own arguments or of the arguments used by other Members in the debate, the Standing Order empowers the Speaker, after calling the attention of the House to the Member's conduct, to direct him to discontinue the speech."

I am calling the attention of hon. Members. This is not the first time that I have been appealing to the hon. Member to get back to the subject.

5.30 p.m.

Mr. Shand: Mr. Speaker, as a result of your very wise counsel, I will have to skip a few pages of my notes and come to winding up my contribution, because—

Mr. Speaker: The speaking time of the hon. Member has expired.

Motion made, That the hon. Member's speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [*Mr. B. Panday*]

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. Shand: I thank the hon. Member for Couva North for so kindly proposing, and I thank the rest of the House for agreeing to give me 30 more minutes of speaking time. I would not need the 30 minutes because what I have to say, by way of my winding up, will take much less than that.

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I am happy to support the motion. I cannot support any amendment that will cause this to go back to the Elections and Boundaries Commission, and come back here, and then back again. I think that would be punishing the people of Trinidad and Tobago. I support the motion. As a result of this draft Order being accepted by this House and the President issuing the Order, the Prime Minister will be in a position to call the elections. It really is unfortunate, I think, that an election date should be the cause of consternation in a population. I rather prefer the North American system where the date is given and you know that is the end of a term and a new administration is to take place.

This dangling of a date—do not tell them the date; that kind of thing—I find that is so unbecoming of statesmen. We are here at the sufferance of the people. We are not here to suffer the people by keeping them in suspense, and date this and date, and political strategy and all that. I would prefer that the population know that they have voted people in for a certain length of time, and that the Constitution—even though it has its leeway, should not be so used, that people become the victim of the naming of a date, rather than the beneficiaries of the naming of a date for elections. I am happy that this last hurdle will be passed in this House today, and this will facilitate the exercise of people suffrage and the electing of a new government.

By my actions and my words today, I have indicated that I will not be on the side of the National Alliance for Reconstruction. This does not mean that I am going to campaign against them. This does not mean that I am going to be on the side of the UNC; this does not mean that I am going to be on the side of the PNM. Today, I reclaim my independence. I will continue to be an independent observer of the affairs of my country in which I have a right to express my opinion, no matter who may like it, as long as I do not transgress the laws by which we are governed by way of slander. I will be supporting actively none of these new things.

It is my fear and it is a grievous fear that come election day, the crisis that I have referred to, probably, will not be fully resolved. I fear a hung Parliament, where no one has a clear majority to govern. I do not wish this on the country; this is the worst thing that can happen to a country, but this is what my fear is, and I must express it. I wish all the parties well, but I am afraid, it looks as though none of these old parties—because that is what they really are, the PNM “B” team the PNM “C” team, because they are now the PNM “C” team. The PNM “A” team has been killed. I congratulate the leader of that party for executing his

title with such dexterity. But now he has made the PNM “C” team, and it is the same thing, the same piece of cloth. What I have noticed over the last few months and years, when I compare it with what I fought against, it is the same khaki pants.

The UNC, although they are struggling to really expand their image, it still is, at this time, the DLP. It is all the old order which changeth, even now. But a few years from now when the people of this country have consolidated in their breast once more their disdain for politicians—and I felt that disdain, I felt that disdain as a hostage in this House. I felt it when I left this House a free person and re-visited my constituency. I felt it throughout the length and breadth of this country. I did not realise that politicians were so hated.

Mr. Smart: How come I did not feel it.

Mr. Shand: Because your head is buried in the sand.

It really is unfortunate that people who make the sacrifice—and it is a sacrifice—to present themselves to serve—and I will say this now, that in 1986 the team that I was a part of, honestly presented themselves to serve this country without fear or favour, and it was a wonderful team to be with.

It really hurt me in the early days when I saw people misunderstanding the politicians and the sacrifices. I remember when I got a car loan because of my office there was open resentment of my driving a new car to do the people's work. It really bothered me that the name of the politician got to sullied. I am praying and hoping for the day when the representatives of the people can reclaim their good names and reclaim the confidence of the people. I am afraid that as long as the old order is presented to the people, as exemplified in the existing politician party, the people will not be satisfied. The people will clamour for and call for a new order where the new blood of this country, not the old tired blood, will be pressed into service.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, I thank you for allowing me the leeway you allowed me today. I thank you for the pleasure of being associated with you, not only as a member of a party, but also as Speaker presiding over the House of which I am a Member. I have always found you to be a gentleman, even-handed, fair and courteous.

I thank all my colleagues, because I am referring to my colleagues here as parliamentarians, for the experience that they afforded me by being associated in this honourable House in making laws. I go, but I shall return when the time is

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right. It is not yet time for the new order. But when the time comes and if it is God's will, I will be there to serve.

Thank you.

5.40 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member has given me a lot of trouble this evening. But the nice thing about it is that he has not been rude to the Chair, which is something that I greatly appreciate.

Mrs. Muriel Donawa-Mc Davidson (*Laventille West*): Mr. Speaker, like my leader, Mr. Patrick Manning, I am supporting the motion presented to this honourable Parliament and to repeat the objective which is to draw our attention to a report, and I quote:

"And whereas the draft of an Order entitled "The Elections and Boundaries Commission Order, 1991" giving effect without modifications to the recommendations of the Commission was laid before the House of Representatives on the 10th day of May, 1991:

Be it Resolved:

That the draft of the Elections and Boundaries Commission Order, 1991 be approved."

I wish to remind this honourable House that when the Elections and Boundaries Commission was presented to this Parliament we were certain that we were selecting the men and women of the highest form of integrity. I am opposing the motion by the hon. Member for Couva North who, unfortunately—and I could understand his mood—has accused the previous members of the Elections and Boundaries Commission of being responsible [*Interruption*] I do not know why he is answering, I did not say anything about accusing the integrity of the members of the Elections and Boundaries Commission when he said to this honourable House that ghosts' names were on the electoral list in the Baratavia constituency.

In one breath they have accused the PNM Government of being racial and in the next breath the hon. Member for Couva South—I am sorry he is not here at this time—has accused the PNM of transferring people from Calcutta to vote in the Baratavia constituency. It is most unfortunate when in the same breath he comes back and boasts about the large majority of people who voted them into power. I do not know what more the Elections and Boundaries Commission could have

done whether in this Parliament or in the previous Parliament. People have to know that there is a sense of responsibility and we do know that it was not until the PNM Government came into power in Trinidad and Tobago that the political consciousness of the citizens of this country was developed. And it is a continuing process to cause people to understand and to exert their civic responsibility and to do their duty in Trinidad and Tobago. It is for this reason, particularly, Mr. Speaker, that in the Chaguaramas Declaration, an appeal had been made to the citizens of this country to become involved and to participate actively in all aspects of national life.

The hon. Member for Couva North asked that the Elections and Boundaries Commission report be deferred and I feel from his utterances that it is not really for the reasons that he has given. It is understanding that because of the education system put in place by the PNM Government at all levels, all citizens of this country, particularly the younger people, are coming to recognize that people are people and race has no place in the development of any country, more so in the development of Trinidad and Tobago. I say to this honourable House that people are going to vote in this election based on the policies, the principles and the honesty of purpose put forward by the party that is in power.

I wish to say to this honourable House that no longer will this country use the arguments that have been used in the last election—using O'Halloran as the theme in which they hope to win the next election. If he committed any sin, he has been absolved by the amount of criticism that has been levelled at him. If we accept the Hindu philosophy, then “the Karma has been burnt out” by the amount of consistent criticism about him.

The electorate voted a government into power based on the *[Interruption]* I wish they would stay quiet and listen to everyone. I cannot understand why in the name of heaven they do not sit and listen. I am beginning to think that maybe the time has come—with all due respect—to remove all men entirely from the politics of Trinidad and Tobago and give the women a chance to take it over. They could never do worse in this country. I feel so disgusted sitting here every parliamentary afternoon and hearing some of the nonsense inflicted on the citizens of this country particularly the young people of our land.

I wish further to urge even at this stage, that the Elections and Boundaries Commission has officers in the field to publicly appeal to the citizens of this country, at all levels, that it is in their own interest, and in the interest of their

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country to understand that they have a duty and a responsibility, just as they are able to complain, just as they are able to criticize, to become actively involved.

This morning, while driving along the Wrightson Road at the Fire Services, I saw long lines of people seeking employment. If there is a good show, thousands of people attend the show; when carnival season is in progress, everybody participates. Why, therefore, all the people in Trinidad and Tobago cannot understand that to vote is their right. It is a right that has been earned for them. They now have an opportunity to participate and, obviously, it would take some time for people's consciousness to be so lifted that they will understand this duty and this right. Do you know that life is about a wheel, whatever you give out is going to fall right back into your lap, and this is what we have been observing.

