

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES*Friday, June 28, 1991*

The House met at 1.35 p.m.

PRAYERS[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]**SPECIAL OLYMPICS CORPORATION (INC'N) BILL**

A bill for the incorporation of the Trinidad and Tobago Special Olympics Corporation and matters incidental thereto, brought from the Senate [*The Minister of Youth, Sport, Culture and Creative Arts*]; read the first time.

**MOUNT ZION INDEPENDENT SPIRITUAL
BAPTIST CHURCH (INC'N) BILL**

A bill for the incorporation of a body to be known as the Mount Zion Independent Spiritual Baptist Church and for matters incidental thereto, brought from the Senate [*Mr. Kenneth Valley*]; read the first time.

PAPERS LAID

1. Report of the Auditor General on the Accounts of Reinsurance Company of Trinidad and Tobago for the year ended December 31, 1990. [*The Minister of Planning and Mobilization (Hon. Winston Dookeran)*]
[To be referred to the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee]
2. Report of the Supervisor of Insurance for the year ended December 31, 1990. [*Hon. W. Dookeran*]

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS**Cruise Ship Complex
(Rental)**

- 39. Mr. Kenneth Valley** (*Diego Martin Central*) on behalf of the hon. Member for San Fernando East (Mr. Patrick Manning) asked the Minister of Works, Infrastructure and Decentralization:

Would the Minister 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?

The Minister of Works, Infrastructure and Decentralization (Dr. the Hon. Carson Charles): Mr. Speaker, please permit me to give the figures from rentals and the total revenue attributable to the operations of the Cruise Ship Complex.

In 1989 from August to December, rental revenue was—\$75,700.01; total revenue—\$75,700.01.

In 1990, January to December, rental revenue was \$394,035; total revenue—\$877,637.00.

In 1991 from January to March, the first quarter—rental revenue was \$127,050.00; total revenue—\$317,536.00.

In 1991, the projected revenue from January to December—rental revenue \$460,401; total revenue, \$1,262,000.

Mr. Valley: I wonder whether the Minister would give us a breakdown on the other revenue. In other words, the difference between the total revenue and the rental income.

Dr. Charles: Mr. Speaker, the question asked was for the rental revenue. What I have done is to indicate the rental revenue but to go further and indicate that there are other sources of revenue such as head tax, for example, which are attributable to the complex and to give the total figure.

Mr. Valley: Mr. Speaker, I am asking whether he can give us that composition of the other revenue. I know the question asked simply for the rental income but the Minister was good enough to give us the total income. I am asking now if he would be a bit kinder and give us a breakdown of that additional revenue.

Dr. Charles: I am afraid I do not have the breakdown with me. I can tell the Member that apart from the rentals, one of the major components, in fact, is the head tax for the people using the facility as well as for functions held at the facility and rental of portions of the facility itself, as opposed to booths and stalls—for use of office space and so on. But I cannot give him the breakdown.

**Cruise Ship Complex
(Construction Cost)**

40. Mr. Kenneth Valley (*Diego Martin Central*) on behalf of the hon. Member for San Fernando East (Mr. Patrick Manning) asked the Minister of Works, Infrastructure and Decentralization:

Would the Minister 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): The total cost incurred in the construction of the Cruise Ship Complex is \$6,256,000.

Tourist Arrivals/Foreign Exchange

41. Mr. Kenneth Valley (*Diego Martin Central*) on behalf of the Member for San Fernando East (Mr. Patrick Manning) asked the Minister of Industry, Enterprise and Tourism:

Would the Minister 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): The answers are as follows:

Year	Tourist Arrivals	
	Cruise Ships	Otherwise
1987	19,100	182,616
1988	12,278	175,488
1989	21,378	172,910
1990	42,042	151,979

However, the number of tourists actually occupying hotel rooms increased from 19,000 or thereabouts in 1987 to 30,000 in 1990.

Foreign Exchange Earned

Year	TT \$M
1987	337
1988	339
1989	359
1990	401.5

1.45 p.m.

**Media Advertising
(Expenditure)**

43. Mr. Kenneth Valley (*Diego Martin Central*) asked the Minister of Industry, Enterprise and Tourism:

Would the Minister kindly state:

- a) What expenditure has his Ministry incurred or committed itself to on media advertising and other public relations activities, including the recent Financial Times Supplement between January 1990 and March 1991?
- b) How much money specifically has been spent in this respect by:
 - i) the National Gas Company?
 - ii) the National Petroleum Company?

The Minister of Industry, Enterprise and Tourism (Dr. The Hon. Bhoendradatt Tewarie) Mr. Speaker, during the period January 1990 to March 1991, the Ministry of Industry, Enterprise and Tourism *per se*, did not incur nor commit any of its annual appropriation on media advertising or any other public relations activities. However, the Industrial Development Corporation and the Tourism Development Authority have expended, under their respective public relations and promotional votes, a total of \$1,259,662.22.

With respect to the Industrial Development Corporation, the sum of \$393,395.56 was expended. This included media advertising for staff vacancies,

seminars and courses in publication and promotional magazines and brochures and also related expense for its overseas promotion of Trinidad and Tobago. No advertising was done in the *Financial Times*.

However, on May 23, 1990 an advertisement was taken in the *Wall Street Journal* at a cost of US \$17,565.00. The Industrial Development Corporation had also subscribed to a half-page advertisement in the Special Report of Trinidad and Tobago in *South* magazine at a cost of US \$3,498.00.

The Tourism Development Authority's promotional programme is aimed at developing confidence in, and respect for, Trinidad and Tobago as an attractive tourist destination. In this regard, the Tourism Development Authority expended a total of \$866,280.66 in its media advertising and public relations activities. Included in this expenditure was the sum of \$28,390.13 towards the *Financial Times* Supplement on Trinidad and Tobago in 1990.

The National Gas Company of Trinidad and Tobago Limited expended the sum of \$90,114.00 in media advertising during the period January 1990 to March, 1991. A breakdown of expenditure is as follows:

Newspapers	\$45,169.86
Foreign publications	\$24,193.39
Local publications	\$1,750.00
Radio	\$4,000.00
Television	\$15,000.00

The benefits of expenditure can be summarized as follows. The National Gas Company as a sole supplier of natural gas in Trinidad and Tobago, has accepted its responsibility to provide accurate and timely information to the general public about the natural gas industry and the benefits of natural gas as the most environmentally friendly fossil fuel currently in use.

At the national level, the country is at this time actively encouraging gas-based investments. The advertisements placed in international publications were in support of this effort as they sought to market the country's capability to provide a reliable source of natural gas to these industries. Given the strategic importance of the National Gas Company in the industrial development of Trinidad and Tobago, it is vital that the company establishes and maintains a corporate presence both at national and community levels. Apart from the

economic benefits outlined above, the company also recognizes its responsibility to support the social development of Trinidad and Tobago and one of the ways in which this is manifested is through the acknowledgement of various national festivals through the print media.

National Petroleum: National Petroleum's overall expenditure on advertising during the period January 1990 to March 1991 was \$1,491,000. This involved expenditure for advertising on the local market and also in 14 regional and extra-regional countries including the Central American market.

Benefits derived: Advertising plays an important role in National Petroleum's marketing strategies. National Petroleum profitability in terms of the product mix depends significantly on the sales of industrial and automotive lubricants. This advertising outlay has enabled National Petroleum to consistently maintain over 80 per cent share of the domestic market for automotive lubricants and greases. The successful export market initiatives have, since 1985, been enhanced through the medium of co-operate and product advertising. The export advertising expenditure is also reflected in its total outlay.

CONSTITUENCY OFFICE ACCOMMODATION

The Prime Minister and Minister of the Economy (Hon. A. N. R. Robinson): Mr. Speaker, the present Government is committed to the principle of facilitating parliamentary representatives with the necessary resources to enable them to discharge their functions.

This perspective can be seen reflected as well in the Second Report of the Salaries Review Commission dated July 1980, at page 9 where it is stated as follows:

"Parliamentary Expenses Allowance

89. In general, there seems to be an urgent need to provide Parliamentarians with facilities to assist them in the performance of their Parliamentary duties. A Parliamentarian who is an elected Member will, whether or not he is a Member of Government, in the course of his representational role, find it necessary to incur expenses related to the maintenance of a Constituency Office, secretarial, research assistance, and other incidentals.

The Commission recommended a Parliamentary Expenses Allowance to assist in defraying those costs identified above. Accordingly additional

facilities were made available by the Government to Members of the House of Representatives. These included free postage for official correspondence relating to constituency business within Trinidad and Tobago, the provision of official stationery, and a special travelling allowance of \$400 per month. The Government also decided to provide, where feasible, office accommodation.

It was proposed that in order to minimize the cost implications, consideration should be given to the use of State-owned facilities such as Community/Civic Centres, Inland Revenues Offices, Health Centres, Social Security Offices, etc. and that where available the accommodation should be placed at the disposal of the Member of Parliament on a full-time basis. On June 25, 1987 Cabinet agreed *inter alia* that:

- (a) each Member of the House of Representatives be provided with the following basic office accommodation in order to assist in the discharge of his or her representational responsibilities:
 - (i) an enclosed office area of not less than 20 square metres (200 square feet) with essential office furniture, namely, a desk and 3 chairs to be used by the parliamentarian for private discussions with his constituents;
 - (ii) a suitable waiting-area for constituents, equipped with basic seating accommodation;
- (b) the Property Management Unit in the office of the Prime Minister..."

and this is the decision of the Cabinet—

"...after consultation with the representatives concerned, should identify appropriate office space in Government buildings including Community/Civic Centres, Inland Revenue Offices, and Health Centres, provided that any such allocation does not create undue hardship to existing occupants and does not cause any need to find additional accommodation for relocation of displaced or inconvenienced staff; further, where accommodation is required for predetermined days per week, that use of existing offices be considered rather than the permanent allocation of space on a full-time basis;

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- (c) the Property Management Unit in the Office of the Prime Minister should report back to Cabinet detailing its recommendations by constituency specifying where its recommendations may be at variance with the wishes of any Parliamentarian, and detailing the cost implications of any allocation where this may not be possible otherwise;"

The Cabinet decided further that—

- "(d) the accommodation to be provided to the Members of the House of Representatives should be available to them free of charge."

Cabinet's authority to consider recommendations of the Property Management Unit was subsequently delegated to the Minister responsible for property management on July 26, 1988 (Minute No. 1565) that is, to the Prime Minister..."

1.55 p.m.

I regret to state, however, that no recommendations for the allocation of constituency offices have ever been submitted either to the Prime Minister or to the Cabinet. The Property Management Unit has now reported that while the required ministerial approval was not sought, a total of 22 constituency offices had been allocated by the unit, acting in the mistaken belief that it had the authority to do so. The Prime Minister himself did not receive an office until February 1 1990. The Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister, Mrs. Margaret Hector has not yet been allocated an office.

With respect to office accommodation for the Member for Port of Spain East I am informed that a building owned by the National Housing Authority located at Observatory Street, Harpe Place was identified in February, 1991 by the Member and the Property Management Unit thereupon set arrangements in train for structural repairs to be undertaken by the Ministry of Works, Infrastructure and Decentralization.

During the afternoon of June 10, 1991, the Member for Port of Spain East informed the Unit that it was his intention to open the constituency office on the afternoon of June 11, 1991. The *Express* newspaper of June 13 reported that the Member of Parliament for Port of Spain East opened the office on June 11, 1991. Inquiries into the circumstances surrounding the matter revealed that repairs to the building were in progress on the day in question, June 11, 1991, when the Member of Parliament and his supporters reportedly occupied the building and

proceeded to clean and decorate the interior of the premises and removed all loose material. They later proceeded with the opening ceremony at the end of which the premises were cleared and the materials returned to the building.

The Ministry of Works, Infrastructure and Decentralization forwarded the keys to the Property Management Unit on June 18, 1991. In a letter dated Monday, June 24, 1991, received in the Office of the Prime Minister on Tuesday, June 25 and seen by the Prime Minister on Wednesday, June 26, 1991, the Member for Port of Spain East indicated that he would have no further need for the office if the keys were not made available to him by Tuesday, June 25 and that in addition he would be claiming from the Government repayment of rental fees which were paid for the premises he has been occupying for over four years to discharge his representational responsibilities. A copy of the Member's letter to the Prime Minister is attached to this statement.

It is important to note that the Prime Minister never received any other communication from the Member for Port of Spain East. Having regard to the claims and allegations made by the Member for Port of Spain East, the Prime Minister has decided to refer the matter to the Attorney General for his advice.

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS (INC'N) BILL

Question put and agreed to, That a bill to provide for the incorporation of the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous of Trinidad and Tobago be now read the first time.

Bill accordingly read the first time.

GLOBAL ENCOUNTER MINISTRIES (INC'N) BILL

Question put and agreed to, That a bill to provide for the incorporation of the Global Encounter Ministries be now read the first time.

Bill accordingly read the first time.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

The Minister of Industry, Enterprise and Tourism (Dr. The Hon. Bhoendradatt Tewarie: Mr. Speaker, I seek leave of this honourable House to proceed under Private Business with Motion No. 6 before proceeding with the main item on the agenda.

Question put and agreed to.

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

Dr. Anslem St. George: I wish to move the following motion standing in my name that this House adopt the report of the Special Select Committee of the House of Representatives appointed to consider and report on a private bill entitled "An Act for the Incorporation of the Ophthalmological Society of Trinidad and Tobago and for matters incidental thereto".

Question proposed.

Question put and agreed to.

Report Adopted.

Question put and agreed to, That the bill be now read the third time.

Bill accordingly read the third time and passed.

REGULARIZATION OF TENURE (STATE LANDS)

[SIXTH DAY]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question [26th April, 1991]:

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

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

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

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

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

Question again proposed.

Mr. Speaker: The debate on the motion which was in progress when the House was adjourned on Friday, May 24, 1991 will now be resumed. The resolution is that this House call upon the Government to take immediate steps to implement the provisions of the Regularization of Tenure (State Lands) Act No. 20 of 1986.

We have some amendments moved by the honourable Minister of Settlements and Public Utilities to this motion, as follows:-

Substitute the word “made” in the first line of the second recital, the words “did not make proper”.

Add the following words at the end of the second recital: “in that the Act sought to regularize squatting on an individual basis rather than on a community basis”.

Substitute for the words “call upon the Government to take immediate steps to implement the provisions of” occurring in lines 1—3 of the resolution the following words: “take note of the action on the part of the Government to repeal and replace”.

2.05 p.m.

Mr. Eden Shand (*St. Ann’s West*): Mr. Speaker, I rise but I do not rise to support the original motion as presented and moved by the hon. Member for Oropouche. I do not support the motion because, if I do so, I will be condoning, Mr. Speaker, what was blatantly a piece of PNM political gimmickry that was foisted on the population in an election year. I am inclined, Mr. Speaker, to support the motion as amended by the hon. Minister of Settlements and Public Utilities. I would be totally in support of it had I not seen in the motion, in the resolution section thereof, that the House is to take note of the action on the part of the Government to repeal and replace the Regularization of Tenure (State Lands) Act No. 20 of 1986.

