

*Leave of Absence*

*Monday, August 26, 1991*

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

*Monday, August 26, 1991*

The House met at 1.45 p.m.

**PRAYERS**

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

**LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

**Mr. Speaker:** Honourable Member, the Member for Arima, Mrs. Gloria Pollard, has been excused from today's sitting.

**ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS**

*The following questions stood on the Order Paper in the name of Mr. Trevor Sudama Oropouche):*

**National Quarries Limited**

**63.** Could the Minister of Industry, Enterprise and tourism state:

whether any privately owned quarries in Tobago were purchased by National Quarries Ltd, in 1987 and, if so, could he advise who the owner/owners of these quarries were?

**Hon. Surujrattan Rambachan  
(Construction/Repair of Schools)**

**64.** Could the Prime Minister and Minister and Minister of the Economy state whether the Minister in the Ministry of Industry, Enterprise and Tourism, Mr. Surujrattan Rambachan, has the authority to arrange for the construction and/or repair and/or extension of Government or Government assisted schools in Trinidad and Tobago and, if so, who gave him such authority and to whom is he accountable for such activity?

**Penal Vedic School  
(Completion of)**

**65. (a)** Is the Minister of Education aware of the continuing inconvenience caused to both students and parents of the Penal Vedic School by the unbearable delay in having the construction of that school completed and, if so, what action her Ministry is taking in the matter to expedite the completion of construction?

- (b) Could the Minister state the total amount of funds advanced to date by the Government to the board of the Arya Prathinidhi Sabha for the construction of this school?

**Mr. Speaker:** Those questions are deferred to the regular sitting.

*Questions, by leave, deferred.*

#### BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

**The Minister of Industry, Enterprise and Tourism (Dr. The Hon. Bhoehendradatt Tewarie):** Mr. Speaker, the Central Tenders Board (Amdt.) Bill is under debate in this House, but we would like very much if this House would agree, so that we could proceed with the motion having to do with the Elections and Boundaries (Local Government) Order, 1991.

*Question put and agreed to.*

#### ELECTIONS AND BOUNDARIES COMMISSION (LOCAL GOVERNMENT ORDER)

**The Minister of Works, Infrastructure and Decentralization (Dr. The Hon. Carson Charles):** Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the following motion standing in my name:

*Whereas* it is provided by subsection (3) of section 4 of the Elections and Boundaries Commission (Local Government) Act, that as soon as may be after the Elections and Boundaries Commission (hereinafter referred to as “the Commission”) has submitted a report under paragraph (a) of subsection (1) of section 4 of the said Act, the Minister to whom responsibility for Local Government is assigned, shall lay before the House of Representatives for its approval the draft of an Order by the President for giving effect whether with or without modifications to the recommendations contained in the report;

*And whereas*, the Commission has submitted a report to the Minister in accordance with the provisions of paragraph (a) of subsection (1) of section 4;

*And whereas*, the draft of an Order entitled “The Elections and Boundaries Commission (Local Government) Order, 1991” giving effect to the recommendations of the Commission was laid before the House of Representatives on the 23rd August, 1991:

*Be it resolved:*

That the draft of “The Elections and Boundaries Commission (Local Government) Order, 1991” be approved.

I had the honour to lay on the table recently, the Elections and Boundaries Commission (Local Government) Order 1991 draft order as well as the first report of the Elections and Boundaries Commission under the Municipal Corporations Act, 1990, for the purposes of local government elections. The Order is presented today on the basis of the report of the Elections and Boundaries Commission

Last year on September 10, a bill entitled the Municipal Corporations Bill was passed by this Parliament. It was assented to on September 13, 1990, and one aspect of it provided for the extension of the life of local government councils and came into effect at that time, so that the councils come to the end of their live on September 12, this year.

Earlier this year, a second section of this Act was proclaimed and came into operation. That section provided for change in the electoral areas of Trinidad from the old county system to the system based on the new municipalities. This is to say, based on the four existing cities and boroughs, the new borough of Chaguanas and 13 regional areas in Trinidad.

The Elections and Boundaries Commission was this able to continue with this work which it had been undertaking in respect of local government over the past years—ever since its last report. Under the Elections and Boundaries Commission (Local Government) Act Chap. 25:50, section 4(1)(a), it is provided that:

“The Commission shall define and review the boundaries of the electoral districts into which an electoral area is, or is to be, divided and shall submit to the Minister reports either—

- (a) showing the constituencies into which it recommends that an electoral area should be divided in order to give effect to the Rules set out in the Second Schedule; or
- (b) stating that, in the opinion of the Commission, no alteration is required to the existing number or boundaries of electoral districts in order to give effect to the said Rules.”

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It also indicates at subsection (2) that:

- “(a) in the case of its first report after the commencement of this Act, not later than six months after the date of the commencement; and
- (b) in the case of any subsequent report, not less than two nor more than three years from the date of the submission of its last report.”

In respect of the report presented by the Elections and Boundaries Commission recently, to the Minister of Works, Infrastructure and Decentralization, this was done under item (b):

“in the case of any subsequent report, not less than two nor more than three years from the date of the submission of its last report”.

**1.55 p.m.**

Accordingly, the Elections and Boundaries Commission presented this report dated August 15, 1991 in which the Commission indicates that in compliance with the Act to which I have referred, the Seventh Report of the Commission, was submitted on December 21, 1985. Based on the number of qualified electors on the annual list published on July 1, 1985, that report showed the constituencies also called electoral districts into which the Commission recommended that the electoral area should be divided in order to give effect to the rules set out in the Second Schedule of the Boundaries Act. Parliament accepted those recommendations and an order was duly made thereafter by the President to give legal effect to them.

The Commission continued to indicate that elections were due to be held in 1986 but the three-year term of office of members of local authorities which was due to expire on September 19, 1986 was extended by Parliament for one year from that date. Consequently, the local government elections under reference were held instead on September 14, 1987.

As a result, this event rendered the three-year term of persons duly elected to office thereunder terminable on September 13, 1990. The deadline for the submission of Eight Report of the Commission was December 21, 1988. That report was, in fact, submitted on that date, and what the Elections and Boundaries Commission did was to simply indicate that there was no need for alteration in the number of boundaries of electoral districts to give effect to the rules. The Commission, therefore, had until no later than December 21, 1990, to present this report which it did submit, as I indicated, on August 15, 1991.

Mr. Speaker, the work of the Elections and Boundaries Commission in this matter is now completed and my duty is, in accordance with Form No. 26 of Election Rule 50 of the Representation of the Peoples Act, to present this report to Parliament and to have the order passed in order that the President may give effect to these new districts for the holding of local government elections, following which the Elections and Boundaries Commission will be able to present its annual list of electors for local government. The deadline for the EBC presenting this list of electors is September 2, and this is as a result of EBC's request that it should be provided with an extension from the original time of July 1, to September 2, which extension was granted by the President following approval of Cabinet.

So that my job today is to request that this House approve the order which will give effect to these electoral districts. This must be done before the EBC can present its list of electors, because it is required that the list of electors be presented indicating polling divisions and electoral districts in which the electors fall for the purpose of local government election.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to indicate that the duty of the Minister is to either request the approval of Parliament for the order based on the EBC's report as it stands, or in the event that he believes that there are amendments to be made, to present these amendments in writing, giving reasons for such amendments to the House of Representatives, after which the House may approve or not approve, or it may approve the withdrawal of the order as the case may be.

Mr. Speaker, I have reviewed, with the assistance of my technical officers, the report of the Elections and Boundaries Commission and have found no reason to recommend that amendments be made to the EBC's report. Our review has indicated that the EBC has presented their report in accordance with the election rules and, in fact, the Chairman of the Elections and Boundaries Commission has so indicated in his letter to the Minister.

In this regard, therefore, Mr. Speaker, it is my duty and I believe also it is a great pleasure on account of the historic opportunity to bring into effect this new system of local government, to present to the Parliament and to move the motion standing in my name that the draft of the Elections and Boundaries Commission (Local Government) Order, 1991, be approved. I so move.

*Question proposed.*

**Mr. Basdeo Panday** (*Couva North*): Mr. Speaker, this voluminous document that was laid before the Parliament on Friday last, is the order and the appendix, the schedule attached thereto, in which the Government is seeking to have this order approved.

I want to make it clear at the outset that the contribution which I wish to make has nothing to do with the Elections and Boundaries Commission. In fact, what it has to do with is the Government's policy with respect to local government, which resulted in this document being put before the House. Because it would not have been the Elections and Boundaries Commission who initiated this document, but rather it, would be carrying out the functions which were allocated to it by the Government

You will notice, from this schedule, Mr. Speaker, that what is before the House is a changing of the structure of local government, in that, as the Minister rightly said, there are now going to be five boroughs and thirteen regional municipalities. Now, when you look at those regional municipalities, Mr. Speaker, you will see that the electorate in those areas range between 62,543, as in Diego Martin; 64,000 in San Juan; to 6,528 in Mayaro. Now, the Diego Martin figure is later broken down to indicate the polling divisions of the electoral districts within the municipal areas. The first question I would like to ask the hon. Minister is: What is the rationale behind the differences?

For example, in Diego Martin we have 55 polling divisions, an electorate of 62,543, and the proposed number of electoral districts, nine. So it goes down; Laventille, 52 polling divisions, an electorate of 39,800; San Juan 89 polling divisions, and electorate of 64,000—I am calling the round figures; Tunapuna, 65 polling divisions, 48,000 electorate; Piarco, 59,000; Sangre Grande, 35; Couva, 54,900; Tabaquite/Talparo, 39,000; Rio Claro, 14,000. That is a big jump. I wonder what is the reason. What is behind the creation of a municipal area of that size? Siparia, 91 polling divisions, electorate 54,000; Penal/Debe, 67 polling divisions, electorate 53,000; Princes Town, 93 polling divisions, electorate 59,800; Mayaro, 14 polling divisions, electorate 6,528. From a high of 64,000 to a low of 6,500. What is the rationale behind the creation of local government areas with such wide disparity? That is the first thing I would like to ask the hon. Minister.

The second thing, lest I forget, is that he did mention that the life of the local government bodies come to an end on September 12, this year—that is a couple weeks from now. Does the Government intend to extend the life of the local

government bodies again, or does it intend to hold the elections and, if so, when? I thought that is something he would have wanted to inform the population. Because as I remember, the Member for the Tobago East, when he was in the Opposition, always complained about the power of the Government to determine when elections will be held and that this was a tremendous disadvantage to everybody else beside the Government. It is a pity that having assumed the office of the Government, that he now continues in the same vein and does the same thing of which he criticized so bitterly when he was on this side. But then they say, *c'est la vie*, that is how it works.

Mr. Speaker, the reason I have asked the questions about the differences in size is because size will determine the efficiency of the local government body, and it also will determine its functions. We have got, therefore, I believe, to start from the beginning and to ask what is the purpose of local government? Why do we want a system of local Government at all?

I recall the former Prime Minister, the late Dr. Eric Williams, actually saying that Trinidad and Tobago was too small for local government and, as a result of that, really denuded the powers of local government; reduced it almost to nothing.

Is that the same position of the present Government? Have they answered the question? Do they feel that there is a real need for local government, or to have it at all? We, on this side, believe that a system of local government is absolutely necessary. We contend that the purpose of having a system of local government is to depend the whole democratic process by giving citizens at the local level an opportunity to have a say in the decision-making process on matters that affect their lives from day-to-day. So that first of all, it has that effect of depending the democratic process preventing a feeling of alienation by permitting them to participate in the decision-making as to what goods and services will be supplied to them. If that is the case, then the size of the local government is very relevant. The functions of the local government become important, and if we decide upon the functions, then those functions and the size of the local government must be such as to make them viable. We, on this side, want to distinguish, and we want this House to distinguish, between decentralization and devolution of powers. We have to make that distinction.

**Dr. Charles:** I thank the hon. Member for giving way.

I just want to point out, Mr. Speaker, that the debate on the functions, purpose, structures of local government took place when we were passing this bill, and including the definition of the actual regions, their size, their

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geographical boundaries. Everything is contained within the Municipal Corporations Act of 1990. What has happened is that the EBC has, pursuant to its own Act and this Act, carried out a function which it has to carry out, of numbers and boundaries and so forth. But it has not interfered with the size of San Juan or the size to Mayaro. Those things were determined last year. I thought I should point that out.

**Mr. Panday:** I thank the hon. Member for that. I was quite aware of that, and that is the point I made, when I said that what I was saying here really did not relate to the Elections and Boundaries Commission at all because they were carrying out the decision of the Government. That is the point I am making. So that I am saying that your decision is wrong and you must review that decision; that is the point I am making. You must review that decision on local government, because you are not going to achieve the purposes for which local government is intended. That is not cast in concrete.

So that, Mr. Speaker, we want to submit on this side that the Government is really misunderstanding this whole concept of local government. What it is really relegating local government to, is a functionary of the central government, an arm of the central government. So what you are doing really is decentralizing the functions, administration of central government's function. We say that local government is much more than that. Local government has to do with a devolution of power, that, the policy-making decision of the central government must be transferred from the central government to the local government bodies. That is what is going to make local government meaningful. Anything else is really a sham, that you really do not care anything about the local government and you are just going through the motions. The point I was making is, maybe you are still in the same school of the PNM and the late Dr. Eric Williams, and the former Prime Minister, who believed that Trinidad is too small for local government; that local government ought not to have any policy-making decision; they ought to be an arm of the central government. As a matter of fact, I remember he did that at a time when they abolished the Roads Board and that sort of thing.

Now, we submit on this side that the extent to which people will participate meaningfully in decisions that effect their daily lives, has to depend upon the powers that they have an on the resources that you give to local government bodies. We argue from this side, that there is absolutely no reason why people



should be treated unequally in this country insofar as local government is concerned. That is what you are doing here.

I am saying that there is no earthly reason why you must treat people unequally. That is to say, that all local government bodies should have the same powers. If you want to reform local government bodies—and you have set a beautiful example for Tobago, the Tobago House of Assembly. The powers given to them is something that we have supported, and we still support it. That is an example you have set. There you have a local government body with meaningful powers.

**Dr. Charles:** I just want to point out that the Tobago House of Assembly is not a local government body. I am sure the hon. Member was party to the passing of the Tobago House of Assembly Act. It is not a local Government body.

**Mr. Panday:** Well, I did not think it was a central government body. I did not think so, myself, but if you say so, I will bow to your greater wisdom. My own interpretation was that it was a local government body within a unitary state; not a separate state, not another central government. But I may be wrong.

**Dr. Charles:** Surely, if the hon. Member reads the Act to which I am sure he was a party, he will recognize that the Tobago House Assembly Act provide for the House of Assembly to carry out local government functions as well as certain central government functions which were devolved on the body. Just read the Act.

**Mr. Panday:** Thank you, very much. That is exactly what I am saying when I argue that you have to distinguish between the decentralization of the functions of the central government and the devolution of powers. What we did with the Tobago House of Assembly, we devolved power from the central government to the local body. You are making exactly the point I wish to make. Thank you kindly. That is what I am saying. If we are going to deal with local government in Trinidad, we have set the example with the Tobago House of Assembly, and we have set the parameters, the precedent, if you wish, in which we are saying, why should not local government bodies in Trinidad perform those functions that are being performed by the Tobago House of Assembly? Why not? Because we would now be devolving power from the central government and also decentralizing central government functions. That is the plea we are making. We are saying when we get into power that is what we will do. We are going to level the powers of local government, treat them all equally; there is no reason to treat

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them unequally. That is my argument. We have always recognized that in the twin-island state, Tobago was separated by water. We have always recognized that. But we do not think that the water is a sufficient reason to treat local government bodies in Trinidad, unequally. To do that would be to treat your citizens unequally. You are telling citizens who live in one particular area that their local government body will not have the same power as the local government body of other citizens who live in a different area. What is the reason for that? There can be no reason for that. There can be no justification for that. Why should all local government bodies not have the same power? As I say, we think that is something that should be redressed and we intend to take action to do that.

If we want local government to work in Trinidad and Tobago, then the powers, as I say, have got to be changed, creating some measure of equality between them, while at the same time permitting them a measure of flexibility, to move at a pace at which the community itself decides that it wants to move. If you are going to create that kind of equality and you are going to devolve powers that allow the local government the flexibility to move at its own pace, then the size of the body is important. Therefore, if the size is important, you have to explain why there is such a difference in the disparity in the sizes in the order that is before us.

