

*Leave of Absence**Friday, October 11, 1991***HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES***Friday, October 11, 1991*

The House met at 1.40 p.m.

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

Mr. Speaker: The following Members have been granted leave of absence: Member for Tobago West (Miss Pamela Nicholson), the Member for Fyzabad (Mr. Arthur Sanderson), Member for Diego Martin West (Miss Margaret Hector).

PAPERS LAID

1. Report of the Auditor General on the Accounts of the National Gas Company of Trinidad and Tobago Limited for the year ended December 31, 1984. [The Minister of Finance (*Hon. S. Wilson*)]
2. Report of the Auditor General on the Accounts of the National Gas Company of Trinidad and Tobago Limited for the year ended December 31, 1985. [*Hon. S. Wilson*]
3. Report of the Auditor General on the Accounts of the National Gas Company of Trinidad and Tobago Limited for they year ended December 31, 1986. [*Hon. S. Wilson*]
4. Report of the Auditor General on the Accounts of Trinidad and Tobago (BWIA International Airways Corporation for the year ended December 31, 1987. [*Hon. S. Wilson*]
Papers 1—4 referred to the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee.
5. Trinidad and Tobago Tourism Development Annual Report for the year ended 1990. [The Minister of Industry, Enterprise and Tourism (*Dr. The Hon. B. Tewarie*)]

SPECIAL SELECT COMMITTEES

Mr. Oswald Hem Lee (*Pointe-a-Pierre*): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this House adopt the following reports:

Rebirth House (Inc'n) Bill

Report of the Special Select Committee of the House appointed to consider and report on a private bill for the incorporation of the Rebirth House and matters incidental thereto:

Church of Spiritual Metaphysics (Inc'n) Bill

Report of the Special Select Committee of the House appointed to consider and report on the private bill for the incorporation of the Church of Spiritual Metaphysics and for matters incidental thereto.

Question proposed.

Question put and agreed to.

Reports adopted.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS**Oropouche Constituency
(Visits)**

67. Mr. Trevor Sudama (*Oropouche*): asked the Minister of Works, Infrastructure and Decentralization:

- (a) Could the Minister state why he refuses to respond to my letter to him of June, 3 1991, requesting him to have on-site visit with me of certain critical highways, drainage and bridges problems in my constituency?
- (b) Could the Minister state what is the policy of his Government with respect to requests from duly elected representatives of the people in the House of Representatives for the addressing of problems brought to the attention of the Government?
- (c) Could the Minister state why he visits the constituency of Oropouche at the instance of those who are not duly elected representatives but chooses to ignore the duly elected representative when such requests are made by the latter?

**Foreign Debt
(Rescheduling)**

68. Mr. Trevor Sudama (*Oropouche*) asked the Minister of Finance:

- (a) Could the Minister state when the debt rescheduling arrangements with foreign Governments and commercial institutions, will expire and, after that date, what will be the annual foreign debt that this country will be required to pay in the ensuing five years?

- (b) Could the Minister state whether his Government intends to negotiate any further rescheduling agreements with foreign Governments and international commercial institutions?
- (c) Could the Minister state whether his Government intends to incur any additional foreign indebtedness before the expiry of his term of office?

Question, by leave, deferred.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS AUTHORITY BILL

[THIRD DAY]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question [October 4, 1991]:

That the bill be now read a second time.

Question again proposed.

Mr. Oswald Hem Lee (*Pointe-a-Pierre*): Mr. Speaker, when we took the adjournment on the last day I had just reached the position where I had started to look at the role of telecommunications and indeed the electronic media, the role it is expected to play as we move through the 1990s and beyond, with respect to education and in particular, distance education. I have no doubt that, indeed, in the years ahead, we in Trinidad and Tobago will have to focus more on providing education for our citizens through the means of the television and through the means of video cassette to a greater extent.

Mr. Speaker, Trinidad and Tobago is now in the position where an increasing number of our young citizens who are qualified and who wish to continue their education are somewhat constrained and are indeed unable to pursue their educational goals because of the unavailability of places particularly at the sixth form level, at the technical institutions as well as the university. This is compounded by the fact that in many instances they cannot pursue their educational goals because of the prohibitive cost of having to study overseas. Based on these factors and bearing in mind that we are fully aware that our continued advancement in the social and economic and, indeed, technical fields demand that the larger sections of our population be exposed to tertiary education, it is incumbent that we find other means in order to provide that kind of educational opportunity for our citizens.

Mr. Speaker, recent studies done at the university revealed that the University of the West Indies is only able to—that is the St. Augustine campus—provide five

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per cent of our national population with a university education, whereas, the standard in developed countries is for 15 to 25 per cent of their population to move on to the tertiary education level. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, we in Trinidad and Tobago must make up this deficit one way or another. In my view, in our present state of economic development, Trinidad and Tobago cannot make up this deficiency in the normal conventional way, that is providing additional school places or additional places at the university, or at the technical institutes. We are fully aware that our society must be provided with these higher skills in order to cope and in order to get ahead in this modern world. I suggest that, yes, indeed, greater use will have to be made of distance education and distance teaching, on the whole, in order to make up that deficit and to raise the percentage of persons in Trinidad and Tobago who have been exposed to tertiary education.

1.50 p.m

Mr. Speaker, as you, yourself would be well aware, Trinidad and Tobago is no stranger to distance teaching. In the first instance, we have here many academics who now hold prominent positions in Trinidad and Tobago, who acquired or achieved the academic qualification through correspondence courses, be they from Wosley Hall, City and Guilds or London University. Apart from that, the School Broadcasting Unit of the Ministry of Education has been providing a useful back-up service to primary school education over the last 30 years or so. Therefore, we have, in the Ministry of Education, a body of experienced people in the field on which we can truly build, to provide modern distance teaching programmes.

Further, the Educational Development Learning Resource Centre, which is scheduled to be formally opened early next month, will have the technological facilities to provide full and integrated curriculum support service to our regular school system.

When the centre becomes fully operational, it is envisaged that in addition to the present school broadcasting system, there will be educational television on a regular basis, which will include basic core curriculum support, supplementary or enrichment programmes, programme instruction in areas where good teachers or specialized equipment are supplied, technical, vocational education, teacher education and support in sports and in the aesthetics area.

Mr. Speaker, satellite facilities have already been put in place and, therefore, we feel and we know that we will be able to capture contemporary foreign materials which we can record and use and distribute to our schools throughout

Trinidad and Tobago, to be used as a support system for our teachers and, indeed, our pupils.

Mr. Speaker, in my view, the facilities of the Learning Resource Centre can, indeed, be put at the disposal of the University of the West Indies and, indeed, other institutions of higher learning, in order to provide degree programmes for other citizens who would not have had the opportunity to go to the university for one reason or another, whether it is because of work constraint or whatever. I have no doubt that once the university takes up the challenge, degree programmes can indeed be organized so that we can have tertiary education reaching a wider range of our citizens.

Already, Mr. Speaker, through the UWI-DITE process of distance teaching, certificate programmes are already in place and are being carried out on more or less a daily basis. But it is for the university to decide, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, to administer some degree programmes. This is not something that is foreign, or something that is not practiced widely in the world; it is widely practiced in the world. It is developing more and more as we move on towards the year 2000.

Mr. Speaker, I would just like to make a quote from a study that was done, and the paper is entitled "Appraisal of Distance Education at the University of the West Indies: First Impression", written by Mr. William Renwick, from the Commonwealth of Learning, Vancouver, dated June 1991. Its observations are as follows:

"Adult Learning and Distance Learning: Distance education is one of the fastest growing fields of education and it is bound to increase ever further in this decade. It will become an important aspect of work of national tertiary institutions in the Commonwealth Caribbean as well as the University of the West Indies. The university should consider developing for teaching through distance education modes, courses in pedagogy of adult learning and of distant teaching and learning."

I am saying that the Learning Resource Centre—which is to be formally opened next month—is a centre where we will have the necessary facilities and the capabilities to undertake such a programme. I want to indicate that in my view the university should spare no effort in pursuing these laudable goals in order to provide higher education to a wider cross-section of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

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So, Mr. Speaker, with one final aspect on this bill, the function of the bill, I merely should like to make an observation, and it has to do with the functions of the Authority. One of the functions of the Authority, on page 14 of the bill, at subparagraph (p), states:

“to investigate complaints received from the public in respect of problems of harmful interference and report receipt of complaints and resolution of same pursuant to section 66 (3).”

I am happy that this aspect is out in the bill, because there have been persons who have come to my constituency office to complain about the reception they receive on their television sets with respect to the interference from short-wave radios. A certain constituent of mine, whose neighbour has a REACT facility indicated to me that they are able to hear the entire conversation that goes on through the televisions, and although they have complained to the REACT people, and they have brought in people there to look at the situation nothing has been done. They have tremendous difficulty in enjoying their television shows when the persons are using their REACT equipment. Therefore, when this bill is put in place, I feel that such a matter should be more actively pursued and there would be a greater avenue for redress for such individuals who might be plagued with the same kind of conditions.

So, Mr. Speaker, in giving support to the bill, I want to indicate that, in my view, it could not have come at a more timely stage, in that the provisions as enunciated in the bill could only lead to a greater organization and greater improvement with respect to telecommunications; the additional radio stations and television stations that we are expecting to see emerging in Trinidad and Tobago over the next few months or so. Thank you.

The Minister of Planning and Mobilization (Hon. Winston Dookeran):
Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to lend my full support to what I consider to be a very unique and far-reaching piece of legislation that is before this House today, and which was so ably moved by the Minister two weeks ago.

Mr. Speaker, during the course of the debate, we have had a number of presentations aimed at explaining the operations of the Telecommunications Authority as it has been conceived, and as it has been brought to Parliament. We have indicated before that this speaks of a wider mandate that continues to inspire the vision of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. During the course of receiving this mandate, reference was made to the changing world environment in which we

live today. The clear commitment for the establishment of a telecommunications authority was given in the manifesto of the National Alliance for Reconstruction, subsequently adopted as Government's Medium Term policy in this matter, and further elaborated upon in the Macro-Planning Framework which was laid in this Parliament as we attempt to put into place very important vehicle that will be able to give Trinidad and Tobago the opportunity to participate very effectively in the changing world environment.

It is instructive to note, Mr. Speaker, the way in which the Government has approached this very important task. Based on very careful analysis and study, the Government, in the first place, prepared a white paper which was the subject of full discussion by all the relevant parties in Trinidad and Tobago, bringing to bear all the new ideas and thinking of those who have expertise in this matter, also engaging the wider community in formulating the precise instrument.