In 1986 and all the previous years of the present Opposition whose role, I am afraid, will always be the Opposition of Trinidad and Tobago because they do not have that dedication to work, that purpose of doing something for their country—it is easy, very easy, to enter the Parliament. *[Interruption]* You have no authority to speak because I am uttering your very words. The gentleman is happy coming to Parliament and opposing any government in power. I am telling him and the present Government that they are not going to get away in Trinidad and Tobago on allegations of corruption against the People's National Movement. They campaigned on that basis. *[Interruption]* Would you please just listen to me? The population responded and I am asking the parties in this country to come forward to the people of this nation, based on their own track record, account to the people on their successes, on their own achievements because this country has already decided, based on their own propaganda. By the same token that they are accusing the PNM of corruption, they too know the amount of allegations, right or wrong—it is not in my position to say—are also levelled at them on the basis of corruption.

Therefore, corruption is an issue that we have to take from the schools, the homes, all the community groups, whether you are in Britain or in Grenada, it does not matter where you go, it is each man accusing the next man of corruption and most of the time, they are not looking at themselves. If corruption is an issue, I ask therefore, the Government and also the people of this country, and appeal to the churches, because many masters have come on this earth—Jesus, Mohammed, Buddha, Krishna, *toute monde*—and, if therefore, all the citizens of this world adhere to some religious philosophy, their church leader would tell them about honesty, about services, about lack of corruption; whether it is a pundit, an imam,

the Pope, a bishop. This is your daily service. If corruption is reflected in the politics of Trinidad and Tobago then something has to be wrong with the consciousness of the people of this nation.

I appeal [*Interruption*] You just keep quiet and listen. I have had enough of this in the Parliament of this country. I am appealing to all the religious organizations, to all the voluntary organizations, to all the schools, to all institutions in our country, if corruption is the issue, let us attack the issue at all levels so that no level should ever become corrupted.

5.50 p.m.

The others failed—Jesus failed so far; Mohammed failed; Buddha failed; everybody has failed. Therefore, all that we are doing as politicians is reiterating and confirming that policy of appealing to our citizens at all levels, to act in a manner which will avoid these things happening. If they continue to happen all the time, I sometimes wonder whether the whole political system of the world should not change. Because one gets the feeling that corruption is only among the few people in the country, or the few people in the world who come forward as representatives of the people. But every other section of the country, whether it has to do with the Elections and Boundaries Commission report—because all the arguments for the rest of the afternoon have not been necessarily to concentrate on the simple motion.

I really got the impression that we were coming here this afternoon to support, because you have put people in place; you have given them responsibility and the least you can have, is confidence in the report which they present to you so long as they follow the criteria in the area of responsibility. The Elections and Boundaries Commission gave us an explanation as to what caused them to make the report and to make the changes in the boundaries which they have made.

I have represented four different constituencies. In the case of Fyzabad, that constituency's boundaries were changed three times. In 1961 I lost to Jamadhar by 126 votes. Fyzabad constituency was from La Romain, all into Coolie Wood, all into Barrackpore, all down to La Brea, but you still went back and you won the seat. The boundaries were changed again and again and on the third occasion. I came to San Juan and the boundaries were changed; I went to Laventille the boundaries were changed. The fact remains that if you are a party, and representative of the people, then it does not matter what boundaries are changed.

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It should not make a difference. But many people waste precious time and energy and look for excuses, particularly as the election campaign is around the House.

I would like to thank very much therefore, the Member for Caroni East, who has followed in the philosophy and the democratic action because he made reference to the changes in 1986 and before, which is again PNM's philosophy in action. He has also said that there will be free and fair elections, again following the philosophy of the PNM. Whatever, anyone wants to say about the PNM, the PNM has done a lot for the people of Trinidad and Tobago. The PNM did not come here to say that they are the only party or the only organization. It is the PNM, who over time has appealed for the two-party system of government which can only make for good democracy. In spite of all the pleas for a two-party system, you still see year after year, more and more parties being formed, more and more parties dying tomorrow. I hope that the time will come when this country will recognize the PNM as a government and the other parties as the Opposition in Trinidad and Tobago.

I therefore, *[Interruption]* Mr. Speaker, I have absolutely no fear at all. We have put forward a free and fair election. We brought the voting machine, we brought the ballot box and we won. Politics is continuity and voting is continuity. Just as PNM have had to review their programmes, I am certain that after five years in office, the present temporary government will also have to review their motion. I sincerely hope that they will mature as a result of one period here in government and another period here in opposition. While you are in opposition you look at your weaknesses and you strengthen them. When you get back into Government, you will develop and so the country will be able to move forward progressively.

Hon. Wilson: Thank you for giving way. Mr. Speaker, I was quite enjoying the Member's discourse, but I am suggesting to her that if she would like to adopt the position she is talking about, she must first have the courage to recognize the Government in power. There is nothing temporary about this Government. We are the Government in power and she must recognize that. Withdraw the word "temporary".

Mrs. Donawa-McDavidson: I take the correction. He is always a fine fellow. I understand, Mr. Speaker. It seems that I got into the elections sort of thing, so I take it back. The present Government—thank you very much, Member for Point Fortin.

If the PNM Government were in power, you could go and examine where they failed and where they were weak; where the good will be carried on. The present Government is in power, when we get in we will examine what they have done, where they have failed and then we would continue to improve. If we did this, I am certain that the people of Trinidad and Tobago would bless us for it.

I want to end therefore, by giving again, my total support to the Elections and Boundaries Commission report. I will ignore totally the comments made by the hon. Member for Couva South, because he is not capable of talking in any other form. He does not even know where he is. One minute he is there, another minute he is here; and another minute he is courting the Government with support just in case he loses. He is so afraid of what is likely to happen to him in his own area. I mean, if you won so many thousands of votes in an area, what is your concern whether there is a change? You are good, you are effective. You were in the Government and you are better than the Government, you have come back in the Opposition.

As far as the Member for Couva North is concerned, what can we say about him? He loves his position and he makes a very good job at it. I wish to commend him. It is unfortunate, or fortunate, I do not know which it is, but I sincerely hope that we will take ourselves very seriously in this Parliament and move on to something new. Stop repeating. Let the dead rest in peace. Let the Almighty Father judge him according to his works. Let us continue to pursue the true national development in the interest of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Trevor Sudama (*Oropouche*): Mr. Speaker, I would just make a few points here this afternoon because I think they are necessary. The first is that what we are concerned about here and what we seem to be taking for granted is the fact that we are talking about free and fair elections. A proper Elections and Boundaries Commission report is a pivotal element of free and fair elections. People in different countries of the world have fought wars and battles, have had riots and revolutions, in order to have the privilege of free and fair elections. Therefore, when we had the opportunity to put in place all the procedures to have free and fair elections, I do not think that we should discount those opportunities.

We have heard talk about commitment to the rule of law; the present Government being committed to the rule of law and to the democratic way of life. About that, I want to say something later—commitment to the democratic way of life and what it constitutes. It is very nice to talk glibly about the rule of law and a commitment to the democratic way of life and so on, but I want to question, this

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afternoon: How committed is this present Government to all aspects of the democratic way of life in Trinidad and Tobago? I want to seriously question that especially as regards the recognition of the official parliamentary representative of a constituency and the practices over these last few years. Because it all has to do with free and fair elections.

We have a neighbouring country which is now the focus of world attention with respect to its practices in that area; with respect to the charges and counter-charges which have been levelled against that regime and today I want to say that we in this Parliament should not ignore the comments which are being made on this side with respect to the validity of the electors list which is being recommended through this Elections and Boundaries Commission Report.

I fully endorse the amendment before us, and this report should be referred back to the Elections and Boundaries Commission for further consideration of the missing electors which has been admitted by that Commission in its report.

It has been said already in this House, that unless you have an acceptable electors' list, you cannot fully have free and fair elections simply because the total will of the electorate is not likely to be expressed where you have any doubt as to the accuracy and validity of the electors list.

It is extremely important for the promotion of democracy and the democratic ethos, that people have confidence in the system. In the same way as it is important for economic growth and development and improvement that people have confidence in the economic system and the country generally. You cannot have a viable political dispensation without the underpinning of confidence in the procedures and processes which make up that dispensation. Today, we do not want to leave any stone unturned to let this country and its citizens be fully confident in the procedures.

You see, democracy is not only an abstraction of principle, democracy is also procedure and processes. If there is any inadequacy or failing in those procedures and processes then the outcome—though it may not be deliberate at all—could be very undemocratic. Therefore, in this draft report that we have before us—and I want to repeat that nobody on this side is attacking the integrity of the members of the Elections and Boundaries Commission—it may be possible that there is an inadequacy or failing of procedure and as a result of going through with that and accepting that inadequacy and failing of procedure you may have an outcome which is not totally acceptable. That is the point I want to make.