Although I agree with the repealing of blatant political gimmickry legislation, I would have felt a little happier, if what was to replace it was also before us, or some indication of what was to replace it could be before us. But I understand why there is nothing yet before us that we can get our teeth into; that we can pass judgment on, because having served in the Ministry of Food Production in the early days of the tenure of the Government to which I once belonged, I am rather familiar with the problems that one encountered in this whole business of squatter regularization. Although I understand the problems, however, I do think that by

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now, four-and-a-half years after a period of office, that a matter of such crucial importance to the lives of people would have been settled, or at least a policy would have been settled, and if we were lucky, some legislation passed to replace this dastardly Act of 1986. I am disappointed that not much has progressed in this area, Mr. Speaker, and I think that the Government is blameworthy. As I develop my contribution, I think I can justify this thought of my own, that there is some blame to be shouldered by the Government in this regard.

I am also grateful for this opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to make a contribution in this debate on this Motion. Even though I do not support the motion, I think it provides an excellent opportunity for me to comment on some of what has been said before by other speakers. I was not going to participate in the debate, but upon the suggestion of your good self, Mr. Speaker, I think it is a debate that I really cannot sit still on, having regard to the fact—

Mr. Chairman: When was this, May 24?

Mr. Shand: Whenever it was.

Mr. Chairman: Was it on the last occasion when a number of Members were raising issues on the environment?

Mr. Shand: Exactly, yes, yes.

Mr. Chairman: Let us take my request or suggestion in the right context.

Mr. Shand: Oh, yes, yes. I did not think there was a context, Mr. Speaker. But you made a very good point: How could I sit here, someone who has been such a controversial figure in the centre of the squatting problem, someone who is recognized as knowing a little about the environment, and let this opportunity pass where I can make a meaningful contribution to the deliberations that affect the lives of our citizens?

The Members for Nariva and St. Ann's East, the respective Minister of Food Production and the Minister of the Environment, alluded to and made a very strong correlation between the problem of squatting and the degradation of the environment. My main purpose in standing today, Mr. Speaker, is to offer a solution. This squatting problem has not been resolved. My main purpose in standing today is to offer a solution to the national community, to the Government, a solution that solves the squatting problem and prevents environmental degradation at one and the same time.

To understand my solution, Mr. Speaker, I think it is necessary to understand a little more about the kind of environmental degradation that results from unresolved squatting problems, and I refer particularly to the problem of forest fires. The Minister with responsibility for the environment also made reference to this problem how, as a result of unsolved squatter problems, haphazard occupation and development of the hills, one gets deforestation, fires, and consequently soil and water erosion, with disastrous effects on people downstream.

I remember, Mr. Speaker, in the years prior to the coming into power of the NAR Government and the sweeping away of what definitely needed to have been swept away, it used to break my heart every dry season, every April and May—principally April—to see the uncontrolled wanton destruction of our hills, forest fires galore, absolutely no control or no programme of control evident in the Government of the day. One of the things that I thought that I would do, if I was elected to office and if I was given an opportunity, was to address this problem. As fate would have it, when portfolios were allocated, the Prime Minister asked me whether I would mind serving with Minister Lincoln Myers in the Ministry of Food Production, and I said that I would willingly do so. He asked me; I did not ask him.

Mr. Speaker, I hope I get my speaking time, because the Leader of the Opposition and the Prime Minister are having fun at my expense.

Mr. Panday: Never, never at your expense, my friend.

Mr. Shand: And so on immediately taking office, in those heady days when we were full of energy, initiative, eager to serve, and when one thought that one was able to serve, I remember calling in, on January 20, 1987, the Conservator of Forests and his top technical staff in the presence of the Permanent Secretary to express the concerns of the new political directorate for the question of forest fires. This concern was followed up by a memorandum from the Permanent Secretary to the Conservator of Forests on February 17, 1987. This was all done on my initiative, Mr. Speaker. This is what the Permanent Secretary wrote to the then Conservator of Forests:

"Reference is made to recent informal discussion on the matter at caption in the office of the Parliamentary Secretary. It was agreed that you would harness and explore ideas among your staff on the matter and submit proposals relating to ways and means of achieving higher levels of efficiency in the avoidance and control of bush fires.

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Your recommendations thereon are urgently awaited: While ideas on a long-term basis may not yet be finalized, proposals with particular reference to the current dry season will be very much appreciated.

E.P. Alleyne,
Permanent Secretary.”

The response to that memo, Mr. Speaker, was really shocking. I hate to have to appear to be attacking public servants, but the response to that memo left me with no alternative but to conclude that some public servants, at levels where it ought not to occur, are very, very lax in their work. The response that one received on this serious problem caused me to write the following to the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Food Production:

"Re Forest Fires:

Please advise the Conservator of Forests that what I requested of the Forestry Division was not discussions and reports, but an action plan for reducing forest fires this dry season. What are they doing to cut down on the burning hillsides?"

This is a memorandum dated March 19, 1987. Well, the rest is history.

In April, 1987, this country suffered one of the most devastating spate of forest fires ever, especially in the Northern Range, which is so crucial for water supplies for the East-West Corridor, and so crucial for the soil conservation of the plains at the foot of those hills. As a result of this terrible problem, the fires, especially after one foresaw it, Mr. Speaker—it was foreseen—and those with the Authority were asked to take all the necessary steps, and the disaster occurred because the necessary steps were not taken. As a result of that situation, I had cause to write the following to the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Food Production on April 27, 1987. After all the fires. I quote what I wrote:

"The responses from the Forestry Division lead one to conclude that they did not sufficiently care about the nation's forests. So it was no surprise that the Press and the Field Naturalists Club were able to brief this Ministry on forest fires in the Northern Range more fully than the Forestry Division. As you know, extensive fires in the Valencia area were brought to the attention of this Ministry by the *Trinidad Guardian*, while the Forestry Division was apparently sleeping. Moreover, outbreaks of fires at El Tucuche were brought to the attention of this Ministry by Professor Kenny of the Field Naturalists Club on 21st April, 1987."

2.20 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, there is a lot more in the memorandum—a thorough analysis of the situation and where we should go from there after the disaster. So at least around April, 1987, yours truly was finding a lot of important, interesting work to do.

Mr. Panday: I thought you had nothing to do.

Mr. Shand: Around the same time that the forest fire problem was rearing its head, or just prior to that, another problem reared its head—the problem of squatting. The problem was always there, but it reared its head in an unprecedented and most unexpected manner on December 17, 1986. The reports that flowed across my desk—for at that time, reports did flow across my desk—were horrendous. There was a squatting spree that took place on December 17, 1986.

As the Minister of Settlements and Public Utilities said in her contribution, “a land-grabbing spree was taking place”. Reports were coming back to us, that the justification for all this rush for squatting was mouthed in a way as though it was written in our manifesto. People were saying, "Humphrey tell us we could do this." I do not know if that is true. I doubt that is true, but that is what they were saying.

Mr. Panday: At least he had something to do.

Mr. Shand: It was so bad, that the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Food Production had to write to the Director of Surveys in February, 1987 in these terms:

"There has been a rapid and dangerous increase in the incidence of squatting on State lands. Towards the end of December, 1986, instructions were given to field staff not to serve any further notices on squatters, except with special approval in each instance. Reports received from St. Andrew, Nariva/Mayaro, Victoria and St. Patrick indicate that there is need for carefully determined corrective action for various reasons."

It was a serious situation in our Ministry, Mr. Speaker, so serious that I decided to continue to use my initiative, to chew up on the problem, and to pen my thoughts to the person to whom I was responsible and accountable then—the hon. Member for St. Ann's East.

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In a memorandum dated April 28, 1987, the subject "Agricultural Fires", this is what I said:

"The forest fires in the Northern Range and elsewhere continue to be a source of environmental concern. The media have been active in expressing this concern, moreso than our own Forestry Division. And they are now pressing the relevant Ministry 'to do more than make meaningful noises about the bush fire problem'. See *Express* editorial of April 27, 1987.

The political directorate was getting the jamming. To continue my thoughts to the Minister.

"Following upon my helicopter tour of bush fires in the Northern Range on Thursday, April 23, 1987, I have come to the conclusion that the situation is so intense, that drastic action is now required. It is clear to me that most, if not all, forest fires seen from the air were the result of human beings slashing and burning forested lands in accordance with the practice of shifting cultivation. It is regrettable that neither the Forestry Division nor the Fire Guardian System of the Ministry of National Security was sufficiently mobilized to prevent these agricultural fires which, according to the Agricultural Fires Act, require a fire permit. Because of these deficiencies, shifting cultivators probably feel that the authorities do not care about their practices and that they can continued their destructive ways without interference. I think that the time has come for the State to assert itself positively by the immediate enforcement of section 20 of the Agricultural Fires Act."

I then suggested to the Minister that we have an intense internal discussion in the Ministry with the appropriate division heads and with the Ministry of National Security, and items for this discussion on the agenda might include—one of the items that was suggested for the internal discussion was a system of destroying crops planted in defiance of the law.

Mr. Speaker, we in the Ministry were very, very concerned about this problem. We formed internal committees; we discussed problems at length. One of the problems on the agenda was, indeed, this question—I remember it being very much in my head at the time—how can one discourage people from slashing, burning and planting crops? Into the law was written the remedy that the state had the authority to seize crops, and I believe to destroy crops, so as to prevent that person from reaping the benefits of his illegal practice.

We formed a committee within the Ministry. I remember I was the chairman of that committee. At one of the meetings which was held on July 15, 1987, we sat and thrashed out this problem. The meeting was called for three specific purposes, to discuss three things. We were looking at ways to eliminate or control the practice of squatting on private lands in the hills that give rise to runaway bush fires, because we were told by the Forestry Division that one of the problems start on private lands and it rushes onto state lands, because the fires do not know the difference between private land and state land; it just burns.

2.30 p.m.

The second problem we discussed was squatting on state lands in general, to come up with recommendations to give the hon. Minister for the inter-ministerial committee established to deal with squatting on state lands. That was another institutional measure that was adopted. There was an inter-ministerial committee set up to come up with a policy on squatting on state lands, with particular reference to agricultural squatting. I believe that committee was chaired by the Minister of National Security at the time, Sen. Atwell and the membership also included the Minister of Food Production at the time, the Member for St. Ann's East.

So an inter-ministerial committee was put in place and that committee, of course, set up a technical committee and the technical committee reported as to what ought to be done and for the Ministers to decide. But it was around this time that I found things going awry. I found that the initiative that I had taken with this question of forest fires, setting up committees to look at squatting, suddenly started to peter out. It also happened that suddenly I found myself really out of touch with what was going on in the Ministry. It was a very embarrassing thing. Very often, to find out what was happening in my Ministry, I had to ask the Permanent Secretary. There were things I found out in the press, quite a lot as well. I felt as though I was being pushed aside, marginalized, to use the word of the Member or Naparima. At this time, yours truly had not made a single trip abroad for private gain so that could not be the reason for marginalization. It could not be the reason that the Member for Caroni East so shamelessly uttered in this House in my absence.

Dr. Tewarie: Mr. Speaker, I beg—

Mr. Shand: Is that on a point of order?

Dr. Tewarie: I did not hear what I so shamelessly uttered.

Mr. Shand: You should pay attention to the debate.

Dr. Tewarie: I have the *Hansard* document here to read anything that I said.

Mr. Shand: I have it too. Mr. Speaker, is it out of order for me to refer to that document? No? Well let me read what he said.

Mr. Speaker: Please stick to the matter that is before the House.

Mr. Shand: I have so much to say that this is a small thing. He has been dealt with anyway. He has been exposed for what he is.

So here was I. It was real agony. It was so much agony, that I decided to write a memorandum for the signature of the Minister allocating responsibilities to me so that I would not feel ashamed to come to work every morning. I drafted the memorandum for him, saying I think it is reasonable that I be allocated the portfolio of forestry because that is my professional area. He was making decisions in that professional area without consulting me—some atrocious decisions—the Member for St. Ann's East.

Mr. Myers: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, because I am fed up with him.

Mr. Shand: I have not started with him yet.

Mr. Myers: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order, largely because I believe untruths ought not to be told in any parliament, particularly by one who postures with the truth so often.

Mr. Shand: Could you come to the point of order instead of making a speech.

Mr. Myers: Mr. Speaker, in the first instance, before this so-called memorandum was written, the goodly Parliamentary Secretary was assigned responsibility, even if informally. I did not believe it was necessary to write such a thing. So he was assigned responsibility for the forestry area. This matter of being pushed aside was a figment of his imagination that we have seen going through all his political life.

Mr. Speaker: Order please. I will ask the hon. Member for St. Ann's West to continue.

Mr. Shand: As I was saying before I was so rudely interrupted by a very nervous individual—for many reasons, he is nervous today because he knows he is at the end of his political life. I shall merely deliver the final blow.

Mr. Speaker, I had to draft a memorandum for this Minister assigning me responsibilities in my own professional area, which he signed. I give him credit for that. He signed it and sent it to the Permanent Secretary. If the arrangement was all that good and I was already assigned responsibilities informally and things were so “honky dory”, why did he sign that memorandum?

Mr. Myers: Because I saw you were too weak.

Mr. Shand: Mr. Speaker, did you hear him?

Mr. Speaker: No.

Mr. Shand: Okay, I am sorry. Anyway, I was assigned the responsibility of forestry formally by that memorandum, but the memorandum was not worth the paper that it was written on, because the signing did not come from his heart. This Minister was more preoccupied with building his political future, grandstanding in front of the cameras, appearing in the newspapers everyday and it was in his interest to have no competition. It is as simple as that. You know how he likes to grandstand. Do you remember the 40-day fast? It got so bad, the fact that this memorandum which was written—I have it here, I would spare you the agony and not read it—in September, 1987. But everything went the same old way. No respect for Parliamentary Secretaries! I can say that in this House. Parliamentary Secretaries got no respect under the NAR Government.

2.40 p.m.

On March 2, 1988, having got fed-up of seeing items in the newspaper under the portfolio that I was supposed to have been assigned, decisions being taken in the area where authority was delegated to me in writing, I decided to write a little note to the Minister. I believe in giving a man a full chance. I wrote a memorandum from the Parliamentary Secretary to “Honourable Minister”. I gave him his respect. I never called him “Lincoln” or anything like that, “Honourable Minister”.

"Portfolio Management

The attached communication is forwarded to you for your attention."

This is the attachment, two newspaper clippings. One headlined "Provider for Flying Fish Project" the other "Talks on Scarlet Ibis". There were two items, announcements of happenings in my area of control that I did not know about. So, I wrote this to the Minister.