The task force was in fact established in order to go into great detail as to the modus operandi of the proposed Authority. Subsequently, after Cabinet deliberated on the matter and took a firm decision, appropriate legislation was prepared. I raise that, if only to emphasize the professional approach of the Government in handling these major issues. A professional approach that also brings into focus a consultative process. But I think it is important for the nation and for the country to recognize the professional way in which we have been tackling our problems on all fronts. This is but one example of a unique process that is today part of the administrative vocabulary in Trinidad and Tobago.

The mandate, therefore, was translated through this process into the Telecommunications Authority Bill. I should like to take the opportunity to put this piece of legislation in the context of some of the international developments that have taken place so that we can position the response of Trinidad and Tobago in a manner that will be able to reap substantial benefits for us in the future.

There is no question, Mr. Speaker, that the legislation before us is a response to a search for a very practical response for new economic space in our country. The information subsection today is the area of focus. What we are engaged in, in this debate, and what will happen thereafter, is the provision of institutional and management structure in order to exploit the full benefits of the information era that is now on our doorsteps.

The information era, Mr. Speaker, is viewed as perhaps the single most important development that will become relevant to the 1990s and beyond. Our

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search for new economic space has been confined not only to physical economic space, but indeed to searching for new economic space in areas of economic and social activity in which we are now engaged.

Mr. Speaker, it is widely recognized that in the same way that the transportation revolution changed the world scenario, so too, today, we are on the doorsteps of major revolutionary changes in the information systems. The bill before us is an invitation to the people of Trinidad and Tobago to participate fully in the new technologies in this area, to widen our horizon and be able to seek direct economic and social benefits in this area of the information subsector.

Throughout the world, developments have been taking place in this particular area. A recent report published in the *South* magazine, which has been engaged in discussing many issues that are relevant to developing countries, identified a number of concerns which must be addressed by us in the Caribbean and other countries of Latin America, Asia and Africa. The very first statement in that special report dealing with the information age made the following statement:

“Despite wide agreement that investments in telecommunication bring far-reaching economic benefits and despite the apparent willingness of development banks to fund well-planned programmes, the telecommunications gap between the north and the south is, if anything, widening.”

It goes on to say, Mr. Speaker, that:

“...the most recent calculation found that of the more than US \$100 million invested in telecommunications in 1983, only about US \$8 million was spent in improving third world networks.”

The challenge, Mr. Speaker, is very clear. We must now position ourselves to be the recipients of substantial investment in this area, not only to provide an additional link in the network that is now developing at a phenomenal rate but also to be able to seek direct economic benefits from these new ventures.

This is an area, that has been left untouched for too long; an area, in which, as a nation, we have not addressed an appropriate approach. The bill today brought by this Government is from a carefully studied and a carefully designed response to the changes that have taken place around us.

Mr. Speaker, throughout the world, developments of this nature are being emphasized. In a report that was published in the *Financial Times*, a number of developments were identified. Poland is planning a radical deregulation of its telecommunications industry in order to enable it to modernize its network faster than the world otherwise could expect.

Nigeria, is also engaged in these developments, and in an article focusing on developments in Nigeria, it was pointed out that a truly effective telecommunications system is now regarded as essential by both the government and financial institutions, if old businesses are to be retained and new ones attracted. The European Economic Community—and I quote from the report dealing with developments there:

“As the 1980s come to a close, a new liberal era in European telecommunications seems about to begin. In the last months of 1989, Ministers agreed on two important directives. The first was to open up the market in telecommunications services, and the second to agree on technical rules for free access to networks. With the passage of those two directives, the bulk of the measures laid out by the Commission in its 1987 white paper on the liberalization of the telecommunications market, have been adopted, leaving a handle with which greater detailed programmes could now be developed. The focus for change will then move to satellites.”

Another part of that report, Mr. Speaker, talks about the assessment of what has been called an expanding market for value-added services is now emerging worldwide. These value-added services will in the final analysis, bring about the employment of our people, that will create the need for transforming our training programmes to meet that need, and will also add to the possibilities of substantial investment in this area.

So what we see emerging, Mr. Speaker, is a new international market which is expanding and today, electronic trading is a part of that world scenario. Other countries have also engaged in fundamental responses to the international developments around us.

Canada, Mr. Speaker—in the report to which I am referring—indicated that the opening shot in the far-reaching Canadian telecommunications battle is due to be fired within the next few weeks, when the Toronto-based CNCP telecommunications files an application with the regulatory agency in Ottawa to break new grounds for Canada in the telecommunications field.

Mr. Speaker, we can go far and wide. But what is very clear at this stage is that the entire world is responding to a changing technological and economic map before us. They have been able to do that in different ways. Here in Trinidad and Tobago we are committed, as a Government, to ensuring that we put ourselves in a position to maximize our benefits from these developments taking place, and place this country in a position that it will in years to come, be able to fully secure the benefits of the information era.

There is no question about it. The information subsector is perhaps the single most important growth area, based on an international expanding market, and we in Trinidad and Tobago have been one of the first of the countries in Latin America and the Caribbean to respond so positively and so quickly to that challenge ahead of us.

This, Mr. Speaker, must also be seen in the context of a wider programme which has already been enunciated on the communications and information systems of Trinidad and Tobago. An entire chapter was devoted to this particular area in our *Medium Term Macro-Planning Framework*, which outlines all the various changes that have taken place, and will take place in the field of broadcasting, in the field of telecommunication and in the field of information.

It is against the background, Mr. Speaker, and those possibilities for the future that the Bill before us has many very unique qualities. It is unique, for in Trinidad and Tobago we have been able to devise an instrument that will be able to co-ordinate policy-making within a regulatory framework and with an investment potential. Most countries of the world who have had programmes of this nature have had great difficulties in effecting that co-ordination. One of the very peculiar aspects of the bill before us, is the establishment of a system that will bring about that co-ordination in a systematic and coherent way.

2.20 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, let me briefly look at some of the developments in other countries, in order to convince hon. Members of the uniqueness of the approach that we are taking here in Trinidad and Tobago. When we look at developments in other parts of the world, we see a clear division of these responsibilities that have generated a lack of action. The structure of the Authority which is being established here in Trinidad and Tobago is meant to bring about a very effective form of co-ordination and action.

In the United States of America, there is a Federal Communication Commission, which operates as an autonomous body, established for the regulation and licensing functions, and a National Telecommunication and Information Administration, the policy-making body, as a government department. In the bill before us, we have been able to combine those very important functions in a co-ordinated approach as the functions and operations of such institutions are equivalent to what will be part of our operations in the Telecommunications Authority.

In Canada, there is the Department of Commerce and the Radio and Telecommunications Regulatory Board. Both bodies are equivalent to the single Authority which is to be established here in Trinidad and Tobago. In Britain, there is an Office of Telecommunications responsible for regulatory matters; the Department of Trade and Industry as a licensing and policy body; and an independent broadcasting authority. In Trinidad and Tobago, we have been able to combine, in a co-ordinated approach, these three functions into one institution.

In our own Caribbean region, most of the countries have maintained a purely regulatory role in this aspect and very little attention has been placed on policy-formulation and certainly investment-promotion.

The uniqueness, therefore, of our Authority is one which I have no doubt will be a model that will be used by other countries of the Caribbean and Latin America, as they too make their appropriate responses to the international developments that are taking place in the information era.

It is important to emphasize that the Telecommunications Authority is established as a body that has great autonomy. The Board will be appointed by the President, in consultation with the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition. It is expected that the members will have full knowledge and experience in the field of telecommunications. Such a knowledgeable board and such an autonomous operation will also ensure the full protection of the Authority from narrow political interests, for it embraces a wide area of activity in telecommunications, broadcasting and information. Its reporting system will be direct to the Parliament and necessary provisions for financial responsibility are clearly laid out in the bill. A broadcast code—which has been the subject of some debate here—will also be approved by Parliament.

In this context, Mr. Speaker, we see the approach of the Government to establish institutions that will be able to outlive any narrow political requirements,

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but will be able to serve its objectives faithfully to the nation. So the uniqueness of the legislation before us is one that we must emphasize as we take a lead in Trinidad and Tobago in moving in this direction.

What are some of the direct benefits that will be derived out of the new framework that is now being debated? In the first place, there will be an increased demand for different types of skills to be developed in the country to be able to cope with the requirements which are taking place in broadcasting, telecommunications and information.

Our educational institutions will have to respond to that situation to create skilled persons and human resource development in many other areas of activity. This, of necessity, will mean fundamental changes in the priorities of our educational system. The Government has already recognized that by ensuring, in its proposed programme for community college development, that the discipline of communication, information and broadcasting is given sufficient priority. Our young people, therefore, who are aspiring for further training and acquiring skills in the new area of activity, will have new doors opened to them through our training programmes that must, of necessity, be put into place so that we can exploit the opportunities in the information era.

Mr. Speaker, investment is a very important consideration. In this particular area, there is need for large investments and, of necessity, there is need to work with foreign and local capital to ensure that there is sufficient investment that would come our way in order to add more value to the services. The investment will be of a specific quality, for what we are trying to promote is investment in high value activities so that there will be new opportunities of a different nature which will expand our job markets for the future. Already there are some steps that have been taken in order to encourage such investment, but broadly speaking, the potential to attract new investment in this area will be substantially enhanced by the approach that is being developed by the Government to co-ordinate its policy formulation with its regulations and with its investment promotion, under the Telecommunications Authority.

Today, there are so many developments are taking place in this area that ensure the need for a network that can be easily integrated worldwide. Already, much has happened in this regard.

A small accident which takes place in New York in the field of telecommunications or information—and I am advised that one such accident took

place on September 24—can have its ramifications not only in terms of the breakdown of the telephone system, but can also extend itself to the operations of the airport and subsequently to a whole array of activities on the international travel market. I say that if only to indicate how today the world in which we live—and the world which my honourable friends opposite have not yet been able to understand and appreciate—is one in which we must acquire the competence and capability in order to handle this new future ahead of us.

Hon. Member: He is trying to understand the world. You see, he has gone to Africa.

Mr. Dookeran: Mr. Speaker, the information era and the development of the information subsector create substantial challenges for many aspects of our society.

There is no question that there will be economy-wide advantages to providing an information service in many aspects of the economy but with specific reference to manufacturing, agriculture and tourism. The service aspect of the telecommunications system is critical to the advancement of those key sectors, as today we are so often faced with a major gap in our development, which is the information and communication gap. Our processes need to incorporate this new element.

2.30 p.m.