When an election report is submitted, which shows that there are over 102,000 electors missing from your previous registration, I think everybody should feel concerned about this. One-eighth of your electors, that is 102,000 electors missing out of a total electorate of just over 800,000 people are missing, according to this report, "cannot be found" or have had their names taken off the list. When possible disenfranchisement of one-eighth of your electorate confronts you, I think you ought to make every effort to see that that situation is fully clarified and/or rectified. The question we have to ask today is: Given the resources of the Elections and Boundaries Commission, have they undertaken a full clarification or rectification of that position?

I want to tell this House that there were two lists prepared by the Elections and Boundaries Commission—I think it was last year—for each polling division. One list showed those whose names appeared on the polling divisions, and the other showed names which were removed as having been found invalid according to 3(a) of the regulations of the Elections and Boundaries Commission. These were found invalid—if I am correct—not because the people were non-existent. They were found invalid according to 3(a) of the regulations of the Elections and Boundaries Commission.

One of the first things we have to ask in this House is whether it is not time to re-examine those regulations which automatically declare people invalid and therefore taken off the electors list. It is a very critical question. I myself have tried to test the validity of these lists. I have taken a list which has declared people invalid in a certain polling division and I have gone through it and found families who are very much alive, completely excluded from the list. When I further asked: Have enumerators come to your home? Have enumerators tried to get your names put on the list? Some of the people who responded said, "No"; they do not recall enumerators having come to their homes.

Therefore, in the light of my own experience, I think it is a fair suggestion to make that this report be referred back to the Commission to make a final attempt to see that the list that is being produced which will be used in the next general election is, as I said, a valid and indeed an acceptable list. I think it is only fair.

One Member spoke about the disappointment which people experience on election day when they go to the polling stations and look for their names to vote, and they cannot find their names on that list, the frustration and disappointment which they experience where they have been disenfranchised, without even their knowledge. You may very well argue, well look it is up to the vigilance of the

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elector himself to see that his name appears on the list. We are dealing with a certain kind of political culture in this country and you have to understand the political culture where people, perhaps, out of habit, do not take the time and the effort to go and check—if they can find their electors list, wherever it is publicly posted—to find out if their names are on it, in which case if we accept that fact, we will then put a greater onus of responsibility on the Elections and Boundaries Commission to see that they go that extra mile in ensuring that people who are eligible to vote, in fact, do have their names on that electors list.

It has been rightly said that this is going to be a very closely fought election. I do not accept the view from the Member for St. Ann's West, that it is going to be a hung Parliament. It is going to be a closely fought election but there will be a majority government. A majority government which will either be the United National Congress or the People's National Movement. Therefore, a few votes might make the difference between who wins and who loses, particularly so, in a place like Tobago where the electorate is very small. You may very well find if you have an inaccurate list that perhaps the Member for Tobago West may not be here with us in the next term of Parliament. That is a very real possibility.

I really want to urge the Government, if they are serious about the democratic way of life and seriously want to have a free and fair election with an accurate electors list, that a few weeks of intensive effort on the part of the Elections and Boundaries Commission to go back there and to find those missing electors, would be a very useful exercise and would show the people of this country that this Government is really committed to democracy; that it is willing even if it means a postponement of two or three weeks as the case may be, to go that extra mile to ensure that citizens in Trinidad who are eligible to vote are not in fact disenfranchised. I cannot see why they would want to feel that there is this overwhelming urgency to go to an election with a voters list which people regard as suspect, even before the election. Why would they want to have the burden of going into an election with such a list?

If I am to understand the recommendations or the procedure involved, when the electors list is presented to this House and it is an annual presentation in July of every year, that serves as a preliminary list. If it is a preliminary list then it is subject to correction. Why can we not have a more accurate preliminary list rather than having to force people after the list is published within a specific time-frame to have their position rectified? I think the Government ought to really consider that.

I understand that this motion before us today, was the signal to attack with full force. I am sorry the Member for Tobago East is not here, but when he gave that instruction on the last time it did bring him a little grief. That of course is a question of opinion, whether he has survived or not or whether he is merely going through the motion. I am wondering, having repeated that instruction in another scenario, what his electoral fate is going to be? What then is the urgency? We would like to know. Attack with full force! What I am suggesting today and I suggested it elsewhere, since every time we come to discuss the electors list in Parliament, the question arises whether or not it is a valid and accurate electors list with which we are working, I think the time has come for the Government to look anew at how it prepares the electors list.

I think that we should put in place a system for automatic registration, automatic registration which is being amended through reports on death and migration. In other words, if we start off and we have a proper electors list at any given time, we can update that through a liaison between the Registrar General's Department and the Elections and Boundaries Commission, where anytime somebody reaches the age of 18 he is automatically added to the electors register and anytime somebody dies or migrates he is automatically moved from the electors register. What you will have is a continuous system of registration. As long as you have the accuracy of death, migration and birth figures and those are fed to the Elections and Boundaries Commission, then for the whole country you ought to have an accurate list.

The only problem there, of course, is with respect to people who may have moved from their place of birth. If you put in place a system of updating change of addresses then what you are going to have at any given time is a comprehensive, continuous electors list which, if you want to test you can of course go into a system of registration for a particular election and test the accuracy of your registration with that continuous updated electors list.

6.20 p.m.

Today, if we had a system in place, we would not be talking about whether 102,000 electors are missing, whether in fact they never existed in the past, whether the election lists were padded in the past, and so on. We would not have been talking about it. There would have been an updated list which would have been a guide as to how many people in fact are eligible to vote in Trinidad and Tobago. To divide those into constituencies, and so on, one would have had to carry out a registration exercise in each constituency. But at least there would

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have been something by which to be guided so that the Elections and Boundaries Commission itself would have an idea whether it was doing a proper exercise or not with respect to registration. It would itself be guided by that continuous updated list of electors through this system which I am proposing.

We are not at all proposing a system of compulsory registration for the purposes of elections. We think that would be an arbitrary proposal, and I think it would not accord with the democratic spirit with which we are accustomed in this country and, in fact, may not even be effective, given the political culture of our people, the political inclinations of our people. But I see no reason why we cannot go into an area of new thinking on the whole question of the electors list. I know anything new, and so on, that does not bring immediate political benefits to the ruling regime would not be countenanced. We know that. But I am talking generally to citizens of the country now as to whether in fact we could not look in those directions to avoid this continuous uncertainty year after year, especially when these reports are presented to the House of Representatives as to whether this list is an accurate and valid list or not. I am sure if that suggestion is taken up, we would not be spending the time of this House in that kind of exercise.

Mr. Speaker, the other point I want to make is that—and here we come back to the question of the democratic way of life and a commitment to the democratic way of life—I want to ask some questions and, indeed, to answer them: why are we debating an Elections and Boundaries Commission report? We are debating an Elections and Boundaries Commission report because it is on the basis of that we are going to have an election. What is the purpose of this election? The purpose of this election is to elect parliamentary representatives for 36 constituencies. But you do not elect parliamentary representatives merely to come to Parliament. They must have a function. What is that function?

Mr. Speaker, what is the function of Parliament? And we, as Members of this House, do comprise Parliament, but perhaps we tend to forget this. In section 53 of the Constitution, Parliament may make laws for the peace, order and good government of Trinidad and Tobago. However, the provisions of this Constitution, insofar as they form part of the laws of Trinidad and Tobago, and the Tobago Independence Act 1962, may not be altered except in accordance with the provisions of section 54.

So we come here to make laws for the peace, order and good government of Trinidad and Tobago, and we come here collectively, you know. But if you look at the behaviour and the practices of the Government and the previous regime, it

is as if the people who are in Opposition do not count and really are not part of this Parliament and do not have functions, and official functions at that. Mr. Speaker, what is very intensely being practiced, is a deliberate undermining of the officially recognized constitutional representative of a constituency by the ruling regime. So what do we have? One makes requests, one makes representations.

For example, I have been asking the Minister of Works, Infrastructure and Decentralization to visit my constituency and to look at some of the problems which I am faced with when I make representation on behalf of my constituency. In the past, I have had to raise a question in this House: Why does he refuse to visit with me in my constituency? I have written him recently asking him again to visit with me in my constituency. I have not had a response to that request. But he has the time and he makes the effort to come into the constituency of Oropouche on official business with the Minister in the Ministry of Industry, Enterprise and Tourism to look into projects for which I have made representation over the past eight years, for example, a post office in Debe, for which they have only recently decided to release money to construct. But he comes there, he visits with a member of the Government who has no official role as a parliamentary representative of Parliament in that constituency; no official role. He comes there, surreptitiously, without informing the Member of Parliament that he is coming there. When I ask him for an official visit as a parliamentary representative, he has no time for that. He ignores my requests. What I am saying is that they are undermining the democratic process by their very actions.

Dr. Charles: I just wondered whether the Member for Oropouche was not happy that the constituents who deserve a post office are indeed getting one, or whether his concerns were more of a public relations nature.