If you want local government to function, also, you have got to give them the resources, and you have got to make sure that they have both human and financial resources, equipment, personnel and so forth. What we say on this side, therefore, is that we should really change, not only the structure of local government; we should change the whole philosophy of it. We should change this habit of a central government voting, allocating money to the local government bodies.

**Dr. Charles:** Mr. Speaker, I really must rise on a point of order at this stage. The Member is not being relevant to the matter under debate. I do not think the Member can go into a debate on the structure and functions of local government, relativities, devolution of power and so forth, when that was the subject of debate which led to the passing of the Municipal Corporations Act of 1990. All that has happened since is that the Elections and Boundaries Commission has scrupulously observed the rules and has presented its report to the Minister. What I am seeking to do today is to ask this Parliament to approve of that report with respect to the Elections and Boundaries subdivision of these very areas, into electoral districts for the purpose of local government elections. In other words, all that has

happened is that the EBC has divided up the areas and has recommended to the Minister, who brings it to Parliament, what each electoral district within the area should be; how many councilors and aldermen, in other words, should be within a particular area; nothing more! It has not recommended on the functions, policies, financing, *et cetera*. Those are not matters germane to the motion which I have moved today. I ask, Mr. Speaker, for a ruling on this matter.

**Mr. Panday:** I did not see what you were afraid of. I was talking about local government. I thought I would be irrelevant if I was talking about the port of the oil industry. But this has to do with local government. It is following upon an Act that was passed here. But you do not want to be criticized, is that it? Not you, your Government? Is the purpose of all of this not to have a functioning local government body? Is that not the purpose of it? If that is the purpose of it, then let us on this side, grant us the privilege of telling you how we think it should work in order for it to be successful. We said size is important and we want you to answer why there is a difference in size; why there is an inequality of powers. We want you to answer that, as well. We also want you to answer—unless you do not wish to—why is it that your allocation of resources to local government bodies has left so much wanting when you criticized the former government so vehemently for that very obnoxious practice? That is, where you release moneys to the local government bodies at a time when they cannot use it. If they have to provide fields, you release it in the wet season. Up to this time, you release it in December and they must spend it in one week, or they must return it. If you want the local government bodies to work, you cannot do that.

We are suggesting, if you want it to work, what you have got to do is have block allocations to local government bodies where you give them the money and let them put it in the bank. Let the local government bodies hold the moneys in accounts to be spent on priorities to be determined by them. So that you do not give them money to bulldoze a playing field in the wet season. It cannot be done. Not only should the local government bodies be given a block vote—

### **2.25 p.m.**

You have to have some kind of criteria, rationale, for allocating moneys to local government bodies, otherwise you would be suspected of being guilty of discrimination if you allocate more funds to one local government body than another. This was a matter which we were very serious about and very critical of the last Government, condemning them for that kind of thing; except you, you

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really cannot get out of that syndrome, except that you are PNM 'B' team and you really cannot help. It may be that.

We believe also that local government bodies should be given powers to raise funds on their own by way of taxes or levies, so that the community will be free to develop.

**Dr. Charles:** It is in there.

**Mr. Panday:** We believe you should hold the local government elections when they are due. Is that in there too?

When I looked at the way these local government areas were structured, I thought we had agreed, in this House, that the boundaries of the local government bodies will have regard to the communality of interests of communities. If that is the case, how do you explain some of these divisions that we see here? While we are at it we might as well tell you that after five years, it is clear now that you have betrayed the electorate, in that when you spoke of the decentralization of functions, very little has been done in that regard. It is really to treat your citizens unfairly. You must come to Port-of-Spain to the centre to do certain things. That is to treat the people of Mayaro, Cedros, Toco, unfairly because the cost of services to them increases with the distance from which they live from the centre. Simple things, like obtaining birth certificates, death certificates, passports, the filing of probate actions, and so forth, we should have decentralized those areas a long time ago, and people who are living way down in Cedros should not have to come to Port-of-Spain for those things. That is a simple thing, and in our manifesto we had set about to do that. There is, therefore, the need to decentralize central government functions We had said so, and we were hoping that you would have done that. Unfortunately, you have not.

I think also, Mr. Speaker, we should take this opportunity—if even we have to amend the Act it does not matter—to end what is called the jurisdictional madness that has taken place in this country between the functions of local government and the functions of the central government, particularly with respect to drainage, roads, and that sort of thing where you find that people are complaining that the local government body is asked to clean a drain, and they clean the drain and when they reach a certain point they stop. If one asks why, they say, "Oh, from thereon, it is the central government's function. The Drainage Department must look after that." That is jurisdictional madness. It is stupidity which we should not continue in this society. Therefore, the powers of the local government bodies should be increased, so that if they begin to clean a drain they

do not have to stop when they reach what is called the Ministry's drain. If they perform functions for the Ministry, it can pay them for it. At least, let them have the power to clean a drain fully, right through to the river, the sea, or whatever. It is something we had talked about when we criticized the former Government, but you have not done it.. *[Interruption]* I read the bill.

The point I am making is that having regard to this division, you cannot do it; you will never do it. If you give them that kind of function it has to relate to size. If you have 6,528 electors in an entire local government area do, you expect them to be able to perform the functions, which they ought to, in the same way that a region with 62,000 people can? They cannot. So that when you speak of Mayaro, and you put 14 polling stations there, and you say that their electorate is 6,528, you are really denying them the right to function.

**Dr. Charles:** May I ask whether the hon. Member is referring to size in respect of population, or size in respect of physical territory? What happens, in other words, in areas which are vastly populated? Do you then have a vast area which you then cannot manage, just in order to get the same population as somewhere else?

**Mr. Panday:** How are you going to have the people of Mayaro being treated equally? Will be able to perform these functions which you give them? This is a sham. They are always shamming around with local government. They obviously will not be able to do it. They will not have the personnel. They will not have either the physical or the human resources in order to exercise powers which they must exercise if local government is going to be meaningful.

There is one other area in which we thought local government bodies should have their powers increased. It is with respect to land acquisition. The record of this Government on the question of land acquisition has not been very good, in that, always there is a problem of local government bodies deciding upon having a playing field but they have no influence upon when the Government will acquire those lands. The procedure is a one for the central government to acquire those lands. I believe that we should change the law with respect to that so that they can acquire lands. *[Interruption]*. I know, my friend. You keep missing the point I am making. You expect the people of Mayaro to be able to exercise all the functions we have in the bill. I am trying to tell you that they cannot, because there is such a disparity between resources. That is the point I am making.

I thought that the he might also tell us, and that he might put into the law, a basis for the allocation of funds. On what is this based? The size of the population, land space? Did you take into consideration the fact that they have been discriminated against by the past regime, and they need to catch up? What is the criteria that is used in allocating funds?

One of the reasons I am saying that all local government bodies should have an equality of powers is that maybe we can deal with the crime situation by giving policing powers to the local government bodies. We do it for the municipalities. In the municipalities, there is the City Police. I am of the view that there should be equality of powers, particularly for local government bodies that are in the rural areas. There is the question of praedial larceny and that is a serious constraint upon agricultural production in this country, and the Government has been totally helpless in dealing with this question of praedial larceny. We think that if you give to local government bodies, policing powers to have their local police service, this will go a long way in dealing with the issue of crime, as I say, in rural areas, with respect to things like praedial larceny, which affect the farmers.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, it is a waste of time to pass all these laws about local government, and then having done so, undermine them because you do not control them. That is what this Government has been doing, undermining the local government by the use of LIDP, ECHO, and whatever it is. You are usurping the functions. Once you begin to usurp the functions of the local government bodies so that the central government can have control over funds and you can buy votes by having these things, then you are destroying the country.

**Mr. Sudama:** Political mileage.

**Mr. Panday:** You are destroying the country, so you may win the elections because the voter will say, do you not care what happens to the country as a result of this kind of practice that you are perpetuating? Is that not why we voted the PNM out of office? That is exactly what they were doing, undermining the Local Government bodies. *[Interruption]* I would think that is something to cry about.

Passing of laws is one thing, but then how we put them into practice is another thing. I am sure the hon. Minister knows what his Ministry is doing with respect to the handing out of political patronage all over the country. I think the NAR has been more vicious, if that is possible, than the former regime in its pursuit of political patronage. Wherever we go, people tell us that they are told

that they must join the ruling party in order to get work on the projects. People come to us all the time. I think this Government should set up an enquiry into the practices that obtain with respect to political patronage, if you really want local government bodies to succeed.

Mr. Speaker, I do hope and trust that the hon. Minister will answer some of the matters I have raised.

**2.35 p.m.**

**Mr. Trevor Sudama** (*Oropouche*): Mr. Speaker, I, too, wish to raise a few matters on the basis of the report of the Elections and Boundaries Commission which has been presented in this House. Let me, first of all, say that it is with great disappointment that I listened to the contribution of the Minister, in introducing this report.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition spoke about the rationale for this division that we are debating here today. I would have thought that he would have paid this House the courtesy of going into some detail into the rationale for the divisions. We heard talk about the disparity in terms of the size of electorates in the respective regions—great disparity from 5,000 to 64,000. You would have expected him to come here to this House and give some explanation why Mayaro is treated in a certain way, as a region. But he comes here and makes the briefest of introductions to this bill and tells us that he and his technical officers reviewed the report and as far as this House is concerned, that is the end of the story. He and his technical officers, in their wisdom, reviewed it and decided that this report ought not to be amended in any way.

**Dr. Charles:** I thank the Member for giving way. I just want to make sure that he does not confuse the House. The first point is that I indicated before that we went to great lengths last year, to explain the reasons why Mayaro had a particular structure and boundary distinct from Diego Martin or San Juan. That was not a subject of the matter presented today. It was debated fully last year. I can give him the reasons again on a subsequent occasion.

Secondly, that in respect of the technical officers—

**Mr. Sudama:** I do not think you should make a speech.

**Mr. Charles:** Do you want the explanation on the technical officers?

**Mr. Sudama:** I really think that you would have the chance to respond, but you are cutting into my time. You had enough opportunity when you were

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introducing this bill. You spent just about 15 minutes in your introduction, when you could have given this House the benefit.

So, when we debated last year, we did not have numbers before us. We have numbers today; and he is telling this House that he and his technical officers, in their wisdom, reviewed the report. We would have liked to be told of that wisdom here today. What was the rationale and the basis for the division which is before us today for debate? But he did no such thing. He said that the Elections and Boundaries Commission followed rules. They assiduously followed rules which were prescribed. I myself am not sure what those rules are or were; and whether this House had the benefit of the knowledge of those rules which this Elections and Boundaries Commission was supposed to follow in compiling this report for us. We do not know. So, we come here to this House to debate in a situation where we have little knowledge of the rationale and the basis.

All this big propaganda about a new system; it is an historic occasion that they are introducing a new system of local government, is sheer unadulterated propaganda. All that you are doing, really, is a geographical delimitation—changing of geographical boundaries. Very little new powers and responsibilities have been devolved unto those bodies. Therefore, local government will continue to be an area of neglect by this Government, as in fact it was an area of neglect under the previous Government. Then you come here to say that this is a report which will tell us how many representatives you would have at the local government bodies in certain regions.

I do not know if the Minister would wish to answer. What are these representatives supposed to do? What are they supposed to do? Merely sit there as representatives and talk and have no effective power? You know, today this Government has asked people to serve as representatives of the local body and there are electoral districts in my constituency where all that is allocated for a month is \$4,000, to do maintenance and development work; \$4,000 per month, and they talk about local government and their commitment to local government.

To talk about a new system without giving some assurance that that system is going to work, in my view, is idle talk. When you look at the history of this Government you will see that it has been a history subversive of local government and, indeed, subversive of the democratic process. We are committed to a system of participatory democracy. That is what we have been told. In order to implement participatory democracy, you must give powers to the lowest level in



the system. But what they are doing, they subvert whatever little powers the local government body has.

The Prime Minister is so concerned about democracy in Russia. He cried, wept, when Mr. Gorbachev was overthrown. While he weeps about democracy in Russia, he is leading a Government which is subverting the democratic process as applies to local government in Trinidad and Tobago. I want to give an example. In my constituency, there is something which comes under the local government responsibility, the construction of a drain on Beckles Trace, which has been put on the programme of the local government for a very long time, but they are unable to implement it because they do not have the funds to do it, and that is their responsibility.

Lo and behold, election is now in the air, the man in charge of LIDP in Oropouche, Sen. Surujrattan Rambachan, comes into Beckles Trace and overnight, a LIDP project has been instituted in order to fix a drain which is the responsibility of local government. So you take away that from local government, you put it under central government and for the purposes of electioneering, this political myopia, which this Government is labouring under, as indeed the past Government—political myopia—merely for the purpose of electioneering to try to win some votes, you are subverting the process and the authority of local government. We find that is totally unacceptable to our side. So it is no point coming here with elaborate boundary reports, if you are going to continue in that fashion with respect to local government.

**2.45 p.m.**

I want to read into the records what a member from their side has said about the emasculation of the responsibilities and powers of local government and how they are proceeding, by the numerous programmes they are putting in place, which really ought to be local government responsibility. I want to quote parts of a letter from Lennox Sankersingh, who I understand is a prospective candidate on the other side, dated February 4, 1991, and he writes the Chairman of the Association of County Councils concerning social programmes and the involvement of local government bodies in these social programmes:

"The Association of County Councils will be aware of the many social programmes that are presently being implemented by the Central Government largely through agencies of the Central Government. Very large sums of money are being spent on these programmes which are aimed primarily on the human component of development with improving the quality of life and

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well-being of the population and all sectors of the society and with fostering good relationships between the individuals and groups of which society is constituted."

Central government, undermining the responsibilities of local government under the NAR Government and even one of their own members, so disgusted with that approach, has written publicly to the Association of County Councils. He goes on to say:

"Some of these programmes are the Youth Training Enterprise Partnership Programme, Labour Intensive Development Programme, Industrial Cottages Programme, Public Assistance, Food Subsidies, Squatter Regularisation, National Commission for Self-Help, people-oriented programmes, the ECHO Programme, the Apprenticeship for Industrial Mobilisation Programme".

You name it and they have it. YTEPP, LIDP, ECHO, AIM, POP—and this is how it is —The National Training and Service Programme. He continued.

"It is noted that the local government bodies are left our entirely..."

And yet they are promoting local government.

"with respect to implementing these programmes".

"The Association of County Councils is urged to look into this matter with a view to having the agencies implementing these programmes be accountable to the local government bodies in their respective areas.

I would urge you to immediately seek a meeting with the Hon. Prime Minister in this regard.

Signed Lennox Sankersingh

Local Government Representative

National Planning Commission."

So the condemnation has come from one of their own people; condemnation as to the manner in which they are proceeding with local government.

Mr. Speaker, there is another issue I want to raise and that is, when we were talking last year about the powers and the financial responsibility of local government bodies, the Minister said that they would be empowered to borrow money, to raise funds on the local market and so forth, and while they have that power to borrow, I want to ask him, who is going to guarantee the borrowing?

Will it be the central government who will guarantee the borrowing of the local government authorities? Because if no such guarantee is given, what you are doing is giving a power without meaning and which cannot really be effectively exercised. So they have this habit of putting things on paper into the law and knowing full well that it may not be implemented, but you just do it there as a matter of formality and then you go out and tell the public, “you know we are committed to local government in form. We want to make the system more effective and deliver services to the population at large”. We want to get them involved.”

While I am on this point, I want to show the discriminatory attitude of this Government with respect to funding of the Tobago House of Assembly and funding for the respective county councils in Trinidad. While we appreciate, on this side, that distance has something to do with an additional amount of funding being made available for Tobago, the disparity cannot be easily accounted for, except it is a political decision. I am giving you the facts now. Let me give you an idea of the disparity. That is why, while we come here to debate a report to establish new regions in the electoral district, if we proceed in this fashion, these regions that you are going to establish will be mere shams.

Let me quote you some figures, Tobago House of Assembly, what has been allocated under the various budgets: 1987. Recurrent Expenditure—\$158 million. I am just giving round figures. Development Expenditure—\$15 million; Central Administrative Services, Tobago, Recurrent Expenditure—\$10.5 million; Development Expenditure—\$0.5 million.