I believe it is in today's newspaper I saw the hon. Minister of Food Production identifying the communication gap with the agricultural production programmes as one area. This area of activity which we would like to promote and enhance will have its impact on the manufacturing, tourism and agricultural sectors. In addition, and perhaps most important, is this whole question of technology. We have been accustomed in Trinidad and Tobago to focussing on some of the very important gaps in our development strategy. We have looked at investment and savings and have identified that as a major gap—the fact that we cannot get sufficient investment—and we cannot generate sufficient savings—and we have had that debate in this Parliament on many occasions—to some extent, that has kept our entire vision moulded in the context that it is the primary gap to be sorted out.

As a small developing country we have also focussed heavily on what has been called the foreign exchange gap. So often we have had debates on that issue with respect to imports, with respect to exports, with respect to trade regimes, but an

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area on which we have not focussed in this Parliament is this technological gap. This is the area in which this institution hopes to close that gap. The technology gap is perhaps the single most important gap that makes the difference between a country that is now escaping some of the problems of the past into the era ahead of us. That gap, as I have indicated, is widening. A serious and positive response to that gap in this particular area, therefore, is what is being envisaged, whether it be in telecommunications *per se*, whether it be in information or broadcasting. You look therefore, to what has been happening to Trinidad and Tobago in these areas.

In the field of broadcasting, we have already developed a framework to broaden the economic space in this area. When previous regimes have consistently opposed the broadening of that, it is this regime that took the bold and necessary step to open up the broadcasting industry so that we can have a greater set of activities in radio and television. There are many more to come, fundamental departures from the past; for so often our people do not understand or appreciate the fundamental changes in policies that have been adopted by this Government as opposed to those who were here before. Certainly, today there is no other platform that is suggesting any alternative other than what the National Alliance for Reconstruction Government has been promoting. There is no question about that and we can debate that here or elsewhere.

The entire political debate in the country is to see how other parties can mould themselves in the form of the National Alliance for Reconstruction. *[Interruption]* Mr. Speaker, some people seem to think that the problems of this country started from 1986. There is no question about it, but it is the solutions to this country's problems that started in 1986. But many are so preoccupied in identifying the problems that they do not have the energy, the time, nor the capacity to deal with the solutions.

Meeting the technology gap, therefore, is a single and most important imperative for us in Trinidad and Tobago in broadcasting, in information and in telecommunications. Opportunities will develop as we broaden the horizon and the framework in which we operate as we zero in on that critical issue. For out of that will emerge, as I said, in the expanding market externally, in the investment that will take place and in the dissemination of that technology to the other sectors, possibilities for the future. You see, Mr. Speaker, a government that is serious and committed must not only be concerned about today, it must also be concerned about tomorrow. For it is by assessing the strategies to deal with the problems in

the future that we can solve some of our current problems. We must not be imprisoned by the handle that is within our reach. We must move beyond that. That is what we are trying to do with this type of legislation, structured in our *Medium Term Macro Economic Planning Framework*, as part of a whole new thrust in widening our economic space.

I mentioned developments in the broadcasting field in Trinidad and Tobago. We are aware of new initiatives that are taking place in telecommunications as well. Today, the world is closer to us by the system of satellite development that is taking place elsewhere. We ourselves have been accessing those facilities for our own use. It is very significant that there is substantial interest that is now being displayed in Trinidad and Tobago as a possible location for the establishment of satellites. In terms of the worldwide development that is taking place, there are a number of regional areas which are being identified in order to have a global network for satellites. The Government is currently considering a proposal from the World Peace Corporation to enter into a licensed agreement which, in effect, will permit us to launch or to be part of that development for the launching of the new generations of direct broadcasting satellite some time in the mid-nineties.

We hope that the technical analysis of that proposal will be completed shortly and we can open up entirely new possibilities for Trinidad and Tobago through our location. The attraction, therefore, of Trinidad and Tobago as a Caribbean centre for satellite development and the establishment of a Caribbean earth station, is one which we will pursue, and pursue with urgency.

Already, we have begun to see the changing technological and economic map that will emerge. But it is important that we establish the appropriate framework and machinery to facilitate these developments. In the absence of that, we could not even at any stage find our country an attractive one, locally or externally, for these purposes.

2.40 p.m.

The Telecommunications Authority, therefore, is our immediate response to this changing scenario around us, in order to be able to cope with the international developments, and at the same time, to provide us with new doors of opportunities that will have direct impact on our workforce; our possibilities for investment and our possibilities to be engaged in the new technologies ahead of us.

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This is not all that is being done; for there are other aspects of technological development that have been identified in other institutions. But today, since we are dealing primarily with the technologies associated with information—and the bill before us is clearly one whose focus is on that area—I thought that we should emphasize some of these points for the benefit of the Parliament and for the benefit of the community.

The Telecommunications Bill is, therefore, a unique piece of legislation that will form the basis of a model that could be utilized in Latin America and the Caribbean; that is based on the requirement of Trinidad and Tobago to engage itself in international developments in this particular area and so derive direct benefits from our participation.

I hope, therefore, that hon. Members will understand the visionary aspect of the bill before us. It has had its passage in the Senate and has now come to this House as a symbol of the faith we have in ourselves as a people, and in our capacity to cope with the future in Trinidad and Tobago.

I have no doubt that there is much that still needs to be done and as we put into place the implementation of this programme, many challenges will be required, and new management responses will be required. But I have no doubt that our people will rise to these occasions as we in the Government prepare the door to open up ourselves to the possibilities that emerge out of the legislation.

We have already discussed some of the details of the bill before us. Sen. Broomes and the Member of Parliament, Mr. Hem Lee, went into details on many other aspects of it. This is a piece of legislation which, I have no doubt, will command the unanimous support of all Members of this House, for there is no other route which we can follow in this particular regard. It has been one that has come to pass by virtue of a very professional and detailed approach, and in the context of our vision for the future.

I therefore wish to compliment those who have spoken on this bill before, and Sen. Broomes for working with this bill throughout and bringing it to this Parliament within a short period of time and for doing it with such honour, dignity and confidence. Thank you.

Mr. Kelvin Ramnath (*Couva South*): Mr. Speaker, you probably realized that I have not been speaking much in recent times, and others have chosen to speak for me. I almost got the impression that I had lost my capacity to speak, so I have decided to start back today.

I have a special interest in this matter because I was—for a few days—the Minister of Public Utilities in 1987/1988, and that portfolio included telecommunications. I had the opportunity to meet with many of the persons who were responsible for telecommunications in the Ministry and had some input, in terms of discussion, with the Director of Telecommunications and others, with respect to the proposed Telecommunications Authority. It is a great pity that this bill, or what was conceived then, had not been brought to Parliament since 1988. I am not too sure whether there have been any major changes.

I want to say at the outset, that nothing that the Members for Chaguanas or Pointe-a-Pierre, said today, in terms of the advantages spoken about, will come to Trinidad and Tobago with the mere passage of this legislation. It offers endless possibilities for Trinidad and Tobago, not only for the Government to improve its communication, but also for the private sector to become involved in commercial activities which will benefit the country. I recall that there was some work, in terms of telecommunications, taking place in Point Lisas, and the Minister of Industry was there turning the sod in order to establish a very important telecommunications network which will benefit the business community in particular.

There will be no improvement in the education system, unless the Ministry of Education develops its own telecommunications network within the Ministry and have it registered under the provisions of this legislation in order to benefit the schools, the children and those persons who wish to have opportunities of studying long distance.

So, by itself, the bill is simply going to provide these opportunities for organizations to obtain licences and for persons who are interested in operating telecommunications equipment, to do so in some kind of structured and orderly form.

There was a time when a Minister of the last Government who, when he did not like what he saw on the television, would go down to television house and shut it down, fire people and so forth. That was the Telecommunications Authority which existed then. We do not want the Minister, under this bill—while it is necessary for the Authority to work in accordance with policy enunciated by the state—to whom this Authority is responsible, to behave in like manner.

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2.50 p.m.

I hope that this legislation is seen by all as an opportunity or as an attempt to free up this system, to remove the controls which existed over the media. You will remember in 1975—the Members for St. Augustine and Couva North will remember that very vividly because they were directly involved—when the police swooped down with guns, batons and tear-gas on the workers represented by the unions, particularly the Oilfield Workers' Trade Union and the All Trinidad Sugar Workers' Union.

What we experienced was a kind of censorship which was unknown to this country. We experienced the dismissal by the last government—I get into so much trouble when I refer to them these days that I do not know how to refer to them in my speeches—the PNM Government. The staff of 6.10 Radio was summarily dismissed by the Telecommunications Authority then. I think at that time it was the Prime Minister or Jimmy Bain or whoever it was.

One should read Owen Baptiste's "Crisis" I think there are some very interesting interviews in that book, and apart from the interviews it deals with the events which took place on March 18, 1975. We have many examples of the control of the media. One had to look at the way in which the only television station was treated on the eve of the last election, where its employees were violently removed from a public meeting and such violence was instigated by the Prime Minister of the country at the time.

The Member for San Fernando East has just confirmed that.

Mr. Manning: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. Member for giving way. He knows that it is just not true to say that.

Mr. Ramnath: That is what was transmitted by the telecommunications media to the citizens of the country.

The point I want to make, apart from the cut and thrust of the debate, is that no country which is seeking to cope with international developments can afford to have politicians whose only concern is to stifle public comment and activities, which are contrary to their position and expect that the country will benefit or advance. What we need to ensure is that this Authority is independent of the Government. I am glad to see that the President is making these appointments. I presume that the President here does not mean the Cabinet, because if that is the

case, we are not going to achieve the independence spoken of by so many people in this debate so far.

The President should appoint this Authority without consultation because it is a body that will have sweeping powers and over which, if control is exercised will not be able to function with the kind of efficiency which is envisaged under this Act. I suggest that if the President means the Cabinet, which I doubt; I do not think that the President appoints people after consultation with the Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition on the instruction of Cabinet.

The first recommendation which I should like to make in order for this Authority to have the teeth, and not only the teeth, what we need is for the Authority to have the will to move ahead in this very important area. I think that we are all agreed that we are living in exciting times and sometimes ask ourselves the question: How did we manage without a fax machine? Some people have probably never heard about fax a machine, but I am quite sure that those who are using such sophisticated equipment have been asking that question and perhaps thinking about the very tedious manner of communicating which is still used today, that is getting the postman to pick up a letter; having it sorted at the GPO; transporting it to Piarco; having it flown to some country and then redistributed; whereas today one can sit in his office or home and simply send a letter in a few seconds. I think that industries and individuals alike have come to understand that they cannot do without such important developments in telecommunications technology.