Mr. Sudama: I have been asking for a post office for the longest while, but the Minister came there to visit the post office site in the constituency of Oropouche. He did not have the courtesy to tell me, the Member for Oropouche, that he was coming to visit the post office site so that I would have been able to point out the problems that we are having with respect to that site. There were some tenancy problems on that site. But the Minister did not do that. I have asked him on numerous occasions to come and visit with me; not that there was anything done as a result of that visit, but it is my duty to represent my constituency's problems to those in authority. That is my duty. Whether I get any response from the very unresponsive Ministers on the other side is another

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question, but I am telling him what is my function as a representative of the constituency duly elected.

Mr. Speaker, I am sure if that had happened in the constituency of Tabaquite, there would have been legitimate protests—protests against people going surreptitiously to another constituency to try to promote their political fortunes. The Member for Nariva is very famous for operating in this way. He goes to present leases to farmers on state lands in the Oropouche constituency—an official function—but the Member for that constituency is not informed that he is going there. But he goes clandestinely, surreptitiously, covertly, as is his manner of doing things, trying to gain cheap political advantage.

I want to tell them that will not help them. They will undermine the Constitution. They may seek to undermine the Constitution of this country and to undermine the official position of a parliamentary representative in conducting his affairs and in making his representations, but that is not going to help them in this coming election, because, except you do not know it, people have already made up their minds.

I make this point, Mr. Speaker, not because I am fearful of any political consequences which may arise out of their visits. You may spend as much money as you like in order to buy votes; you may ignore the sitting parliamentary representative of the constituency for as much as you wish, you will undermine the democratic process and you will subvert the democratic way of life by your behaviour and your actions, but in the end that is not going to help you. It is not going to bring you any kind of political advantage that you are seeking. I make representation for LIPD projects in my constituency. Nothing happens. But a member of the Government comes there, and the next morning there is a LIPD project. Do not talk about who is employing who, how they are spending money, and if you do not swear your allegiance to the NAR, there is no work for you. This is the very thing that we opposed under the previous regime. This is the very thing that we opposed on the platform in 1986, and it is happening day in and day out in the constituency of Oropouche and elsewhere.

Dr. Charles: Perhaps, instead of just loose talk, the hon. Member could provide me with evidence of persons who have to swear their allegiance. I am always anxious to correct such things.

Mr. Sudama: They want evidence. They want evidence of patronage, open, naked, shameless, obscene patronage being practised all over Trinidad and Tobago, in a shameless attempt to get votes, but they are not going to succeed.

What they are really doing in the process is causing our people, the political culture of this country, to regress a bit by their actions. That is all that they are doing. It is happening in Esperance in my constituency. Check out the LIPD project there. Check out the LIPD project in Rambert Village, Sirju Trace, where a certain Senator is constructing a road under LIPD, but to reach his land, so that he can get access to this land. It is incidental that a few houses on the way will benefit, but he has to get access to his land—a certain Senator in the other place of the ruling National Alliance for Reconstruction. This is the way they operate. A fellow in Esperance says clearly, after employing his son and his relatives, and so forth, he says, when he is questioned, "Charity begins at home."

We are talking about the matter of representation. For example, that is a road under the jurisdiction of the county council which had in programme some works to be done, and without consultation with the county council, the NAR patronage gang went into Beckles Trace in Esperance to dispense patronage, to give this ten days thing, without even the courtesy of informing the county council that they were going to do a LIPD project, which falls under the responsibility of the Victoria County Council. This is the way they operate. This is the way they have been operating in the constituency. The Minister in the Ministry of Enterprise, Industry and Tourism went and said: "I am going to refurbish schools in this constituency. I have \$1.6 million to spend. Then I have \$3 million to spend to upgrade recreational facilities," in my constituency for which I have made representation over the years. Then he went to the Picton Presbyterian School—I do not know how he gets this authority—and had a meeting with the staff of the school organized by the headmaster.

Mr. Speaker, I have been asking for two schools initially as priority schools to be rebuilt in my area: the Debe Presbyterian School and the Picton Presbyterian School. And after a number of years of representation, they have only in 1989 decided that these schools will go under joint management, and therefore, they will be eligible for IDB funding to construct those schools. As a result of my representation, the Debe school is near completion. The Picton Presbyterian School we scheduled to be dealt with later. But there went the Minister, informing them that he cannot wait on IDB funding. He is going to build the school in September. And you want to know what is really going on? Is there any accountability on that side? Do people work to rules and procedures? Promises after promises after promises.

My goodly friend, the Member for Nariva, after so much representation for agricultural access roads, apparently they are repaving one, and, without my knowledge they are going to open it. I want to know if this is, in fact, the way they should proceed, Mr. Speaker. I raise these points because they touch on the whole issue of elections and parliamentary representation. If they were not relevant I would not mention these things.

6.35 p.m.

For example—and I will not say much more on this subject—the manner in which you fight an election and you try to influence voters in a particular constituency is also relevant to the question of free and fair elections. Here we have a Minister in the Ministry of Industry, Enterprise and Tourism going and telling people in my constituency that he is the Hindu leader and if they vote for him, after the election the Member for Tobago East will be removed as the leader of the political party. He is giving that assurance to the constituency of Oropouche. You have to vote for him first; once you put him there he will then see to it that the Member for Tobago East is removed as leader of the National Alliance for Reconstruction. He will then have the power and the authority. They are not going to remove the Member for Tobago East before the election, they are going to do so after the election. You have to give them the vote and then he will organize to deal with the Member for Tobago East. That sort of subterfuge is going on in the constituency of Oropouche. I do not know who they really think they are fooling, whether the constituents will buy that kind of propaganda.

I have not come here to report any kind of untruth. The Member for Tobago East is a seasoned politician. He has been in the political arena since I was in short pants, since I was going to secondary school, and he ought to know that within his own party there are those who are desperate to win political honours and parliamentary representation who will resort to all kinds of subterfuge in order to undermine him privately and praise him publicly—as one person is going and undermining him in the constituency of Oropouche, and saying the worst things about him. Publicly, he is championing the Member for Tobago East and says that all this talk about Indian Cultural Centre, and so forth, is not true, as if he were there in the Government.

Mr. Robinson: Mr. Speaker, I cannot help rising to express my gratitude to the hon. Member for these disclosures and obvious support for the Member for Tobago East.

Mr. Sudama: I am in no way supporting the Member for Tobago East. I am merely trying to inform him of what is going on in the country. It is my largeness of heart to make these disclosures, and if he thinks that they are not true he can make his own discreet enquiry.

The point I was making is that he is a man of immense experience in the political arena. He has seen all the twists and turns and the vicissitudes of political life of this country, of which, of course, he himself was a part, so he ought not to discount the way people operate. When he was in the People's National Movement, I am told that he operated one way publicly and another way privately.

Mr. Robinson: Let me positively deny that, Mr. Speaker. All my statements and positions are a matter of record. They are in books; they are in speeches over a period of 35 years and he can read and quote from them if he wants.

Mr. Sudama: Mr. Speaker, I do not want to prolong this at all but since the Member for Tobago East has cast aspersions on other people on this side, with respect to their motives in being away from this Chamber and that sort of thing, for the records, he ought to categorically state to the country his role in 1970 when we had the so-called Black Power riot in Trinidad and Tobago; his association, if any, with those who were leading this riot, and whose objective was to destabilize a legally constituted government by various protest actions. He ought to make clear to this country, his role in those days.

Mr. Robinson: Mr. Speaker, may I state categorically my role in public life has always been to defend the Constitution and the democratic way of life and the rule of law in the country.

Mr. Sudama: I am not going to put you through any interrogation but I am merely asking you to clear the records because there are many allegations about your private dealings with this group, which was intent on removing, by unconstitutional means, the elected constitutional government of Trinidad and Tobago in 1970.

Mr. Speaker: Bring yourself to order now.

Mr. Sudama: Yes.

Hon. Member: Propaganda.

Mr. Sudama: When that matter is researched and put on the records perhaps you will not be here to determine whether it is propaganda or not. That matter is going to be researched. If you want to cast aspersions on other Members of this House, I would just like to tell you that those who live in glass houses ought not to throw stones and to talk about destabilization and people supporting those who want to bring chaos in this country, and that sort of thing.

Mr. Speaker, I can see no valid reason why this report ought not to be referred back to the Elections and Boundaries Commission to get a definitive response from them as to the status of these people who are alleged to be missing and who cannot be found by the enumerators of the Elections and Boundaries Commission.

The point has been made. I mean, the population of this country is increasing. You had a few people of this country who attempted to migrate, and from all the records we have had it could be about 15,000 persons or thereabout. Many of them have been forced to return to Trinidad and Tobago, and I do not know if they were removed from the electors list, but barring that, we have an increasing population; we have an increasing number of people who are on the list by virtue of the fact that they have attained the age of 18 years, and yet you come and ask this country to accept a list which is 102,000 names less than the 1986 electors list. Except we accept the insinuation of another Member, that maybe the list from 1986 and previously were padded and these people were non-existent, but I cannot accept that. Therefore, I am asking that this list really be reviewed, and reviewed in such a way that it gives us the satisfaction and confidence that it has a level of accuracy which will make for free and fair elections in this country.