When we come to the county councils: 1987, Caroni received \$38 million, but to service almost 200,000 people and more. For Recurrent Expenditure—\$2 million; for Development Expenditure—\$2 million. Nariva/Mayaro: \$19 million—Recurrent; \$1 million—Development: St. Andrew/St. David: \$23 million—Recurrent; \$3 million—Development. St. George East: \$43 million—Recurrent; \$2 million—Development; St. George West: \$56 million—Recurrent; \$2 million—Development and St. Patrick, the very large county of St. Patrick in which his constituency falls, the Minister of Finance, he has no problem, no problem at all: \$29 million—Recurrent; \$2 million—Development Expenditure. When you divide the sum between electoral districts, you get a pitiable amount to be spent on roads, drainage, recreation facilities and so on, in these respective local government bodies. Victoria: \$34 million—Recurrent Development—\$2 million.

Now the figures I am quoting are figures which appear in the budget, the actual amounts received by these various local government bodies are less than the figures I am quoting here. While the expenditure allocated to Tobago shows an increasing trend, the expenditure allocated to the local government bodies in Trinidad has a declining trend. Why? He should answer. Why is that? He presides over recommendations for the allocation of funding for the local government bodies.

1987: Recurrent Tobago—\$158 million; 1988: \$172 million, but you know, when it comes to funding elsewhere, there is no money. \$158 million in 1987, \$172 million in 1988 and \$157 million in 1989; \$161 million in 1990; \$166 million in 1991. Development Expenditure—\$15 million, 1987; \$31 million, 1988; \$72 million, 1989; \$89 million, 1990 and \$92 million, 1991.

**2.55 p.m.**

So when we say we are dealing with a state within a state, you understand what we mean. But development expenditure for Caroni, \$2 million, reducing to \$1 million, going back to \$2 million. Nariva/Mayaro, \$1 million going to \$1 1/2 million to \$2 million. St. Andrew/St. David, ranging between \$3 million and \$1 million. That is how it goes for all the county councils in Trinidad.

**Dr. Charles:** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The Member is misleading the House, because he is giving the impression that he is comparing oranges with oranges. In Tobago, the development expenditure he is quoting under the Tobago House of Assembly is all the development expenditure for Tobago. Whereas, in Trinidad in respect of Caroni, countless central government agencies are funding development in Caroni, or in St. George, or what have you.

**Mr. Sudama:** Mr. Speaker, most of the expenditure with respect to recurrent expenditure that I am quoting, is with respect to local government services. Most of it—and a lot of it, probably under development expenditure with respect to local government infrastructure. Why, I am asking, is this huge and enormous disparity?

So, Mr. Speaker, they will have to answer, not in here, but in the parliament of the streets. That is where they will have to answer and it is coming very soon where they will have to account. The Member for Chaguanas, who goes about saying that this has been the best Government in the whole world and how it is fair and how it is treating people with equality; that everybody is incorporated into the improvements which they are trying to bring about in this country. Then

when you look at the reality, you see something else. So he sits in a Cabinet which proceeds in this manner. I want to make it absolutely clear that I have nothing with the recommendation to give Tobago an additional fund but, not 10 times more.

They sit there in a Cabinet and accept this and then come outside and say, "you know, the ULF fellows ran away from responsibility". This is the responsibility they have, to sit there and shut their mouths and allow this kind of disparity to continue to proceed.

Mr. Speaker, I have another point I want to raise. How are they going to disburse funding for these respective regions? At the moment you cannot even provide funding for seven county councils and four municipalities. You are going to convert the county council areas into 13 regional bodies and I imagine in those regional bodies, you are going to have a similar administrative or technical apparatus, whatever else you want to put in the bureaucracy of those regional municipalities for them to function. Am I to understand you are going to have some structure for Mayaro, serving 6,000 electors and the same for Diego Martin, serving 62,000 electors?

If you have to have technical staff, I imagine there will be a certain commonality in terms of the technical staff that you will provide for each regional municipality. But you cannot do it for seven county councils. You have an electoral district getting \$4,000 per month in order to service the constituents, simply because you take away money from the local government bodies and you give it to all these programmes that I have mentioned, in order to carry out a lost cause, and that is to try to win back the coming elections. If ever there was a lost cause, it is that one.

I do not care how much money they spend through all these bodies, they are not going to see government again, simply because people have seen through their *modus operandi* and their propaganda and their shallowness and their lack of commitment to the people of Trinidad and Tobago when it comes to true development of this country. I hope the next time the Prime Minister weeps, he will probably weep for the 20 per cent of people who are below the poverty line in Trinidad and Tobago and all those suffering in all the local government bodies for basic services, fixing of a little road, getting a water supply, recreational facilities.

I understand recreational facilities which ought to be a local government responsibility is now being handled from the Office of the Prime Minister. He has

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a fund for that—providing recreational facilities. I thought maybe, even if he was courteous to the Minister for Youth, Sports Culture and Creative Arts, maybe he could have channelled the funds through that Ministry. But it is now handled from the Prime Minister's Office and money is being doled out to certain politicians. In my case, of course, in Oropouche it is the goodly Senator in the Ministry of Industry, Enterprise and Tourism who is now telling people that he has the power to do this and to do the other, and he has \$9 million to spend at his disposal, as and how he sees fit to spend the money, in order to gain the Oropouche seat.

**3.05 p.m.**

They are committed to parliamentary democracy, bypassing the respective representations of the respective constituencies at every turn, sending people who are not representatives to undermine the parliamentary representative process in this society and then crying, weeping, when Gorbachev is overthrown in Russia.

You see, Mr. Speaker, it is all so comical if it was not so sad. It seems that they are a Government or criers. You have one of the, when he lost an election he was crying on television. The Prime Minister cries when a head of a foreign government is overthrown; it seems it is a group of criers we have sitting as the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. But that is another issue we have to deal with.

My concern, Mr. Speaker, is that we are going to spend all this money, this enormous amount of expenditure, to revise the system of local government, to put new regions into place, and we are going to have quite an expanded administrative bureaucracy, I suppose, technical apparatus and so forth. My concern, really, is: Will it work? Will it serve the purposes for which the reform is being introduced? That is my basic concern. From the way Government is proceeding, I am convinced that it will not serve the purpose.

So I really question whether what we are engaged in right now is to approve this Elections and Boundaries Commission report for the ultimate objective for which it is intended is not an exercise in futility, complete futility. You have a Government just doing things for the sake of formality and not particularly interested or committed to improving the local government process in this country and strengthening the local government at the level of the community and having these things set up merely as propaganda: Central government controlling all funding, all powers very closely and then utilizing that for electioneering purposes.

So, I am readily deeply concerned whether what we are doing here has any utility whatsoever. I am convinced that this exercise is really not to benefit local government. I think there is a political objective behind this, that if you break up the country into smaller and smaller regions for the purpose of local government, the chances of your winning off one or two, might be improved. So it is a political objective. This really has nothing to do with reform of local government or improving local government. It is a political objective to see that in a situation where they could hardly win anything, whether it is possible, by breaking up the country into smaller and smaller groupings, smaller and smaller local government areas, that they might perchance, win off a few of them. This is why I believe that in Mayaro, with 6,000 voters, they have got five electoral districts there, and they hope by a process of patronage to get a few electoral districts in Mayaro. Is that the reasoning behind it? Then, in Laventille, with 39,000 electors, seven electoral districts; in Sangre Grande, 39,000, seven electoral districts as well; Rio Claro, 14,369 electors, five electoral districts. I think, Mr. Speaker, that is the real rationale for this laid here in this House. I am convinced that it has to be left to another Government to really bring about meaningful local government reform in Trinidad and Tobago. It cannot be done by the mentality which is pervasive on that side, the mentality of restricting and restraining and controlling, for political purposes.

With that kind of thinking, with that kind of attitude—except of course in the case of Tobago—you are not going to have any meaningful reform; you will still have alienation in Trinidad and Tobago from the political process, people will not be able to participate effectively at the local level in determining the quality of their lives. *[Interruption]*

When I say “weep”, I mean weep in the sense that the Prime Minister weeps, this is what I meant, Mr. Speaker, weep in the sense of the Prime Minister. I have never wept that way in my whole life. I weep for other things. So I do not know why he is so up set about weeping.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, all I want to say is that I have got up here to speak on a motion which I sincerely believe to be an irrelevance for the purposes for which it is ostensibly intended. There will be no effective change in local government until such time as a new Government takes office, a new Government committed to the democratic process, committed to bringing true reform and committed to the people, to the welfare of the people of Trinidad and Tobago, in all areas, committed to that welfare. Until such time, all we are doing is merely making

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statements, empty statements, empty gestures, and this here today is really an empty gesture with respect to local government reform.

So, Mr. Speaker when the time comes, we will have much more to say about the issue of local government in the hustings, the disparities in expenditure, the discrimination practised by this Government against people in certain areas of Trinidad and Tobago; the overt, outright, deliberate discrimination by the Government headed by the Member for Tobago East. I trust when that time comes he will weep no more. Thank you.

**Mr. Kenneth Valley** (*Diego Martin Central*): Mr. Speaker, I just want to make a few comments with respect to the motion before us and I hope that I will avoid getting myself into trouble this afternoon.

Mr. Speaker, the motion before us is derived, as the Minister said, from Act 21 of 1990. That Act, in a sense, constrained what the Elections and Boundaries Commission could have achieved. You must remember, Mr. Speaker, that Act divided the country into 18 areas and, in fact, it went a bit further. The Act determined the areas that would fall into a particular region, for example, the Act in the Diego Martin region, defined that Carenage, Four Roads, Diego Martin Central, Petit Valley, River Estate and Maraval, would be included. So that the Act constrained what the Elections and Boundaries Commission could have done in terms of setting up the electoral district within the region. Because of that, it appears that the Elections and Boundaries and Commission had to do what it could within that area, and the result has been certain inconsistencies.

It has already been pointed out, for example, that the area of Mayaro and Rio Claro appear to be smaller than some of the other areas, and one wonders whether it would not have made much sense combining those areas. Of course, the Elections and Boundaries Commission could not have done that, and the question is whether the Minister would not want to review what has happened now and combine Rio Claro and Mayaro. Because when we look further, Mr. Speaker, one would remember that the Constitution, in terms of constituencies, sets out the limit of a constituency; plus or minus 10 per cent. I think the figure is some 21,000. Nowhere in the Act did we set out the size of an electoral district.

So that we see, for example, that in some areas an electoral district is some 8,3000, the population for the area, as in La Horquette, in the Piarco area, but when we look at the Rio Claro region, we see that we have areas of 2,573 persons in area one, in Rio Claro. The point is, ought we not to have some type of guideline? In other words, what is the optimum size that could be represented by



a councillor? Should we not have some consideration with respect to that if we are talking about the proper representation of people? Because, as a new Parliamentarian, one of the things that I have found is that the councillors are very important to deal with some of the local issues in the area. It would seem, therefore, that we would want to consider some type of optimum size per council, and I think the Minister would want to look at that and try to avoid the disparity in areas. Now, of course, it is easy for one to point out that this has been so for quite some time, but I think if we are getting into reform, we should be moving forward.

So that is my first point. Whereas the EBC is being constrained because of the definitions of the areas spelt out in the Act and the areas that the Act spells out ought to be included in different regions, the Government should, in fact, look at this and perhaps make an adjustment. My own view is that Rio Claro and Mayaro should be combined.

The other thing is, one wonders whether, we buy the concept of the optimum-size population per electoral district, whether Rio Claro ought to have five. Obviously, if we start taking about fewer than five electoral districts in a region, then we can see the wisdom, perhaps, in combining regions.

The second point I want to make, Mr. Speaker, is that though as a fact Act 21 of 1990, speaks about devolution of authority to the local government bodies and so forth, when one takes cognizance of what obtains now with our local government bodies, one is not hopeful with respect to the powers of local government under this Government. Again, one may very well say that it was no different in the past, but, as I said, if we are going forward, let us go forward. As a fact, we know today that local government bodies are starved for funds, at the same time that we a number of other organizations doing things which one would consider to fall rightly under the local government bodies.

In a number of areas in my own constituency, the complaint is the same. When I speak to the local government people, they say that they have no funds, that they are not getting funds from the Ministry, that funds are being reduced since 1986/1987. Every year it is much smaller. But at the same time, we know that the Government is finding funds to give to other organizations, doing things in the constituency but they are not coming under the councils.

One of the key things we see lately, for example, is the fact that it seems to be very easy to get material from some organizations, I think it is some self-help organization that is operating, somewhere out of Mausica. I do not know how

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many people know that, in fact, we now have two self-help commissions. We have the self-help commission that one knows about, but then there is, as it were, for want of a better word, a “NAR self-help corporation” operating out of Mausica, and the chief executive officer, I understand, is the Deputy Mayor of Arima, and every councillor who is unemployed seems to be able to get a job at the self-help unit out in Mausica. You can find them out there. That is what it is.

**Dr. Charles:** Mr. Speaker, I just want to point out to the Member that every infrastructure department of the Ministry of Works Infrastructure and Decentralization operates self-help. They have operated self-help long before this Minister came into office. What happens at Mausica is simply that they are more efficient these days than they were before. But if you go to the Highways Division, the Drainage Division, they all operate self-help. That is party of the philosophy of the National Alliance for Reconstruction.

In respect of councillors, he might be interested to find out that there are PNM councillors even, who are employed in the Ministry of Works, even in the LID Programme. He might be interested in finding that out.

**Mr. Valley:** The point that I am making is that this unit up in Mausica, they say it is connected to LIDP, A LIDP self-help unit that is supposed to provide material. The Minister—I am sure knows—I do not know whether there are PNM councillors there, but I know that there are thousands of NAR councillors.

In a manner of speaking, the Deputy Mayor of Arima is the person that is supposed to be in charge, but I understand that the material is bought from some NAR big-wig—this is merely the information I am getting and I am asking the Minister to check. I understand that is the system used for financing of the party. I am merely asking the Minister to check.

The other point, Mr. Speaker, on the same aspect of respect for these county councils in this period of reform, is the authority of the county councils. There is a situation, I understand, in St. George West where the Attorney General’s department advised that a particular cleaning contract should be terminated and the St. George County Council acted on that instruction from the Attorney General’s department. Lo and behold, they got a call from the Ministry informing them to renew and to continue that contract. These may all be rumours. I am asking that the Minister should investigate these things because, if we are moving forward, we ought to realize that, in fact, these local government bodies can play a useful role in every area.

There are number of projects, that could be undertaken and they are better when they are undertaken by local people. They, of course, pay more interest because they have a vested interest in insuring that the job is done quickly and efficiently. I have seen it in my own constituency and I am very pleased with what has been happening. But whatever we do, whether we have seven bodies, whether we have 13, the important thing will always be funding. Unless we are prepared to fund these bodies properly, there would be no reform; reform would continue to be an elusive dream.

Mr. Speaker, I simply wanted to make those observations. Particularly, I want to ask the Minister to re-think the constraint he placed on the Elections and Boundaries Commission. Because of those constraints we have this situation where we have one electoral district with as many as 80,000 persons, and another with as low as 2,500. I think we ought to have some system on which we base our electoral districts.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Minister of Food Production and Marine Exploitation (Dr. The Hon. Brinsley Samaroo):** Mr. Speaker, I would, at this point, wish to respond to a number of the claims and charges made by Members of the two Oppositions and seek to do something which ought not to have been done in this particular debate. Because when we debated in September of last year, the whole question of the philosophy of decentralization, and the reasons for the setting up of these local government authorities, there was a document that was made available to Members of this House: "The Decentralization Process, Regional Administration and Regional Development in Trinidad and Tobago, Proposals for Reform, October, 1990". It is in this document where most of the queries were raised on the philosophical underpinnings of this new process of decentralization and the setting up of those 13 regional bodies. This is where the rationale was given.

I will spend some time today in underlining, in repeating, if one might use the term, those very premises that were given in that particular document. Therefore, I am quite sure that both the Member for Couva North and the Member of Oropouche, did not look at this document. Because if they had, then a number of the considerations that they have raised today would not have been raised in this particular debate. I do not see how all of these questions could be raised if that document had been properly read.