I was looking at television the other night—because you know I have much time these days—at the development of televiewing and the kind of advancement which had been made in terms of a telephone and television hook-up, which would be made available in the not too distant future for the homes of citizens, so that very shortly you can be speaking to people from their homes and having a live conversation. We do know that it exists on a commercial basis and requires the setting up of such a connection between a company like TSTT and some other foreign body.

I am quite sure, very shortly, we will ask the question: How did we manage to have telephone conversation without seeing each other? What has happened is that Government has been the last to face the realities of the telecommunication era and the benefits accrued therefrom.

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In the area of computers, you cannot operate a business which must depend on information without accessing important data banks across the world. You cannot operate any institution or organization of government without having computer hook-up from your country to other countries; you cannot operate within Caricom and this new tariff system unless the Ministries of Industry in these countries have a computer network which is linked, so that at a moment's notice, one can follow what is happening rather than wait for telephone calls or newspaper articles.

One can provide a great deal of examples of what has been happening in the world. It has been argued that the real instrument which was used to make the transformation in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union was CNN, more than it was any other form of interference—and I am told the Voice of America.

3.00 p.m.

In fact, Eduard Shevardnadze in an article recently in which he was very critical of the President of the Soviet Union, mentioned that the revolution which took place, that is, the revolution which ensured the presence of Gorbachev in the Soviet Union came about to a great extent as a result of the role of the international media, particularly CNN. So that, no matter how repressive regimes tend to be, no country can adopt an isolationist policy in these times and expect to survive the impact of media penetration. To be stubborn, and to feel that one can achieve these narrow goals of political control and other forms of control by controlling the media, is to be living behind the times; to be living in the stone age. In fact, there has already been a great interest in television viewing in the country and I am quite sure that the opening up of television in the country, will create, such competition that even politicians will become relevant in the society.

Trinidad and Tobago Television cannot continue to be the only television media in the country. In fact, I suggest, Mr. Speaker, that there will be a whole policy of revamping that station and making it more useful to the people of Trinidad and Tobago and leave the other stations to be the entertainment viewing stations. Trinidad and Tobago Television should remain a state-owned organization similar to what the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and other state-owned media are, the most important means of information dissemination. This will not take place if it is allowed to compete with the other commercial stations. If government is going to have educational programmes to meet certain social and educational needs of the society, it owns a television station and should do precisely that. We have to be open-minded to the media and to this age of

information and technology, otherwise we are not going to benefit from any Authority established to free-up the system.

In this country, almost every radio enthusiast has a CB radio. In fact, they come through Piarco and other areas of Trinidad, and they perform a very valuable service to the country. Mr. Speaker, without them much more negative things which have been taking place in the society would have been reported. Nobody wanted to give these CB owners a licence to operate, not even this Government. I imagine that we have an Authority which will now have the power to do so, but certainly the Minister had the power to do that. The Minister responsible for Telecommunications had the power to do that but Ministers responsible for telecommunications have been paying lip-service to these organizations; like REACT and the various other organizations perform great services to the country and in spite of paying such lip-service, these people operate illegally. In fact, at one time, somebody was swooping down on CB operators because there were complaints that too many CB sets had arrived in the country.

Mr. Speaker, it is a well-known fact that in any country today particularly, in the western hemisphere, you can go to a store and buy a CB radio and install it using your cigarette lighter, put a magnetic antenna on top of your roof and then you can begin to communicate. That communication is important because in those countries they need to know what the weather is like. The sun does not rise at six and set at six; and they do not have six months dry and six months wet weather. They have all kinds of changing weather conditions and people need to stay in touch with each other. It has also been very useful in Trinidad and Tobago, and yet we find that no one was sympathetic to an organization or to people who are performing such important functions in terms of the security of the nation, in terms of assisting people in distress and so forth. I hope that the Authority which now has the power, will not do like the Minister who had the power until now, and deny these operators the right to have a frequency and to be licensed. I think that attitude stems from a kind of belief that if you stifle communications well, you will stay in power.

I thought then of putting an advertisement for the UNC on CNN and I wondered what would have happened to the archaic policy of our television company because everybody then would have been able to turn on their television sets and watch CNN. We all watched CNN for long hours and if I had put it during some peak period well, Trinidad and Tobago could have viewed political advertising.
[Interruption]

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Mr. Speaker, there are some people who can never take on a serious debate, but the point I am making, even today, Trinidad and Tobago Television has the most backward policy and I imagine that they derived their policy from the Government. I think they have an independent board. A policy which, Mr. Speaker, could not be properly interpreted by the general manager of TTT when I spoke with him during the course of the bye-election in Diego Martin. We were wondering whether we had qualified for media time, having regard to the fact that we did not contest the election under the UNC.

3.10 p.m.

The Elections and Boundaries Commission, though, had recognized us and our candidate and symbol and so forth, but TTT had a problem with that. I feel very sorry for the people who work there—not sorry, I sympathize with them—because they have been accustomed to a regimented type operation, that if freed in the morning, they would not know how to deal with their freedom.

The 610 Radio policy on political advertisement is still in existence, Mr. Speaker, and I do not think very many people know what this policy is. You have to write this statement and if Mr. Bain did not like what you said about the Government, that statement would be made.

I am not advocating the irresponsible behaviour of the media. As, indeed, you do not yourself support irresponsible behaviour in Parliament. But people would learn to be responsible if they are given the freedom to speak out on issues, and all this political broadcasting policy should have gone out with Jimmy Bain and the others, because we are dealing with very archaic systems of communication. I make these statements in the context of an earlier statement that by simply giving parliamentary approval to an authority without a determination on the part of those who control media in the country, we are not going to achieve the objectives of the legislation; we are not going to achieve the communication that is required for greater development in the area of business and so forth.

It would be also interesting, Mr. Speaker, to note whether Textel or TSTT will have a monopoly on long distance calls, whether the Authority can, in fact, give a licence to some other operator to transmit overseas calls between Trinidad and Tobago and other countries and to receive such calls, with TSTT being the owner of the local network. As you know, this is a major development in the United States with the introduction of long distance companies. Essentially, what Textel did in the past when it was an independent unit, was to simply take the calls

made from the network of Telco, and send them to another company in the United States or Great Britain, or wherever, and to receive such calls.

Does TSTT have a monopoly on that kind of communication, or would that be a matter for the Minister to decide? Or, can the Authority, in fact, approve a licence to someone who now seeks to develop another earth station, in Trinidad and Tobago, for the purpose of transmitting telephone calls overseas?

I suggest, as well, Mr. Speaker, that in the area of telecommunications through the use of computers, Trinidad and Tobago has so much to benefit that we have not begun as yet to tap the host of possibilities available to us. But you have to remove duty on VAT on personal computers. You have to flood this country with computers. We are behind the times. I am quite sure there must be other Caribbean countries which are way ahead of us in the area of home computers. *[Interruption]* I am told not a single one, but that is not an excuse. I suggest—and I am not trying to use that comparison. What I am saying is that you need to make home computers available to the people in this country at a very reasonable price.

You cannot afford to ask people to convert their cars from gasoline to natural gas and have them pay \$7,000 to do the conversion. What you need to do is have a policy that I have advocated on behalf of myself and my party a long time ago. That is, to remove the taxes and to offer people a tax rebate for investing in something as novel and useful as that conversion. The Ministers are very happy with that suggestion.

The same thing could be done with respect to computers. On the market now, Mr. Speaker, there is what is called a 486 computer. There is on the market, a laptop computer which is smaller than your briefcase which can do what a machine the size of this building did 20 years ago. There is now the virtual dumping of the older model PCs, because they are irrelevant in terms of the production scale of new electronic equipment around the world. Yet, in Trinidad and Tobago, students in secondary schools, were it not for the initiative of private or state-assisted schools, in the main, these students would not have been exposed to that kind of equipment.

While that might not be telecommunications equipment in terms of our use in Trinidad and Tobago, it certainly will have long-term effects on the country. I suggest that the Government and successive governments should look at making such technology available.

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I just want, for the benefit of the Members of the House to say how far we have gone in drilling technology. I was explaining to the Leader of the Opposition a few minutes ago that there is a tool now that can be attached to your drilling equipment, which will send signals to the surface to tell you exactly what is happening down the hole. Sometimes you can go as far as three miles down into the holes. Many years ago, it would have required several more days to find out what was happening by pulling out of the hole and running tools and then running back and continuing to drill. *[Interruption]* The expert from Caroni East is giving me some advice on something about which he knows very little.

Mr. Speaker, what Amoco was able to do, only a few years ago, was to transmit that signal instantaneously to Houston. So that not only were the drilling engineers in Trinidad looking at what was happening three miles below, but the parent company, with their experts and their expertise in Houston, was able to monitor the drilling of a well in Trinidad and give technical advice on the spot, as if those people were on the platforms on the east coast. The result of setting up a telecommunications network, a very simple network, has paid very great dividends for the company in terms of the down time and so forth which would have come about as a result of this technology not being available.

But people must know of these things. We must begin to develop a telecommunications culture in Trinidad and Tobago. For the Minister of Education to stand here today and talk about the great prospects of distance learning and quoting from the Wolsley Hall experience and City and Guilds, and so forth, is to completely miss the point, because that requires the Ministry of Education to begin the process of developing this telecommunications and electronics culture at the school.

I suggest, Mr. Speaker, that now that we do not have the red tape, now that we are about to have an Authority, we will free those people who were busily engaged in these activities to do what they are supposed to do in terms of policy, and leave the Authority to get into the very serious work of not only managing the system for the issuing of licences and monitoring the airwaves and what takes place, but rather to develop policies and guidelines for the expansion of the telecommunications industry and to advise the Government on these matters.

If that is allowed to happen, if we find the best people available—and there are very good people available in the market; there are good people in the Telecommunications Division of the Ministry right now whose services should be

tapped and used. I understand there is a provision in this bill that would allow them to shift over to the Authority. If we allow these people to do their work, I think that in a short period of time, we will see remarkable benefits.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to the abolition of all of these antiquated, archaic rules and regulations which were put in the statute books in colonial times, and I look forward not only to the establishment of an Authority, but also the thrust by Government in developing this new culture about which I spoke. I hope that the people selected—if it is done by the President, I am quite sure that we will see people of great calibre and integrity. I should like to see, if possible, the appointment of people without any political considerations. We should see people who are simply competent, who have an interest in the development of this country and whose sole purpose would be to ensure that we benefit from the developments which are taking place around the world. Thank you, very much.