6.45 p.m.

I make that plea because I, too, am committed to the democratic system, to the preservation of our democratic way of life, to upholding the Constitution, as in fact, I did when I took the oath of office as a Member of Parliament in this country. I, myself, and all the Members of my party—I cannot speak for them—

Mr. Speaker: The speaking time of the hon. Member has expired.

Motion made, That the hon. Member's speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [*Mr. R. Palackdharrysingh*]

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. Sudama: Mr. Speaker, I am not going to take up very much of those 30 minutes. I rose to speak because I felt that it was necessary (a) to make the point of how they are undermining the democratic process by the activities in constituencies which are represented by sitting Members—complete undermining. Perhaps they do not know the damage they are doing to the political process by their actions. They may be ignorant of it, but in the long term it will have certain consequences. The Member for Caroni East, who is a past master of these things—subterfuge and deviousness, he would know about these things. He has, perhaps, been well trained by the Member for Tobago East in this respect. He has learnt well. There are certain minimum acceptable standards of behaviour which they ought to employ. They are always lecturing people about standards of behaviour, particularly the Member for Tobago East. They should look at the standards of behaviour of their own Government, their Members and their Minister and the way they are operating in this election period. I want to know whether they are proud of that behaviour. They may be, because the way I see the electioneering going these days, no holds are barred. You talk about the political culture and standards. Are you adhering to acceptable standards of political behaviour in the obscene manner in which your Government Ministers have been behaving in these last few months? Ask yourself that question.

Secondly, as I look at this electors list, as I have had the experience of going into my constituency with the list of invalids and checking that out, I am not satisfied, in my own mind, that that electors list which we are presented with, and which forms the basis of the division of the 36 constituencies and the number of electors in those constituencies, is an accurate list that we can use as the basis of this very crucial forthcoming general election.

Thank you.

Mr. Raymond Palackdharrysingh (*Naparima*): Mr. Speaker, it is beyond my comprehension that the Elections and Boundaries Commission report should indicate that there are about 104,000 people missing in 1991.

In 1986, according to the report before us, there were 861,621 electors, but in 1991, we are now told that we have 756,902 electors which, to my mind, indicates that there are 104,719 electors missing. In 1981, there were 690,459 electors. What it indicated was during the period 1981 to 1986 there was an increase of 171,162 new electors. When I work that out, between the years 1981 and 1986, there was an average of 34,000 people added to the electoral list every

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year, because there was a 171,000 increase during 1981 to 1986. It is clear that something is obviously very wrong, even greater than what is being reflected.

From 1986 to 1991 there has been a net increase in the population, of approximately 20,000 annually and therefore, one would have expected that from 1986 which had a voting number of 861,000, another 100,000; but what we are actually seeing is a decrease. My own rough calculations would indicate that what we are actually seeing is a decrease, roughly, of around 204,000 voters rather than 104,000. Where have the voters gone, Mr. Speaker? That is critical for us to understand. Because with an increase in population every year, it is really ridiculous, to my mind, to have missed so many voters—upward 20 per cent of the voting population. Something has been very wrong. I wonder whether or not this has to do with the efficiency of the machinery that is responsible for it.

Some time ago I have had, more or less, personal dealings with the Elections and Boundaries Commission, and every time I requested particular documentation or literature they would say, "It is not available." They would also indicate, at times, that they do not have the required staff. If that is the case, it would seem that with so important a machinery for the setting up of a system for free and fair elections, little consideration has been given to them for the purpose of regularizing a most important exercise in the country in order to effect democracy. It is not only that.

I have had registration since 1986 for a new identification card, and it was not until 1991 that it was ready. Several occasions during that period I checked for the identification card and when I went they said, "Well, you know the card is not yet prepared, because the pictures did not come out, and we do not have photographic film." It happened on several occasions until I had to get my own picture and take it to the Elections and Boundaries Commission, in order to be issued with a personal identification card. This is not only so with me; it has been so for thousands and thousands of the population. I am not apportioning blame to the Elections and Boundaries Commission. They have expressed, in no uncertain terms to people who go to them, that they do not have the resources to carry out the exercise efficiently. It is no wonder to me that today we have such a situation existing.

6.55 p.m.

In that light I believe that the amendment moved by the Member for Couva North has been most reasonable because it would give the Commission time to

express its view to the appropriate place. What they need are additional resources to complete the exercise.

The other concern was the fact that some of those people who were listed to go around as enumerators found that perhaps it was a difficult job, and some of them were not well trained, and were not given what was called a reasonable stipend. So from these points of view, one could understand the tremendous frustration experienced by the Elections and Boundaries Commission and I would not be surprised if the presentation of the report to date was merely an attempt to satisfy a legal requirement rather than having a job comprehensively done.

I empathize with the Elections and Boundaries Commission, though not completely satisfied with what is happening. But one could use the argument that registration is a continuing exercise. The registration centres have been located in areas that are urban and there are very many people who cannot get to the towns. I think it is obligatory on the part of the Elections and Boundaries Commission to adequately carry out the job by going to the rural areas, not for a day or two but as a follow-up. If they cannot do it, obviously they do not have the resources, be they material, or manpower, to complete the exercise.

We do not know where that process would end; we do not if the so-called disenfranchisement of so many of our citizens is merely a matter to meet the deadline or for expediency, but I believe when one follows the process, one begins to understand what happens.

Much has been said this evening about what transpires in almost every sphere pertaining to electioneering and much has been said about people's consciousness to exercise their democratic right of voting. But, Mr. Speaker, are you satisfied that reasonable steps have been taken to really educate the population on these matters?

Today, we have a population that, as its first sources of information looks to the electronic media, especially the television. You do not see the type of education on the television with respect to getting across the importance of registration and where to do so. What you see is the propaganda of political parties trying to cloud the minds and issues, trying to deceive the population by spurious programmes that are really not necessary and in any event, cannot in any significant way influence those who are determined to exercise their franchise.

Dr. Tewarie: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. I do not want to interfere with the Member's contribution but since we have had so many excursions today, could we ask the hon. Member to please focus on the bill.

Mr. Palackdharrysingh: Mr. Speaker, I would be happy if it were to be pointed to me in what way that is a diversion. I am dealing with an important aspect with respect to the exercise of the right of individuals to democracy that has to be linked to a report like this. Therefore, the point I am making is simply that the wrong use is being made of the media and that those who control the media do not have the integrity to prioritize those things which are more relevant for the population. That is the point I am making and I cannot see that as being a digression.

I cannot in any way say that I am satisfied that the use of the media has been to effect the sort of communication necessary so that the population would be sensitized and, therefore, it would impact upon the level of registration in the Elections and Boundaries Commission report. If Members of the Government side cannot see that, I am sorry for them. Sometimes my heart goes out to the Prime Minister because he never wants to accept the truth. We have had a good relationship but, and I tell him the truth when we talk, but he does not accept it.

Mr. Robinson: Mr. Speaker, my only problem is that I do not know when the hon. Member is telling me the truth.

Mr. Palackdharrysingh: I always tell him the truth, that is why I am on this side. If he had listened to me when I spoke to him in 1987, he might not have been in this situation.

Hon. Member: What situation?

Mr. Palackdharrysingh: Do not ask.

7.05 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, much has been said about representation and I, too, have to throw my bit in because you see, there is a tendency to believe that when you are in opposition to the Government, the people of your constituency must suffer and the only way to alleviate their suffering is for them to shift allegiance. So very often, I have made representation here with respect to bad roads, drainage, water and so on, for the constituency, but the moment other people of the Government get a chance, they go to the constituency and they say, "there is no representation at the parliamentary level". Fortunately, that population is not so gullible—35

years of bad roads and bad drains and what not. If that is the attitude of Government after they have won election, to alienate people from their rights because their representatives are on the other side, then I am sorry for them with respect to their view about our citizens. It would seem that it is, indeed, a very spiteful view.

Mr. Speaker, I have to talk about this because some of the same things which the Member for Oropouche spoke about are happening in the constituency of Naporima. I am afraid when the time comes in the near future, the result that they hope they will get will be very different.

Today we heard the Member for Couva North asking for an amendment but one cannot hope to really accept the report unless there is a total scrutiny of those people who are not registered, or who are registered. It is only when the electors list is out that one gets a clearer picture because of the opportunity, at least, to do some sort of field work; to make some measure of comparison and to find out exactly what has happened. We have not had that information and that is critical information before, so to speak, the matter is closed. As was pointed out, if there should be significant increases in particular constituencies, then the equilibrium of equity in constituencies would have been disturbed.