I would quote from the document, and I will add some of my own feelings on the matter, explaining the Government philosophy with respect to the reasons for

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the setting up of these regional authorities. I would like to be indicating to the Member for Oropouche, that he has a continuous obscurantist view of everything:

Nothing can happen. For him, his world, Trinidad and Tobago, is the constituency of Oropouche. So that everything that is happening or not happening in Oropouche, he expands that to the whole of Trinidad and Tobago. So that because a particular trace called Beckles Trace was not repaired some time ago, then every trace in Trinidad is not being repaired. If we do not repair Beckles Trace, then it is neglect; when we go to repair it, then it is electioneering. So it is difficult to please such gentlemen.

Let us go also to his little world, the constituency of Oropouche. He came here and said that this Government announced it was going to build a Debe market and no Debe market was going to take place. He said that here; he said that publicly. I wish to assure him that the Debe Market is almost complete and will be by the end of September. He also came here in the way that he looks at Debe and Oropouche as the world and said there will be no Debe Post Office. Now that we have agreed to give a post office in Debe, what will he say, electioneering? If we did not give him a post office, he would say Debe is being neglected. In the very same way he came a few weeks ago to talk about work that is being done in Puzzle Island. He did not know that the work had been completed and we had to come here and tell him that the work he said was not being done and would never be done was, in fact, completed.

The miles of roadway in Rahamut Trace, I went there myself a month ago and a delegation came to see me in San Fernando and said for 40 years they had been asking for the Rahamut Trace on the one side to be repaired, and on the other side, Cemetery Trace, leading to Rahamut Trace. Now it is done and it is completed. He asked me where is Rahamut Trace. I have gone there and I have been there myself.

**Mr. Sudama:** Would the Member give way to a question? Would he tell this House—truthfully, that is—when work on the development of Rahamut Trace that leads from La Fortune Pluck Road to Puzzle Island first started?

**Dr. Samaroo:** Mr. Speaker, he asked a question on the particular matter. That question was comprehensively answered in Parliament. I went and looked at it before answering the question. It was done this year. But, again, he did not know that it was done, so he came asking what would be done, when could it be done and I had to tell him it had been completed. So that I am using that reference

to tell him that he is again expressing this negative, this obscurantist view, in saying that this will serve no purpose, that no local government institutions will be established, that they are empty statements and gestures. These are his words. But I am saying, it is in the same way that no market is being established in Debe, no post office is being set up; Rahamut Trace was not ever done; that is a figment of the imagination of the present Government. *[Interruption]* I wish, Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member would give me a chance to speak. He had his full opportunity. I did not disturb him.

**Mr. Speaker:** Give the Member his opportunity, please.

**Dr. Samaroo:** Of course, I will be quite prepared to answer any questions he may ask, but I wish not to be continuously disturbed since it is becoming a nauseating habit with the Member for Oropouche.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to raise some of the larger issues that have been raised by all three speakers who have spoken so far. I wish to give the Government's assurance to the Member for Couva North that this Government has no intention whatever to do anything to dismantle local government; that we do not believe that Trinidad and Tobago is too small to have institutions of local government, and that this legislation that is now before us is a continuation.

The hon. Minister, when he was making his initial presentation indicated that there was an earlier debate about the powers and authorities and how we intend to go towards the process of decentralization, and this document of October, 1990, furthers that process. Now we are going towards the final stages of the physical demarcation of the boundaries to indicate what are, in fact, going to be these local government areas.

I would like to indicate quite clearly, Mr. Speaker, that the intention of drawing up these particular kinds of demarcations—I will go into a number of details, in a little while, but I wish to indicate the broad parameters that influenced the demarcation, first of all, to harmonize the various local government areas, to create a homogeneity of interests—one might call it a commonality of interests. So we look at things like occupational commonality. I would indicate that form this document. We look at things like cultural commonality; we look at things like administrative cohesion—I want you to remember these terms, Mr. Speaker; we look at things like regional coherence. The whole intention is to create small manageable units so that the many difficulties and problems that we have had in administering large, disparate, local

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government areas, would now be removed. So that many of the problems that the Member for Oropouche raised, we know that those problems exist. But what do you do about those problems? Do you simply say let the problems exist and let them go on? Here is an attempt to get rid of those problems.

I wish to point out that the Association of Country Councils—in which their own political party has leadership—was involved continuously in this process of discussion, and have, in fact, contributed substantially to this document as well as the final demarcation of the local government areas. So I wonder whether the Members of that particular party are in contact with members of the local government. Or has this split in the party split some Members of Parliament from most of the Members of local government so there is no consultation before? So that the Member from Oropouche comes and makes criticisms against the suggestions given by his own colleagues when we were discussing those particular—*[Interruption]*

**Mr. Speaker:** Order please. Give the Minister his opportunity. He was not disturbing you.

**Dr. Samaroo:** I must raise these questions about split between this one and that one in public. I will deal with it in public.

**Mr. Speaker:** Continue, please.

**Dr. Samaroo:** He will be surprised at how I deal with it. He will be quite surprised at what has taken place in that particular case. But that is something we will deal with the public.

So I am saying we are trying to create this harmonization of interests in the local government areas, because it is our belief that people must be encouraged to participate as fully and as meaningfully as possible in the whole process of local government, more and more, rather than less and less.

We believe that the local government authorities ought to be a training ground for future Parliamentarians, as indeed you have Parliamentarians who are right here: the Member for Siparia, the Member for Fyzabad, who have had their training in the institution of local government. This Government would wish to see a further increase of such persons assuming positions of leadership all over the country.

So the general point I want to make is that this Government has no intention of doing anything to diminish the influence of local government, and I would go to a few examples in order to illustrate these general principles that I spoke about.

If you look at page 25 of that Regional Administration and Regional Development document, you would see the same point I have repeated, said there:

“It is anticipated that with the coming into being of the new uniformed system of regional stratification in Trinidad, a greater sense of regional identity and regional cohesion will be experienced by citizens. In addition to regional planning and administration, sporting and cultural events may be promoted on a regional basis”.

The sentences go on to elaborate on this particular point.

With respect to the points raised by all three Members, I wish to read from page 33, which talks about the Mayaro region, and I will talk in a little while about the Rio Claro region because those have been particularly raised. In the case of the Mayaro region, the question of occupational commonality was very important. Mayaro region, page 33—for the Member of Naparima, who seems to be following very inattentively, as he always does on debates like this:

“Located on the south-eastern corner of Trinidad, this is a relatively undeveloped rural zone with agriculture and fishing being the main sources of economic activity. However, the recently launched South-East Coast Consortium Project involving the offshore exploration and exploitation of natural gas reserves, has the potential for transforming economic activity towards gas related industries”.

So that in the first place it is an agricultural area, secondly we say it is a neglected area, and thirdly we say it is an area for considerable potential; potential for attracting people; potential for further development. So that now one creates that Mayaro region, yes, with a small number of people, but it is over a large geographical area. But the intention is quite clearly that with the development of the South East Coast Consortium, the Mayaro region is going to develop rapidly with an increase in population and we are pre-empting that by putting in place the necessary administrative machinery to make room for that kind of expansion.

**3.35 p.m.**

I would wish to read also, Mr. Speaker, about the Rio Claro region because I think this is something that Members on the other side have mentioned and they consider this important. I am reading what is said there so that people in this House can understand what is the philosophy behind the demarcation of these areas. On page 31:

“Rio Claro region—rural east coast zone, including and surrounding the Nariva Swamp. This region consists of several rural agricultural villages along the major north-south route set by the Cunapo Southern Road. The major economic activities of the population are agriculture and fishing.”

Again, the commonality of occupation is agriculture and fishing.

"Agriculture is to be further promoted by the rehabilitation of private estates and improvements to transportation service."

**Mr. Valley:** If it is a fact that Mayaro is agricultural and Rio Claro is agricultural, what then is the problem, really, of combining the two areas?

**Dr. Samaroo:** I will be coming to that presently. There are a number of considerations that have to be borne in mind. It goes on to talk about the Nariva Swamp which is to be the focus of an extensive agricultural development. I can report to this House right now that that development is, in fact, taking place and the Nariva Swamp is producing, in fact, the best rice that we are now obtaining in Trinidad and Tobago. I thought I would mention these areas and deal with them in some kind of detail.

If you look at page 57 (c), one of the appendices to this particular report that we have, where the detailed description is given of the areas, you have on page 57 (c), Rio Claro with five electoral districts; Mayaro with five electoral districts. Rio Claro—14,369 in the whole area. Mayaro—6,528. Siparia, on the other hand, which is on that very page, is 54,000; and Penal/Debe—53,076.

The Member for Diego Martin Central asked the question, why not combine Rio Claro and Mayaro into one regional council? Anybody who asks that question, really has no idea of the geography of the area. Do you expect somebody from Ortoire to be going to Rio Claro, as they now have to do, and which is what one wants to remove? It is more than 30 miles of roadway. Can you think about children from Biche going to Mayaro? This is what would happen if you combine those areas. I represent a large part of that area, and the



Member for Ortoire/Mayaro represents a very large area, and we can attest to the extreme distances between those areas. So that even though you have small areas in terms of numbers of seats, and in terms of numbers of population, one has to think of the enormous geography of the area, the enormous landmass.

**Hon. Member:** Sit down, man!

**Mr. Valley:** You are the Minister of National Security, and one would expect you to have better behaviour.

Mr. Speaker, I simply want to ask the Minister whether the roads in that area are good. Whereas the Member of Parliament for that area has to travel the whole area, it would seem to me, if we are talking about electoral districts, one is confined to a smaller area within the larger geographical area.

**Dr. Samaroo:** Mr. Speaker, I have great difficulty in understanding this question. I do not know if the hon. Member may wish to repeat this question. Possibly it is as a result of my own dullness that I cannot understand, but I really have difficulty in understanding that confusion of words.

**Mr. Valley:** Historians are not known to be good at logic.

**Dr. Samaroo:** I would continue, Mr. Speaker. We are talking about very far distances and one has to use that kind of consideration—the enormous geographical expanse—to create small but more homogeneous areas. If you think of the area that is going to centre now on Pierreville in Mayaro, with Pierreville as a small regional capital, you will think of Guayaguayare on one side; you would think of Ortoire on the other side, and you come down to Union Village on the western side, and then the sea on the eastern side. Here you have a homogeneous area, people involved in the same occupations, their administrative centre being Mayaro, and that whole community focussing on the cultural capital of Mayaro. Therefore, we are giving them that convenience of moving to a small area, possibly not more than 10 miles from any one of these village centres that we are talking about, rather than, at the present time, where if you want to go from Guayaguayare to Rio Claro, it is something like 40 miles to do whatever business one has to do in Rio Claro.

There is another example I wish to give, and that is the Rio Claro area, which now goes as far as Plum Mitan—very large still, but certainly smaller than it was before and all focussing on Rio Claro. If you think about the Canque River—you would know that very well—it has served for very many years as a Berlin wall

between the village of Newlands and Canque on the other side, because the Canque River puts one part of a homogeneous community in St. Andrew/St. David and another part in Nariva/Mayaro. That has created enormous problems over very many years.

This artificial demarcation divided one village into two villages. So that, when one tries to put a community centre for Biche, they say, "No, you cannot put a community centre for Biche, you have to put one for Newlands and one for Canque." When there is a cricket team that one wants to encourage in Biche, they say, "No, you are talking about two cricket teams, two community centres, and so on, for one community." Therefore, that bridge has divided, for very many years, one village into two areas because they were under two jurisdictions, two demarcations. This legislation before us combines the whole of it, combines the whole of Biche.

**Mr. Valley:** It will not work.

**Dr. Samaroo:** Yes, you seem to be taking lessons from the Member for Oropouche. Nothing would work. For 30 years nothing has worked, so you are saying now also, nothing will work. You have a history of seeing things not working, so now that things are working you say it would not work. We will demonstrate quite clearly that this thing was very clearly thought out, and it will certainly work.

What we have done in that particular case—when I speak of the cultural commonality, bringing a cultural oneness in the whole community of Biche, for example, and now you include Plum Mitán, so it is now the whole of Biche, being part of the Rio Claro regional area.

**Mr. Sudama:** Is that in the constituency of Nariva?

**Dr. Samaroo:** So that, instead of dividing the country and putting something that is unworkable, this thing has been very carefully thought out and seeks to fulfil, as I am trying to indicate, these primary intentions of bringing communities together, communities that have a common interest, whatever these interests may be, rather than dividing them.

Mr. Speaker, if you think of the village of Ecclesville, which has now been made into a seat for the Rio Claro area, for many years we have had problems in Ecclesville because there is one particular road that goes to the village and that road divides the village into two communities, because one side of the road is in one electoral area and the other side of the road is in another electoral area. So

that for many years, instead of the village cohering together, people always told you, "I am in this electoral area; they, on the other side, are in the other electoral area." There was considerable difficulty in getting people to co-operate. What this legislation does—and if you look you will see the description of that village of Ecclesville—once more, both sides of the road are in one electoral area. Where the village ends the electoral area ends and the whole community is now cohered together—brought together.

This is what explains the small size of certain areas because of the covering of geographical spread, the need for bringing the various interests of the community together, rather than having them divided and causing the divisions and the antagonisms that we have inherited, unfortunately, in our local government system.

**3.45 p.m.**

The Members on the other side said that there must be a differentiation—one member said a discrimination—in terms of allocation, when that has to be. They said you cannot give the same kind of financial allocation to Diego Martin that is going to have 62,543, the same financial allocation you give to Rio Claro or Mayaro; there has to be some differentiation. There must be, because of the large population in one area and the small population in the other instance. So, you would not find Mayaro getting the same amount as Tunapuna. Mayaro would indeed get less because it has a smaller population and smaller electoral areas.

Similarly, when it comes to the setting up of administration, again the Members on the other side said that there will be discrimination; there will be disparity; but there has to be disparity. You would have a general structure for the operation of each one of these local areas but then staff would be allocated numerically in relation to the number of people whom they have to serve in those particular areas.

So, you see, instead of the thing being very haphazardly done and being done without thought, it has been most carefully thought out and those disparities, those differentiations, we on this side have no difficulty with them because we feel that the logic of what we are doing naturally leads to those disparities in financial allocation and disparities in the allocation of such officers who would serve these particular areas.

The Member for Oropouche as well as the Member for Diego Martin Central, raised the question of the local government bodies not getting to do all that they

are supposed to do. Obviously they did not read this document which states very clearly our view of the demarcation of functions between local government and central government. This has been a subject of dispute all over the world for, let us say, the last 150 years and this will continue to be a subject of dispute in Trinidad and Tobago as well as in every other part of the world in which you have central and local government.

Local government will be continuously asking for more; central government will have to be continuously looking carefully and saying what must remain with the central government and what must go to local government. That debate, as I said, is more than 150 years old and we expect it to go on for the next 150 years because there has to be this tension. There has to be this continuous tension between central and local government as to who would get what. That is a natural tension that maintains the democratic spirit in societies such as ours.

**Mr. Valley:** Mr. Speaker, I thought the point that I was making was that the Government is setting up parallel agencies to do what ought to be done by the county councils.

**Dr. Samaroo:** Yes. If the Member for Oropouche has his way, then everything that the central government has, has to go to local government. He talks about social welfare, works programmes and so forth. In other words, what will happen is that you would have a total transfer of central government functions to local government. A central government has to decide those things that must remain with it and those things that would, through decentralization, go to local government. These things have to be the subject of continuous argument between the two institutions. That dynamic has been going on, and will continue, and it is this Government's intention to give as far as possible, more and more responsibility to the local government authorities.

Now, an institution like the National Self-Help Commission, a charge has been made that local government could be performing a number of the functions of the National Self-Help Commission. *[Interruption]* You see, I start off with National Self-Help Commission and they say I must go to the LIDP Self-help. Because he knows that in respect of the National Self-Help Commission, local government authorities are very intensely involved.

**Mr. Valley:** I must protest, Mr. Speaker. I said nothing about the National Self-Help Commission. As a matter of fact, let me put it on the record, I have the

greatest respect for that organization, and especially for its Chief Executive Officer.