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"I notice that Cabinet Notes on matters related to Marine Exploitation and Forestry—"

the items attached—

"reach me after they have been submitted to Cabinet.

As the politico to whom you have delegated authority in these two areas, do you not think that I should be aware of the preparation of the notes and perhaps have an input into them?

I do not think that I can properly manage my portfolio if decisions are taken without my knowledge.

Please advise."

I was laying it out. Everybody here is probably hearing this for the first time. I have kept this inside of me but now I can make a clean breast of it. I laid it out in the interest of brotherly co-operation. We were on the same team. They talk about team. Do you know what the response to this was? The Minister's response was to withdraw the delegated authority in forestry and marine exploitation that he had put in writing. That was his response.

Thereafter, I was just a marginal person. A "Joe Boy". Do this, *ad hoc* this, *ad hoc* that. No properly structured input into the running of a very important Ministry and the Prime Minister put me there to assist him. That is what my instrument said. But he just wanted to "gallery" by himself, making atrocious decisions; publicity hound.

Anyway, that is what I had to write. You know what was one of the things that prompted that? In 1987 just after the fires of which we spoke, I had a very good relationship with the then Chief Fire Officer, Mr. Copeland and Mr. Copeland, on seeing my concern, wrote to me the following:

"Dear Sir,

I have enclosed for your viewing, a copy of the VHS tape of the Bambi Fire Buckets. However, as this tape is on loan to the Chief Fire Officer, I am requesting its early return. I believe that this item of equipment can prove to be an asset in controlling the menace of bush fires."

An admirable man, with initiative. He saw that there was something he could share with the political directorate so that we can solve a problem for the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

I immediately took steps, on my own initiative, to get bambi buckets into this country. I held informal discussions with the Canadian High Commissioner and members of the Ministry of National Security and this culminated in a gift of bambi buckets for dousing bush fires from the Canadian Government to this country. But I discovered that the Canadian Government actually gave us these gifts and it had arrived in the country, by reading it in the newspaper of October 28, 1987. I read that the initiative that I took culminated on October 27, 1987 when I read it in the newspaper. The *Express*, "Bambi Bucket is here" and the "gallery" artist is there posing with it. The Minister of Food Production and the Minister of National Security, posing with bambi buckets. When I asked him why he could not tell me, he said, "Oh, you know, it really slipped me." Can that be a lie too? *[Interruption]* Of course you would say it is a lie. *[Crosstalk]* Sure, you had your turn. I suffered under him for 18 months without a squawk because of his simple idiosyncrasy.

Do you know what is the saddest thing about this bambi bucket story? The two Ministers, having galleried and posed for the picture in the *Express* and *Trinidad Guardian*, do not know what happened after that to the bambi buckets. Do you know that these buckets have never been deployed and after that event they went into a warehouse in Chaguaramas and they are still there. The "gallerying" was done.

Do you understand why this Government has not come up with the squatter regularization policy yet? There was too much interest in having pictures and making empty speeches. The talk now making the rounds is that the current Minister of the Environment is doing the environmental cause more harm than good because everytime he gets up to make a speech about the environment, people go "click", they turn off. They are tired hearing him. Empty talk. No action. *[Interruption]* Well that is another story but he is not here so I cannot deal with it.

Anyway, so what happens; "galleryings", vacillating of the highest order, the ministerial committee submitted their report on November 25, 1987—the whole policy is here—as to what could be done in the national interest to ease the plight of squatters and to save the environment. It is there. But there was a lot of back and forth and this committee and that committee, and of course the National Planning Commission had to come in, because they used this. By September, 1989, about two years after this thing was ready, they put out a new policy for agricultural development, land distribution and squatting for public comment.

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I do not know if this has been revised as a result of those public consultations and I do not know if the Cabinet has adopted the policy. Maybe I was not around or reading the newspapers but I am not aware—

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. Shand: I thank the hon. Member for Naparima for moving that motion and my colleagues for agreeing that I speak for a further 30 minutes.

While there was all this pussyfooting, dilly-dallying, vacillation, the squatting that was identified in December 1986 continued. Recreation grounds that had been earmarked for sporting associations were squatted upon. I had a personal interest in this because it affected something in my constituency, because the President's Grounds which the community of my constituency was pressing me to get community control; of and I held negotiations with the then Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Sport, the Member for Barataria/San Juan. We went out to the site, looked at the pros and cons and eventually we got the Ministry of Youth, Sport, Culture and Creative Arts to hand over the President's Grounds to a management committee of which I was the Chairman.

2.50 p.m.

This was a policy of the Ministry at the time, to hand over community areas under their control to local management committees. The footballers who used that ground—there was a Rangers Superstar Football Team, the champions in Trinidad from St. Ann's—wanted a home ground and they proposed at the committee, that the Ministry find alternative accommodation for the other sporting bodies who used the ground, and they did. The hardworking Parliamentary Secretary did find alternative accommodation for the sporting groups, but alas, there was an influx of squatting so that today, the President's Grounds which we had so successfully brought into the community under community management, is still crowded with sporting bodies that could have been otherwise accommodated.

Only last week, I had a call from one of the members of the management committee, the representative of Rangers Football Club who, in distress, almost in tears, said to me that the Ministry of Youth, Sport, Culture and Creative Arts had

rescinded its decision and taken back the ground—this is only in the last two weeks—from this management committee. My informant also told me, “Mr. Shand, I saw it coming ever since Sen. Atwell and Mr. Ivan Williams asked for the file”. Sen. Atwell and Mr. Ivan Williams asked for that file. Do you know why they asked for it? They talk on the block and the fellows on the block relate well to me.

Mr. Sudama: Could the Member inform this House if he is aware of whether Mr. Ivan Williams has an official position with the Government of Trinidad and Tobago or with the public service in this country, and what is his authority to ask for a file?

Mr. Shand: He has several official positions. He is a national carnival commissioner; he was a port commissioner; he is a LIDP regional manager; he is a member of the strategic committee of the National Alliance for Reconstruction and he was once described by the Prime Minister as one of the most corrupt elements in the PNM who had come over to the NAR.

Mr. Robinson: May I deny categorically and say that I have never expressed such a description of Ivan Williams.

Mr. Shand: After last night's performance on television I expect the Prime Minister to deny that.

To come back to the question of the squatting problem, coming back to the fact that the squatting regularization problem has not been properly dealt with and has not been finalized. Of course, in my own personal and political life, my high point in this question of squatter regularization took place in June 1988. I had just returned from the one and only FAO consultancy which I undertook as a Member of the Government. That was a consultancy in Guyana where I got the special permission of the Prime Minister to undertake this five and a half week assignment. I had just returned and I was on my way for debriefing in Rome, when I was asked by the Minister to open a seminar on environmental management. At this seminar, the winner of the public speaking competition among schools, a charming young lady, who cared for her generation, made a very stirring speech about the rape of our hills; about the responsibility of adults; about the negligence of politicians and about the future of her generation. It was really first-class.

When I got up to make my feature address from a prepared text, I would have been a robot if I did not make some reference to what the young lady said.

[MR. SHAND]

In dealing with the problem which she outlined so masterfully in her presentation, blood rushed to my head, and I uttered those famous words. Fresh was the remedy in my head about destroying crops as a remedy for stopping environmental destruction, that I uttered those famous words that “one day this nation would be entitled to march into those hills with cutlasses and spray cans and destroy those illegal crops”, words which I have lived to regret and for which I also apologized publicly. What I was proposing in those carefree and careless words was a violent solution, not violence against persons, but violence nonetheless, against the earth and violence against green things.

In the evening of this phase of my political life, I have come to realize that violence and using violence to solve problems is never, never the way. I abhor the use of violence for the solution of problems between people. So, inevitably, when I came back from Rome I had to take the flak. The Prime Minister called me in and said he had no alternative but to do what he has to do and he advised the President about the revocation of my appointment. The Prime Minister advised the President; this is the normal constitutional procedure. *[Interruption]* Of course, he supported that. The competition was out of the way now so he could “gallery” by himself. I might also add that certain advisors, the same people who were behind the “ULF grab for power” article, also advised that.

This was a beautiful time, they said, for the Prime Minister to show some decisiveness and a beautiful time for him to show that he is not a racist. They were looking for a non-indian head and I presented it willingly. It was a very lonely time too, Mr. Speaker.

3.00 p.m.

Mr. Robinson: Mr. Speaker, I would normally ignore the hon. Member completely because I think that is what he deserves, but on this occasion, when he is talking about the persons who were influential on the Prime Minister to cause him to advise the President to revoke his appointment, I want to say that what he is saying is absolutely without any foundation and it is mischievously misleading. I want to say also that he himself agreed that it was a correct course to take.

Mr. Shand: Of course. My agreeing that it was the correct course, Mr. Speaker, does not mean that what I said did not happen. It was the correct course to take.

As I was saying, Mr. Speaker, it was a lonely period. I probably could count my colleagues on half of a hand, those who called me to express some kind of

sympathy. You know, here was a young politician in a rush of blood to his head making some remarks, which were incidentally misinterpreted—but that is beside the point—and paying the price for it. He did not say it out of malice; he said it out of concern—not a soul. That was hands off, and that was the cue for the activists who wished to prepare St. Ann's West for the chairman to start their campaign of undermining. That was the cue. But there were some people who had environmental concerns in their hearts who, in their correspondence to me, talked about the squatter problem and advanced solutions. I will just quote from two such letters. This one comes from the Embassy of the United States of America. It is dated July 13, 1988. It was written by the then person in charge of the embassy, Mr. C. Robert Dickerman, Chargé d'Affaires, and I quote:

"Dear Eden,"

I will not go into the personal parts of the letter. This letter was written when he was about to leave the country.

"Best wishes to you Eden. I have greatly valued your friendship and have much respect for the type of personal, political courage which I understand to have been a Shand characteristic through the years. I want to wish you especially well in your environmental pursuits. There is nothing more important in the long-run and nothing so easy to ignore at any particular moment.

C. Robert Dickerman."

The other letter I would read in its entirety, for it is not long, comes from Professor Julian S. Kenny of the Department of Zoology of the University of the West Indies:

"Dear Mr. Shand,

I was absolutely shattered to hear of your dismissal from the Ministry. I do not think that any thinking person who heard what you had to say at the environmental seminar could have interpreted this to mean a literal march into the hills. You, in fact, made your statement in the form of a rhetorical question led from the essay of the child. My fear now is that the action of the Prime Minister will give slash and burn farmers *carte blanche* to continue and to accelerate the destruction of our forests. We already have the indifference and incompetence of the Forestry Division to contend with.

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Please be assured that many people in this country are totally behind you in your defence of our natural heritage. This ought to be obvious to you from the support you have had in letters to the editor.

I do hope that you will continue to fight for this most noble of causes. If it is any comfort to you, I think perhaps you must be the only elected Parliamentary representative in the recent history of this country who has had the moral fiber to make the kind of public apology which you made blaming no one but yourself. History will not forgive the Prime Minister for the licence which he has given the squatters to lead us on the road to Haiti.

Warmest personal regards,

J.S.Kenny."

It was somewhat comforting to receive correspondence like this, and there were several more. What this points out, however, Mr. Speaker, is that whereas on the one hand, certain action was taken against the Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Food Production, Marine Exploitation, Forestry and the Environment and correct action, on the other hand, nothing, nothing, nothing was done about the problem for which he sacrificed his position. *Carte blanche*—according to the letter. And there was a ground swell of environmental concern about what was happening then, and I believe some of this must have got to the Prime Minister, because on June 30, 1988 I got his letter advising me that he was going to revoke my appointment, which I will not read now. Less than a month later—to be precise, 18 days later—he had called me back to his office to offer me something to do, and I declined. I said to him that it was too early for me to return to the scene to negate what he did 18 days ago. I also said to him—anyway, the point is I did not think it was proper for me to accept or to pay any attention to the overtures that he was making. He obviously felt some kind of remorse because he knew I meant well.

Mr. Robinson: Mr. Speaker, since the hon. Member thinks it fit to refer to these matters, I do not mind him saying what he was offered, and I do not mind him giving the history of the relationship and how he got back as a Minister in the Ministry of External Affairs. I do not mind. Let him tell the public everything and, if necessary, I will say what the facts are.

Mr. Shand: Okay. You will not have to say what the facts are because I am saying the facts. On July 18, 1988, Mr. Speaker, after he had called me and made an offer, there were two things mentioned: He said he wanted me to work in his

office, the Office of the Prime Minister, because he needed someone to look after the National Self-Help Commission and/or the programme for the widest possible participation of the community in business activity. Those were the two things mentioned.

Mr. Robinson: As what?

Mr. Shand: He did not get into "as what", because I stopped him early, saying that it was not proper for me to return at this time. You see, he did not have time to give—he likes to talk about “make people this and make people that”. He did not have time to say what he was going to make me, Mr. Speaker. To make assurances doubly sure that I would not be called back by this gentleman, I wrote back the same day, almost immediately after leaving his office, July 18, 1988:

"Dear Prime Minister,

During the course of our discussion today of my future quiet service to the country, it slipped me to inform you that since my vacating the office of Parliamentary Secretary, I have been approached by the FAO to do two short consultancies in Bolivia and Mozambique. I have indicated willingness to carry out these assignments during the Parliamentary recess.

I thought that I should let you know the above immediately as this may have an effect on the timing of my service."

So this was a legitimate pleasant way of saying, "thank you, but no thank you." I did not go to his office by imposition. I was called back there to be made something, which I declined.

Not too long afterwards when there was a Cabinet reshuffle coming up, I think it was a reshuffle where the Minister in the Ministry of Finance was made the Minister of Finance—whatever one it was—I was called again, summoned to the Prime Minister's residence. I went. I met the Member for Tunapuna waiting in the waiting room. Do you remember? Yes, you were summoned as well. That was when you were summoned and you were being shifted from Health to Social Development. I admired the Member for Tunapuna then and I still do now, basically, because he refused. He found his manhood and said, "I am going nowhere." He discovered that he had won that night on television. That night on television, he discovered that he had won. He stood up and he won. He was not removed. But, I was offered. You see, it was only lately dawning on the Prime Minister the quality of the resource that he had at his disposal, and I can tell you,

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the Prime Minister knew nothing about the resources at his disposal when he went into office. All he knew was the old guard. A brilliant solicitor like Smart was a back bencher; Tewarie, a back bencher. Only the old guard. There was an old guard running the country, and they were not sitting in the Cabinet.

Mr. Smart: That was because I realized that we all could not be in the Cabinet at the same time, and I was happy to be a back bencher.

Mr. Shand: But you were moaning privately.

Mr. Smart: Never, never. I was working in my constituency, Mr. Speaker. I was working in my constituency assiduously from January to June, 1987. Maybe that is why I am comfortable in it now.

Mr. Shand: Mr. Speaker, do I have any injury time?

Mr. Chairman: Five minutes.