This lack of information makes the amendment moved by the Member for Couva North importantly urgent, in that we cannot take the final decision without a genuine attempt to give an equal chance to all the citizens of our country. It might take some time but it is better that a little extra effort is put in, so as to avoid the denial of the rights of a vast number of our citizens. That is critical, Mr. Speaker. If that is not done, the Government, acting in haste, would have done a disservice to many citizens in the country.

Mr. Speaker, a most curious thing happened in the Parliament today, in that at times there was so much theological discourse, especially for the wiping away of corruption and what not, as though all sins must have been forgiven because there was some measure of repentance. There is also something called vicarious liability even in theological circles. It would mean for those who do not know, that some of these sins are not written off just by wishing it, unless there are acts bringing about atonement and there must be a price for it. I say no more, except those who want to bring in the great religious teachers of the day and merely use them flippantly, as either failures or models, without the deeper understanding of their mission on earth among mankind.

Elections and Boundaries Commission Order
[MR. PALACKDHARRYSINGH]

Friday, 21 June, 1991

Mr. Speaker, it is so critical for us to be touched sometimes by these values because many people believe that politics is merely an art of the possible which has nothing to do with morality, or spirituality. I am sure that when the basic secular tenets fail, some would revert to philosophy, some would revert to religion, some to theology, some to other values, because in the end it is where we are going as a nation that is important. So if it is a curious thing that has been developed in the Parliament today, I hope more and more, that whatever actions people take, in the end would have, what is called, a moral basis, a philosophical basis, a theological basis. I do not know sometimes where some of the diabolical practices seem to get its under-girding from.

This exercise needs to be seen in the context of giving full rights to all our people to vote at election time. It is important and it is critical. If our democracy is to flourish and grow, then every action must be taken to have all those who are qualified to exercise their vote, do so. Unless this is part of our culture and our belief, then there will be convulsions in the society from time to time.

7.15 p.m.

We could create a humane society if we wish. We could create a society based on expedience and opportunism if we also wish but in the end it depends upon what our view is about man, those who support—man in the generic sense—those who are against us, it depends on that view. In the end, it is for all of us, whatever the differences, to accept the democratic will of the people.

In this regard I would like to support the amendment to the motion as moved by the Member for Couva North. Thank you.

Mr. Morris Marshall (*Port of Spain East*): Mr. Speaker, I wish to add a few words to this very important motion given as it may very well be the last sitting of Parliament and more than that, the constituency that I represent may no longer exist in the next session of Parliament. That is not to say that this Member may not be there.

I do not normally find it possible to support my colleagues on the other side. That is always a difficulty really, given their approach to national matters but I find it necessary on this occasion to support the Government and this motion and to declare as well, the support of my colleagues for this motion—the original motion that is—that the draft of the Elections and Boundaries Commission Order 1991 be approved.

I find it necessary because, first, we have confidence in the integrity of the Elections and Boundaries Commission and, secondly, and more importantly, we do not think that any useful purpose would be served by sending the report back to the Commission and to do such a thing would be to send some very unfortunate signals at the local, regional and international levels in terms of our commitment to free and fair elections and elections free from fear.

It will also, in my view, delay unnecessarily the holding of a very important election in this country. So for those reasons, I really have serious difficulty in supporting the amendment by my colleague and friend from Couva North.

I wish to take the opportunity, however, to remind the Member for Couva South that it was the same list and essentially the same Commission that managed the election of 1986 and when we lost 33-3, we accepted our defeat and there were no charges about a rigged or padded list. It was the so-called padded list that resulted in the election of 33-3 and we accepted that as a party that is committed to the democratic process. We made no quarrel; we argued with no one; we challenged nothing and we peacefully and in a very democratic manner passed over the reins of power to the incumbent Government and we will hope that when the result of the next election is declared, that the same will happen in a very peaceful manner.

There is no doubt that the question of an electoral list is a very important matter. I think that a Member mentioned that there are many countries where serious physical battles are fought to ensure that elections are held freely. We in Trinidad and Tobago, notwithstanding the criticisms from a number of quarters, can say that that is one thing that has always stood out, for as long as I can recall that people across the globe have paid significant congratulations to us in terms of how we have maintained our democratic process.

So the question of an electoral list is extremely important, and we, in the PNM, recognize that we have a role to play in dealing with any deficiencies that may have arisen. Hence the reason why, when the EBC made the call for political parties to be involved in assisting in treating with these problems, we came forward.

Originally I think we had about 124,000 persons who were taken off the list and we recognized how serious that matter was. As a direct result of that, and our commitment to ensuring that we play our part in maintaining the democratic process, that we placed almost 1,500 to 1,600 persons out in the field for a period of about two to three weeks assisting the EBC as part of our responsibility,

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separate and apart from the question of trying to convince individuals to support the PNM. As a civic responsibility we did that and during that period we were able to touch base with about 40,000 persons.

We are now in the process of preparing a report, which we are going to make available to the Elections and Boundaries Commission. The exercise was much more difficult than we thought and it took much longer. We were hoping to present this report much sooner but nonetheless we are hoping, during the course of next week, to make this report available to the Elections and Boundaries Commission.

Just to give you a little insight into what we found, that almost 4,000 persons just about 18 years of age were not registered. In fact, this report is for 25 constituencies. We also found that there were about 5,794 new residents moving into various constituencies; persons who have died or migrated, 7,301; persons, who had moved out 6,508; and persons who were disenfranchised—now this is very important—and claimed that they had completed the registration process—that is they had gone to the EBC, taken out their photographs, and so forth—were very surprised that their names were on that so-called disenfranchised list. We picked up about 7,263 such persons in the 25 constituencies I talked about. There were about 4,041 persons who were disenfranchised and who admitted that they did not complete the process for one reason or the other; persons who were not at home when we did the exercise amounted to about 1,300.

As I said before, we are going to provide the EBC with all these details and also the specific information in terms of the individual addresses and so on. Again, as I said before, we did that because we realized the importance of ensuring, as far as humanly possible, that you have an electoral list that is reflective of the reality of the respective communities.

We want to take the opportunity to congratulate the Elections and Boundaries Commission. It was a very difficult task; we know this. We raised quite a number of concerns with them when we met them on one or two occasions in the past. I think it is largely as a result of our efforts, that there has, in fact, been some heightened activity in a number of constituencies across the country, where people are going out and seeking to update their registration.

We want to take this opportunity as well to really make an appeal to the national community to let them understand that regardless of which party they may wish to support, that is their right and privilege, but to let them know that if they are going to heighten the democratic process; if our democracy is going to

prevail, that they have a responsibility to ensure that they are properly registered. The respective parties can go out there and seek to assist and so on, and seek to influence them but the bottom line rest with each and every citizen to do what is necessary to ensure that our elections are in fact free and conducted in the proper manner.

7.25 p.m.

I just want to take the opportunity to respond very briefly to one or two Members, particularly my colleague from St. Ann's West, who is not here at this time. If I may say, I am not going into any great detail because I have heard your guidance. In my view, he has raised one of the major critical matters facing us as parliamentarians and as a people in this country. It is extremely fortunate that he raised some of the issues and it was not a Member of any of the opposing parties.

It is the very same point I have been making myself in terms of treatment. We cannot divorce the question of the treatment of parliamentary representatives from this whole question of the electoral process. If this country has to go anywhere, we must ensure that we do something to make the people of this country have the respect that is necessary for institutions, whether they be parliamentary representative, the office of Prime Minister, or whatever.

One of my unfortunate experiences as a Member of Parliament over the last four years has in fact been the treatment I have received as a Member of Parliament from those on the other side. I share the view expressed by the Member for St. Ann's West, that it is in fact a very horrible situation. If it is that, that took place before 1986, it was also wrong, and if that is what happened there is no justification for that happening today. That is what the people voted for to ensure that it did not happen again after 1986.

We cannot come and talk about corruption today on the basis that it happened before 1986. That is obviously ridiculous and unacceptable. It really pays no level of intelligence to the population of Trinidad and Tobago. When the people voted in 1986 and they gave my colleague from Couva North and others that resounding mandate, it was a mandate not to come here and talk about corruption in 1986; it was a mandate to address the failings of what they perceived transpired until 1986. That is why I cannot simply understand my colleague from Couva South, who comes here and seeks to attack the PNM every single week, and he understands that the PNM is the real challenge. He talks about corruption but when he left the NAR he said nothing about corruption because he was afraid. He said that publicly. The reason he attacks the People's National Movement is that he

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understands politically that he is under siege right in his own constituency and we are going to deal with it there.

I was making the point more importantly, that my treatment for example, by officials of the Government in terms of communities in my own constituency, is indeed very sad. I have just been allocated an office after four and a half years and even after the office has been allocated to me I am having tremendous difficulty in getting the keys. I am going to give the authorities until Tuesday at 3.00 o'clock next week, to let me have the keys or they can keep the office. Absolutely no respect for the persons who were elected by the people to do the work of the people of the country. I can say one thing, that if the PNM forms the next administration of this country that is one thing that will not happen. If I have any role to play regardless of which party people may belong, they must be treated with respect as Members of Parliament.