**Dr. Samaroo:** So, you see, what suits them is good; what does not suit them they tend to criticize. The point I am making about the National Self-Help Commission is that many of the projects are submitted by councillors of all the political organizations, by Members of Parliament and so forth. For every project the people are written, the Member of Parliament is written and the local government representative is written and the local government is involved in a number of these projects. I can speak in that regard, both for the Nariva/Mayaro County Council as well as the St. Andrew/St. David County Council.

The Member for Diego Martin Central said that the person in charge of the project at Mausica is the Deputy Mayor of Arima. Has he understood that he is a professional engineer? So must you now say that because he supports the best political party in Trinidad and Tobago, he must be discriminated against, even though he is well-qualified? Even though he is a professional engineer? Must you say that every professional engineer who says that he belongs to the National Alliance for Reconstruction must not get a job? Is that the logic of what the Member for Diego Martin Central is saying?

**Mr. Valley:** I am not saying that. I am simply saying that as long as it results from fairness. In other words, that the job is advertised and people apply for the job, I have no problem.

**Dr. Samaroo:** Most certainly it was extensively advertised in the newspapers, because I myself encouraged people to apply in response to the advertisement which I saw and which many of them did not know about. So, one must be careful and look at the qualifications of that particular Deputy Mayor of Arima *[Interruption]* Of course it certainly was not done. In the PNM you simply had to have a party card. We are saying you have to have the proper qualifications.

Now he talks about getting material from the quarry of some NAR bigwig. Yes, I will tell him who that NAR bigwig is and he must ask the PNM councillor in the St. Andrew/St. David County Council, to carry him to this NAR bigwig. The NAR bigwigs are as follows: the state quarry at Tapaná; the state quarry at Guapo, for oil sand; the state quarry on the 17-mile mark, Biche. These are the NAR bigwigs of which he is speaking. *[Interruption]* Well, he must tell us about the others.

These are the sources and I know about that because I am involved in it. These are the people who are giving us material. The state quarry at Tapaná; the state quarry at Guapo and the state quarry on the 17-mile mark in Biche. He must ask his councillor because his councillor works on the state quarry at Tapaná. Without finding out, the Member for Diego Martín Central comes and says, NAR bigwigs. Well, I have given him the names of the NAR bigwigs, and he must come, if these are not correct, he must tell us right now, I am prepared to sit so he can give us the names of those NAR bigwigs who are supplying the materials. They are all state-owned institutions and the material is being taken out of those state quarries in order to provide assistance for self-help projects; for county council projects; for Minister of Works projects and for all kinds of activities in these construction projects throughout the country.

So, people must be careful in coming here and making all kinds of claims when they do not have the evidence to support those particular claims. Programmes like YTEPP, AIM and the National Training Service, are programmes that the Government has decided has to be centrally handled so that one can look at the needs of the total population and one can allocate resources throughout the population as the Government interprets the needs all over the country.

That is why I am saying that it is an area that the local government authorities might say that they should be in charge of. It is an area that the Government feels has to be centrally handled, centrally managed so that the needs of the entire community can be assessed. In each one of these programmes, notices are put out in the newspapers. That is one thing this Government can never be accused of, letting people come in a YTEP Programme simply on the recommendation of some Member of Parliament. These things are published, the centres are given; dates and times of registration are very clearly given and that is the basis on which these people are given the opportunity to operate in any one of these various services.

**3.55 p.m.**

So Members must be very careful and understand the whole intention of the Government in taking a number of these nationally organized institutions, understanding the needs of each part of the country, allocating the resources, such as we have, towards the betterment of, particularly, the young people of the country.

I think these are the major arguments raised by the Members on the other side. What I hope that I have done is to give very clearly what is the philosophical

basis for dividing the country as we have divided it; why it is that some regional areas appear to be so smaller than some regional areas. You have to look at that extremely carefully. You might say, why is the constituency of Nariva so big and why is the constituency of Tunapuna so small? Should not they be both of the same size? Well, they cannot be for reasons of their location and their geography and state of under-development and so forth. It is the same principle that one has to look at in looking at areas like Rio Claro and Mayaro, giving them a number of seats. The hon. Member for Diego Martin Central possibly has never been to these areas and, therefore, he does not understand the tremendous difficulties. He goes only when they have that big fete, the “waste-down” fete that they had in Mayaro. So he drives on one road—one of the best roads in the country—and drives back, no doubt hardly in a position to notice what is going on around him, after that; then he comes here and asks: Why are some areas small? Why are some areas big? What can be the size —

**Mr. Valley:** If the Minister will allow one final question. Mr. Minister, does it not make sense that if we are talking about agricultural regions, that we are going to have economies of scale if we combine Rio Claro and Mayaro? Does that not make sense? Is that not overriding?

**Dr. Samaroo:** Yes. On one hand it certainly makes sense. So then you should include the whole of the Tabaquite area into that, because that is also agricultural and you must extend into one regional area, the whole of Caroni because that is also agricultural. That is the logic of what the hon. Member is saying. Because two areas are agricultural they should be combined. Then you should have one regional centre from Caroni to Mayaro. That is the logic of what he is saying. We are saying that is not the only consideration. That certainly is an important consideration, but there are other considerations. The major consideration I am trying to explain to the hon. Member, is the consideration of the vastness of the area, the extensive areas of swamp; the extensive areas of forests, the long distances that children have to go to school. So, one is looking at creating homogenous, self-contained, self-centred constituencies where they develop a culture of their own in each one of these areas—little republics one might call them; developing their own culture around their common experience and the geographical and cultural commonality that exists in those particular areas.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think these are some of major points that have been raised by Members of the other side. I hope we have answered a number of them but I

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wish, in closing, to stress once more, the very serious and absolute commitment of this Government to the principle of local government, to the principle of the decentralization of authority from central government to local government as much as possible, in fact, to the whole principle of the decentralization of many of the other functions of ministries of Government. Once that is understood, then immediately this will be clearly understood.

**4.05 p.m.**

We hope that members on all sides of the House would not ask for a further postponement of this debate and the postponement of a passage of this bill, because we consider it very important for reasons raised by the Member for Couva North, but that people would understand clearly, what is the intention of the Government, and therefore the logic of what we are doing as epitomized by this particular legislation.

I beg to support the legislation as strongly as possible and to recommend it to the full support of all Members of this honourable House. Thank you.

**Mrs. Muriel Donawa-McDavidson**(*Laventille*): Mr. Speaker, I had hoped this evening to simply sit in this Parliament and ensure, as stated in the programme, that the motion would be passed. However, it has been most unfortunate. In fact, I ought to say that I am speaking here as Member for Laventille who served in the San Fernando Borough Council from 1956 to 1961, and to indicate that it is most unfortunate to sit in the Parliament, session after session, to listen to Members opposite make the point that the PNM Government has done nothing for local government in Trinidad and Tobago.

The Hon. Member for Nariva has indicated the philosophy of the Government where local government is concerned, and I thought that I would put in the record the PNM's philosophy where local government is concerned.

The People's National Movement's philosophy on local government is grounded in the prescriptions of two men who have represented more than most, the two sides of the anti-colonial struggle. Mr. Speaker, the first is Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, Secretary of State for the colonies who, in an angry exercise of exchange, letters to the Borough Council of Port-of-Spain, asserted on August 31, 1898 that :

"The whole theory and foundation of sound municipal Government is that the ratepayers..."



And I am making the point giving the historical background that allowed the PNM to move in the direction in which it had taken.

"...as they have full management of their own local affairs and they cannot throw out this responsibility upon any other authority unless they are content at the same time, to part with their control."

The guiding principle in Chamberlain's assertion is that any failure of the ratepayers to assume full responsibility for, and full management of, their own local affairs will lead to a loss of control of those affairs under that authority. In our context, that other authority must mean the central government. Chamberlain is suggesting therefore, that if local government is to be a meaningful Governmental mechanism, it must function to ensure control by the ratepayers of its own local affairs."

The second person whose prescriptions must guide us is Dr. Eric Eustace Williams, the last Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago who, in his *Perspectives of the New Society* in 1970—

**Mr. Sudama:** Mr. Speaker, on a point of clarification. The Member said that Dr. Williams was the last Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago. I just need a little clarification on that

**Mrs. Donawa-McDavidson:** Mr. Speaker, the former Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, I am sorry, and thanks for the observation. What he said in the Chaguaramas declaration in 1970 was:

"We must devise a system which gives the central place to the idea of the sovereignty of the people. The people must participate actively in decision-making in political and economic matters. They must, after 400 years of being acted upon, act for themselves. From being passive objects of history, they must become active agents. They must shape their own future and their own destiny."

Mr. Speaker, my very presence in the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago is a testimony of the PNM's philosophy and democracy in action.

Eric Williams' guiding principle, therefore, was the concept of the sovereignty of the people. While he thought that universal adult suffrage provided a necessary condition for the translation of that concept into notions of popular participation and control, he was not satisfied that it was a sufficient condition. He therefore prescribed a greater degree of local government and a

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greater number of consultative mechanisms at various levels, including village councils, youth and other grassroot organizations.

When, therefore, this afternoon I am listening in the Parliament to the hon. Member of Couva North saying that the PNM Government wanted to discard and get rid of local government, sometimes you want to fight, but you try to sit quietly and listen to some of the things that go on.

This, he felt must apply with special force to Tobago as it is separated by the sea from the capital of the country. It is PNM Government who, considering the position of Tobago, made special provision. Taking Chamberlain and Williams together, we have to conclude that the philosophy of local government in a country like ours must reflect the need, both for institutionalizing the concept of the sovereignty of the people and to provide the social mechanisms and structures for ensuring that the people get the opportunities to assume authority and responsibility for the management of their own communities. Those communities must be managed proactively, rather than as they are given today, managed reactively.

Mr. Speaker, I have had the opportunity to serve in the PNM Government in the areas of community development; local government; sport culture and youth affairs, special works *etc*, all the Ministries where the peoples orientations are. In the 1970 declaration, the Party therefore understood the importance of completing the independence of Trinidad and Tobago and of preserving the democracy of Trinidad and Tobago. Towards that end, it was declared that it was vitally important that we get people's participation and involvement in all aspects of national life.

Mr. George Chambers, in his 1981 Budget Speech, made that philosophy very prominent by appealing to all state agencies, all private enterprises, *etc*, to become involved in the local areas and lend their technical support for the expansion and development of community participation.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Local Government and Community Development in February 1983, also prepared a draft policy paper for community development and local government. What the present administration has done is to review this document, to take from it what is relevant to their philosophy. Because some of what we say is in that philosophy; some new ideas have come forward. One would think therefore, that it is a continuation and completion of what was propagated by the PNM, because the philosophy of self-help, the philosophy of participation, the philosophy of involvement, they are all part of

the PNM's philosophy. Talk to the Member of Laventille. She has been part of community development, of sport, culture and youth affairs, of village councils. Whether you change a name—everybody has a right to change a name. I see nothing wrong if you choose to have a programme of people's orientation, fine. It is an area of involvement and participation. If you believe that the name YTEPP is another area of involvement and participation, fine. Whether it is YESS whether it is ECHO, the fact remains that ECHO has come out of a programme from the Government that sought to give assistance to communities. We had trade centers, youth camps; we had youth employment initiatives. I am looking with interest at the evolution of what will be necessary and important to complete the independence of Trinidad and Tobago. I am sincerely hoping that the time will really come when people will talk about what they are doing. Let us observe and make the criticisms. When criticisms are made by Members opposite, it is useful to see whether there is merit in those criticisms.

We have had several consultations with village councils, with youth organizations, with county councils, with local government bodies at all levels in this country. Consultation is nothing new. You, Mr. Speaker, will know better than anyone else, that even the Holy Prophet Mohammed in his time, to rule the "Ummat" did that by consultation of the people at all levels. So it is not a creative idea. It is nothing new. It is something that has happened before, it is something that has worked successfully and the philosophy which PNM undertook in order to get the views and the feelings of the people.

If, therefore, the present administration finds it possible, practical and usable to bring consultation as the means of activity, fine. Because it was done before; it has been successful; it has been done by the PNM. Clearly, it is your job to improve the methods, the qualities of the consultations and continue to bring the better results on the basis of the upliftment of people's consciousness, people's educational—

**Dr. Hosein:** Did the new PNM consult the people of Laventille as to the candidate—

**Mrs. Donawa-McDavidson:** Where the people of Laventille and PNM and Muriel are concerned, I can definitely take care of that.

**4.15 p.m.**

Mr. Speaker, I would, however, like to urge that whatever the reforms are, whatever is in this document today, nothing is final. Clearly, it is until you put

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these things into practice you will observe the loopholes, the difficulties, and the problems. The hon. Member for Couva North and the Member for Diego Martin, identified an area of concern whereby proportionately something seems not to be right. The Minister can, when he stands, give an explanation as to what allowed—*[Interruption]* The Member for Nariva always spoils this debate, you know. I was sitting here listening to every single word and from the time he hits that chord, about the PNM Government did nothing, he raised every—

**Dr. Samaroo:** Would the hon. Member give way, Mr. Speaker? I never said anything about the PNM Government.

**Mrs. Donawa-McDavidson:** He said 30 years—*[Interruption]* Okay. He is sorry for what he said and he will not say it again. So I will pass on.

However, Mr. Speaker, I would simply like to ask the Member for St. Joseph, one of the Members opposite whose wavelength I am able to understand a little better—*[Interruption]* Yes, Mr. Sudama, sometimes I understand your wavelength, sometimes I really do not.

The hon. Member would be wise to note the observations made and really examine them—because we will be examining those proposals—and to remember that whatever we do in this country, we will have to continue again the philosophy of the PNM, which is education for emancipation. In spite of whatever pieces of legislation are brought to this Parliament, what is essential is, again, consulting with the people, informing them, using the media more effectively, possibly in giving the ideas of what is involved, educating the masses. In other words, to ensure that when the time comes, whichever persons or party form the Government, whatever is good, you carry it through; whatever is bad, you change; whatever needs expanding, you expand.

I think if we concentrated on that area, the time will come in this country where we will develop a genuine two-party system of Government where the main interest will be the people's interests, and each section looking out for the weaknesses, criticizing constructively, and making certain that this democracy that many of us have sacrificed to bring to this stage, will be so secure that we can pass on, being assured that this can never change in Trinidad and Tobago. For God's sake, acknowledge what is good; correct what needs to be corrected; improve what needs to be improved, and stop making people believe that these ideas, these initiatives are new, they are original, they have come from your administration.

I hope, therefore, Mr. Speaker—I am tired to saying this, you know—that we will see the wisdom to come to this Parliament and really debate the issues, be intelligent, remember that the population is looking at us and listening to us. We are saying that we are going to act better; we are saying that after the attempted coup of July 27, 1990, things would become better.

This may not be the place to say it, but I would like to feel very proud of the fact that in this Parliament on the debate of the Children Act, I did say that from July 27, 1990, that I will make sure that the women of this country are mobilized more than they ever were before, to ensure that the next time a Parliament is convened more women would be here. I am happy to see that both political organizations have taken the idea very seriously and I am hoping in the education process, where this local government is concerned, that we will find the women of Trinidad and Tobago really coming out as they have never come out before and be really serious. Because it is really the women who do anything that is meaningful in Trinidad and Tobago.

I am not saying the men do not do anything, but we do it with less confusion. *[Interruption]* The gentleman is concerned here that we have not built one institution for women in 30 years. What we have done is give the impetus, the finance for one of the most powerful grassroots organizations of women in this country, to build and institution in Cocorite and I refer to the Federation of Women's Groups and Institutes. This is our concept when we think in terms of development, advancement, and development of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. Buy extension, I am observing that the present administration is doing likewise. They are getting the private enterprise, and state enterprises to become involved in national development, and absolutely nothing is wrong with this.

Let us really get serious and move quickly to save our nation. The only way I can safely see it, Mr. Speaker, we have to work to get those thousands of idle people, particularly our young people, who pain you 24 hours a day, involved, to get them participating, so that this nation of ours could be saved.