Mr. Trevor Sudama (*Oropouche*): Mr. Speaker, I rise this afternoon to indicate that I am back and well. Since we are dealing with this Bill on information and the transmission of information and so forth, I must confess that I have also risen here today to say categorically that I associate this Government with disinformation rather than information. Simply because of a minor illness which I suffered in India, I understand there were reports instigated here by Members of that Government that I had almost died and that a rescue operation was undertaken by those very concerned gentlemen belonging to that regime. It just merely goes to show you that when people have been so attuned to propaganda, they can conceive of very little else, they operate in a syndrome of falsehood and subterfuge.

So, Mr. Speaker, I am here, today, to say that I am not very encouraged by the experience of this Government in terms of their *bona fides* with respect to regulatory activities. I accept the need for a certain measure of regulation in all aspects of our life, but given their tendencies over the last four and half years, as I said, Mr. Speaker, I am not very sanguine about their approaches, and what we are dealing with here today is primarily the regulatory functions of an authority that is to be set up under this bill. [*Interruption*] I will come to that in a while. That is primarily what we are dealing with, regulatory aspects of an authority dealing with transmission of information and so forth.

But I recall, Mr. Speaker, that this Government is very concerned with regulation. I mean, very early in the life of its Government, the hon. Member for

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Nariva was in charge of information and dissemination of information. Apparently, some people thought that he was doing too good a job, that his activities had to be regulated, so much so that the poor fellow was relieved of his responsibilities not very long after he was appointed. That gives you an idea of the perspective of those who run things on the other side, a perspective which seems intent on emphasizing the oppressive hand of regulation.

Mr. Speaker, I want to indicate that I speak here as a layman. I have no technical knowledge of telecommunication and telecommunication services and equipment. I speak here as a layman and I believe I speak on behalf of the majority of people of Trinidad and Tobago as to how this legislation and the Authority which would be established under this legislation would affect them. But I must confess that perhaps the Government and its spokesmen have been putting the wrong emphasis, or perhaps not putting sufficient emphasis on the quantum of information, the kind of information and the freedom with which that information is to be transmitted to the general public and people who use such information. Rather, it seemed to me, as I listened to the Member for Chaguanas, that he is so obsessed with the wonders of the technological aspects of what he believes his Government is introducing, that he seems to lose sight of the use to which this technology is to be put. This technology, really, is to benefit the average man and woman in Trinidad and Tobago. He should not be so obsessed with technology and the wonders of technology, without looking at the more critical issue of the quantum and the kind of information and the freedom with which it is to be relayed and transmitted.

Mr. Speaker, for a number of months now I have been trying to get answers to some questions which have been filed in this House, even before I made a trip overseas. It appears to me that this information which is supposed to be given from the other side to me, is not forthcoming, and perhaps this information revolution of which they speak has not quite reached the Government Benches. I mean, we may need a political revolution to precede this information revolution which we have so boldly proclaimed here this afternoon.

So, Mr. Speaker, when you put this legislation against the mind-set of people in Government, you see a certain kind of contradiction emerging. Their inclination and their tendency is to withhold information, to regulate information and yet we are told that this Telecommunications Authority, which is being set up, would open up a whole new world of expanded communication and facilitate communication and that sort of thing.

I am not really convinced, not that, as I say—and I emphasize that I do see the need for a measure of regulation of our telecommunication services. We recognize that. But, at the same time, I think that this Government, and this country should be sensitive to that balance that we have to maintain between regulation on one hand and freedom of communication on the other hand.

Mr. Speaker, it is easy to put something down in writing. I am talking about the experience we have had with the manner in which they have operated, and whether, given that kind of experience we can be certain of the outcome as a result of the activities.

Mr. Speaker, much has been made by the Member for Chaguanas about how the Government has been faithful to the manifesto of 1986. If he were to resort to the manifesto for a moment, he would see under the heading “Immediate Action Plan” at page 5—do not know what his concept of immediately is—they had promised a number of things. “On being voted into office”—paragraph 12 says:

“Establish a Telecommunications Authority to supervise and regulate the use of the air waves with particular emphasis on the development and use of new technology...”

Now, he should perhaps indicate to this House why it has taken this Government almost five years to introduce a piece of legislation which they said they would do as part of an immediate action plan. I think this Parliament and this country is owed an explanation, if it was felt that this was a matter of such great urgency. Perhaps in the early days of Government they were too busy in their attempts to expel certain Members formerly of the United Labour Front and that consumed all their use and attention; they did not have time to think about Telecommunications Authority and so forth. After that, of course, there were these long and tedious negotiations with the IMF to bring them here to supervise our economic life. So that, of course, you understand why they had very little time to address the question of immediacy and urgency as was proclaimed in the manifesto.

Mr. Speaker, while we have waited almost five years for a Telecommunication Authority Bill to be brought here to establish a Telecommunications Authority, one of the other things we had promised in the manifesto in 1986 under the “Immediate Action Plan” was a Freedom of Information Act to be enacted as a matter of urgency. But I will tell you one thing: This Government will never enact a Freedom of Information Act because the last thing it wants, is that this

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population should have access to as much information as possible. So you will never see sight of a Freedom of Information Act, although it has been promised here in this manifesto, which, of course, is relevant to the issue being debated here. Because again, I want to infer that it is not only information, but the quantum of information which is available, and the quality of that information.

Here you have a government which is intent—as indeed the previous Government was, and I am not trying to exonerate anybody here—on suppressing information and giving this society as little information as possible, and I cannot even get an answer to a question which I filed months ago. So I want to register my reservation with respect to how this Government operates.

So, Mr. Speaker, we have had so much emphasis placed on the physical infrastructure with respect to telecommunications; we have had talk about it; we have had the statements about what the technology gap is with respect to telecommunication facilities and services and so forth. Yet, while they talk so glibly about that, they do not address the question of the substance; what it is that we need to transmit and communicate. What is it? What is the relevance of what we need to transmit and communicate?

Mr. Speaker, again, in 1986, I remember we were canvassing and campaigning all over the country that this Government—again, as a matter of urgency—would introduce a university of the air. I am afraid Sen. Broomes was otherwise employed in those days—I hate to use these terms—but as a Johnny-come-lately—is that parliamentary?—into the seat of Government. But a university of the air, where we thought that we would use the facilities of transmission to bring a higher standard of education to a wider population in Trinidad and Tobago. What has happened to the university of the air of which we spoke so much in 1986? Has it become rarefied? I do not know whose portfolio that falls under, whether it is my good friend from Chaguanas who, I understand, is going to revert to university very soon.

But what has happened to the university of the air? Why, after five years in office they do not feel that was something relevant to have introduced in Trinidad and Tobago to lift the general educational standards of our population? Or are they bent on trying to depress and keep restrictive, the education levels of the general population? Why is it that their new horizons do not encompass something like a university of the air? That is a question they ought to address their minds to and these are some of the grounds for the skepticism I have in dealing with what comes forward from the Government.

Then, of course, Mr. Speaker, when I look at page 47 of the manifesto, we had also promised the establishment of a children's television studio so that we would have addressed the needs of the young children in this society, and would have expanded the amount of information, and the capacity for learning, *et cetera*, to boost their cultural levels and cultural orientation. We promised to establish a children's television studio for that specific purpose. Up to today, almost five years have elapsed. This Government is coming into the twilight of its existence and so far no children's television studio.

I understand the Member for Nariva was putting forward a case for promotion of indigenous culture. So very disappointingly, he was summarily dismissed for promoting indigenous culture. It will give you an idea of the orientation of this Government, that it looks for its inspiration from outside and not from inside. This is not only with respect to culture and the economy but with respect to all aspects of life; it looks for dictation from the outside. This is a Government which is not fully independent, and not seeking to induce any measure of independence in the society, a measure of independence which accords with our independent reality in Trinidad and Tobago, today.

When we said that we are advocating a free market, when we said that we are talking about getting into a market which incorporates these other countries, it was never envisaged to get involved in such a market as a colony of the United States. They have put themselves in a position of a colony. They are colonized by the IMF and the World Bank, and they are talking about independence.

3.40 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, let me come back to this question of information and the telecommunications services that we are trying to foster and promote under this piece of legislation. The Member for Chaguanas spoke about the possibility of large-scale investment which is anticipated in this field. I do not think he indicated from what source this investment might come. After all, for five years now they have been trying to attract foreign investment to this country. What has been the outcome of that bold measure to attract foreign investment which, in fact, has been very costly to the society? I think the Member for Caroni East made two trips to the Far East in order to attract such investment to come to this country.

Dr. Tewarie: We have over \$2 billion worth of foreign investment down in the oil—

Mr. Sudama: Which \$2 billion worth of investment is he talking about? Investment in the energy sector? He did not even have to go outside of Trinidad and Tobago to get investment in the energy sector in this country.

Hon. Member: That comes for itself.

Mr. Sudama: He went to bring companies to invest in the EPZs, to create thousands of jobs in Trinidad and Tobago. What happened to the EPZs? If they cannot attract ordinary investments into Trinidad and Tobago from the outside, how will they attract investments in telecommunication services? Will they attract it on the same basis on which they handed over the telephone company to Cable and Wireless? Is that the basis on which they want to attract foreign investment into the telecommunication services in Trinidad and Tobago?

As I speak about the telephone services which is a means of telecommunications in Trinidad and Tobago, the other point I wish to make is that we may have elaborate telecommunications services, and plans for those services, which may not be affordable to the general population because the telephone company is on the verge of increasing its rates.

Hon. Member: Not even the police can afford it.

Mr. Sudama: When the telephone company increases its rates, the number of subscribers will fall and, therefore, a smaller and smaller population will benefit from whatever advances are being made in telecommunications services. Is this what is intended? That a more and more select group will benefit from this great new world of telecommunication advancement in Trinidad and Tobago?

Dr. Tewarie: That makes no business.

Mr. Panday: It is happening with telephones, right now.

Mr. Sudama: Mr. Speaker, to what use do they want to introduce more complexed, more technologically advanced services, if it will not benefit a wider and wider range of the population of Trinidad and Tobago? That is their perspective.

Dr. Tewarie: We passed a bill here in the Parliament. Was he asleep?

Mr. Sudama: Will they regulate the tariffs on telephones, in the interest of the wider community in Trinidad and Tobago? They must answer these critical questions, and the time is coming very near when they will have to answer them, not in this House, but outside.