Mr. Robinson: Mr. Speaker, may I say that when I saw the allegation of the hon. Member for Port of Spain East in the newspapers, I had an enquiry made into the allocation of offices. With your leave, I shall make a statement on this matter at the next sitting of Parliament.

Mr. Marshall: I look forward anxiously to the statement coming from the hon. Prime Minister, because I think it is a matter that is extremely serious and that it runs counter to the democratic process. It establishes a lack of respect for those persons who are elected to office and it is something the population must not condone. I thought I should make that point.

I really thought it necessary to make these comments, and to emphasize that we support the original motion as Members of various political parties, as people who ought to have some commitment to the democratic institutions, that we must all play our part to give support to the Elections and Boundaries Commission to ensure that the list is as perfect as is humanly possible. I do not think that the mere fact that this report may be approved today will interfere or stop the work of the EBC. The work continues. I understand that the EBC officials are outside there in a number of constituencies seeking to get people to do what is necessary.

I want to take the opportunity, on behalf of my colleagues, to urge all our citizens to ensure that their names are properly registered and to ensure that they play their part in putting together an effective electoral list. Thank you very much.

The Minister of Industry, Enterprise and Tourism (Dr. The Hon. Bhoendradatt Tewarie): Mr. Speaker, I must begin by thanking all hon. Members for making their contributions on this motion. Obviously because it sets the stage for the new boundaries by which any parliamentary elections in Trinidad and Tobago are going to be held. It solicited quite a good deal of excitement and debate.

When I made my initial presentation, I started simply by pointing out that the Elections and Boundaries Commission was a creature of the Constitution and, therefore, it was dependent in its authority and was responsible to account to the people as any institution of its type. I also indicated what were the boundary changes; what those resulted in and what was the rationale articulated in the report by the Elections and Boundaries Commission for these things. I tried to show as well that it was in keeping with precedence already set, that the new things had emerged, or any different things which had emerged. I also reiterated this Government's unstinting commitment to upholding the Constitution, the law and the democratic process in Trinidad and Tobago.

I was a little taken aback, therefore, when the debate became quite political though it is not unpredictable or unreasonable because as I said, it does have to do with elections and following that I think this Parliament found itself faced with a situation in which we had a number of confessions and personal responses to what may very well be seen as the end of a certain era. This is important to point out because I think many people forget what significant contribution has been made to the democratic process, to the process of economic growth and more than that, simply maintaining stability and unity in this country over the last four and a half years. I point out that this Government has been in office for four and a half years and that any government before existed for 30 years.

7.35 p.m.

In that four and a half years, Mr. Speaker, we have had, first of all, to battle with this country being on the brink of financial disaster in 1987, and the declaration that we were simply a temporary government, and that, indeed, others who had held control of the state for 30 years were, in fact, the government in exile. In 1988, we had to deal with the worst kinds of undermining of the party and the government which took its toll on the party, on the government and on the population at large. In 1989, we had to do battle with several forces which feared that the Government which they predicted would last only three months

was, in fact, going to last its full term in 1989, and that was the year of shutdowns in the country.

In 1990, Mr. Speaker, we had to do battle with an all-out assault on the democratic process in this country and the very institution of Parliament which we are debating today, by a man, now notorious, by the name of Abu Bakr and his group. God only knows what lies in store for 1991. But I say, Mr. Speaker, that this Government, by any objective criteria, has done exceptionally well to keep unity, to maintain stability, to support the Constitution and the democratic process, and to continue the process of economic development and growth in Trinidad and Tobago. By any criterion, boundaries or no boundaries, any sane sensible people would give a government of this calibre the opportunity to continue its work for another five years.

There were two or three issues raised by the Member of the House, and I really cannot go through all of these because, in terms of substance, there was not a great deal, although one or two points were made and I want to address those points. The first and overriding point was the issue raised about the numbers of voters who, in fact, could not be found, so to speak, a point which I raised reporting what the Commission had said in their own report.

I simply want to make the point that this is a matter of some difficulty because, according to the statistics we have from the Central Statistical Office, the 1990 figure for citizens of Trinidad and Tobago over the age of 18 should have been 772,970, and when you take the figure that was given for voters, that is to say people over 18 years of age in Trinidad and Tobago, it is 756,902. So that is a discrepancy or a deviation of 16,068. There seems to be some difficulty with that 124,103 and now approximately 50,000 voters who cannot be found.

It would seem that there is some credence to be given to the theory that there are many people on the list who in fact do not exist. I think that this is something that we all should be concerned about. I think the Leader of the Opposition raised it. I think the Member for Port of Spain East, under the present boundaries, indicated that his party had become very active in trying to locate many of the people whose names were not on the list, and I think it is something we should be concerned about. All I would say at this point is that the NAR as a political party also has a responsibility in this matter. I have no doubt that if the EBC could not account, as it should, to the people and all the political parties for any list of voters that could not be found, there would then be room for collaboration by the political parties in the interest of democracy. This would ensure that the

democratic process proceed unhindered in working together with the EBC, that these people are found, or some mechanism set up, to ensure that no one is disenfranchised in the upcoming election.

The second matter is the motion or the amendment up forward by the Leader of the Opposition. I simply want to say that clearly, given the position that we have articulated here and the motion itself, that the draft of the Elections and Boundries Commission Order 1991 be approved, we cannot support that amendment. We note the concern and we think it is a legitimate one, but we are not interested in holding up the process, and we want to ensure that the stage is properly prepared. We abide by the proposals and recommendations of the Elections and Boundaries Commission, and that gives the hon. Prime Minister, under the Constitution, the freedom to call the election at anytime after this particular motion is approved and, therefore, the report also approved.

I want to deal with one or two matters that, what you might say, lie at that root of the whole democratic process and which were raised here today. I raise them simply because I feel that there was little sincerity in raising these matters.

When people talk about undermining the democratic process and the fact that people are going to their constituencies, and so forth, I think that is something that we as parliamentarians should abhor. I think that we should make our contribution and ensure that the democratic process, the institutions and so forth, are preserved, or else we pay very dearly for it in the long run.

We may not pay even in our lifetime, but the costs are very, very high, perhaps sometimes a hundred years later. That is why we are so committed and that is why we have fought every single battle over the last four and a half years, sometimes battles which had all manner of collaborators and collaboration, and yet we fought those battles in order to preserve the integrity of the state as an institution, in order to preserve the integrity of the nation as a democratic nation.

When people talk about undermining democracy, I think about those four and a half years—and I will not go back to pre-1986—I think of the manner in which the former government, which had been in power for 30 years, behaved in relation to our Government, a new administration in the context of transition, in a country that had gone through the colonial process, and that had only one government for the past 30 years. I think of how that Opposition behaved in relation to its articulations in Parliament, its machinations outside of Parliament, and its statements sometimes bordering—I do not want to say anything that

[HON. B. TEWARIE]

would get me into difficulty, Mr. Speaker—bordering on provocation of the whole process of order in the society. I cannot help feeling that the whole process of undermining the democratic process began to be initiated at that time.

Mr. Speaker, I listened to the hon. Member for Oropouche talking about the Minister in my ministry, who is a Member in the other place, and the fact that he is campaigning. He is entitled to campaign in the democratic process. He is entitled to do that. That is what democracy is about. All of them want to play mas' and "fraid powder". They did not think about undermining democracy. I remember seeing this gentleman, the hon. Member for Oropouche, describing the Prime Minister then and leader of our party, a Prime Minister coming to office for the first time after those 30 years and what we had to face even after 1986. I remember the Member talking about him as a sawdust Caesar and carrying on, and this and that, and bringing the battle into Parliament, unable to take the issues to the party and taking it out of the party and virtually threatening the whole basis of harmonious existence in this society.

Mr. Speaker, the institution of Parliament— *[Interruption]* I will let you all speak and we could deal with Guptar because I could deal with that, and will do so at the appropriate time. I have a lot of patience, believe me. I also feel I have a lot of time.

Mr. Speaker, what I am saying to you and hon. Members of this House is that this Government contributed to the positive side of development of this country over the last four years in the face of every provocation to create disorder in this society, and that if there was any attempt to undermine the democratic process, it is not from the Members or the leaders of this side, and it is certainly not from the Government. I want to state that categorically. I want the population to understand that, because it is very important. It is fundamental to the existence of the future of this country.

Mr. Speaker, this motion is a simple one here. I simply wanted to deal with that particular point because it was made as if to throw guilt in the yard of the Government and I do not believe that is fair. The Member for St. Ann's West is not here, and I do not want to say anything when he is not here, but I simply want to point out, Mr. Speaker, that he was a Member of Parliament here. He was a Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Food Production and Marine Exploitation following which, it is true, he was removed from that post, but less than a few months after the hon. Prime Minister made him a Minister in the Ministry of External Affairs. There were many times, you will remember, that

this gentleman was not in the Parliament for months on end, and the reason was, as he indicated to the hon. Prime Minister and Leader of this Government, that he was having serious economic and financial difficulties and he wanted to use his skills; and he has skills.