I wish to indicate that I will support—yes, we would support—*[Interruption]* Why I had to say that, Mr. Speaker, in the last debate in parliament I spoke, and what is very interesting, I neither said whether I support or did not support the bill. But I am in Parliament making many gesticulations and the reporter is saying what I have said. All I can do is burst out one big laugh and say, “Lord, when will TTT get serious about their responsibility to the nation?” The least they can do if they are not sure is to look at the notes or listen to the voice or let me speak

myself. From today I do not want them to say what I am saying; do not put me on the television. Do not say what I am saying in Parliament, because they have difficulty understanding what I am saying.

Thank you, very much, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Rawle Raphael** (*Arouca North*): Mr. Speaker, I just want to make a few comments with respect to this motion as it affects the Arouca North constituency. In 1987, I did indicate, and for the same reasons that the Member for Nariva indicated why certain communities should be given special consideration. I again want to appeal that the villagers of La Pastors, Lopino Settlement, Lopino Village and Surrey should be considered one electoral district because of the geography of the area, the commonality of the people in these areas and other reasons. As it is set out here, I think we continue to have no representation because of the distance. I am suggesting that some consideration be given to that.

Also, the villages of Blanchisseuse, La Fillette, Morne La Croix, Paria, and Virdenville, I feel that this area should have a separate district. To bunch it with Blanchisseuse, Santa Rosa, Wallerfield, I feel that is not fair to the people of Blanchicheuse, Virdenville, La Fillette, Morne La Croix, and Paria. So I would think some consideration should be given for representation in these particular villages, because they are far from Wallerfield and Santa Rosa.

In my view, Wallerfield and Santa Rosa is a correct mesh; Bon Air, Arouca also a correct mesh; Caroni, St. Helena, likewise; Caura East and Trincity, there could be some adjustment, but it is not too bad; La Florissant and Cleaver, a good mesh; La Horquetta as well; but Lopinot, Five Rivers, as a result of the terrain, the geography and the whole distance between these two areas, I feel some consideration should be given to these villages and the villages of La Pastora, Lopinot Settlement, Lopinot Village and Surrey. Mausica, Maloney, that is an okay blend. But I would want to think that the Elections and Boundaries Commission overall, in this area of Piarco, they did a fairly good job. But I feel there should be some way whereby the Elections and Boundaries Commission, whoever is responsible for going out into these areas, there should be some sort of consultation with Members of Parliament. I understand from the Member for Nariva they had some consultation with the local government representative, but facing the reality of it, there are some areas where the NAR no representation whatsoever and they might have a biased view in respect to certain areas.

So I would think that the Elections and Boundaries Commission should set up some system where we can have some kind of dialogue with Members of

Parliament and these suggestions would come up for the interest of the Piarco region. This is what I want to draw to the attention of the Minister. Thank you, very much.

**Mr. Govindra Roopnarine** (*Siparia*): Mr. Speaker, I just want to make a brief intervention. I think that by and large the Elections and Boundaries Commission ought to be commended for an excellent job done in compiling this report that is, given what has been imposed on it by Government, or by Parliament. Because when one looks at the report itself, or the manner in which the municipal areas have been defined, one can see that a genuine attempt was made by the Elections and Boundaries Commission to lump polling divisions in such a manner as to give those areas a commonality of interest. But what I cannot still agree on, is the imposition by Parliament on the Elections and Boundaries Commission. Because if one looks at the report and we look under "Municipal Corporations, Electoral Areas", we will see where, for example, the city of Port of Spain, which has 12 electoral districts, and a total electorate of 40,164, this means that there is an electorate of under 4,000 per electoral district; just over 3,000. Whereas in the city of San Fernando, we have nine electoral districts for a population of 41,964, which would mean for each electoral district we have an electorate of just over 3,000. For Arima there is under 3,000. For the Point Fortin borough, there is just a little over 2,000; and in the borough of Chaguanas, there is a little under 4,000.

My point is, that except for San Fernando and Chaguanas, the other municipalities all have under 4,000 per electoral district; that is an electorate of 4,000. Whereas for San Fernando and Chaguanas the number is greater, it is over 4,000. I would have thought that we could have had some kind of equality in ensuring that all of these municipal corporations have similar numbers in that, if we are arguing for equality of treatment, obviously, areas that have a larger number of electorates cannot be properly served by their representatives. As I said, this is not the fault of the Elections and Boundaries Commission; this is the fault of the Government or Parliament, as you may want to say.

The other point I wish to make is that I believe that Mayaro really deserves to be lumped in the way it has been lumped, in that I know the people of Mayaro, and there is a commonality of interests in the way it has been defined, but the only problem that can emerge here is that the area is much too small in that we have five polling divisions and five electoral districts and the representative only has to look after just a little over 1,000 people. I am wondering whether you

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would not have difficulty in setting up the administrative machinery to deal with such a small number of people or such small numbers of people in small electoral districts.

But now that I am certain that this final hurdle will be crossed before having the local government elections, once this draft is approved, I want to hope that we will have local government election as quickly as possible. Because I would hate to think that after having a postponement for a year, that we will shortly have introduced into the Parliament another postponement for another year. Because if that does not come to Parliament, then what is going to happen is that the lives of these local government bodies as they now exist, will expire, and the norm that takes place is that the chairmen of county councils or municipalities will carry on the affairs of these bodies. I do not think that is fair for the people in the local government districts. If they have elected people to serve them, then we must not allow a situation to develop where the life of these bodies lapses and the people are without representation. In any event, some of these bodies today do not enjoy—or rather, we do not have chairmen in some of these bodies that really belong to the party that is in control of the council, if you understand what I mean, so that really and truly these people will not get the benefit of the representation that they require from their representatives.

So I am hoping that we do not delay the exercise of holding elections, and that we do not have much time, and maybe possibly today, when this is approved by Parliament, we may be hearing something of an election date.

My other concern is that if the elections are to be held very early, then how are we going to set up the administrative machinery to deal with these new regional corporations and municipalities? Have we identified offices for these new regional corporations as yet, or are we in the process of doing that? How are we going to identify such offices? My hope is that we do not repeat the fiasco of the Victoria County Council where we are paying huge sums on rent to house this local government body for the length of time we have been occupying the offices in Princes Town. At the kind of rent we have been paying, by now we might have been able to build a building more comprehensive than what is being occupied now.

I hope that we do not repeat the fiasco of Princes Town and that the most important consideration that should go in identifying offices for these new regional corporations and municipalities, must be money for value, and that political patronage must not be the order of the day; that we must identify



properties that are ideally located at the most reasonable prices, and we must not allow nepotism or political patronage to come into the place.

So, as I said before, I think the Elections and Boundaries Commission ought to be commended. Given the constraints and what has been imposed on it, I really cannot fault them for bringing to Parliament this document. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** The sitting is suspended for half an hour.

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

**5.15 p.m.:** *Sitting resumed.*

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

**Mr. Raymond Palackdharrysingh** (*Naparima*): Mr. Deputy Speaker, this afternoon, what the Government is attempting to make us believe is that it has the will to effect a plan that is circumscribed by the municipalities bill. But sometimes I wonder how much of what they say they are going to do, will be done. I want to draw to your attention a pertinent example in Princes Town. About three years ago, or thereabouts, the county council hall was vacated so that there would be space and room to extend a market. The country council's administration was shifted to a building called Hosein's Building, and at rather a fantastic cost per month.

What we have seen happening until this very day, is neither an attempt made to extend the marketing facility nor an attempt made to reduce the expenditure of Government with respect to rentals. So based upon that sort of track record, I have to wonder how far will this bill be giving effect if we confirm the report here before us, this afternoon.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me just give a friendly piece of advice to the Member for Nariva. I think too often he has tried to slant what I have said. As historians, I agree that you write from your own perspective, but sometimes in the Parliament where we have the opportunity for debate, where we have the opportunity to test what is being said, I think he must be a little more careful in his interpretation of what he says.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the order before us is to give effect, as I said, to the Municipal Corporations Act. The Municipal Corporations Act's principal function was aimed at deconcentration and not devolution, as it was pointed out.

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Mr. Deputy Speaker, I indicated it was an Act aimed principally at deconcentration or decentralization and not devolution of powers. *[Interruption]* Look at you, it does not fit medical jargon so that is why you have a difficulty.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member will do well to concentrate on the Chair.

**Mr. Palackdharrysingh:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, at the same time I wish you would give me the minimum amount of protection.

In this respect, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am wondering once more whether or not the Government has had any plans whatsoever to give effect to local government as merely an agency of central government. I am wondering. Because what is tied up in this whole situation, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that situation in which you are moving away from county councils into regional councils, the number of regional councils really increasing. But for each regional councils, there must be a certain amount of infrastructure put down. You may need headquarters, you may need buildings like markets and public buildings, whatever they are, and to move from seven to 13 would almost instantly increase the cost of overhead. So administration becomes effectively more costly, and I am wondering whether or not the advantages, as advocated by the Member for Nariva, would come into reality.

Because even the county councils as they are, benefiting more or less from greater administration of scale, if I may put it that way, in terms of economy, have had great difficulty in meeting the recurrent expenditure, even for staff. A number of these county councils during the course of the NAR term of tenure, have had to really cut down on their work-force because they could not even pay some of their workers. In any event, it was part of what I like to call the IMF policy to reduce overhead expenditure among public sector employees. That has to be pointed out because with all the frustrations in the present situation of county councils as an administrative unit, I am wondering if this Government could set up the infrastructure in terms of physical amenities, and also in terms of personnel, to carry out the work that would be decentralized to it. I am wondering, because I do not think they could have half of a CAO. You need a whole one. Some units are indivisible. I am wondering if they could have half of a lawyer and half of an auditor.

So, in this case, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think that the country would really undergo some severe strain; that the difficulties experienced by the present county

councils would be further exacerbated in this new thrust, because I cannot see the money forthcoming unless there is a re-ordering of priorities, where you are going to take away some funds from essential services to give effect to this, to putting into being, the regional bodies.

**5.25 p.m.**

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think the Government has to clear that. It is important because, more and more, we are beginning to understand that our resources, even those that are allocated, are not optimally used and, therefore, with no proper co-ordination or no system of proper accountability, we would have greater difficulties in having much more of these organizations function.

I think the hon. Member for Arouca North has indicated quite clearly, in his own opinion, that the way the new regions are being demarcated may not necessarily give rise to either commonality of interests or cultural focus in the particular communities. If it were, he would not be at variance with his Government in either making the sort of observation he has made or making recommendations with respect to his own constituency. What is very clear is that there was a lumping together of certain towns and districts, and in that respect what became a criterion was the easily identifiable features, as was postulated previously—things like highways, rivers, hills and valleys, whatever it is. These were some of the considerations perhaps given that may not have had the cohesive binding force as the Government would want us to believe.

This society is in a state of dynamism, a state of flux. There is always internal movement, internal migration and, therefore, to postulate with any certainty the commonality of cultural traits might be pushing a concept a little too far. One has to understand that the sort of self-contained region that is being identified in this Order may not be in reality what is being said.

If you argue that there is going to be the promotion of regional economies, and the assumption that some of the basic infrastructure was put in place, will it not still mean that there had to be the linkage effect of integrating the regional economies to the macro economy?

For example, in marketing, farmers in some of the rural areas might produce copiously. If they are lucky they might have a point at which they can deliver, but in the region of production it may not necessarily mean that they have the market, that the demand for their product, produced locally, is not there and, therefore, they may have to take it to the urban centres or even be packaged for export. If

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these matters are not addressed, in which there is a complete link-up with the local communities and some of the more national areas for selling, then really what are the benefits? To think about regional economies, not merely as the production of commodities but also in terms of entertainment, and what not, who will be attracted in the areas if the necessary facilities are not being provided?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am at a loss really, to conceptualize the operational dimensions of this new situation. I want to take a look at, particularly one area which is called Diego Martin:

"Diego Martin consists of several suburban towns, north and west of the capital city. Life-styles range from those in low-income villages to upper-income suburban residential communities. Major problems to be attended to, include the need for infrastructural development in hillside areas and the rehabilitation of depressed urban communities and villages.

Where is the commonality of interests in an area like that, for example?

**Dr. Samaroo:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thank the hon. Member for giving way to a question. The whole trend of his argument seems to suggest that he is not satisfied with the way in which some of these boundaries have been demarcated. Would the hon. Member be satisfied with the setting up of a Select Committee of this House of Representatives to review the recommendations of the Elections and Boundaries Commission so that they can work further towards satisfying his particular demand?

**Mr. Palackdharrysingh:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, you know in our parliamentary system, whatever the Members of the Opposition think is immaterial—the "Ayes" always have it. You know that. I mean, if by their wisdom they think that is right, they have the authority to so proceed. I do not know why he is hooked on select committees.

**Mr. Myers:** This is not the first time you have made a recommendation. We listen to you sometimes.

**Mr. Palackdharrysingh:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to move on to a slightly different point, and I want to look at municipal corporations, the electoral areas of the cities of Port-of-Spain and San Fernando; the boroughs of Arima, Point Fortin and Chaguanas.

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

**Mr. Palackdharryshingh:** Mr. Speaker, in the Port-of-Spain area, I see that there are 12 electoral districts, each of them with an electorate of approximately 3,300—some slightly over; some slightly under. I look at San Fernando and I see nine electoral districts with an approximate electorate of 4,500—some slightly above; some slightly lower. I look at Arima, with seven electoral districts, with approximately 2,700; Point Fortin, with six electoral districts, with an approximate electorate of 2,000; and Chaguanas, with six electoral districts, with an approximate electorate of 4,300.

**5.35 p.m.**

Now, I have noticed that the number of electoral districts will not change because it is fixed by law. It is fixed by law but we are seeing that for these municipalities, we have, what I consider to be, quite a variation in the number of electorates. Can this be justified merely on the grounds that it is fixed by law? If it was a case where a re-ordering of the electoral district would have brought greater benefit, what was the great difficulty, really, in bringing to this Parliament, some piece of legislation to rationalize the size of the electoral districts in the municipalities? As I said before, I would like to have some clarification on it and if it is to stay as it is, then somebody must explain how the allocation of resources would be distributed to meet expenditures, recurrent, development and otherwise.

I have great difficulty in following how local government, merely by the change in the re-allocation of electoral districts to regional councils, would bring about greater harmonization of the system of government. The system is still tied to central government, via a ministry. You do not have space for innovations in the new set-up. Then other organizations like community organizations and village councils, have been precluded from the new set-up because the advisory bureau has taken its place.

To put merely a plan, or what you call a drawing of local government, as envisaged by the order, without giving substance to some of the administrative areas of functioning, in my view, would lead to more conflicts and disturbance. Another area of concern to me is the way the areas are demarcated. I would have imagined that if central government, in addition to all that it wanted to do, was to harmonize in a way that was more meaningful, it would have attempted to fit

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electoral districts within constituencies, so that half of an electoral district will not be in a NAR or UNC-controlled constituency.

We have had examples of where electoral districts criss-cross several constituencies and because of the persuasion of the particular councillor, he has the opportunity—and in some cases as has actually happened—to discriminate with respect to the allocation of funding and projects for basic amenities in particular communities, *vis-a-vis*, constituencies that do not favour his own political affiliation.

That, to me, is a very serious consideration because as you know, the perception of many people, is that the parliamentary representative is responsible for the provision of amenities. That is a perception that is still there. But as you see, some local government representatives have more power than we do, in terms of resources. If we are Opposition parliamentarians, we do not have a cent to split to allocate to anything. But when we have county councillors, they still have an allocation from the county council whereby they can spend certain sums, small as it is.

What I am saying is, if there was an attempt to accommodate the electoral districts within constituencies, regardless of the persuasion you might hold politically, the constituency, in some form or the other, would benefit. I am making that observation. I do not want to give examples—not that I do not have—but I would refrain from giving examples at this point in time, of that sort of situation.

I think the argument, or the case, for harmonizing local government is really a myth. Actually, if there is no relationship with parliamentary representatives there is going to be continued conflict. I do not know if that is the type of conflict that the hon. Minister for Nariva thinks is healthy for democracy, but in the end, a large section of taxpaying people suffer because of the behaviour of those who are put to disburse the nation's funds.

I believe to call regional bodies “little republics” is really to flatter. Because in the idea of republics there is the notion of some measure of power. As far as I see it, with the present arrangement, even as we attempt to change the jigsaw puzzle, if we cut up the pieces differently, in the end when you fit them back you are going to have the same picture emerging and very little would have been accomplished in a real sense.