The Member for Chaguanas talked about gaps; he talked about foreign exchange gap and savings gap. I do not know whether the Government is concerned with the employment gap. Are they concerned with the employment gap in Trinidad and Tobago, which should be a matter of priority interest, priority emphasis, for this Government? They are concerned with the foreign exchange gap, and all those other gaps, but no concern for the employment gap, and the poverty gap which is widening in Trinidad and Tobago—the increasing numbers of people who are going under the poverty line in Trinidad and Tobago. They are not concerned about the employment gap and the poverty gap, but their main concern is about foreign exchange gap, and telecommunications technology gap.

Hon. Member: I do not understand what all these gaps are about.

Mr. Sudama: I think it is a gap in the Government's thinking. I think the gap that they are really concerned with is the gap in the thinking of the Government. If they bridge that gap between what they are thinking and what the population, the rank and file, is experiencing in this country, they might be better able to see the reality. They will better be able to see the reality if they are able to bridge that gap between the stratosphere in which they operate and the grinding experience of deprivation which is experienced by larger and larger numbers of people in Trinidad and Tobago today.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation, while I believe there is some need for it, is not a matter of the greatest moments, as far as I see it, in dealing with some of the major problems that we experience in Trinidad and Tobago today. Yes, we need some regulatory activities in the field.

Then I come to this question of how much regulation as against how much invasion of privacy will be permitted by the operations of telecommunications services. I am reliably informed that my telephone is tapped. That is a means of telecommunications.

Mr. Panday: That is freedom of information.

Mr. Sudama: Maybe that is the only part of the Freedom of Information Act which has been implemented by the Government, so that they will be free to access information which I have to provide. I suppose a number of my colleagues' telephones have also been tapped. As I said, I want the Government to have freedom of information, as I myself would like to have freedom of information, but it is just that it is not forthcoming when I ask them questions. But this is a serious question we have to deal with.

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Very many governments have tried to grapple with that very serious question of how to maintain that balance that identifies the society as a democratic society, that has concern for the lawful constitutional rights and freedoms of the individual. If you put the wrong people in charge of this Telecommunications Authority, it is possible, if they have a certain orientation, that the freedom of individuals and institutions in this country can be infringed in the name of regulations.

3.50 p.m.

I am very intrigued about this broadcast code which is being proposed and how it will be conceived and how it will be adhered to by the people who are involved.

As you are aware, under clause 79 of this bill it says:

"The Authority shall, within a year of its establishment, by Order, subject to negative resolution of Parliament, promulgate a Broadcasting Code to regulate the practices of concessionaires of broadcasting services."

First of all, let me deal with this question of affirmative resolution of Parliament. Affirmative resolution of Parliament merely means that those who have the majority in the House, the Government in power, will have its way in getting affirmative resolution through. So that once the Government decides on a certain broadcast code, the bringing of an affirmative resolution in this House is really a matter of formality in a system of party government where people vote without adhering to their consciences, without having free votes and so forth. I raise the question simply because it will be answered, "well you know, this broadcast code is going to come before the House". It will come before the House; we will debate it; we may have very cogent reasons to question the contents of that broadcast code, and yet, because of the manner in which this Parliament is structured, the broadcast code will go through with whatever deficiencies it may possess.

The important question is, how is this broadcast code going to be conceived and devised? I hope that this broadcast code, when it is put down on paper, when it is agreed upon by the Government will, in fact, err on the side of greater freedom with respect to regulating the practices of concessionaires of broadcasting services. Because it might be very easy to move from the concept of regulation to the concept of censorship, censorship of information which you want to keep away from the public in the interest of one's own political fortunes.

I say so, Mr. Speaker, given the experience of TTT, both under the previous regime and under the present regime. Anybody who looks at Trinidad and Tobago

Television and what they have to broadcast, especially with respect to the news items, the commentaries, and current affairs, will see an undisguised attempt to promote the Government, its policies, its personnel and its ministers. The number of ministers that appear on a news programme on TTT, is amazing.

Sometimes the television authority, perhaps, go out of their way to put in a two-minute insertion in the news item of what goes on in Parliament—this is supposed to be the highest forum of the land—and in that two-minute insertion if a Member of the Opposition happens to appear, his voice is completely obliterated; you see his lips moving and nothing is said. The person who does the editing of that tape currently is a gentleman by the name of Errol Pilgrim who makes sure that it is only the voices of the Government's spokesmen which are heard. This is the kind of censorship that has been practised against views, other than those which have been promoted by the Government

I want to know whether this broadcast code that we are going to institute will make certain provisions to guard against this kind of heavy-handed governmental intervention in the telecommunications network in this country; heavy-handed and indeed vulgar, given the fact that we are supposed to be a democratic society, where we should have freedom of access to all kinds of views in the society. It is a certain element of political vulgarity that this Government perpetuates in the politics in this country. As I say, I am not very sanguine about what they intend under this piece of legislation and under the broadcast code that is being recommended under this bill.

There is another issue I want to raise, and this is with respect to freedom. Here we have a society which is a plural society, a democratic society, where people have the right to pervade their views so long as their views are within the pale of legality and constitutionality. Yet today, if you went to buy television time as a political party in Trinidad and Tobago, other than the Government—of course, as you know the Government does not have to buy television time, it owns the television station; it is there all the time regaling the population with their views.

Let us assume that this party wishes to communicate something very urgently to the population about where it stood: its policy, its programme and so forth, and wishes to buy a few minutes of television time, that is not permitted by the present regime, yet they come here and talk about liberalization of telecommunications services and liberalization of information. The more I listen to the Member for Chaguanas, the more I realize that he is becoming more and more removed from

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the reality of the situation. They are talking about liberalization on the one hand and yet the television station is so securely under the control of the Government, that it cannot even be opened up for a political party to buy time to propagate its views.

They will argue, well, you know, they have opened up the system so that other television stations could operate. But surely, a Government should have the responsibility to see that the station it owns has a certain measure of freedom and operates under a certain scope of liberalism so that it becomes an exemplar to the other communication networks in the society. You should not be following but setting the pace and, therefore, if people wish to propagate their views, they should be permitted to do so, simply because television is such a powerful medium to influence the general population. You have that medium in your clutches and under your direct control, yet you are refusing to give proper access to that medium to other views and people who are not in support of the Government.

I rose here today to get a few things clear, to sort of impress the House with my own reservations and scepticism with respect to the implementation of this bill. I may say that it is not only confined to television, to the radio station services under their control. Not satisfied with that, they try to extend their influence to the newspapers, to the print media in Trinidad and Tobago, by getting in collusion with the vested interest who control the print media and trying to inveigle certain journalists who operate in the print media in order, again, to exclude and marginalize other views which are not consistent with the views and the policies of the Government. This is their manner of operation. *[Interruption]*

4.00 p.m.

I do not want to call names here today; I can call names—and I have been calling names. I do not want to be accused of using parliamentary privilege to call names. I use my column in the *Express* to call names, when I need to call names, and that is a small gesture; and that is heavily edited as well. We should not even have that little opportunity for expression against the Government.

I am appealing to the Government that if it is serious about liberalization, then it should look at its own action and do not talk about liberalization in a vacuum and as an abstraction. Look at your own action and policies. Look at what you had been doing to stifle communication services in this country; to suppress access to the media and to the telecommunication networks of other groupings, whose views do not coincide with yours.

At times, in the past—on very rare occasions, maybe once a year—I used to be invited to appear on a television programme with other members of the Government to debate their economic policies. For the last three years or so, I have not been invited as a spokesman for the Opposition. I have not been invited to appear on this television which, of course, is under their control. *[Interruption]* Look who is talking; this Attorney General who cannot distinguish himself by anything. The only thing he has distinguished himself by, is in the coup attempt last year. He disguised himself in order to get out of this Parliament. That is his only claim to fame, as Attorney General of Trinidad and Tobago. *[Interruption]* I understand he put on an apron; I am not sure. He resorted to an apron; a petticoat, or something of that sort, in order to get out of this Parliament unscathed. This is the Attorney General that they have here, devising legislation for them and talking about who is boring and who is not.

Mr. Smart: I then went home to my wife of 21 years. Whom did you go home to?

Mr. Sudama: I am sure she was not very pleased by your presence. You should have asked her whether she was very pleased by your presence.

I am sorry I have to respond to some of these peripheral matters that are being raised here, to some of this picong, but I thought I would get up to say something which I feel strongly about and which I fear, except we are careful and except this Government has a proper concern for the views of other people in this society; a proper concern for the expressions of dissent which other people may want to express; a concern for getting a consensus on the approach that they will take to this piece of legislation and the formulation of this broadcast code, which I believe is extremely important. Here you have a Government that does not seem to have an idea of how to deal with expressions of people, whether artistic, cultural and so forth. I understand that while I was out of the country, they sent a whole party of policemen. Now, when policemen are needed to deal with crime, they cannot be found but the Government sent a whole posse to the Central Bank Auditorium to arrest some actor or the other, for giving vent to his feelings.

[Mr. Deputy Speaker *in the Chair*]

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. Sudama: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I would not be very long but I want to make this point. This Government does not have an idea of what cultural levels, the levels of decency and taste that they want to promote in this society.

The situation arose where a posse of policemen went to arrest someone and even if you had to deal with that problem in a certain way, I am wondering if that is the heavy-handed way that this Government intends to deal with the question of freedom of expression in Trinidad and Tobago.

I am not for a moment standing here to condone indecency and obscenity, but what I want to know is: What is Government's view on indecency and obscenity when this television station under its control is airing programmes in which "four-letter" words are frequently used and there are high levels of violence and nudity? Here you have the incongruity of a large posse of policemen going down to the Central Bank Auditorium to arrest one poor, unfortunate actor. I do not know how much more ludicrous this Government can get in its actions.

I hope what I have said would alert the country and this Parliament to my particular concerns in this matter. As I said, if we are to devise policy; and if we are to err, I would much rather we err on the side of freedom than on the side of censorship and suppression of expression and views. You see, I am a confirmed liberal democrat. Therefore, the views that I express today accord with my own political philosophy. Thank you.

4.10 p.m.

Mr. John Humphrey (*St. Augustine*): Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is one aspect of this bill which I oppose. I think it is incumbent on the Government to explain where a new liberalism is adopted in the management of the state, not only in Trinidad and Tobago, but all over the world; and where totalitarian regimes are collapsing and are being replaced by democratic regimes, why it is necessary to include in this piece of legislation a provision which is to be found in the preamble, requiring a special majority to enable this Act to abridge sections 4 and 5 of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

In fact, in the preamble, preparation is made to require a three-fifths majority. I think as long as this remains in this legislation and since the Government today cannot get a three-fifths majority, we in the Opposition should not support it. It says:

“And whereas it is necessary and expedient that the provisions of this Act shall have effect even though inconsistent with sections 4 and 5 of the Constitution:”

I want to know why it is necessary to include that provision. What are sections 4 and 5 of the Constitution? Section 4, Chap. 1 "The Recognition and Protection of Fundamental Human Rights and Freedoms: Part 1 Rights Enshrined" says:

"It is hereby recognised and declared that in Trinidad and Tobago there have existed and shall continue to exist without discrimination by reason of race, origin, colour, religion or sex, the following fundamental human rights and freedoms namely..."