Mr. Shand: To comply with the Prime Minister's request, he called me over. He saw me first because mine was a smaller matter. That was the problem. So the Minister of Health had to wait. He saw me first. Realizing that this was a resource with some international acumen, someone who spoke four languages and someone who was in demand internationally, it dawned on him. So he said to me, "Given your background and your knowledge of the international arena, I want you to be attached to the Ministry of External Affairs with Sahadeo Basdeo." Mr. Speaker, once more I declined—

3.15 p.m.

Mr. Robinson: Mr. Speaker, I must correct the misrepresentations of the hon. Member. I use "honourable" in a very polite sense. The hon. Member represented to me that he could not live on his income and that is why he had to accept these assignments abroad. I indicated to him that in those circumstances he could be made a Minister in the Ministry. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Shand: Mr. Speaker, do I have injury time?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Shand: I think we should wind up this chapter.

Mr. Speaker: Before we commenced today, I brought the resolution before the House. I do not know what all this has to do with what is before the House.

Mr. Shand: I was just complying with the request of the hon. Prime Minister, to give some details which we shall now put to rest. We will wind it up by me denying what he just said. I never discussed financial problems with the Prime Minister.

Mr. Marshall: I believe you.

Mr. Shand: To put this whole thing to rest, I declined the offer. Shortly after declining the offer, I did go to an assignment in our sister Caricom country of Jamaica, which is my right as a backbencher Member of Parliament, to practise my profession. It was while in Jamaica, the Permanent Secretary to the Prime Minister, Mr. Reginald Dumas, pursued me with two telephone calls, asking me to come back because the Prime Minister wants to know if I was going to take up this position in the Ministry of External Affairs. I did not ask him.

Mr. Robinson: May I say that I was embarrassed by the hon. Member's absence from his constituency and the complaints I was receiving. This is one of the principal reasons I was anxious for him to come back home and do his duties as a representative of his constituency.

Mr. Shand: Why did he not say that at Seamen and Waterfront Workers—

Mr. Speaker: Order please. For 75 minutes—in your initial remarks you said that you had a solution or you had solutions to the squatting problem.

Mr. Shand: I am afraid I do not have time. If you give me some more injury time—

Mr. Speaker: I beg your pardon. There is nothing like injury time on this occasion. You have gone so far off what is before the House. I have been most tolerant.

Mr. Shand: I apologize, unreservedly. I will give the solution now. I will give the philosophy of the solution in the last three or four minutes of my time.

Whereas I attempted to solve or to design a solution for the squatter problem with violence, and after great pondering, suddenly the solution was there—eureka! Why not, I said to myself, apply—instead of the principle of violence—the principle of love? Why not apply the principle of love for people and see if a solution would suggest itself? There it was before my eyes.

There was a problem in my constituency in the Fondes Amantes area of St. Ann's, a watershed that is owned by WASA, land that is vested in WASA. The

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[MR. SHAND]

Water and Sewerage Authority wrote to me, thinking that I was a champion or an anti-squatter man which was a misunderstanding of me. They wrote to me and asked me to use my good office to get those squatters off their land. They were getting pressure from all sorts of people. Here is a letter here from a constituent to Mrs. Stephanie Daly, Chairman, Water and Sewerage Authority, complaining about these squatters next door to him, and using the traditional violent approach—get them off the land. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Minister of Industry, Enterprise and Tourism (Dr. The Hon. Bhoendradatt Tewarie): Mr. Speaker, this motion, amended by the hon. Minister of Settlements and Public Utilities, deals with a fundamental and important matter which has to do with theregularization of squatting in the country, something which derives out of the need of large numbers of poor people to find a place to live and to make a home.

The whole business of settlement has been an important policy issue of the National Alliance for Reconstruction Government. It was a fundamental policy issue addressed in the manifesto of our party, which manifesto we took to the electorate in 1986. It is a misrepresentation to suggest that simply because we have not been able, in the four and a half years, to repeal the legislation and bring new legislation before the House, that we are not concerned about it.

I want to give you the information that the legislation has, in fact, been drafted by the Attorney General and is now under study by the Ministry of Settlements and Public Utilities. The intention always was to bring it to Parliament as quickly as possible because it was such an important matter. I want to indicate as well—we are always working under the assumption that we have another five years, at the very least. I think there are very solid, scientific foundations for that assumption. I want to say that the legislation will be in the House before long, but that does not mean that the problem has not been addressed nor is not being addressed.

There are communities all over this country on state lands where regularization is taking place and has taken place. There are a number of squatting areas, even on private lands where—

Mr. Valley: Mr. Speaker, if the Minister would allow a question. If I understand the Minister, he is saying that there are communities in which regularization in fact has taken place. Could the Minister inform us under what legislation this regularization has taken place?

3.25 p.m.

Dr. Tewarie: Mr. Speaker, what is happening is that with the position that we have taken to deal with that bill that was introduced—as the Member for St. Ann's West indicated was passed in 1986 in an election year—what has happened is that while comprehensive legislation which has been prepared and is being reviewed for final placement before the Parliament, a policy on squatting and on regularization has, in fact, been prepared and this policy is the policy on which the regularization of squatters is taking place.

Mr. Manning: I wonder if the hon. Member could be kind enough to make the policy available to us and let us know when that policy was made public.

Dr. Tewarie: I think it would be very easy. The Minister of Settlements would be the duly authorized Minister to make that information available. As far as I know—because some of squatter regularization and preparation for it has in fact taken place in my own constituency; I have been at some of the meetings—the policy is outlined so that people understand what is involved and what is happening. I have a copy of it here.

Mr. Valley: I want to know whether regularization has taken place and whether that regularization is taking place in accordance with the existing legislation and whether the Minister has found something else to regularize squatters on state lands.

Dr. Tewarie: What is happening is that preparation is being made for the regularization of squatters. We are going to repeal the old law and we have a new bill which we are going to present before Parliament and pass. *[Interruption]*. The hon. Member is again trying to jump in opportunistically, as he normally does in every issue in this country. He has no sense of anything in Trinidad and Tobago except to use rhetoric. *[Interruption]* Mr. Speaker, I am not giving way unless it is on a point of order.

Mr. Manning: Mr. Speaker, it is a point of order. Mr. Speaker, I am glad the hon. Member has given way.

Dr. Tewarie: Is it on a point of order?

Mr. Manning: Why is the hon. Member so jumpy? I am asking a simple question in Parliament.

Dr. Tewarie: You spoke for one hour and a quarter.

Mr. Manning: Surely, the hon. Minister would be prepared to adhere to some of the wise principles of the Westminster system. Surely, he would be prepared to give way.

Dr. Tewarie: No, I am not prepared to give way.

Mr. Valley: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order.

Dr. Tewarie: Do you have a point of order?

Mr. Valley: I have a point of order. I want to know whether the Minister is misrepresenting the facts when he says that squatters have been regularized so far under his Government.

Mr. Speaker: It is not a point of order.

Dr. Tewarie: I understand what he is saying and it is true. I made an error when I said regularization has taken place.

Mr. Sudama: I see, he is playing to the cameras.

Dr. Tewarie: Regularization is taking place. I have the list of all the areas provided by the Ministry of Settlements. *[Interruption]* Mr. Speaker, they normally behave like this at meetings. Could they behave a little better in Parliament? *[Interruption]* We will find out how much trail as the days pass. I bet you we do not see you here next time—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker: Order please. Can we settle down please so that the hon. Minister can continue with his contribution.

Dr. Tewarie: When I hear Members on the second row of the other side speak on things like housing and how they put people first, I am appalled because that is the Government which, when it was in office, people in the Opposition, including the Member for St. Augustine, had to go to rescue individuals whose property was being violated with the force of arms in this country. *[Interruption]* Mr. Speaker, I would like to continue my presentation

As I indicated before, regularization is taking place in a number of areas throughout the country and those can be itemized. The policy under which the regularization is taking place does exist. I have the document in my hand, provided by the Ministry and in many areas what is happening is that the land is being identified—

Mr. Manning: Mr. Speaker, would the Member be prepared to lay the document on the table and therefore make it available to us all?

Dr. Tewarie: I indicated that this is the formal responsibility of the Minister of Settlements and if she wishes to lay it before the House it is possible that it could be laid. Also, it is a public document. I think this document has been given out in almost every squatter community in which they have gone to explain the policy to the people.

Mr. Valley: Mr. Speaker, if that is so, I wonder whether you could ask the Minister to make it available to parliamentarians.

Mr. Shand: Mr. Speaker, can the Minister tell us whether this policy refers to all squatters or just residential squatters?

Dr. Tewarie: The whole policy is to deal with settling people in homes, so obviously, you are talking about residential squatters.

Mr. Shand: Therefore, it does not take care of agricultural squatters.

Dr. Tewarie: No, it is not addressed in this document.

Mr. Shand: So the problems with forest fires still remain.

Dr. Tewarie: The issue of agricultural squatting is being dealt with under the Ministry of Food Production and that is why the document to which we referred—the whole comprehensive document before the National Planning Commission—these things are very complex things. They often overlap. They have policy implications of a broader nature and that is why one encourages consultation. It is basic misunderstanding of the whole process of government that has often caused us a lot of unnecessary pain and problem. They spent 30 years in government and understood nothing about government. Their entire approach to government was centralization and over-centralization; the ownership of the resources of Trinidad and Tobago they used as their personal real estate and a psychology of plunder that led to corruption in Trinidad and Tobago.

3.35 p.m.

When I was General Secretary of the party, which is the Government of this country—they are getting hot under the collar because they see the gap widening; that is what is happening to them—and I did not occupy a ministerial position, I was paid by the party. *[Interruption]* By the party! When I became Minister without portfolio, I was also Leader of the House—I held an office in the Office

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[HON. B. TEWARIE]

of the Prime Minister—and would be assigned things from time to time—I received salary as a Cabinet Minister, and that salary only.

There are Members in this House at the present time who receive three or four salaries and there are people who are Members here, who you cannot say what the source of their salary is. *[Interruption]* Mr. Speaker, I do not want them to interfere with me. *[Interruption]* I was Minister without portfolio, a Cabinet Minister and I was paid a salary of a Cabinet Minister. I continue to do party work today, as Minister of Industry, Enterprise and Tourism without having a responsibility for it.

Mr. Robinson: Mr. Speaker, again, may I say that is the Prime Minister's responsibility. The Prime Minister was satisfied that the Minister was performing his duties and was paid as a Minister only and not as General Secretary.

Dr. Tewarie: Mr. Speaker, if I proceed in this debate, the crosstalk is only going to intensify and the reason is very simple. The issue of corruption in this country which has emerged as a major issue following the findings by a Canadian court, has made the people on that side extremely jumpy; and anytime you get up to speak and they sense some kind of political approach to your presentation, they are going to get up and intervene and interfere in that manner in order to prevent the trend of thought.

This is the problem, because that has emerged as the central issue. The central issue is, if you have had a government for 30 years that you suspected of corruption but could never find corrupt, and you have now succeeded as a country in removing that from your neck as a yoke, and you find after they have gone that they were in fact corrupt; are you going to put that government back into power? That is the central issue.

There were other matters I was going to deal with. I was going to continue with the presentation. I wanted to respond to the Member for St. Ann's West but I feel that is the central issue. I have identified that issue and I will sit at this point.

Mrs. Muriel Donawa-McDavidson (Laventille): Mr. Speaker, I would simply like, for the record, to state—and I think I am responding to the comment made by the honourable Member for Caroni East—the question of regularization of squatters has been an exercise undertaken by the Government of the People's National Movement over time. Many of these problems were addressed as a result of the Prime Minister, then, the late hon. Dr. Eric Eustace Williams, the master of politics in this country and the Caribbean. Based on the “Meet the People’s

Tour”—[*Interruption*] The leader will support that point also. Action was initiated, primarily on the basis of participation and involvement of the people themselves in the area, operating on the village councils at that time.

It is so unfortunate that the last speaker, in his presentation, took the time to make the point that this particular action took place in 1986. But the Government over time, as I indicated before, worked on squatter regularization; prepared a law in Trinidad and Tobago for this action. The people themselves took initiatives by paying sums of money for their particular project. If, however, a new government comes into power, what is so difficult in allowing some sort of recognition to be paid to what was done before and continuing the process of the squatter regularization?

I simply want to point out that in the great efforts—anything done in haste is not always the best thing. I myself have attended meetings of the squatter regularization. The hon. Member made reference to a document. In spite of discussions, there are people who do not quite understand the implications of what the Government is instituting. It would mean, in my view—

Miss Nicholson: On a point of order. Mr. Speaker, I would like the hon. Member to point out who “people” do not understand.

Mrs. Donawa-McDavidson: Mr. Speaker, I can make reference to the squatters in my own constituency. I have been present and I have listened. After the meeting, I was approached for clarification on the matters raised. My contribution on that occasion was that it was necessary to find some legal assistance and make it available for the people who are involved so that they will clearly understand what they are being told. I am confident that the hon. Member for Tobago West would also have had that kind of experience.

I would, however, like to point out that in that effort to rush, attention must be paid to the manner in which some of the roads are being cut. I make reference to the areas in my own constituency where, in one instance, the tractor went through a piece of land that was privately owned. I urge that some sort of supervision be made. Maybe I can go and show you.

Miss Nicholson: On a point of order. Mr. Speaker, I believe the hon. Member is speaking about self-help. She must be very distinct and clear and do not mislead the House. I am very clear on what is happening on every programme.

Mrs. Donawa-McDavidson: Mr. Speaker, I am not talking about self-help at this point. What I am saying is that I was on the spot. I was called from my home by squatters saying that—it was a Sunday morning not a workday—a tractor had gone through the land. *[Interruption]*

What is all of that for? Why do you not just listen and go and find out? I am saying, it may not be your responsibility or your Ministry doing it; it may not even be the Ministry of Works, but I am pointing this out so that supervision can be made in the area lest the problems become over-exaggerated.

In reference to the point made by the hon. Member for St. Ann's West, on the question of what will follow after the rains fall in Trinidad and Tobago, this is the point I would sincerely like to make. My greater concern is education, repeating and consulting and to ensure that more and more people do not put themselves into greater positions if the squatting continues.

3.45 p.m.

It has also been drawn to my attention in that particular constituency, that some of the squatters are still on private lands and that there are problems. I am repeating, one, that the squatters and the parliamentarians understand clearly what is taking place; that in the efforts of consultation, it continues and that legal representation be made available so that the squatters themselves will understand the implications of what they are getting into. I, for one, I must have the most squatters in Trinidad and Tobago and I will sincerely want the effort of regularization of the squatters to continue and hope that this Parliament—I sometimes wish there is no election year.

This is my contribution and I sincerely hope that the Minister concerned will take me very seriously.

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

The Minister of Works, Infrastructure and Decentralization (Dr. The Hon. Carson Charles): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise to make a brief contribution to this debate because of the importance of the issue being debated. I want to begin by saying that I am very happy that the matter was raised in this private motion, because it gives an opportunity to highlight the issue.