**5.45 p.m.**

As I said before, I would be extremely happy to support any legislation that would give greater meaning to the democratic process, that would give local officers, county councillors, whoever they are, an opportunity to look at problems, identify those problems, and then come up with a rationale for their solution and find ways and means of implementing those solutions. But as it is, with a new form, all that has been happening is that the jigsaw puzzle pieces are fragmented but it is still tied to the string of central government and, therefore, in reality very little would be achieved.

So let no one talk about little republics, because in fact, there is nothing about republicanism in those regions. It is merely a convenient ploy at the moment to impress the electorate that at last we are trying to do something, but when you examine what is going to happen with respect to administration, what is going to happen with respect to the infrastructure, with respect to the linkages of those regional bodies with their wider macro apparatus, nothing significant is going to happen. I am afraid that this is just another attempt, like the promise of the Princes Town market and the building of a county council four years ago, this is going to be more or less the same sort of thing, telling the electorate —

**Mr. Sudama:** Could the Member give way to a question? Could he inform this House who made that promise—that a market would be constructed in Princes Town? Would the Member tell us who made that promise and whether we can believe that representative who made those promises?

**Mr. Palackdharrysingh:** If my memory serves me right, I understand it was the hon. Member for Nariva.

**Mr. Sudama:** Oh, it was him again. Fraud!

**Mr. Palackdharrysingh:** So, Mr. Speaker, I have a lot of qualms of what is before us and I am not sure whether or not it is workable. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Minister of Health (Hon. Selwyn Richardson):** I will be short, Mr. Speaker. I just wish to commend the Elections and Boundaries Commission for producing this excellent report under what I know were difficult circumstances. I will be short because the Member for Nariva has dealt with some of the criticisms raised in respect of the region of Mayaro—that section of the report.

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I am just in a quandary, after listening to what I think is the new PNM, as espoused by the Member for Diego Martin Central. I am wondering—

**Hon. Member:** You belonged to the old one.

**Mr. Richardson:** I did belong to the old one, like the Member for Laventille whom you want to put out. I believe that the new PNM seems to be critical of the fact that the Elections and Boundaries Commission has recommended Mayaro as a region. It seems as though the old PNM—

**Mr. Valley:** Mr. Speaker, the Minister is misleading the House. I was at pains to point out that the Elections and Boundaries Commission operated under a constraint, that the Act, in fact, defined Mayaro as a region and stated the areas that ought to be in Mayaro.

**Mr. Richardson:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, exactly so. Keep your seat. Do not get in a "hot seat" because this is exactly what I am saying. He wants to continue to lump Mayaro with Rio Claro. This is what has been done all down through the years. This is why as a child, for example, I had to leave Mayaro to come to Port of Spain to get an education. That is why all through the decades, children at Mayaro, as pointed out by the Member for Nariva, had to be on the roadsides from 4.30 on mornings to get to places like Port of Spain, San Fernando, Rio Claro or Sangre Grande, in order to get an education, returning home at 9.00 p.m., and this continued right up to 1988 when this Government came into office. It was only then that problem was solved. Does he want to let the people of Mayaro continue in the stone age?

**Mr. Valley:** Mr. Speaker, would he allow a question? I just wanted to ask the goodly Minister, given the fact that he spent five years in Government, what did he do during that period to alleviate the problems within that period with respect to Mayaro.

**Mr. Richardson:** I was Attorney General then and I did my work as Attorney General. If he takes up every law book, he will see what I did during my period as Attorney General. Even in Mayaro there, if he goes back to Mayaro, he will see the financial complex and the court house with my stone. I have many stones in many places. But he would see that stone as one of the several things I was able to accomplish despite people like him. You know of same, Mr. Speaker, as a practising member of the profession during that period. As I said, he wants to continue to lump Mayaro with Rio Claro, which is unworkable.



**Mr. Sudama:** I just wanted to ask him if he knew that George Bernard Shaw wrote a play called *Man and Superman*?

**Mr. Richardson:** As I was saying, there is no logic whatsoever in the argument as espoused by the Member for Diego Martin Central. The logic is the same as that which has been taking place for decades before this Government came into office in 1988, when we looked at all these country districts, all these rural areas like, Mayaro, and made sure that they were brought into the twenty-first century, literally.

The point is, the only time they recognize the region of Mayaro is at election time. You see what they are doing now. After all the decades when they totally ignored Mayaro, they are doing now what they have been doing over the past 25—30 years, that is, keep a fete, keep a family day, roti and everything and they figure that could get votes. *[Interruption]*

Of course, I could talk about it because I criticized that during my stay in the PNM and I still continue to criticize it. Mr. Speaker, they even went so far as to insult a member of the old PNM, Victor Campbell, the elected member for Ortoire/Mayaro. They called him a millstone. The man did not know where to put his face thereafter, up to today—a man elected by the people. This is how they treated Mayaro, but they know Mayaro now. Election time is coming up so suddenly they go Mayaro, big fete, rum and roti, and they think that they can continue to fool people in this way, but we will deal with them

**Dr. Hosein:** I thank the Member for giving way to a question. I just want to ask him whether he is aware that his predecessor, Mr. Leon Prevatt, also criticized the way the PNM treated Mayaro while he was a Member of this House.

**Mr. Richardson:** Yes, I am aware, Mr. Speaker. That is a fact.

I thank the Member for Siparia for supporting the region of Mayaro and possibility the Member for Laventille. My heart bleeds for her, an old PNM. I thank her for her support. Do not let them throw you out like that, Muriel. You deal with them.

As I said, I will be short. Look at the map of Trinidad and Tobago as produced by the Elections and Boundaries Commission. You know it, Mr. Speaker, as an Ortoire/Mayaro man. You will see how far Mayaro is, as the Member for Nariva said, from Rio Claro. Look at the distance people have to travel. They may not have the quantity, but they have the quality of people, a place that produced people like Michael Anthony, Prof. Knolly Butler. They have

vast areas as you will see on the map. Look at the area. Ortoire/Mayaro is the biggest geographical area in Trinidad and Tobago. If you look at page 180 of the report, you will see five areas: Mayaro Central stretching from Union Trace—the Member for Nariva was born quite near to there—along the Naparima/Mayaro Road, going South along the Mayaro/Guayaguayare Road to St. Ann's Road, westwards along St. Ann's Road to the point where it crosses the South Eastern corner of lands of heirs of Richardson, 16 acres. You know the vast area covered by that. Then Mayaro North, from Ortoire River to St. Joseph Estate. You are also very familiar with that. That is quite a large area. Then Mayaro South, from Naparima/Mayaro Road on the Mayaro/Guayaguayare Road to Naparima/Mayaro Road to a point on the sea coast.

**Mr. Valley:** I do not want to interfere with the Member's flow, but really, I want to ask him whether we are representing people or trees.

**Mr. Richardson:** Mayaro is people, not trees, and this is the mistake that the PNM made in 30 years and will continue to make. Mayaro has people. I take strong objections, Mr. Speaker, to his describing Mayaro as trees. Mayaro is not trees. This is how the new PNM would describe Mayaro, because Mayaro threw out the PNM in 1986 and they will throw them out again in 1991/1992 because they are not trees; they are not jumbies. They are people.

Next, Ortoire/Mafeking, from Cascadoo Trace. You know Cascadoo Trace on the Chip-Chip Road, Mr. Speaker. We now call it the Manzanilla/Mayaro Road. We know it as Chip-Chip Road because it was built of chip-chip shells. From Cascadoo Trace, coming all along Ortoire, right back to Mayaro.

Finally you have the electoral district of Trinity/Guayaguayare. Well that is the whole of the Guayaguayare area. Look at the kind of vast potential—natural gas: onshore oil, where oil was first discovered in Guayaguayare: offshore oil with Amoco and other companies responsible for the major wealth of Trinidad and Tobago. They did not know it, you know. The offshore oil between Amoco, Trintopec, *etc* that was what was responsible for the vast wealth of Trinidad and Tobago. Mayaro received nothing from it up to 1986 when we came into power. Ortoire/Mayaro and Mayaro in particular have nothing to show for it. That is why the Member for Diego Martin Central could describe the people of Mayaro as trees.

**5.55 pm.**

**Mr. Speaker:** Order please! Take your seats please. Order please. I recall what the Member said: He wanted to find out whether with these new arrangements in Mayaro, you will be representing trees. Is that what you said?

**Mr. Richardson:** Exactly so.

**Mr. Valley:** Mr. Speaker, what I said was, whether a Member represents people or trees. The Member was making the point with respect to geographical location. I am talking about the point that there are merely 6,000 persons in Mayaro, and that it should be joined with Rio Claro for representational purposes. *[Interruption.]* You know exactly what I am talking about.

**Mr. Richardson:** Mr. Speaker, this is the same logic used why the elected Member for Ortoire/Mayaro was described as a millstone—the Member for Laventille would remember that—and he was put in Siberia for years. It is the same logic. He is calling the Member for Ortoire/Mayaro and the people of Mayaro, trees. I am very proud to represent trees and the people who he call trees will deal with him in 1991/1992.

I assure the Member for Siparia that the infrastructure is there, the quality of people is there, and there is vast potential. Right now they are doing many surveys in Ortoire/Mayaro for oil, and if God is with us and we find some new resources there, Ortoire/Mayaro, Nariva, in general, and Mayaro in particular, would prosper one good day again.

The quality of people is there, the resources are there, the area is vast and the potential is there. With self-help and the work that this Government has done in the past five years, Mayaro, as a region, will prosper. I commend the Elections and Boundaries Commission and the Minister, the Member for St. Joseph, for what they have done. I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Minister of Works, Infrastructure and Decentralization (Dr. The Hon. Carson Charles:** Mr. Speaker, I would begin by thanking hon. Members for their contributions, and in particular the Members who gave their support or who made recommendations or suggestions for improvement in our work. A large number of matters were raised mostly matters of detail, but there are some points of significance which I would like to address.

First of all, I would like to begin by clarifying, for the benefit of Members, in response to some of the points made, in particular the points made by the Member for Naparima.

It was the purpose and the effect of Act. No. 21 of 1990, the Municipal Corporations Act, and in that regard, I must say unfortunately, Members really debated this Act and not the Order which was brought here today. In 1990, we had extensive debate of this particular Act and all these matters that were raised today, in fact, were raised in 1990.

Mr. Speaker, on that occasion, I referred to the world scene and I had put in context of the world scene, this reform exercise, which led to the Municipal Corporations Act. I wish to quote from the *Hansard*. On that occasion I said:

"After decades of much talk, of many false starts and much writing we are now off the starting block".

No attack on the PNM really, but just a matter of fact that there were many reports and we needed some work. I quote again:

"In 1990, we are in the center of world transformation on a huge scale. It has been repeated in this place and in many public places that we, in Trinidad and Tobago, must prepare ourselves to fit in with the world of tomorrow.

Mr. Speaker, what is that world of tomorrow? It has been repeated many times that with developments in Europe, North America, the Far East and the South East Asian areas of the world, we in Trinidad and Tobago and indeed in the Caribbean and Latin America, must get our act quickly or we will be left out.

There is a world movement towards globalization, towards the coming together of huge blocs into much greater blocs. Paralleled with this, there is also a world movement toward handing power and authority to the people who make up these nations, assembled into blocks. How else would it be possible to construct such blocs and maintain stability, but by the use of every method of decentralizing power and authority to those who must be beneficiaries of the services of the state?"

Mr. Speaker, that is the background against which this Act is being presented. It goes on to make the point, that it is necessary while one seeks to build on a regional basis, whether Caribbean regions, or even a wider North American, Central American, South American region as one wishes, it is necessary while

one does that, to at the same time, decentralize within the states and hand power to the people if only to maintain stability of these growing blocs. That was the background against which this was presented. This Act which we passed last year, provided for empowerment of the people, which is in fact a basic block on which Government's policies rest. It provides for example, in a very simple way.

The point was made that these bodies need to raise loans. I think it is the Leader of the Opposition who raised that point. Mr. Speaker, I repeat now, as I said then, that a county council cannot raise a loan, even if you wish to give it authority, even if you write and say you have authority, it cannot raise a loan. A county council, if it raises five cents, cannot keep the five cents because of the nature of the legislation under which the county council works, not because of Government policy. The existing laws do not allow the county councils to keep five cents. Therefore, they are totally and completely dependant on central government for everything. They are mere departments, arms of the central government.

This Act establishes the regional corporations, the regional municipalities and the cities and boroughs, as corporate entities with the power to utilize revenues which they raise. In other words, if they raise five cents, they can keep it. It does not go into the consolidated fund of the Treasury.

It empowers them to raise loans. Of course they must have approval of the central government WASA has to have approval of central government, PTSC, the Port Authority, they all have to have approval from the central government before they borrow money. Because if they borrow money and they cannot repay, who will be called upon to pay it? But at the present, time even if you give them authority, by policy they cannot raise loans. This Act would allow them to raise such loans and to utilize the money to develop the regions, once of course they show that they will be able to raise some funds from the investment of the loans and to develop the areas.

Mr. Speaker, this Act provides for the island of Trinidad to be sub-divided in a way that makes sense, based on geography, based on the way people live, based on community. In fact, I am very happy to get support from the hon. Member for Ortoire/Mayaro, from the Member for Nariva, from other Members; Member for Siparia, Member for Laventille—from those Members who appreciate the need to build communities.

**6.05 p.m.**

I must take time to explain the point about the difference in population, the difference in size, and so forth. One is seeking to build communities. Diego Martin seems to me to be a community. I do not think that the Member for Diego Martin Central would suggest that we take the Diego Martin region and further subdivide it, and I do not think he would suggest, either, that we join the Diego Martin region together with any other area. In fact, I think he should be quite happy to represent an area—for the time being, anyway—which falls within what will be the Diego Martin region rather than the St. George West County Council. Because the St. George West County runs from Chaguaramas to Hutton Road, in my constituency, in St. Joseph.

So, you see, all this point about the differences in size and so forth, may I indicate that—just approximate figures—St. George West County will be carrying a population of about 160,000 electors. Compare that the Nariva/Mayaro, under the existing system, would be carrying a population of about 21,000, a vast disparity. How much further can you get that that where St. George West runs Chaguaramas to St. Joseph? *[Interruption]*

Now, the Member for Diego Martin protests, but I wish to remind him that the political party to which he belongs took a position in this Parliament and elsewhere, in support of the existing arrangements for local Government. It took a position in support of the existing county arrangements in which you have this vast disparity from 160,000 to 21,000 in which the area from Chaguaramas to St. Joseph is considered one. That can never be community. Just carve out the city and leave all of that area as though it is just hinterland, treating the people of the country as hinterland. No wonder they have difficulty with Mayaro. Their concept is that you have the cities, you have these central urbanized areas, in which you concentrate services, you give them authority, and then everything else is hinterland. That is their concept, and if he disagrees with his political party, I have no problem with that. But I am reminding him that this is the policy position which his party took on the occasion of debate of the Municipal Corporations Bill. Mr. Speaker, we have tried—it is not perfect—to set out the areas in Trinidad on the basis of communities. So that Laventille is a natural community. As close as we can make it, we have established the boundaries of what can be called Laventille. If you move further south, you have the community of Couva; you have the community of Princes Town. In the central range you really have Tabaquite Talparo, a large geographical area, but many things in common, of

which perhaps the most important thing might be the need for infrastructure. So it goes on. The points have already been made about Mayaro and Rio Claro and the fact that we have taken pains to redraw the line which separates Nariva/Mayaro at the present time from St. Andrew/St. David to make more sense, in separating what would now be Rio Claro from Sangre Grande.

So it has been a deliberate policy, and I want to indicate, Mr. Speaker, that a large number of hours were spent by officers at various levels—including the Minister—on the road traveling to these areas, to see where the lines would run. It was not done by guess or by sitting in Port-of-Spain, in the office. The officers went out and I also went with them, to see where the lines would run, to go as far as we could, to make sure that communities were not broken up. But, of course, again, as I said, one cannot be perfect, there are areas in which there would be shortcomings.