The Prime Minister in his generosity gave him the opportunity to provide those skills, rationlizing it at one point in time that he was doing one particular case for a Caricom country, and that it was important to share those skills in the region, something which we share in this Government. We take that point of view. He was all over the world and he was a Minister in this Government.

Mr. Speaker, I am decidedly of the view that those who allow themselves to be marginalized when they are in a governing party have created that condition for themselves. When I was without any responsibility whatsoever, I spoke in Parliament and I raised important issues. When I was a Minister without Portfolio, everybody said “Minister without nothing”, but I found work to do. I worked tirelessly to build and ensure that this Government has a second term. When I got a job as a Minister, I did that. I think the record will show that all the responsible, dedicated, committed people to this nation and to its future, have done that in their ministries with whatever responsibilities.

7.50 p.m.

I am appalled to hear some of the arguments. I listened very carefully, and I know everybody has to vindicate themselves but I really think that it is unfair to always, in a culture—and you see, we have a culture that allows people to do that. This culture is such that it does not matter what the issue is or the rightness of the issue, if you pick out the leader and say X or Y about the him, you have an issue. If you protest against the Government, it does not matter whether the issue is legitimate or right, you have an issue, because this is a culture that seems to perpetuate and legitimize the politics of protest, which is the opposite of the politics of substance in this country.

The only substantial politics and education and moving forward of this country that we have ever had and I am not denying what the Member for Laventille said, that they raised political consciousness in this country—but the really significant work in the opening up of the society and the development of consciousness, was under this administration in the four and a half years.

PROCEDURAL MOTION

The Minister of Planning and Mobilization (Hon. Winston Dookeran): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the House continue in session until the business before the House is completed.

Question put and agreed to.

ELECTIONS AND BOUNDARIES COMMISSION ORDER

Hon. B. Tewarie: I agree that there has to be confidence in the system, but the people who are part of the system—and they are all part of the system; the problem is that they do not understand it because of this culture of protest. It is a culture of protest that will die with them and they do not understand that this culture of responsibility is the opposite of the culture of protest, and that in order to enter that culture of responsibility other things are required of them. They will not make that leap. That is what is required for confidence in the system.

So that you have a system in which people see players exercising responsibility in whatever they are called upon to do. Whatever your job is—if you are a Prime Minister you do the job of a Prime Minister; if you are a parliamentarian, you do the job of a parliamentarian; if you are a member of the party and you are not in Parliament, you do that job, and all of it within a framework that you are committed to a country, a nation in a region, and a world that is fast becoming, what somebody has described, as a borderless world. Not just a global village—that says one thing—but the other side of the coin they say is a borderless world.

Mr. Speaker, I want to deal with one other matter which is fundamental. While I acknowledge that the PNM made a significant contribution to this country, in the raising of consciousness and other things, I was really appalled and a little surprised by the rationale that the Member for Laventille gave about O'Halloran and corruption. I was really quite surprised, and it brought to mind echoes of a speech which was made in a campaign in Laventille in 1986 by another former Minister in which the headline of the newspaper was, "All Ah We Tief".

Mr. Valley: They are looking for issues.

Mrs. Donawa-Mc Davidson: Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that the hon. Member for Caroni East is again this evening making reference to a speech made in Laventille by another Minister. I happened to have been at that meeting and someone in the audience shouted, "You all are a pack of thieves"—this was

somebody who worked on a project—and the Minister responded to him saying that when you go to work and you do not work eight hours, that is stealing; when you get your money and you do not take it to your family, that too is thieving; since you are accusing us, then all of us are doing that. It is unfortunate that the reporter who was there at that time really misinterpreted the thing. It is really unfortunate that that has to be brought in at this stage.

Hon. Tewarie: Mr. Speaker, I was not there at the meeting and I made reference to the headline, but I made it in the context of the rationalization made by the Member for Laventille in this House just a few minutes ago.

Mr. Valley: Talk about the Guptar letter.

Mr. Speaker: Order please! Order please!

Mr. Valley: —state funds. And you want to talk about corruption. Let us go on the campaign trail. Call the election now!

Mr. Speaker: Order please! Order please! Order please!

Mr. Valley: You should hide your face.

Mr. Marshall: We are not afraid to declare.

Mr. Speaker: Let us get some order please.

Mr. Marshall: You are talking about corruption. Talk about LIDP where you have to purchase your party card to get—

Mr. Speaker: Order please! Order please!

Mr. Marshall: You all are not going to get this election on corruption this time.

Mr. Speaker: Order please! Order please. Order please!

Mr. Marshall: He must account for the Guptar letter.

Mr. Speaker: All right, we have had enough of that. Let us settle down, please. Proceed.

Hon. Tewarie: Obviously, what I was saying—

Mr. Valley: We are not worried at all. We are like a "mapepire", we set.

Mr. Speaker: Order please! Order please! *[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker: I am having more interruptions on my right side than on my left. Order please! Member for Port of Spain East, let us get on with the debate, please. Proceed.

Hon. Member: You raise a "jep" nest.

Hon. Tewarie: First of all, I cannot understand the response of the Members on the other side. Are they going to allow me to continue, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Marshall: We want to hear about the report on the Alexander Commission.

Mr. Speaker: I think I will ask the Member to—

Hon. Member: Wind up.

Mr. Speaker: No, to ask that we put the question before the House, if he is not being given an opportunity to complete. It is very, very unfair. I have given you sufficient time with your crosstalk. Please, let us carry on. Co-operate, please.

Hon. Tewarie: I think they must have completely misunderstood what I was saying. I am saying that I cannot understand the rationale given by the Member for Laventille which went, in interpretation, something like this: "that the whole society is corrupt and corruption is everywhere. It was not in the PNM alone, it is everywhere."

Mrs. Donawa-Mc Davidson: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. That is not what I said. If there is one citizen in Trinidad and Tobago who watches her words, it is me. I said if there is an allegation of corruption, then something has to be wrong and we must therefore address this thing head-on. The same way they are alleging accusations at us, people are making allegations against them. It may be totally false but come the election period, allegations of corruption at all levels are levied. If something is wrong, we cannot at each election time just repeat this, we must do something about it. That is why I feel— and I think the Member for Naparima repeated what I said in the last debate in this House—that we must have education in human values, and I was corrected by the Member for Oropouche, and asked to develop more education in ethical values. Let us move forward.

Hon. Tewarie: Mr. Speaker, I will not continue in that area because I realize they are over-sensitive on the issue. I will simply proceed by saying that much of

the focus on the other side was about the election and who would win. One Member even mentioned a hung Parliament. When we approve this today, if I may anticipate the decision of the House, the stage, as I said, would be set, and under the Constitution the hon. Prime Minister has a certain amount of leeway, freedom and option. The gap between the parties today and the party which is the governing party is really like the gap between the 19th Century and the 21st Century. This party and this Government has brought this country from the brink of disaster to the point where it is possible now of envisioning a future.

Mr. Palackdharrysingh: Call the election.

Hon. Tewarie: In this very complex world that we are emerging in, this borderless world, this global village, this world of major economic power blocs, this world in which the whole world is moving towards free trade, on one hand, and at the same time protecting their industries on the other, I am saying that the only Government and party which has a clue about what needs to be done to take this whole country together, united purposeful, with a whole generation of people living on the cutting edge of the world's transformation, are the people on this side of the House.

8.00 p.m.

I think the politics will show that the last regime on the back bench was of the politics of the last 30 years prior to 1986. The regime on the front bench was in a politics that has gone past us a long time ago; it is only that they do not realise it. I think we are at the point in this country where, as the Member for Couva South was saying, we have really reached the fundamental point of choice, and the country has to make a choice. The country really has to decide between going back and going forward. I have no doubt that this country will make the decision to go forward, and we will be there leading this country.

Mr. Speaker: There are three questions before the House. Let me just explain. We will take the amendments first. In the resolution the first question will be that the word "approved" be deleted. If that stands, then we move to the second question, that you add the words "referred back to the Commission for further consideration of missing electors." The third would be, if the first and second are carried, then we do not go to the third, which is the original motion. If the first is not carried, then we do not go to the second—we go to the original motion. Is that understood?

Assent indicated.

Representatives on the 19th Day of May, 1991:

Question, on amendment, [Mr. B. Panday] put and negatived.

Question, on original motion, put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That the draft of the Elections and Boundaries Commission Order, 1991, be approved.

Motion made and question proposed, That the House do now adjourn to Friday, June 28, 1991 at 1.30 p.m. [Hon. B. Tewarie]

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 8.05 p.m.