In fact, a moment ago, I note that the Member for Laventille seemed to have supported the programme being undertaken by the Government and spearheaded by the hon. Member for Tobago West and Minister of Settlements and Public Utilities. I agree with her that one should acknowledge the work done prior to our Government in dealing with squatters. I do not want to be harsh this afternoon

in my references to those who served before us. I think it is unfortunate that the motion was put this way and we had to propose an amendment. I do not think the mover of the motion, if he had really studied the issue could seriously call upon us to take steps immediately, to implement the provisions of the Regularization of Tenure (State Lands) Act No. 20 of 1986 because implementing that will not solve our problem, which is why I think the Member for Laventille recognized the work of the Government in seeking another approach.

I want to indicate to the Member for Diego Martin Central—I will get into it although my contribution is brief—that he may be quite mistaken in thinking that because we are proceeding to deal with the large problem of squatting under a different policy to the one which the party he represented put in place before, that we are in any way infringing even existing legislation, because legislation on the books does not prevent the Government from dealing with the overall squatting problem. It simply does not enhance it. It does not allow us to proceed in a comprehensive way, the way we would like to proceed. It deals with an individualistic approach to squatting. In other words, an individual who has been squatting for some time can come to the owner, the Government or private owner and seek to get title to the land. The approach which we are seeking to implement is one in which the entire community which is squatting is regularized and people have an opportunity to have land tenure and to build their homes.

I think as the Minister of Works, I ought to point out to the House that the problem of squatting provides some of the most serious challenges to our attempts to deal with problems such as preservation of the land resources; avoiding flooding; protecting the rights-of-way of our roads; protecting our infrastructure, in which so much money has been invested over the years. Therefore, it is the most serious of problems. As a Member of Parliament, I represent the constituency of St. Joseph and, in fact, last night I was at a meeting in the community—which I noticed some of my colleagues on the other side like to visit very much. That is the Bamboo Grove Village No. 3. I visited one of my party branches there last night. I would like to remind them that almost 100 per cent of the residents there have applied, filled out all the forms and done all that is necessary to ensure that they are part of the Government's Squatter Regularization Programme in that area. I am sure there are UNC supporters albeit a minority in Bamboo Village No. 3 and I am sure there are a few PNM supporters there too. The PNM does not normally deal with areas like Bamboo Village No. 3.

Regularization of Tenure (State Lands)
[HON. C. CHARLES]

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I do not want to be harsh this afternoon. I do not really want to remind the House about the residents of Bamboo Village No. 3 having to march to Port of Spain with placards to prevent the total destruction and tractoring down of the lands they occupied, and the shacks which they had under the Government of the People's National Movement. I do not want to get into that so do not raise the issue with me. I do not want to get into the history of the PNM with squatters. There is little they can be proud of in dealing with squatters. As I said, they have made some efforts over the years and we acknowledge the successes which they had. The fact of the matter is, it is only now that we are beginning to deal with the problem in a comprehensive way. It is only now that squatters do not expect that in the night, people are going to arrive at their homes with guns to put them out of their houses; break down their shacks and throw their property in the streets. This thing about caring government and all that nonsense!

The point I am really getting at is that the problem of squatting can be illustrated by that community of Bamboo Village No. 3. *[Interruption]* Let us treat Parliament seriously. Can we treat Parliament seriously this afternoon? The problem of squatting can be illustrated by the community of Bamboo Grove Village No. 3. As I said in my constituency, it is bounded on two sides by two highways, the Churchill Roosevelt Highway and the Uriah Butler Highway. You build highways, as they are called, above the level of the surrounding ground. When you build a highway, naturally, it tends to exacerbate flooding problems in surrounding territory unless you do your drainage properly.

On the other two sides, it is bounded by two rivers, the Caroni River and the St. Joseph River. Under normal circumstances, you would not want people going to set up residence in an area which is bounded by two rivers and two highways because the problem of flooding is bound to be difficult to solve. The problem of flooding there can only be solved by pumping water out of the community into the Caroni River. For anyone who travels in that area, as they go East they would note that our very hard-working Drainage Division is right now undertaking the widening and dredging of the Caroni River past that area going east which will allow for the abatement of flooding in such communities as Bamboo No. 2, Bamboo No. 3, St. Augustine.

3.55 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, you would not normally want people to live in that area. But we know the history of the country and the problems of land-ownership and, therefore, ordinary poor people over the years have taken up residence wherever they could find a piece of land, and they have been allowed over the years to take

up residence in such numbers that the only solution now to the problem is to regularize. The solution is not to pass a piece of legislation which simply allows each person, an individual who is enterprising enough who has support, legal advice, maybe a lawyer on his own, to come to the state and to try to get the land.

The state is in such a powerful position under the existing legislation, that it can frustrate the individual because the Act allows the person to get the land, subject to the Town and Country Planning Division, the Highways Division, and all the other authorities agreeing. Do you think the Highways Division on its own is going to agree that the people in Bamboo Village No. 3 be allowed to settle there? On their own, they will not, because where will they provide access? The Highways Division had quite a problem in providing access for them, because you do not normally allow people to get access directly onto a highway, worse yet at a major intersection like that, the Uriah Butler Highway and the Churchill Roosevelt Highway. And the cost of getting access via overpass—it really is not overpass but you have to have a large merging distance and so forth—or going through the community of Bamboo Village No. 2, is quite high. So the Highways Division, if this matter came before it under the existing legislation, will say, “No, we cannot allow access directly onto the highways”. Therefore, even though the law is there and you come as an individual and say, “I have been there 20 years”, you cannot get the land.

That is what the existing legislation does. That is why it is unworkable. It is individualistic, and it allows the agencies of Government to frustrate all the individuals who want to get land there. That is the reason we have to repeal and replace with legislation which provides for a community approach so that the community of Bamboo Village No. 3, the entire community, will be regularized. As I said, they have already applied, despite all of the attempts to oppose the programmes of Government, despite all the politics. While some of them will say, “yes, we would like to see this government or that government in power,” almost all of them have signed up because they have sense. They know that they would like to have the lands and that under the programme of this Government, they are going to have access to the lands.

Mr. Manning: I wonder if the Minister would be kind enough to let us know how many of them, what percentage of them, have actually paid the \$1,000 down.

Dr. Charles: I do not know what figure has paid the \$1,000; I have not asked that. It depends on the stage at which they have reached. These are poor people, you know.

Mr. Valley: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would just like to ask one question also. I wonder whether the Minister gave these people a choice between the existing legislation and the new one so as to determine which one they prefer, or is it simply a question of their wanting their land?

Dr. Charles: I do not know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if the hon. Member understands what I said. In order to answer that question, may I repeat? I took the specific example of Bamboo Village No. 3, and I said they are nestled between two highways and two rivers. Under the existing legislation, if an individual there applies for the land, it will be granted to him, subject to agreement by the various authorities—WASA and T&TEC, Town and Country and the Highways Division. I took one example and I said, the Highways Division on their own, without political intervention, will not agree because they will not want people living in that area. They will not provide access directly onto a highway. So an individual there trying to get the land under the existing legislation will be frustrated by all the authorities of Government. Therefore, it cannot work. So there is no choice between this legislation and the one we are going to put in place.

Mr. Sudama: Could I ask the hon. Minister a question? If he is saying that under the present legislation, the Highways Division would not agree to provide access simply because applications will be made on an individual basis, when they are made on a community basis, will that make the difference as to whether the Ministry responsible for highways will agree—if it is made on a community basis as against the individual basis? Where is the technical differential? This is the point I want to address.

Dr. Charles: Mr. Deputy Speaker, because we decided that this community would be regularized, a comprehensive programme is to be put in place to provide the necessary infrastructure. As far as access is concerned, the programme which is funded by the IADB will include the construction of appropriate access. I said it is expensive to provide proper access through Bamboo Village No. 2 all the way up; it is expensive. An individual obviously cannot meet that. An individual has to apply under the current conditions. But as a programme of the Government, especially with the funding support, proper access will be constructed. *[Interruption]* That access would not be appropriate and will not be approved, as I understand it, by the Highways Division for the community. *[Interruption]* I do not know when it was done for San Juan. I am repeating what my understanding is. I said without intervention of the Government or political authorities.

I am repeating—will you just hold a moment.

Mr. Ramnath: I just want to make a technical point. I am an engineer and I am entitled to that. I am saying, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is an approved entrance and exit from Bamboo Village No. 2 to the Uriah Butler Highway. It exists at the moment. It was built as part of the construction or the expansion of the Uriah Butler Highway and, at the moment, traffic can enter into Bamboo and can leave Bamboo and can even cross the highway and enter into the other Bamboo, so I do not understand what the Minister is saying. Why will they not approve applications having regard to the fact that there is already access?

Dr. Charles: I said, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am not the Director of Highways. I am indicating once again to the Parliament that under the current legislation, where it is up to the individual to apply, but where it is subject to the agreement of the various institutions or authorities of the Government, the individual can be frustrated by the various authorities of Government. That is what I indicated. I am saying that the Government's programme is such that it will put in place for the community, the infrastructural support to the standards required by the various authorities of Government. More than that, as I understand, any work done in the community to assist in this upgrading, whether on a self-help basis or by private individuals or by institutions of Government, reduces the amount of work which has to be done by the Ministry of Settlements and Public Utilities in its Squatter Regularization Programme, once it is in accordance with the plans. This will reduce the burden that will eventually be transferred onto those persons who want to get land. So it allows for development incrementally; it allows for the self-help approach.

While I am on that point, I should indicate, although I do not know the exact location, it is quite possible that the problem to which the Member for Laventille referred might have been caused by self-help, because we have those problems with self-help, people not knowing exactly the ownership of lands and getting confused, and so forth. It is possible. We can always check that. But the Squatter Regularization Programme has not yet started its physical works. That is why the Minister could have got up and said that it is not the squatter regularization programme doing it. So I hope I have clarified that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the wider problem is such that in order to tackle housing in the country as part of settlements, it is essential that we tackle squatter regularization, because the sheer number of people involved in housing as squatters at the present time, is so great that if one were to start constructing

[HON. C. CHARLES]

houses for them or developing new land for them to live on, you just cannot come to terms with the problem. There are just too many people. Therefore, an important component of housing policy and of settlements policy has become, under this administration, the Squatter Regularization Programme.

I heard the officials speak about it, excellent officials working with the Minister of Settlements and Public Utilities in the Squatter Regularization Unit. They came and gave us a little talk in the community about it. In fact, they also went to the National Planning Commission and gave a presentation. It is a far-reaching programme that will take very many years to be addressed, even on state lands. It is a programme which one has to expect a decade or a couple decades of attention to really come to terms with it. I cannot remember the overall time-frame they gave because of the sheer numbers involved and the amount of work required. It is voluntary. So that the community has to be convinced and the community has to apply. That is why I said in Bamboo Village No. 3, of course, they understand what is happening, they are sensible people, they applied. But unfortunately, in one of the communities they did not. Or they applied and they changed their minds, and I think they are now learning that they made a big mistake—that is the community in Diego Martin, is it?

Miss Charles: Yes.

Mr. Ramnath: While you are on this topic, can you kindly indicate whether regularization of state enterprises land, particularly Caroni, will proceed simultaneously or whether the same authority that is pursuing regularization on state lands will take over that responsibility for regularizing squatting on Caroni lands? Because it is a burning question in constituencies which we represent. What kind of timeframe are we talking about in terms of Caroni's land?

Dr. Charles: I do not have the answers to those questions because they failed under other portfolios, but my understanding is that the programme itself will be conducted jointly, as a joint programme, between the appropriate Ministry and Caroni Limited. But the time-frame, I cannot answer that offhand.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, since I intend to be brief, I will just move quickly on to my other points. One is that the overall problems of flood control, flood relief, of drainage, in particular, can only be tackled in the context of management of the land resources because not only do people squat, taking control of territory, but people who have their own homes, their own lands, squat in terms of filling up water courses, blocking paths and roadways and then they wonder why they have

a flooding problem afterwards. I have travelled to some parts of Trinidad and it is amazing to see the way in which people have simply blocked up the water courses, taken charge of lands that are not theirs, to extend their properties, and so forth.

Mr. Sudama: Could the Minister give way? Would the Minister indicate whether his Ministry has any power to deal with situations where people are illegally blocking water courses and causing drainage problems? What has his Ministry done over the last four-and-a-half years in which he has been the Minister responsible to enforce any rules, regulations or legislation in force? What has his Ministry done?

Dr. Charles: As I said, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I knew the Member for Oropouche would get up because his own constituency is very much affected by that problem. I am happy that he appreciates that, in fact, part of the problem is this behaviour, the attitude of blocking water courses, grabbing things on your own. The Ministry has the power, Government has the power, to move in and clear the water courses, and it can of course move in and enter into fights with the community to clear the water courses. There are situations in which people go with the equipment to clear a water course and they are confronted by cutlasses. Now, do we move our own fellows in with cutlasses or guns to tackle them? We have taken the approach of talking with the residents. In fact, I have often appealed to the Member himself. I said, "If you have the full support of your community, if you are such a community leader, why can you not get your community force, your community voice, to assist us in dealing with some of these intransigent individuals?"

Mr. Sudama: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I just want to correct the Minister. Of course, you may have a community in which 95 per cent of the people agree on a certain course of action, and there are five recalcitrant people who will block the implementation of any such improvement measure. In the case of the recalcitrant, that is why you have laws and that is why you implement laws. You are supposed to. Any government worth its salt will take that course of action. You co-operate with those who want to co-operate, and you apply sanctions to those who do not want to co-operate. But they are incapable of doing anything, either getting the co-operation of people or applying sanctions. A totally paralytic Government is what we have in office.

4.10 p.m.

Dr. Charles: I am really happy to have brought the debate on course. I think we are now debating the proper topic. I do agree with the Member that there are very serious problems with respect to these people who block water courses. Sometimes the community is not willing to be vociferous or to express the support—

Mr. Humphrey: Would the hon. Member answer a question?

Dr. Charles: Let me have a chance to answer one question at a time. There are cases in which we have acquired strips of land, for example, along water courses, because, sometimes, the problem is also ownership of the surrounding lands. If you own just the water courses, how do you get to them? So we have had to acquire strips of land as well.

Mr. Humphrey: Mr. Deputy Speaker, would the hon. Minister indicate to this House whether in January, 1987, with the national clean-up campaign, the citizens of this country did not rally to assist the Government in achieving the clearing of water courses and the cleaning of the environment generally, and what happened to that great spirit of “one love” and unity thereafter?

Dr. Charles: Mr. Deputy Speaker, yes, in 1987 there was much assistance by residents in cleaning up water courses and assisting us generally in our works. That is a fact. To the extent that one has good will, support and so forth one would get assistance. To the extent that you have warfare within the community, to that extent you would have difficulties. That is a fact. Squatters can also be found on private lands. I am still on residential squatters. On private lands the problem is, I believe, much more difficult.