I am wondering whether it is anticipated that this legislation will infringe some of these rights which I will pick out and identify.

“The right of the individual to life and liberty.” Is it anticipated that they are going to reduce the right to liberty of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago by means of controlling telecommunications, by means of a supposedly independent commission? “The right of an individual to equality before the law and the protection of the law.” Is that to be infringed and abrogated and reduced? “The right of the individual to respect for his private and family life”. Is this legislation anticipated to reduce the enjoyment of that right for respect for private and family life? “The right of the individual to equality of treatment from any public authority in the exercise of any functions.” This is going to be a public authority. Will that measure not in fact give this commission the right to deny equality of treatment?” “The right to join political parties and to express political views?” My colleague from Oropouche has touched on the expression of political views, where Trinidad and Tobago Television has not in fact treated the public fairly, and has not allowed political views to be expressed other than those views representing the ruling regime. “Freedom of conscience and religious belief and observance.” Is that to be affected by this legislation? “Freedom of thought and expression; Freedom of association and assembly; and freedom of the press.” I do not think that this House should, without very serious consideration, pass legislation that is going to affect these rights.

When this Constitution which is the supreme law, Act No 4 of 1976, was brought into being and when we pledged to uphold this Constitution and the law, there are certain principles which were recognized. In the preamble to the very Constitution those principles are expressed beautifully. In fact, governments are

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supposed to govern on the basis of those principles. Those principles recognize that human beings on this earth are inherently entitled to certain rights. The Constitution is written in such a way as to recognize that. There have existed and shall continue to exist in Trinidad and Tobago these fundamental rights and freedoms. We should not permit any legislation to pass through the Parliament which will diminish these rights in any way. I think that this should be removed from the bill before we bring it into law. I do not see the need for it. The whole principle of the free enterprise system of organizing society is freedom. That is the principle. People must be free to go into enterprise. Telecommunications offer tremendous opportunities for business enterprise and for investment.

The constraint which is imposed on the freedom is the competition which is enjoyed. Because of the freedom, many people go into the business. Why do you need to legislate constraint on freedom? Why do you need to give the commission the power to deny the basic rights enshrined in the Constitution?

I am opposed to this in principle and I am delighted to know that the Leader of the United National Congress is not prepared to support this. My feeling is that we are justified in not supporting it on the basis of this provision. I think the Government owes this Parliament, the country and the new Telecommunications Authority, whoever those people appointed to serve may be, an explanation as to why it is necessary to have this provision.

It is quite obvious that the average citizen cannot avail himself or herself of the advanced technological apparatus of telecommunications. It requires tremendous investment. If you want to go into radio transmission you must have equipment which costs a lot of money; if you want to go into television transmission or telephone network likewise; if you want to go into a wire service and deliver television signals, it is very expensive. The average citizen cannot avail himself or herself to these things.

It is my view, that you should remove any constraint and certainly remove the constraint of the denial of basic fundamental rights in the law. Sure, you need to regulate things like frequencies because you cannot have more than one transmitter operating on a single frequency, because the receiver will not receive a clear signal. That is a practical consideration. You need to regulate things like that.

4.20 p.m.

But why do you need to give the Authority the power to regulate content when you are relying on the market-place to determine whether something is acceptable or not? For example, recently this country experienced something that I am a little

concerned about because it reminds me of things that occurred in Germany just before the second world war. A play was being presented to an audience and that audience had been advised that the play contains adult material. People freely went to enjoy the play which has a message and this Government interfered by sending the police to stop them because they were using some words to which the authorities objected; words that are in common usage in daily life; on the basis of a law which, if imposed in TTT, we cannot have carnival.

In fact, when people go on the Savannah stage in front of the television cameras in future and start to gyrate their bodies, the pelvic region, the police will have to go with their guns to stop them because the very law prohibits that. That is called nude and indecent dancing.

One of the most popular calypsoes that has come out of the carnival in recent years is the "Dollar Wine". Not only is it popular in this country when it is presented to an audience of 20,000 and everybody does the wine, it is now being accepted everywhere in the Western hemisphere wherever it is played and people are reacting to it. So are you going to ban that? You see it reminds me of what happened in Nazi Germany where they banned certain things. They burned books by the thousands. Is this what we expect to get from this regime next?

Mr. Smart: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not know if the hon. Member would like to give way. I just want to make it clear, in the absence of the Minister of National Security, that the Government did not send the police to the Central Bank. The police act on their own in these matters. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Humphrey: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am not aware that the police can, in fact, act on their own volition. They have to act according to law and they operate under a Minister. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Government can come to this Parliament and amend legislation, especially legislation that is totally outmoded. [*Interruption*] There are laws on the statute books that if the police were to implement and impose those laws on the society today—I can give you an example of one. Do you know that you are not permitted to reverse into a parking place? That dates back to the time when we had horse-drawn buggies; it was dangerous to have the horse reverse to park the buggy. That is still on the statute books, so you have to arrest every motorist who parks in a tight space by reversing into that space. So if the laws, Mr. Deputy Speaker, do not fit with the social mores of the society then it is incumbent on the Government to change those laws; to get rid of the outmoded

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laws, not to enforce ridiculous laws because by the token of invading the Central Bank Auditorium and stopping the performance of what I understand was a very good production, they can stop the carnival; and that type will stop the carnival if we are to take the hint from their actions. *[Crosstalk]* You are going to send the machine guns with the police to stop the “Dollar Wining” because that is exactly the same law. *[Crosstalk]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It would appear that the hon. Member is being disturbed. Could we have some order, please?

Mr. Humphrey: Their tendencies are being exposed and revealed and this is the point I am making and that is what bothers me about this legislation. It is unnecessary to include a provision in this piece of legislation that enables the Commission in enforcing the law to abridge the rights of citizens as enshrined in the Constitution, totally unnecessary and dangerous in fact, because there is no recourse. But if this new Commission follows the leaders of NAR, they are going to deny the citizens the recourse to law under the Constitution to ensure that freedom of the human being prevails in this society.

Mr. Shand: On a point of information, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Member for St. Augustine was a little harsh on the Government just now by saying that they sent people to disrupt the play. My own information is that they did not send anybody, but the Government must be commended after the fact, for summoning the Commissioner of Police to question him about that particular event. So there is some nexus between the political directorate and the Commissioner of Police with regard to acts that the police commit. So I do not think that the Honourable Attorney General was entirely correct in conveying an impression that it was hands-off the police in whatever they do because last Friday the Commissioner of Police was summoned to the tea room for discussions with the Minister of National Security and the Minister of Culture on this matter.

Mr. Smart: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. I want to correct the Hon. Member for St. Ann’s West. Again, there was no question of Government taking any hands-off position. I was just giving information to this honourable House.

Mr. Humphrey: Mr. Deputy Speaker, what can we infer from the interruptions by the Hon. Member for St. Ann’s East? Can we infer that the Commissioner of Police, who is exercising his responsibility in seeking to maintain

law and order, is going to be reprimanded for doing just that? Because the law, in fact, is a stupid law and an unreasonable law. What the Government should have done is accept that it is a stupid law and give an assurance to the society that it will be repealed because that very stupid legislation is going to be abused again in more serious ways. It is a little refreshing to hear that the Government is distancing itself from those actions because the Government has not said anything about it. All that we have heard from the Government is that the police are doing their duty. But I am very worried when you see a dozen policemen, armed with instruments of war—SLR and SLGs were designed for war and for killing, not for enforcing law.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, an SLR (self-loading rifle)—if a marksman aims at a row of about 10 people from a mile away and he hits the first one, if that bullet is a steel jacketed bullet, it will go through all 10. That is the kind of weapon the police used to visit some actors to make an arrest.

4.30 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.10 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Mr. Humphrey: Mr. Deputy Speaker, during the tea adjournment I had an opportunity to chat with some of my colleagues and they expressed support for my argument: that to impose conditions of outmoded legislation is stupidity, and what we anticipate, if the Government is going to continue to impose the conditions of the law that was used to censor the play that was being presented at the Central Bank Auditorium, is that they are going to ban the “Dollar Wine”. What they will permit is “the cent”, the “five cent” and the “ten cents” but they are not going to permit the “dollar.”

We expect that if our revelers, our musicians, our bards, our calypsonians continue to sing the “Dollar Wine” and to get the kind of reaction they get with the “dollar”, the entire police service will come out and stop it. I expect even Watchman will do that, because he will have to carry out instructions. But even so, the dollar has been devalued to ten cents anyway.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am sorry the acting Prime Minister is not here now, because I wanted to touch on a couple of things that he raised in his contribution. He was trying to give the impression to this Parliament that his Government was acting responsibly in bring this legislation at this time. But I want to tell this Parliament, that this legislation could have been brought here in mid-1987, because a task force was appointed to prepare this, and they had done all of the

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groundwork before I had been fired. It was under my responsibility. This should have been brought in the first year of the NAR's stewardship because, in fact, it is, as the Member for Oropouche pointed out, part of the "Immediate Action Plan", which states:

"On being voted into office, the NAR Government will forthwith put into effect the following Action Plan."

It took over four and a half years to bring something that was promised immediately.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition has just brought Chapter 11:02, section 51, of the Summary Offences Act which is the law that was used to arrest the actor. I think, in the interest of accuracy, let us put it on the record. It is not a very long section.

Mr. Shand: It was done already; I put it on the record.

Mr. Humphrey: Well, there is no need to do it again. Thank you, hon. Member for St. Ann's West. I commented on it already.

In the Manifesto of the NAR, dealing with the issue that was raised by the acting Prime Minister on the technology gap and the need to close that gap, if Trinidad and Tobago is to enter into the 21st century, like the rest of the world, at page 47, under "Media and Communications", that is what is stated:

"The National Alliance for Reconstruction is committed to the fullest exploitation of the technology of electronic communications as a means of keeping the people of Trinidad and Tobago in tune with the world. Full use will be made of existing satellite transmission facilities to expose the population to information about the global village, commercial and scientific trends and developments and new technologies.