I congratulate the Elections and Boundaries Commission, in that when it came to their turn to subdivide these regions; they too attempted to create communities for the various districts that had to be represented by the councilors. So that, for example, in the constituency of St. Joseph, most of it is now in the San Juan region, instead of an electoral area which is called Mt. D'or/Aranguez, which runs straight across, in which there is very little in common. They have now created Mt. D'or, Mt. Hope, Mt. Lambert where there is a lot more in common. There is an area called El Socorro, there is an area called Aranguez. The Electoral Boundaries Commission, in other words, perhaps taking the cue from what we intended, when it came to subdividing the regions themselves, also attempted to create distinct communities to be represented by the councillors.

In that regard, Mr. Speaker, I think the point raised by the Member for Arouca North, that when he looked at some of the recommendations of the EBC, he thought there could be improvements. For example, in the case of separating Blanchisseuse from Santa Rosa or Wallerfield, the Elections and Boundaries Commission recommends them as one, and he suggests they should be separated. I should indicate to him at least one of the problems that would be observed if you try to separate it is that Blanchisseuse, Morne La Croix—the whole North Coast area there—the population is much too small and, therefore, it would not satisfy the rules under which the EBC is operating, because when the EBC subdivides a particular region to create the various districts, the electoral population in each of those districts must not vary either more than 15 per cent below the average or more than 15 per cent above the average. So they are

constrained by the rules for subdividing. Therefore, it is not possible, again, in that case to observe all of the arrangements for the best community structure, but one can even subdivide a particular electoral district for convenience of representation into different sub-districts, even though you would have one representative.

There are other areas which he mentioned, but by and large, the Member made the point that the EBC's recommendations create the same community areas. There are some cases in which, perhaps, the names which are applied to describing areas could be looked at in the future, perhaps by the very councillors themselves, because they may consider that some of the names do not match, in their understanding, the areas they have to represent based on common usage. But I suggest that councillors in time, perhaps, could look at those things and make further recommendations on how to improve the community structure.

We have gone into the community structure in many other areas. It is the policy of the Government to empower people. When we talk about the community co-operatives, for example—I go to this point because I want to refer to a point made by the Member for Naparima, I think it was—which was voluntary, which are open to everybody in the community and which are intended to bring economic activity to the community, when one looks at that, it is an effort to empower the people to try to come to terms with the economic problems they face which the Government by itself cannot solve, which it cannot simply abdicate for the business community to solve, but it must join in partnership, the business community, the private sector, and the community, the people, who of themselves suffer the problems, to try to find solutions to these problems. It is community approach.

In respect of the CABs, the Citizen Advisory Bureaus, to which the Member referred, they do not replace the community organizations. That, in fact, is described in this very document which is provided to all Members. they do not replace the community organizations. The CABs represent an attempt to link central government, local government and community at the CABs. So, for example—of which one, in fact, was opened recently at San Juan—the committee which oversees the operation of the CAB, consists of representatives of the central government, representatives of the local government—in that case it would be the St. George West County Council for the time being until the new system comes into place—as well as representatives of the local business community, the Baratara/San Juan Business Association, representatives of the community co-



operatives in the area, representatives of the village councils in the area. So that they are all brought together to collaborate for the improvement of the community. So the CABs are not to get rid of the community organizations, village councils and so forth. They are to, in fact, bring them together to try to create a unified approach towards dealing with the community. That is the Government's policy.

Mr. Speaker, one point I must go into some detail to explain, relates to the rules used by the EBC for carrying out their work, because, in fact, that should have been one of the major areas of focus of today's debate. Because having passed this bill last year and brought into effect Act No. 21 of 1990, the Municipal Corporations Act, this Parliament did in this Act establish the various regions. We established the boundaries—if one wants to debate the boundaries, one can—but we established these boundaries last year after considerable debate in the Parliament.

The EBC's work, which is what we are dealing with now, was to take each region and apply the election rules towards subdividing the regions based on the electoral population which they observed when they went into the field to do their fieldwork. They did a considerable amount of fieldwork in a short time. They had to draw new polling divisions all over Trinidad to fit in with the boundaries, whenever the boundaries caused changes to their old polling division structure. They then applied the rules. Basically, there is a difference between the cities and boroughs on the one hand and the regions on the other hand. In the case of the cities and boroughs, the Act itself specifies the number of electoral districts in each city or borough. In this regard, we have simply continued from the old system. Remember, the Act consolidates the existing laws from the municipalities in the first place. It consolidates the old Port-of-Spain Corporation law and San Fernando Corporation and so forth into one. So we have continued with the arrangement for the number of seats in each of those cities and boroughs.

**Mr. Palackdharrysingh:** Did you continue because you felt it was quite a good arrangement? I mean, I have seen disparities in terms of numbers from borough to borough, and I am wondering why some amendment could not have been made.

**Dr. Charles:** The point is, of course, an amendment can be made. But one has to understand, one does not talk about consultation just in thin air. You do not consult with people and then ignore them; you consult with them and then take into consideration what they have said. So you do not simply implement a system

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of rules because you want to divide everything and have it equally and ignore what people said. The Port-of-Spain City Corporation would be most upset if you tell them that you want to change the number of electoral districts in Port of Spain from 12. At the present time there are 12 electoral districts in Port of Spain in the city. We provide for a very small expansion of the city by taking in the Federation Park area and so forth, which is an anomaly; taking in, for example, the barracks in St. James, which many persons do not realize is outside the city. This now includes that area in the city. So we have made some small amendments to make more sense.

How can we make a small amendment in increasing the area and then reduce the number of seats, when the city corporation would be most upset by reducing their number of electoral districts? We have tried to meet them, in other words, half-way. We have tried to maintain many of the powers which they have, which they have had for many years. We could have tried to bring everybody together on the same level. You would have had to bring down the city corporation of Port of Spain, and to bring up the others. You could not bring everything to the same level as the city corporation. It would be absurd. There are only two cities in Trinidad. What is to be the meaning of “city” if you bring everything to the same? Then forget the word “city”.

So therefore we had to meet half-way and we kept Port of Spain with the 12 electoral districts, although its population is not so large as to allow it to have districts of the same number of electors as some of the others. In the case of San Fernando, again, we provided for a small increase in the city, bringing in small area in the city. Once again, we kept the same number of electoral districts in San Fernando as exist at the present time. So there are nine councillors, I believe, at the present time, in San Fernando, and we continue with nine councillors. Similarly, in the case of Arima, there are seven councillors at the present time and we continued with seven councillors, we continued with six councillors. In the case of Chaguanas, a new borough, when we looked at the population, we decided that it should be eight, because if you have Point Fortin at six—you can look at the population of Point Fortin—you have Arima at seven, Chaguanas is bigger. You have San Fernando at nine, San Fernando is a city and its population also is bigger than Chaguanas. We thought, let us put Chaguanas at eight, simple. It makes sense. We were trying to meet the needs of people whom you are consulting, so it was not done blindly. So there is a hierarchy: 12 in Port-of-Spain, nine in San Fernando, eight in Chaguanas, seven in Arima, six in Point

Fortin. It makes absolute sense as far as I can tell, and as far as the persons who represent these councils can tell.

Therefore, in the case, the EBC did not have to determine the number of districts, they simply had to determine which were those districts and the names to be given to the districts, and that is what they did. In that regard, they must follow their own rules, as I said, to make sure that when they divide the electoral population in each of these cities or boroughs, each one does not vary less than 15 per cent below the average, and they can choose to arrange the areas how they wish. They have chosen to follow very much the divisions which exist at the present time, making small changes where they thought it was necessary.

In the case of the regions, it is different, because the existing legislation does not provide for a number to be attached to each region automatically. Instead, there is a formula under the County Councils Act. We thought that we would have a formula similarly in the Municipal Corporations Act, and the formula says that you start at the basic number of four, and you must have a basic number. The County Councils Act says you starts at four. You must have a basic number unless you want to have a council with two councillors and an alderman trying to make decisions on people's lives. It does not make sense. They cannot even form sub-committees. So you must start with a basic number so there are enough persons sitting in council to share ideas and make a decision, and the quorum of that council will be a substantial number. If you start with three your quorum will be two, and then it really becomes absurd.

So I like the existing County Councils Act, where the basic number is six, this says the basic number is four, because the areas are smaller by and large, and to that number you add one for every 15,000 electors or part thereof. Basically, that is how it is structured. So therefore you find with Mayaro, the electoral population is less than 15,000 therefore, four plus one. In Rio Claro, similarly, it is less than 15,000 four plus one. So five is your floor; a basic four plus one for every 15,000 or part thereof. Five persons can sit together in a council; three, but you will try to get five—you cannot really go below that—and you will try to make decisions and run the affairs of the council; plus two aldermen. Five plus two aldermen, that is seven, so it should be four; your quorum will be four.

In the case of the ones that are larger, of course, you go up by one for every 15,000, until you reach the largest one which happens to be the San Juan Corporation, with a population over 60,000, therefore nine councillors and two aldermen. We have kept two aldermen in each case after a lot of debate. In fact,

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we had some variation, but when we met with the Association of County Councils, they thought we should keep that kind of arrangement, and we kept it at two aldermen.

Again, it is not by guess. If you look at the arithmetic in the documents, you will miss completely the results of the consultation. Because you have the arithmetic, but when you meet with the county councillors and you consult, you have to meet some of their concerns, and you will not see that in the documents here. But, of course, as I said, they were presented last year, when we debated the Municipal Corporations Bill. It simply happens that Members did not remember what was the full extent of debate last year.

The EBC, therefore, simply carried out their work in respect of these regions. Once they had determined the number of seats, they carved up the areas and they recommended to us now in this report, each area, the name of the area, number of electors. As I said, when I referred to our technical people to which the hon. Member for Couva North, I believe, hon. Leader of the Opposition, made some remarks, if you say you have not had any technical analysis, you have a problem; when you have technical analysis you have a problem as well. So everything must be done arbitrarily.

What the technical people had to do was to assess whether the EBC had followed the rules as far as we could tell. That is all they had to do. Did they follow the rules or not? If they did not follow the rules, we have reason for recommending amendments. If they did follow the rules, we may still recommend amendments, but we have to have different reasons. We have found that they have followed the rules. I am quite happy with their work, Mr. Speaker, and I commend them for it.

Mr. Speaker, there are many other minor points raised concerning the operation of the system. One concerns financing and undermining of the system by central government, including LIDP and so forth. Well, LIDP is a very popular topic these days. I am not surprised. I expect it will become even more popular in the coming weeks. I said a couple of months ago that I expected that around this time, many political operators would begin to find difficulties with it. I am not surprised. In fact, they would have difficulties in anything that the Government is doing right.

Mr. Speaker, when one looks at the funding of local government, I cannot say that local government is getting any fantastic amount of funds. Everybody is have a squeeze for funds. But when you look at the funding of local government, 1987

releases, recurrent—\$389 million—continuing in 1988—let me give you the total figure: 1987, \$412 million; 1988, \$336 million; 1989, total figure of \$275 million; 1990, \$289 million. Just take 1990, Mr. Speaker, total \$289 million. Now that is a reduction from 1987. Everybody else had a reduction from 1987. But what about LIDP, which people like to make so many comparisons with? In 1987, the DEWD programme had \$120 million-odd, and expenditure even went beyond that. In 1990, the figure was just about \$74 million. This year, in fact, I think it is likely to reach about \$86 million, if we can find the additional funds. In 1987, \$120 million-plus. Do not talk about going back to 1980 in the days of plenty. I have made the point several times, \$300 million.

So when one looks at the funds that LIDP is working with right now, it is not a considerable amount of money. This year, \$86 million. Local government is going with some \$300 million almost, \$289,990,000 in releases. Now, I do not expect LIDP to get the same amount as local government, but I want to make the point. This attitude that LIDP has so much money and it has not had any cuts in its allocation is just wrong. It has had massive cuts. But we simply have had people who want to work. The workers in local government would want to work as well, when this comes into effect; when they can get the management systems and so forth. Do you know what it is to spend \$300 million in a system in which you probably have one or two engineers, one in Port of Spain, and one in San Fernando, the two corporations? This does not include the moneys raised by the corporations themselves, because Port of Spain and San Fernando raise revenues from taxes and add to this. Over \$300 million, in other words, and you have two engineers. That is madness. How many accountants? You must have the structure, plus you must have the authority to raise funds, to have fund-raising ventures, to have business ventures, to make money, in other words, to serve the people, including the provision for property taxation whereby the Government can relinquish its own stake in property taxation for the local government body to take it up. That is provided for in the Act. The Act even provides for it to be introduced in a gradual manner so that you can consult further, and decide when you will introduce that in the various parts of the country. So the drafters of this Act were not making a joke, you know, they are very good.

Mr. Speaker, I hope I have attended to some of the major points raised. There are many other minor ones, as I said. This “ole talk” about the Tobago House of Assembly, I wish all these things were said when the Tobago House of Assembly Bill was being passed. The Members of the Opposition were not criticizing it the way they are criticizing it now. The fact of the matter is, when you look at that

money spent in Tobago by the THA, at the recurrent and development levels, it represents virtually all the moneys spent on Tobago. The Ministry of Works does not have any departments, highways and drainage departments Tobago. But in Trinidad, you cannot compare it with the county councils.

**Mr. Palackdharrysingh:** Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The hon. Minister is misleading this House. We never criticized the THA Act here today. We merely used that as a model for real devolution of power.

**6.35 p.m.**

**Dr. Charles:** I was indicating, Mr. Speaker, that it is completely wrong, misleading and mischievous for anyone to compare the money spent in Tobago by the THA with the money spent by a county council, because in each county, apart from the county council, there are numerous central government agencies at work on the development side and on the recurrent side. If you want to make the comparison, make it on an equitable basis. Carve out the geographical area, find out what central government spends, as well as local government, and compare it to what is spent by central and local government in Tobago. Do not come with the THA expenditure and the county council expenditure. That is totally out of order.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to make one final point. That is, I appreciate the approach taken by the Member for Laventille. She has two major battles. If she makes the first one, the second one, I am afraid, is much more difficult, but I wish her well. One really cannot say that the former Government in its last years stood seriously for decentralization. It may have stood for decentralization some time ago. One can look, in fact, at the words of some of our past leaders and compare them with their deeds, and therein lies a story.

**Hon. Member:** Including some of the present leaders.

**Dr. Charles:** They did not stand for decentralization because they centralized everything over the years, out of expediency perhaps, but one by one everything was centralized. That is a fact. Up to today, as I said, when you listen to the policy position taken by the party, as opposed to the position taken by individual Members of Parliament, you find that they still stand for centralization of the highest order.

When you look, on the other hand, at the United National Congress, first of all, in a debate on this motion one Member was taking one position of support;

the next minute another Member opposing, so we could not figure out which way they were going.

**Hon. Member:** You better check the *Hansard*.

**Dr. Charles:** I have it, it is in the *Hansard*—some supporting; some opposing.

**Mr. Sudama:** Who supported that?

**Dr. Charles:** You should ask the Member who left. You should ask the Member for Siparia, for example.

**Mr. Sudama:** Check the *Hansard*.

**Dr. Charles:** Yes, it is in the *Hansard*. I have checked it. The point is that they stand for what can only be described as anarchy. Are you going to have each area of the country running the Police Service, as well? Are you going to break up the Army into little bits and pieces? I mean, if you follow what they are saying, you will go the extreme distance of breaking up Trinidad into a number of "independent republics". You cannot take either extreme, it is absurd. *[Interruption]* Clearly, what my colleague was speaking about was this motion, and clearly he was referring to the happy medium which we have struck here—republic only in the sense of people feeling a sense of identity, but not in the sense of being in charge of every single operation in the area. I use the term, "independent republics" literally—not figuratively—to say that if you follow what they are saying you will break up Trinidad into a number of independent areas, which will each declare independence. That is the line that they were taking. So we must not go with either of these extremes, because these are two extreme organizations.

I think that we have struck a happy medium, and once again, I praise the EBC for their work and I commend it to the Parliament.

With these words, Mr. Speaker, I beg to move.

*Resolved:*

That the draft of "The Elections and Boundaries Commission (Local Government) Order, 1991" be approved.

*Question put and agreed to.*

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*Motion made and question proposed, That the House do now adjourn to Friday, August 30, 1991 at 1.30 p.m. sharp. [Hon. B. Tewarie]*

*Question put and agreed to.*

*House adjourned accordingly.*

*Adjourned at 6.41 p.m.*