I think that the hon. Minister of Settlements and Public Utilities was successful in completing a major project recently. I was very sad when I saw the presentation in the media after the Minister was able to complete that work in the community of Rock City. I do not want to comment on that except to say that the Rock City example is the example that has to be followed on private lands where entire communities are squatting. In my constituency, on one part you have people squatting on state lands, and on another part you have people squatting on private lands. As a matter of fact, in the areas like Champ Fleurs people are not squatting, they are tenants on private lands, but the owners are not interested because the money they collect for tenancy is next to nothing. The owner cannot be expected to really invest his own money in developing the infrastructure when

he gets next to nothing from the people who are renting. He cannot put them out because there are thousands of them and they have been there for a long time.

Therefore, he appeals to the Government and they appeal to the Government as well, to develop the infrastructure there. But how much can the Government achieve? With self-help and all these other projects, there is only so much you can achieve. Therefore, it is an advantage if the residents are able to acquire the lands by organizing themselves into co-operatives or whatever, and purchasing those lands. In that situation the Government will have less difficulty in investing its resources and improving the communities because it would not be spending money just for the benefit of the private owner so his land value goes up; it will be the entire community owning the land. So not only in the cases of squatting on private lands, but even where the lands are tenanted and rentals are low, even in those cases, it is an advantage to follow the Rock City model.

I think the Minister of Settlements and Public Utilities should be congratulated for the excellent work which was done with Rock City, because it takes work with people to convince them that they should buy the land in the first place, to convince them that they can get together and organize themselves. Although the people themselves are the ones who eventually do it, you have to convince them, work with them, have patience with them, facilitate them, provide legal support, contacts with the financial institutions so that they can eventually succeed.

But again, not to prolong the matter very much, I will go on to the agricultural squatting situation. With respect to agricultural squatters either on state lands or on private lands, the problems are different. On private lands, of course, it is more a matter of enforcement, because if you are doing agriculture on a man's land, then there is a limit to what the state can do. If you are on state lands, especially where you have large numbers of people squatting on state lands in agriculture, the Government cannot simply just throw them off. In fact, the Government has a policy, as was the case before us, of paying for crop damage, in any event.

We recently completed a major work. The Minister of Food Production and Marine Exploitation, I believe, along with other Ministers who formed a committee—settlements, planning and so forth—completed their work following the consultations which were held on agricultural squatting. I understand that a document is now ready for us so that the Cabinet can take a policy position on that, because to deal with agricultural squatting, you will have to deal with the entire matter of agricultural land. That is where the matter becomes very, very

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contentious and difficult. So we could not really handle it in a short time. We had to go through all this process of consultation, of a Cabinet committee meeting, and eventually coming up with a report which the Cabinet can look at and, hopefully, will be in a position to agree to allow us to tackle the matter of agricultural lands, both squatting and allocation of state lands, to give the agricultural sector the necessary boost which is requires.

Mr. Shand: Could the Minister say whether the draft policy for agricultural squatting is now about to be adopted by Cabinet?

Dr. Charles: A policy which includes the problem of agricultural squatting, as well as land in general. That document, I understand, has been completed by the ministerial sub-committee. I have not seen it but I expect to see it soon.

Mr. Shand: Is the Minister aware that an IADB team is currently studying this whole question of land tenure and squatting, and will not be reporting before next year?

Dr. Charles: I do not know, but if the Government establishes a ministerial committee, anybody could study whatever they want. The ministerial committee has a responsibility to consult with the population of the country and to make proposals to the Government, which is what I expect they are now doing. When we see the proposals we will know what to do with it. As I said, I hope that it would have been comprehensive enough and carefully done so that the Government could adopt a policy to deal with this important matter.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I just wanted to touch these various issues to highlight the importance of the matter before us. I hope that hon. Members are now aware, if they were not before, that it is not that we are not interested in the problem; it is because we see that the legislation on the books does not address the problem in the way we think would be most effective. That is the reason we have moved to change the policy and, therefore, we have to change the legislation. That is the reason we cannot support the motion and why we support the amendment to the motion.

Thank you very much.

4.20 p.m.

Mr. Trevor Sudama (Oropouche): First of all, I want to preface what I am going to say here this afternoon by commenting on the fact that this has probably been the longest debate in the history of the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago.

This motion began on private Members' day in January, 1991. Today is the sixth sitting of Private Members' day in this year, 1991, and we are in the process of winding up this debate. Now, there is a reason for this. The last motion I introduced on Private Members' day in this House had to do with asking this House to recommend to the Government that it initiates truth-in-lending legislation in Trinidad and Tobago, in order to alleviate some of the disadvantages which are suffered by borrowers when they confront financial institutions in borrowing transactions, a very significant motion in my view and on which the other Members on that side did not find it fit to speak at length.

That motion was passed in two sittings. It was introduced in November, passed in December and up to today, six months have elapsed and we are seeing no signs in truth-in-lending legislation. The point I am trying to make is that the motion was dispatched by this House with great expedition. Of course, truth-in-lending legislation has to do with treading on the toes of financial institutions of this country. This Government being in the back pockets of big business and the financial institutions will be extremely wary of bringing that kind of legislation into this House because the true rulers of Trinidad and Tobago are not they who sit on the opposite benches. The true rulers of Trinidad and Tobago reside elsewhere and, therefore, no truth-in-lending legislation is going to come to this House under that regime. Of that, we can be sure.

I wanted to make the comparison that here we have a very significant motion being dispatched in two months of debate. While the regularization of squatters motion is also very important, we are today in the sixth day of debate. That has been facilitated by a combination of filibustering on the other side and early adjournment of the House on Private Members' day, and in that process the Member for St. Ann's West was accommodated. I am happy in one sense that the filibuster took place otherwise we would not have had the fine contribution, the fine exposé to which we have listened here this afternoon from the Member for St. Ann's West, who has now brought to light in this country his own experiences as a Member of Government, his own marginalization. Because when we told them so in 1988, they all scoffed at the idea that we were, as Ministers, marginalized and put aside and made powerless in the Government. Here we have the Member for St. Ann's West now coming and corroborating what we were saying in 1988 onwards and the pretext of the dismissal from the Government.

All sorts of pretext and all sorts of propaganda were used to justify our expulsion from the party and from the Government. You had an article headed

[MR. SUDAMA]

"Indianization of the Government after a few months in office of the NAR", a planted article; and "ULF grab for power". All these things were proceeding as a pretext to expel us from the Government and the party so that the Prime Minister and his Cabinet colleagues would have free rein in governing. Fine, that is his prerogative. I think the next elections will determine how right or how wrong that decision was.

I want to come back to this point. The Leader of Government Business who has been the Machiavellian genius behind this filibuster and this early adjournment is the one who is afraid—he and his colleagues—to face the next motion that I have on the agenda for discussion on Private Members' day and that is, to declare Indian Arrival Day a public holiday in Trinidad and Tobago. They are scared, fearful. I want to see what their position would be on that motion. They would wish that this House is prorogued before that motion ever comes for debate because it will show them up for their hypocrisy. That is why you have elongated debate, a protracted debate on this motion. I particularly want to hear the historical exposition of the Member for Nariva who suddenly discovered Indian Arrival Day running down to Edinburgh Hindu temple to give this course on Indian Arrival Day. When the motion comes up for debate, I want to see how he will vote; the hypocrisy would be exposed. The Member for Chaguanas and the Member for Caroni East, I will see how they will vote when the motion comes up [*Interruption*] I am telling you why you protracted this debate. This is what I am trying to explain to this House.

Dr. Tewarie: Mr. Deputy Speaker, if the hon. Member would give way. The reason the debate took so long is that many persons spoke. I have a list of all the persons who spoke for six weeks.

Mr. Sudama: I am telling you a lot of that was filibuster engineered by you. An early adjournment on Private Members' day in order not to have this motion completed.

Dr. Tewarie: It is my business as Leader of the House to engineer the business of the House.

Mr. Sudama: I will repeat that. It was his business as Leader of the House to engineer the business of this House as he has engineered the business of the NAR party and the Government in having our expulsion.

Dr. Tewarie: Do not give me more skills than I already have.

Mr. Sudama: He is one of the engineers of our expulsion because he is a Machiavellian engineer. Nothing short of that.

Dr. Tewarie: I will bring in Suruj for the Indian Arrival Day debate.

Mr. Sudama: To do what? I did not bring Suruj into the debate so if he wants to keep the debate high, leave Surujrattan out of the debate.

All I was trying to say is that the business of this House should not be frustrated in the manner it has been frustrated. I am sure this debate, even if all the Members had spoken on it, or who wish to speak on it and make a useful contribution, would not have lasted more than two or three sittings. What happened is that you had a manipulation of the business of this House and which exposed the evasiveness of the Members on the other side, especially that Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Tewarie: Mr. Deputy Speaker, anything that is done in this House, is done with the consent of the Members of the House. This is part of the parliamentary procedure and I do not understand how the Member could be making these kinds of accusations and these unnecessary points. We debated this thing. The list is here, three or four people on each day.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The sitting is suspended until 5.00 p.m.

4.30 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.10 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Mr. Sudama: I do not intend to be extremely long in winding up this debate but I must emphasize that this motion was brought to this House in order for us to deal with a very important issue which has to do with the housing of the population of Trinidad and Tobago, which has to do with the access to land in which they can utilize one of their basic needs; and which has to do with the situation of a significant group in the population who cannot afford land at the going market prices and, therefore, have been forced to be put in a situation where they have to squat. In other words, where they have got to occupy land without the permission of the legal owners of those lands.

It appears to me, that Members of the Government are not sensitive to the fact that people squat not because they wish to squat. People squat out of necessity because they cannot afford to purchase lands at the going prices. The Minister, in her contribution, spoke about the right to be born being a right to have a home.

Regularization of Tenure (State Lands)

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[MR. SUDAMA]

The right to be born, giving you the right to have a home. Of course, if you do not have the wherewithal to purchase that right to have a home, then that is an illusory right. That is a right which is only on paper. The Government and the Minister do not seem to understand the realistic problem that we face.

As I said, if I had my way, I would have wound up this debate quite a long time ago, but that was not within my power to do so. Today I would not go into the excesses of the Minister of Settlements and Public Utilities, the Member for Tobago West. I would not use such terms as “undergrounders”, “degraders” and so forth. I excuse her excesses because in this Parliament, we have to be tolerant of language which is not considered parliamentary language. I am not one to look at these minor things, but I do hope in due course of time she would mend her ways and will say the same thing that she wishes to say, in parliamentary language.

The first point I want to make about her contribution is that we still have had no unequivocal answer as to why this Minister of Settlements and her Government did not make any public announcement prior to my motion being brought to this House, that Act 20 of 1986 was going to be repealed. It gives you some indication of how this Government operates, a government that is not forthright with respect to what it is doing; that does not come and level with the public and that acts behind the scenes in order to implement their policies which they are not in the habit of making public and explicit.

They must answer the question: Why is it that in a letter to a private individual, dated March 8, 1990, the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Settlements and Public Utilities, could make this disclosure that:

"I have to inform you that Cabinet, at its meeting held on August 10, 1989 agreed *inter alia* that the Regularization of Tenure (State Lands) Act 20 of 1986 be repealed..."

If you had that information on August 10, 1989, the question—

Miss Nicholson: Mr. Deputy Speaker, what he is talking about—and they have been pounding that all the time—I think I should bring some clarity to it. This is an association of land tenants and squatters that used to visit the Ministry on certain things. They asked certain questions and it was against that background that clarity was made to them. Note that. We are doing serious work and you know that.

Mr. Sudama: It has to do with the style of government. This is the point I am making. I am not disputing the right of the Government to repeal an Act or introduce another one. That is not the issue of dispute. The issue of dispute is that many people felt—and they felt they had some security under the Regularization of Tenure (State Lands) Act 1986—that their position could have been regularized under the provisions of that Act. They were of that opinion.

If you were going to repeal that Act, why did you not tell the public at large, and people who are squatting on state lands and so on, that a decision has been made to repeal the Act so that they would not be left in this state of false hope. That is the point I wish to make.

Miss Nicholson: Mr. Deputy Speaker, again I want to give a little clarity. I can remember in a discourse to the nation, on housing—I think it was on the television—we made that position very clear. This Minister was the person.

Mr. Sudama: Mr. Deputy Speaker, as far as I can recall, no such disclosure was made publicly, stating that this Act was going to be repealed and that the Government had another policy on settlements and housing on state lands. It is only when the Member for Oropouche brings a private motion to this House, that the Minister acknowledges that is the Government's decision.

What is also revealed is an utter contempt for this House; that while you have made that decision and while, for all intent and purposes you are pursuing another policy, which is in direct contravention to something which is in the statute books, she did not have the courtesy to come to this House and officially repeal the Act. That strikes at the very heart of parliamentary democracy in this country. You have existing legislation; you are not giving due recognition to that legislation but you would not come to this House and repeal that legislation in order to set the records straight as far as the parliamentary system is concerned.

Dr. Tewarie: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. The point that the Member is making is a non-point. The reason the legislation was not repealed is because when you repeal the legislation, you would want to put the legislation which you have in mind, which embraces your policy, on the table of the House for debate and finally to become Government policy. I indicated when I spoke that, in fact, the legislation was prepared and being reviewed by the Minister and the Ministry of Settlements.

Mr. Sudama: Mr. Deputy Speaker, perhaps they cannot appreciate this point, that if the Minister had gone to the nation and told them, "It is our intention

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to repeal this legislation and to put a new piece of legislation and a new policy in place". However, you did not do so until this debate in the House. Yet, this information is privy to a person in his private capacity but not to this House.

Dr. Tewarie: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the precise reason for that is because all the people who were affected—that is to say people who are actually squatting—had that information given to them directly.

5.20 p.m.

Mr. Sudama: What about this House that passed the law? This House passed Act No. 20 of 1986 Regularization of Tenure (State Lands) Act. Do you not think that this House has a right to know that this law passed in this House, has been repealed in effect and *de facto* repealed and you are operating as if this law does not exist at all? Ought not this House to know?

Miss Nicholson: On a point of order. The Act is not repealed and we are not acting as if the Act has been repealed. All the preparatory works are being done so that when the bill comes to the House and it is passed, all we have to do is just to give out deeds.

Mr. Sudama: All the preparatory work is being done as if this Act is not in effect. This is the point I am trying to make but I would not belabour that. That has not been satisfactorily answered and if you are going to be explicit with this House and the citizens of this country, I think that was the way to proceed. I believe the reason for not proceeding that way was the political repercussions of not proceeding in that way. What you want to do is to have people in a state of limbo so you can go with your propaganda and say, "Look here, the past government did not do this and did not do that but we are going to regularize your position."

We have been hearing this for a long time now. The Minister assumed her functions in February, 1988 as the Minister of Settlements and Public Utilities and shortly thereafter, I believe, she said that the Government is going to implement a new policy because it did not like the previous policy. From February, 1988 to the present time, no squatter on state land status has been effectively regularized as of this date. Now that is a fact. Therefore, it was taking all these years for a policy to be put in place for discussions to be held.

Miss Nicholson: On a point of order. By 1989 our policy was in place. We were in the field. The Member knows that we are doing a successful piece of work and I think that is the problem, the pressure that it is placing on them.

Mr. Sudama: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to inform this Member that when they had a document for consultation which was issued by the National Planning Commission in 1989, the decision to repeal Act No. 20 of 1986 was taken on August 10, 1989. They went to have a consultation on a new policy for agricultural development, land distribution and administration of squatting. On September 30, 1989 this Government did not have the courtesy to inform that consultation, that in fact this Act No. 20 of 1986 will be repealed. They were doing things in what we call cat-in-bag fashion. On September 30, 1989, more than one month after the decision was made to repeal Act No. 20 that information was not forthcoming to the consultation. Now we hear about a bill which is going to be brought, a policy which is going to be implemented and is going to deal with the matter on a community basis—in 1986 the Act focussed on an individual basis.

What is happening in the meantime is that while the grass is growing, the horse is starving. While the grass is growing, nobody's status has been regularized. More and more people are coming into the squatting population of Trinidad and Tobago and yet this long-awaited policy is still to be implemented.

The point I wish to make is that this Government, it seems to me, by delaying the implementation of this policy and by delaying the bringing to Parliament of this bill in the interim, is using the opportunity for political purposes to make propaganda, to try to get people to vote for them on the basis of their housing policy.

One of the most fundamental questions which this Government has refused to address is the question of cost to the squatters. When Act No. 20 of 1986 was introduced to this House, it was said at that time that the cost to regularize the status of the squatters would be in the vicinity of \$1,250 per lot. Many people felt that may have been a reasonable figure, within the means of those people who have been forced to squat, because those who squat are people who are very, very low-income people; some of them are unemployed so that their income is very limited.

I do not know whether the Government has indicated in any document wherever, that the cost to the squatter who is going to be regularized on state lands will be anything between \$15,000—\$25,000 because that is the cost which they are charging for the NHA lots which have been developed all over the country. I want to quote from a document.

Miss Nicholson: On a point of order. He must not confuse two sections of the programme. Again, the Member for Oropouche is misleading the House. If he is talking about squatter regularization, talk about squatter regularization. Do not mix it with the Sites and Services Programme.

Regularization of Tenure (State Lands)
[MISS NICHOLSON]

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Of course, we are giving a realistic charge, but what I would like to tell the Member is that the lands of the country belong to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. We will be doing infrastructural improvement on the lands, so they are not just paying. They are getting anything like a 60 per cent, or more than that, subsidy in the programme. He is being very unfair to us.

Mr. Sudama: The Member had an opportunity. If she wants she can wind up the debate.

They are so close to high-income people; they are supported by high-income people that they do not understand the difficulties of the low-income man in Trinidad and Tobago; the average rank-and-file masses and the capacity of the rank-and-file to meet certain financial obligations. They cannot understand that. When you sit in your air-conditioned offices and you hobnob only with a certain class in the society, how could you understand whether the squatter in Bamboo Settlement could afford land at \$15,000—\$20,000 per lot? You cannot because—again it is a cat-in-bag situation—nowhere have they indicated to the squatter what is going to be the final cost to him of being regularized on a piece of state land. *[Interruption]* What do they know?

They would not make a statement in Parliament; they would not make a statement in public. They control the media. Everyday you see them on television, six, seven, eight Ministers on the news at one time; they dominate the television and the press. They have their friends in big business, supportive; they have their journalist friends dominating the press and radio time. At no time could they go on those stations and tell the squatters what the land will cost them as a final settlement for regularization.

5.30 p.m.

Miss Nicholson: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. We are even doing better than that. We are going closer to the squatters. We meet them on a face-to-face basis. That is to tell you that he is not a representative. He does not even know what is going on around him.

Mr. Sudama: I meet them on a face-to-face basis as well. No squatter has told me you have indicated to them finally what this lot is going to cost them after the so-called upgrading of the infrastructure. But all I can go by, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is what costs are charged under the NHA Programme which is executed under the IDB loan contract.

If I were to quote from the *Trinidad Guardian* of Saturday, January 19, 1991, it states here—and again you see cat-in-bag:

"The average size of a lot is approximately 4,500 square feet. The average cost of a lot on most sites ranges between \$15,000 to \$25,000."

These are the approved NHA sites which are being funded by the IDB. These are the only kind of costs that we have to compare with. The reason I raise that here is because you have made no such public statement as to what the costs will be to squatters on state lands after they have been regularized, cat-in-bag. But what they do is go around trying to fool people by telling them, "Are you willing to pay"—I have a copy of this questionnaire here and I want to know the status of this questionnaire—"the \$1,000 down-payment to participate in the programme?" Now, I want to know if a squatter says, "Yes, I am willing to pay," is this a contractual document? "I am willing to pay. Yes, I am willing to pay." It does not say what the final cost will be, it does not even give an indication of what the remainder of the cost will be. It says, "Are you willing to pay the \$1,000..." and, of course, the squatter says, "Yes, I am willing to pay the \$1,000." What are his other obligations? What are his other financial obligations under this document? Is that the way for a Ministry, a Government to proceed, Mr. Deputy Speaker? They are trying to hoodwink the squatter population in this country.

Miss Nicholson: Again, he is misleading the House. As a man who was a former university lecturer, I think he would understand what social surveys are, and that is what that document deals with.

Mr. Sudama: I want to ask the Minister: Has she accepted on this basis any \$1,000 payment? Have people on this basis made a \$1,000 payment? If they have, it goes beyond a social survey. But that is the subterfuge with which we have to put up, with this Government. It goes beyond social survey. So you get them to agree, yes, \$1,000. They do not know what their other obligations are. So you entrap them into a programme and they come here and say, "Well, you know, the whole of Bamboo Settlement has signed up." They go and they threaten the people of Bamboo Settlement that, "If you do not sign up, you will not get a lot."

Dr. Charles: As the Member knows quite well, no one on this side threatened anybody in Bamboo Settlement. I do not know about that side.

Mr. Sudama: Well, I am going by the reports that I have had. It was subtle psychological threats against them, that, "If you do not agree to be part of this programme, you will be thrown out of the squatter settlement."

Miss Nicholson: On a point of order, that is grossly unfair to the Government. It is an untrue statement. He lives in Oropouche, goes up to Bamboo

and tries to undermine the programme. You see, he is against me when I use that word, but nobody in Bamboo Settlement was told that. The people in Bamboo Settlement love the programme and they love the Government for what we are doing for them.

Mr. Sudama: I hope that love will be expressed in a positive way, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In the not too distant future, I hope that love will be expressed in a positive way.

Now, she talks about cost, and I will tell you how they try to hoodwink. Here we are told the state is subsidizing the IDB programme by 50 per cent. The people are not really paying for the land; they are paying for the infrastructural and utility improvement. They are not paying for the land. So infrastructural and utility improvement is going to cost between \$15,000 and \$25,000 per lot.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we had envisaged a Settlements policy in the NAR Manifesto, it was on the assumption that people will get involved themselves in the upgrading of the infrastructural facilities to reduce the costs, to make the cost one which would have been affordable by the members of the community because people who squat, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are low-income people. Except that you want to tell this House that the squatters are perverse; that although they have reasonable incomes, they prefer to squat and to live in ramshackle buildings.

Miss Nicholson: On a point of order again. I am sorry that I have to be correcting the hon. Member so often. The people are given a lot of time in which to pay whatever funds they have to pay. They are clear on everything. You are coming here and misleading the House all the time, and I cannot sit here—over 20,000 people are associated with the programme.

Mr. Sudama: The question of time being given is not the issue here. I am talking about what it will cost them. They are very evasive on the question of final cost to the squatters because they want to dangle a carrot in front of the squatters in order to get their votes. That is the whole issue behind the thing. They want to dangle a carrot in front of the squatters without giving them an indication of final costs in order to get their votes. But to tell you how this deficient Government operates, \$15,000 to \$25,000 is not for the land; the land is free under the IDB programme; that is just for upgrading the squatters.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we in the Sou Sou Land were able to purchase land; we were able to do survey work; we were able to build roads; we were able to put in some earthen drainage; we were able to put in water-mains and so forth, and we

were able to sell a 5,000 square foot of land for \$4,500. This is why we thought that we would adopt the Sou Sou Land approach in order to minimize the cost to these very unfortunate low-income people. Yet the Government Minister comes here and is saying that the minimum cost, it appears to them, merely for the improvement of infrastructure—without looking at the cost of land—is between \$15,000 and \$25,000. You see, they do not understand, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that what is happening in this society is that people's incomes are falling. You are talking about the lowest income group. People's incomes are falling, prices are rising in this society, and out of that falling income and rising prices you want them to make savings of \$25,000 in order to pay for a plot of land.

I want to ask her a question: When the fellow agrees to pay \$1,000 as down-payment and he is not willing to pay anymore, what do you do with him? He is not capable of paying anymore. What do you do with him?

Miss Nicholson: We have a rental position.

Mr. Sudama: You have a rental position now. Why not tell him initially, "You have the option of a rental position, if you cannot afford it." If that is the case, that option of the rental position does not appear anywhere here in the survey.

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

Mr. Sudama: If they do not want debate, they do not want debate. But to get up every two minutes on a point of order, it is ludicrous, to say the least. You cannot take the jamming and that is your problem. You cannot take the jamming. Your Settlements policy has been totally ineffective. Your Settlements policy is not going to bring you any votes. It has been a policy of trying to fool people and promise them, but it has not delivered anything concrete or tangible. A right to be born is a right to have a home. When will these people have a home? When will they have, in fact, a secure home by deed of lease? When will that come about? After they vote for the NAR in the next election, will that come about then?

So that the point I am trying to emphasize, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is this: if they had followed the Sou Sou Land approach to the development of infrastructure on a community basis, then these lots would not have cost \$15,000 to \$25,000 for the improvement of infrastructure. They would have cost less and they would have been within the income means of the target population. That is the simple point I am trying to make. But you see, having come to Government on a manifesto which made promises, and proceeded to be guided by certain

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fundamental basic principles, immediately after, the Government, threw that manifesto out of the window and all the promises that were made in that manifesto and the mandate given by this population. This is why they find themselves in so much difficulty.

Dr. Tewarie: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. The Member is misleading the House. We did not throw any manifesto out the window. In fact, we adopted the manifesto as Government policy. The problem and the dilemma for him is that the manifesto is not a five-year document. That is his problem. He does not understand anything

Mr. Sudama: What is that, a hundred-year document?

Dr. Tewarie: It is a document of policy perspective.

Mr. Sudama: So that the critical issue in the Government's settlements policy and programme is the cost of those regularized lots to the squatters. That is the critical issue. The Government has failed abysmally and miserably in bringing an affordable cost to the squatter population in Trinidad and Tobago. That is the critical issue, and that will be dealt with on the hustings, in Bamboo and elsewhere.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, my friend from Point Fortin—you see, I do not want to make any comments—has just had a mishap and I do not want to be hard on him but, of course, he is going to have another mishap in a few months' time, and that is a political mishap that will confront him then. He knows fully well that he has just a few months here in this Parliament, and he knows fully well that he will not be returning to this Parliament as a Member for Point Fortin. That is as certain as the sun rises in the East. I am giving him that assurance here today, that he will not be returning here. You will not be returning here so you have a good time. You have a good time.

Now, I want to give the Minister of Settlements a certain indication of what is happening in respect of a settlement which is being done in my own constituency at Wellington Road, Debe.

Mr. Deputy 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. Deputy Speaker, I would not have needed all this time were it not for the constant interruptions from the other side. They cannot take the jamming. They cannot take the valid points which are being made on the question of cost. Let me tell her what is happening. She does not know what is happening in her own Ministry. Down in my own constituency, Wellington Road, Debe, yesterday the NHA officials visited there at a request which I made in a meeting with her. They visited. There were 105 lots prepared, and you know, it is only five people who have been able to pay 50 per cent of the cost, or more, on those lots. One hundred people out of 105 cannot even make the 50 per cent down-payment for the distribution of those lots, simply because they cannot afford, and she comes here to tell me that this is a great programme. This is what I have been told by the officials of the National Housing Authority. Is she telling me that her officials are giving out wrong information?

5.45 p.m.

In Debe they have advertized the lots at between \$3.00 and \$4.00. I took it at an average of \$3.50 per square foot. For a 5,000 lot, that will come up to \$17,500.00. Out of 105 persons who have applied, 100 of those cannot come up with \$8,750.00, and here you are coming to tell me what a great programme you have; what a great policy you have and people are so happy about it. Happy about what, not being able to afford the lots which the Minister is so propagandist about? They have not a leg on which to stand. When it comes to a settlements policy, this Government does not have a leg on which to stand. You will get beaten so badly in this next election, you will not even know. Here is the Minister telling me that her own officials are telling untruths when they say that only five persons, on the basis of the financial commitment, have qualified. This is what she is saying. One hundred out of 105 cannot pay. If they cannot pay, what is the point of your programme? To whom are you directing this? Are you directing it to the high income people of Trinidad and Tobago?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I just wanted to make some brief comments about the contributions of some of the Members on the other side. We have had the Minister of Planning and Mobilization who made a contribution on this debate. If that was not a filibuster, I do not know what it is. This Minister of Planning and Mobilization took over one hour to say that land reform legislation of 1981 was under review; that the Town and Country Planning Division processes were under review, and that new legislation on acquisition is to be brought to the House. He took over an hour to say that. That is all he said, and that was not really relevant

[MR. SUDAMA]

to the debate before us. But they had to make up time, so he was drafted into the programme to make up time.

The Minister of Food Production and Marine Exploitation who attempted to outline a policy for the Government—I do not know if he succeeded, because after listening to him, I really do not know what is the Government's policy on agricultural lands, state lands, squatting on state lands for agricultural purposes or squatting on state enterprise land. One never knows. He says it is a policy. What would happen to the people who are currently squatting on those lands? He did not have time or he did not make the effort to tell this House.

We have a situation where, if the Government was serious about regularizing the status of people on state lands, it could have started with Caroni (1975) Limited. Perhaps the Minister of Planning and Mobilization was very alarmed at certain actions taken by the cane farmers and which was perhaps long overdue. He does not know that a significant portion of the canes that are grown by cane farmers are grown on state lands for which they do not have official permission. In other words, a significant portion of cane-farming in this country is done by, what you might call, squatters on state lands. If he knew that, and if the Government was serious about regularizing squatting, then they would have gone ahead to see what they could have done about regularizing the status of these people. Because if their status is not regularized, and they do not have something to show as security, then their chances of getting finance will be very limited. But he does not know that; he is unaware because he deals at a certain level.

Mr. Dookeran: I thank the hon. Member for giving way. Perhaps by way of information I can let him know that there is a programme that is being jointly worked out by Caroni (1975) Limited and the National Housing Authority to deal with the entire issue of squatting in Caroni (1975) Limited.

During my contribution I made reference to that. As of now, the consultants have commenced the work. I assure the hon. Member that I am fully aware of the problem that he is raising. The difference between him and I is that I am doing something about it.

Mr. Sudama: I just wanted to know when he knew of that problem. Did he know about it when he assumed the position as Minister of Planning and Mobilization in charge of Caroni (1975) Limited, which was four and a half years ago? Has it just suddenly dawned upon him that there is a problem with respect to squatting on Caroni lands as it affects the growing of cane? So he has taken four and a half years to be aware of the problem. How long would it take him to

do something concrete about the problem? Yes, there are a significant number of squatters who are growing canes on lands belonging to Caroni (1975) Limited.

The other thing about which I am amazed is this Minister of Food Production and Marine Exploitation—he is not present—is very alarmed at the incidence of squatting on state lands for agricultural purposes. He says that the Government views squatting on state lands for agricultural purposes with great concern. While they are alarmed in one breath, they are very quick to claim that their agricultural policy is reaping returns because domestic production of agriculture is increasing. The only reason it is increasing is because people have to squat on state lands and other lands in order to find a piece of land to put into agricultural use. So you boast about agricultural production increasing on the one hand, and on the other hand you are very concerned about the squatting problem, simply because their policy for release of lands for agricultural purposes is one which has to be condemned. Of course, it will be condemned in due course. It was the same Minister of Planning and Mobilization, when the issue was put to him, and when seasonal work for the workers of Caroni (1975) Limited had to be cut—they say they were cutting costs and the proposal was put to them to allocate 800 acres; cut it up into half-acre blocks to facilitate 1,600 people employed by Caroni (1975) Limited so they can boost agricultural production and, in the process, make a livelihood for themselves—and his Government who blocked that proposal which came from Caroni (1975) Limited.

Mr. Dookeran: Would the hon. Member allow me to respond to that suggestion? I think there is also some lack of information. The Government had, in fact, agreed to a land production programme that would involve 8,000 acres of land to be utilized for the purposes of the diversification of the sugar-cane industry. With respect to the half-acre plots, there was no reason why that proposal, within the context of Caroni (1975) Limited, could not have been effected. The only issue here is the issue of title which was not agreed to because it had to be dealt with in the context of 8,000 acres. I think the hon. Member, really, does not have full information. I know they have said this on the platform and got away with it, but I did not think it was possible to allow him to get away with it in the Parliament.

Mr. Sudama: Here you have an immediate problem. People are being put out of work. Until they put their grand diversification policy into place you have the immediacy of food requirement for people, and you are putting a short-term measure into place to facilitate them. They cannot see their way to do that. You

come here to tell me about within the context of a policy of 8,000 acres and so on and so forth. When will that policy be implemented? They will never be able to say.

5.55 p.m.

Dr. Tewarie: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. The hon. Member is seeking to mislead the House and misinterpreting what the Member for Caroni said. The Minister pointed out that it was within the power and jurisdiction of Caroni (1975) Limited to effect that policy if they wished, notwithstanding the fact that you had to rationalize the economy.

Mr. Sudama: That is a total falsehood, a total misrepresentation that it is within the power and authority of Caroni (1975) Limited. Mr. Deputy Speaker, whatever Caroni Limited does with respect to land, it has to get the approval of the Minister, the Cabinet and Government and that can be verified by the former managing director of Caroni (1975) Limited. That is a fact of life. You all have frustrated him in his efforts in order to bring improvement into Caroni (1975) Limited. and now you are trying to hide behind a policy implementation proposal. But it is an immediate problem and it is a problem which came into effect last year and we are talking about giving people half-acre plots of land so that they could facilitate their livelihood in the latter half of last year. Last year has come and gone. You have increased the pauperization of the people who live in Caroni (1975) Limited. In your constituency, you did that last year and it is going to continue this year and you will not get away from that in the election campaign. You could jump high or low, you can do any amount of explanation you want to do, but you are not going to get away from that, and your Government is not going to get away from that fact. So to come here and to make misrepresentation about what you are doing with respect to regularization, you are not going to fool anybody.

We are told that the PNM policy was criticized; that the PNM policy emphasized only the provision of housing by the state. I am yet to understand what is the policy being emphasized by this Government because I thought that ultimately, what you wanted to ensure was that people do have homes. Even if you provide them with a lot of land—at a very expensive price—what is the policy of this Government with respect to the provision of homes for people? They have no policy because as far as they are concerned, it is the open market which will take care of the housing needs of this population, regardless of their income levels. That is their approach, that is the neo-liberalism which they have adopted; the Chamber of Commerce stance, and the IMF stance which they have brought into the housing system of Trinidad and Tobago.

The Member for Nariva is very concerned about the security of tenure afforded to tenants under the Agricultural Small Holdings Act. He said that security of tenure afforded to them acts as a disincentive. He would like land prices to be fully determined by market values. Whether you can afford those market values or not is not the concern of that Government but they would like that procedure to be put into place.

He made another statement which I found very amusing. He said that the total state lands of Trinidad and Tobago amounted to 5,126 square kilometres and this was the national patrimony which is to be preserved for the future. So I want to ask the Government certain questions: First of all, is the concern about national patrimony confined to state lands? Are they concerned about the national patrimony of Trinidad and Tobago in other spheres? They are busily putting policies and legislation into place to sell away the national patrimony of Trinidad and Tobago and yet when it comes to the question of the distribution of state lands, they are so concerned about the national patrimony of Trinidad and Tobago being preserved.

They said that so far they have released a total of 21,300 hectares of land which constitute 15 per cent of the total unforested land in this country. Do they realize that restricting the distribution of state lands is one of the reasons they are causing land prices in this country to be at a level which cannot be afforded? They do not realize that it is the restricted distribution of state lands to deserving people. I know they distribute state lands to many people who are not really interested in agriculture but who get state lands merely because the Government wants them to vote for political and patronage purposes.

I was also amazed by what the Minister said was his policy objective. The policy objective of the Government was to put in place a system to prevent degradation of land suitable for agricultural purposes. I would have taken that statement and taken it neutrally if the Minister could have pointed out one instance in their whole four and half year term of office in which the Government has put a system in place anywhere in Trinidad and Tobago to prevent the degradation of land suitable for agricultural purposes. If that is their policy objective, why do they not give us one single illustration of where that objective has been implemented?

I want to draw the attention of the House to the Oropouche Lagoon. When we came into Government very early in February, 1987, I took the Minister of Works, Infrastructure and Decentralization—and if they ever had a useless

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Minister in that whole Government it is the Minister of Works, Infrastructure and Decentralization. He is useless, thoroughly inefficient, of little use to this country. He made a tour in February, 1987, accompanied by the Member for St. Ann's East. There are others who toured; a host of officials toured. And while I had toured under the previous regime—which was also useless in terms of developing agriculture in this country because they had no concern for agriculture, and they believed that the people who are involved in agriculture were never their supporters so they never concerned themselves about agricultural development in this country. I took three Ministers on tour with a host of officials [*Interruption*] I want to wind up this debate today. I do not want another debate to proceed today, so I am going to take up my whole five minutes. The point I am trying to make is that I took them on a tour in February, 1987 early in the life of this Government, after all the promises we had made in 1986 which turned out to be false promises as far as they are concerned.

6.05 p.m.

We pointed out the problem, particularly with the intrusion of salt water into the Oropouche Lagoon and the devastation of thousands of acres in that lagoon. I pointed out to them what was required to prevent that intrusion of salt water and to prevent the spoilage of those thousand acres of land which were very fruitful agricultural land before they did the drainage scheme in the Oropouche Lagoon in 1963.

They came, like they always do, and like the past regime did—and this is why we always said that when we thought we had voted for change in 1986, what we really got was exchange, because their perspective and mentality is similar to what was under the previous regime, particularly as it pertains to agricultural development in Trinidad and Tobago. They came—the Member for St. Ann's East, who, as the Member for St. Ann's West rightly said, is a “gallery” man—made tours and “galleried”—the Member for St. Joseph, as I said, his utility is something in question as the Minister of Works, Infrastructure and Decentralization—and ignored the problem and here we are, that same Minister of Food Production who is responsible for doing drainage and reclamation schemes in the Oropouche Lagoon, comes today to tell this House that they have a policy to prevent degradation of lands suitable for agricultural purposes. They have a policy in their minds, not a concrete policy to bring concrete results to the people of Trinidad and Tobago and for those involved in agricultural production.

I do not want to go into the question of their state land distribution policy and to point out the uses of that policy, and in the process, how they ignored the

parliamentary representative. They distributed state lands in the constituency of Oropouche. I am the official representative of the constituency of Oropouche; they are going to Oropouche for an official state function; distribution of state lands; handing out of leases to farmers and they go surreptitiously in the night. He went with the Minister in the Ministry of Food Production—as if that will help him—to Suchit Trace, and distributed the leases, and made all sorts of outlandish promises to the farmers in Suchit Trace, Penal; promises which they have no hope in hell of delivering to those farmers there.

They ignored the fact that I am still the parliamentary representative for the constituency of Oropouche. I thought that the PNM was a bad administration—I still think so. I think that they have done things in Trinidad and Tobago which if they had done otherwise, we would not have been in this situation today. This is why we campaigned against them in 1986. But I can say that this administration and its style of government is far worse than the PNM.

The PNM Government prior to 1986 still had the courtesy to invite the official representative, the Member of Parliament for an area, when they had an official ceremony in that particular area. They still had the courtesy to invite him. This Government does not have even that simple courtesy that when it is doing a state function, to invite—*[Interruption]* You are a marginalized man in the whole setup. You count for so little in that Government, you cannot set the tone.

I am telling you, they came to lay the foundation stone for the market in Debe, an official function. The Minister of Works came to visit the post office site—for which I have been clamouring for so long—with the Minister in the Ministry of Industry, Enterprise and Tourism to do that function. There is an official representative of the constituency of Oropouche, but he does not have the courtesy to inform that official representative. They came to hand out leases. What I see are the acts of very desperate men when they go to such low levels in order to try to campaign to push their political fortunes. They go to such low levels to ignore the official parliamentary representative of a constituency, who has been duly elected through an election procedure and who, in fact, ought to be part of whatever official activities being undertaken in that constituency. And they talk about commitment to the democratic process and constitutional principles!

The Member for Tobago East was at pains to point out that and he is one of the biggest violators of constitutional principles and commitment. When I raised the issue of his role in 1970, he got a little hot under the collar, talking about

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upholding law and order and democratic process. This Government has perhaps been the most guilty of any Government in Trinidad and Tobago in that respect, in terms of undermining, in an indirect way, the constitutional and democratic process of Trinidad and Tobago.

I think I have just a few more minutes remaining, and I just want to make a brief comment about the Member for Arouca North and his contribution—another attempt to filibuster in this House. He read out a statement. I would say it was a dissertation. Unfortunately, that dissertation was not prepared for him because he made so many errors in reading it. He made so many errors reading out a dissertation prepared for him, by, whom I do not know, to come in this House and read out. I could not make head or tail of that dissertation, nor could he. All I can say is that his dissertation did not enhance the debate in this House. What it did was prolong the debate in accordance with the strategy of the Member for Caroni East.

This is what they have been doing since January 1991, for fear of having the Indian Arrival Day motion come up for debate in this House before May 30.

Dr. Tewarie: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the hon. Member knows very well that under the last administration people used to come here with a Private Member's motion and the Government would not take them on at all. They were not even debated. We, as a Government, have spent a lot of time debating this particular issue.

Mr. Sudama: Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Member is very new to this House and parliamentary practice. What instance can he record in this House—because that is an indictment against the Speaker—to say that the previous Government never entertained Private Members' motions in this House? I was in the House from 1981 to 1986, and he said Private Members' motions were never entertained.

Dr. Tewarie: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Do you see how he misrepresents what I said? The point I was making is that the Government would not, under the last administration, fully engage a debate of Private Members. Ministers spoke on those bills.

Mr. Sudama: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would not pursue that. That is not what he said, but you see when he gets caught in a trap, he jumps out and tries to get out of the trap as he did with the Guptar affair. But we would not go into that on this occasion.

Mr. Deputy Speaker You have two minutes to wind up.

Mr. Sudama: I have a brief comment to make on my goodly friends in the back, the PNM. This is what this spokesman for the PNM, Mr. Kenneth Valley, Member for Diego Martin Central, had to say, but it shows you their perspective as well. He said that the question of dealing with the squatter problem is balancing the claims of the landless as against the claims of society. So, I want to find out from our goodly friends, whether the landless in this country do not form part of the society. Or whether the landless is this marginalized group in the society, do not form part of it and it is only those who can afford land in Trinidad and Tobago are really part of the society and, in fact, can be recognized as such.

It shows you—this caring lot in the back—how they view squatters in this country. They view them in a certain way where the squatters will have to be dealt with as people different from everybody else in Trinidad and Tobago. That is their attitude to the manner they have attempted to solve the squatting problem in this country. The only proposal they could make is that we should have a new cut-off date for those who are regularized to be regularized under Act No. 20 of 1986.

I want to wind up by saying that whatever they have said in terms of bringing a new policy in place to deal with regularization of state lands, is all airy fairy and designed to hoodwink the squatting population of Trinidad and Tobago and, particularly, it betrays the fact that they are trying to hide from squatters, the true cost of regularization—these very unfortunate low-income people in Trinidad and Tobago who have been placed in that unfortunate position to a large extent by the policies of the previous Government and by the policies of the present Government where land prices were unaffordable to that income group.

6.15 p.m.

They have placed them in that position. They are not levelling with the people the cost to the squatters. If I had not brought this motion to this House, we would have never known that they have a new policy with respect to regularization of squatters. Thank you very much.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, there are three amendments which I propose to take first and have a decision of the House on them.

The first amendment is to substitute for the word “made” in the first line of the second recital, the words “did not make proper”.

Question, on amendment, put and agreed to.

The second amendment is to add the following words at the end of the second recital “in that the Act sought to regularize squatting on an individual basis rather than on a community basis;”

Question, on amendment, put and agreed to.

The third amendment is substitute for the words “call upon Government to take immediate steps to implement the provisions of” occurring in lines 1—3 of the resolution the following words “take note of the action on the part of the Government to repeal and replace”.

Question, on amendment, put and agreed to.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The amended motion now becomes the substantive motion and we take a vote on that.

Question on amended motion put and agreed to.

Resolved: That this House take note of the action on the part of the Government to repeal and replace the Regularization of Tenure (State Lands), Act No. 20 of 1986.

Motion made and question proposed, That the House do now adjourn to Monday, July 1, 1991 at 1.30 p.m. [Hon. B. Tewarie]

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 6.17 p.m.