However, to balance the flow of information, emphasis will be placed on the production of local material. Trinidad and Tobago will not be a mere passive receiver but will become an active transmitter of culture and ideas. We will be innovators—not merely users."

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I took that seriously when I was in the NAR and when I was a member of the first Cabinet. I recall a meeting that was organized at my prompting with the ambassador for Japan and his guest, who had been brought especially for the dinner, and the Member for Chaguanas was there, and the former

Minister of Industry, Enterprise and Tourism, who has now resigned from the Government and is a private entrepreneur in the communications business, was there. That dinner guest, who the ambassador brought to meet with us was a Vice-President of the Mitsumi Corporation of Japan, which is the biggest corporation in the world, has the biggest capital base of any corporation in the whole world.

At the end of that evening's very pleasant dinner, a commitment was made by the Mitsumi Corporation to invest immediately in two activities. One was fish farming—they were ready to come in immediately and establish a massive fish farming operation—and the other, that is relevant to what we have before us, is something called a teleport. They were also ready to invest in this immediately. A teleport is communications via satellite, personal communication, but via satellite, instantly enabling businessmen and others in Trinidad and Tobago to communicate anywhere in the world that is linked by the satellite network.

He advised us on that evening that there was a satellite with capacity immediately available to use and that we would not have to go through the tremendous expense of orbiting a special satellite to avail this country of this very advanced technology. The Member for Chaguanas, he was then the Minister of Planning and Reconstruction, his responsibility was to go and do the work that was required to enable this investment to proceed. Four and a half years have passed and I have seen absolutely no sign of this materializing and yet he comes here to say that his Government is committed to modern technology and to attracting investment and so forth.

Another example that I can give related, again, to this technology. It is an exercise that as Minister, I was engaged in with the then Chairman of the Airports Authority to establish at Wallerfield, an industrial park as a nucleus of building a new city.

One of the discussions that was held of interest to investors was held with the RAM space programme who had shown an interest in establishing at Wallerfield—if we were to establish the industrial estate—a facility linked to the Cayenne, the French Guyana facility that launches the rockets to put into space all the communication satellites of the European nations. It was to build a complex to warehousing and assembly in connection with that programme.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, any Member who might have visited or seen on television or in the cinema, these facilities, for example, the one at Cape Canaveral, Cape Kennedy and the one in French Guyana, would know the enormity of the massive exercise.

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So, we could have anticipated a very large investment being located in Trinidad in connection with the RAM programme. I went to Cabinet to seek \$500,000 to clean up Wallerfield. Now, half of \$1 million could not finance it—it was a much bigger undertaking than half a million could finance—however, it was adequate, because the contractors of this country had already indicated that they would assist the Government in cleaning up Wallerfield. The \$500,000 was merely to pay for fuel and lubricants and they were going to give the equipment free. It was necessary to clean up the Wallerfield area, and to expose the airport facilities that exist, with two runways and 23 miles of reinforced concrete aircraft taxiway that is right now under 50 years of growth.

The Prime Minister refused to allow his Minister to do the job. The Government could not afford \$500,000 to do that construction. I then spoke to the then Chairman of the Airports Authority about an idea of getting the job done for nothing, which was to bring in the military engineering contingents of all those countries who have an interest in the Caribbean to conduct a joint exercise with our military engineering contingent in this country to clean it up. That was not approved either. Wallerfield remains as it has been for the last half century. This Government says that it is interested in advancing investment and technology. I would like the Member for Caroni East, who seems to know everything that goes on in the Government, to explain to this House, if they are so interested, why were they not prepared to clean up Wallerfield and to establish a most valuable industrial part a Wallerfield. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker, these are just a few examples that have satisfied me that all we get from the NAR regime is a lot of talk; a lot of rhetoric; a lot of promises. Actually, no performance, whatever to speak of.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think I have demonstrated that, first of all, we cannot put in the hands of this regime, powers that will enable the abridging and infringing of the democratic fundamental rights and freedoms of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. They are not to be trusted with those powers.

The last point I want to make is that because of modern communication facilities which exist in this world, every citizen of Trinidad and Tobago who can afford a television set is given a blow-by-blow reporting on the events of interest to mankind that occur all over the world. One of the events that I recently had a chance to witness on TTT was the US Senate investigating a recent proposed appointee to the US Supreme Court.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I propose that instead of having his Excellency, the President, consult with the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition to appoint commissioners and especially the chairperson of this commission, the President should make the appointment, and the Parliament should ratify it. Also, the Parliament should examine the prospective candidates for these very responsible positions exactly as it is being done and give the people's representatives an opportunity to ensure that the best people are placed in these extremely delicate and important jobs. With that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thank you.

The Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister (*Sen. The Hon. Horace Broomes*): Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me begin by saying that having listened to the very fervent contribution of the Member for Oropouche, I am convinced that my colleague from the other place did a very good job of taking care of him in New Delhi. I understand that during his illness there, my colleague from the other place took care of him and he has come back here with considerable spunk, and I think that is evidence of what a caring Government we are.

Mr. Manning: If the Government was caring, your colleague might have dealt with it in a slightly different fashion.

Dr. Hosein: He would have bounced his chair if he did not care about him.

Sen. Broomes: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to begin by thanking all the hon. Members who contributed to this debate. I want to thank, in particular for the quality of their contributions, the Hon. Acting Prime Minister, my colleague from Point-a-Pierre, and the Member for Couva South, all of whom, I think, made excellent contributions of an extremely high quality. But it is not to say that I am not thanking all those who contributed, because I am.

I thank also, the Member for Laventille, as well as the Member for St. Ann's West for their expressions of support for the bill. Indeed, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have known the Member for Laventille for an exceedingly long time, and I have always found her to be a hardworking person, honest and sincere.

This is not to say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I have not known the Member for San Fernando East for all of 29 years. We have been friends for all of that time since he was in the sixth form in Presentation College when I was a young teacher at Naparima College. I did not actually teach him school subjects, but I tried to teach him other things, without success.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the hon. Leader of the Opposition, I must make very special mention of him, because he concerned himself at great length with me during his contribution, and I must crave you indulgence to refer to some of the points he made in respect of me personally and to set the record straight. He said, for example, that he was impressed with my—and I am quoting—“tremendous capacity for absorption”. He complained when I declined the compliment and he said—not quoting this time—“I have never seen a man resist congratulations so”. The reason I resisted it, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that from all the evidence, I do not think my capacity for absorption is greater than that of the hon. Leader of the Opposition. When I speak of absorption, I am talking about all matters, substances, materials and things. I have no greater capacity than he.

He also referred to the short period that I have been in the NAR. I suggested to him that I was probably in the NAR before him, because I said that while he was trying to decide whether to join up with this party, I was already there. I think the party was established in February of 1986, and I think that is the date of my application, although I do not recall getting my card until about August or September. But I suspect, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that he applied later than February of 1986, and he got his card later than that. So I thought that I would put these facts to the House.

Mr. Humphrey: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Member is misleading the House. It is quite obvious that he was not around in the early days going back to 1981, when the Member for Couva North met with the leader of the then ONR, and started to put in place everything that enabled the NAR to be brought into being.

Mr. Panday: You were hobnobbing with the PNM at that time, remember?

Sen. Broomes: Mr. Speaker, I cannot deny the facts of things that the hon. Member for St. Augustine has just outlined, but I was not dealing with 1981, at all. Indeed, I was out of the country serving the country in another capacity.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition also made a point of saying that perhaps I was straying from the strict path of truth when I said that I contributed to the Manifesto. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I made a big contribution, and only a bit got in, but it is there. I would invite the hon. Leader of the Opposition to have a drink with me at some time and I will show him the bit that got in.

Mr. Panday: I will join him any time. I do not mean drugs, you know you are famous for that. Do not bring drugs in. You want some more? Do not bring drugs.

Sen. Broomes: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have great respect for him. He knows that we have been good acquaintances for a long time. But he must not take *punga* with me, I do not like it. He picked on me, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Panday: But you have got to stay off the drugs. What is your problem? You promise?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

Sen. Broomes: When he did get around to dealing with the bill, the first point he made was about the appointment of the board.

Mr. Panday: Do not bring Richardson at all.

Mr. Richardson: You cannot take me at all. Kill you every day.

Sen. Broomes: He said it is wrong for only two men to advise his Excellency, the President; only the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition. He said that what should happen is that we should have a Joint Select Committee of Parliament and we should have something like what is happening to this judge in the United States at the moment.

What interested me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and he emphasized this, he said we must have television. I think that if the hon. Member wants to have this type of Government, if he wants to change the Constitution to an American Constitution, I think he should have gone before the Constitution Commission when it was sitting. I, myself, do not care for television, because I do not have his capacity to act. He would look so good; his capacity to speak, his fluency, I do not have it. I think he just wants it so that he can go out there and shine.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have a Constitution, we have a system. I made the point in the other place, when certain Members were getting at me as the Minister—some people found it very funny—that a Minister is not an individual, but an institution. He is an institution, in the same way the Prime Minister is an institution, and the Leader of the Opposition is an institution. So that when you say “the President advised by the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition”, you are not talking about individuals, you are talking about advised by two institutions.

That is our system. It is different from the US system where you have a clear-cut distinction between the legislature and the executive. So that when the

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executive proposes somebody, the representatives of the people must have a say. Therefore, you have this grilling before the committees. But, in this system, the Prime Minister is, by definition, the majority representative of the people. Any committee you set up would necessarily have a majority of Government Members. That is why you say the Prime Minister. It is not expected that a Prime Minister will act as an individual. So that the systems are different. One would have expected that somebody of the calibre of the hon. Leader of the Opposition would have seen this, although the other hon. Member who mentioned it, one does not expect that he will appreciate that so readily.

Mr. Humphrey: On a point of order, again, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This Member, who describes "ANR Robinson as the Eric Williams of Tobago", according to the mass media, I want to refer him, again, to the NAR Manifesto. I do not know if he contributed to the section that I am now going to quote for him. Again, it is part of the Immediate Action Plan on page 5. It is item 10; high up in the order of priorities.

5.40 p.m.

"On being voted into office, the NAR Government will forthwith put into effect the following Action Plan:

10. Revise the Standing Orders of Parliament to provide for:-
 - a. The establishment of the required Committees to enable continued and adequate parliamentary vigilance over national, regional and international affairs.
 - b. The vesting of these committees with the appropriate authority and powers, as well as providing them with the necessary resources to function.
 - c. The opening of Parliamentary debates to the electronic media."

It is all there. It has nothing to do with the executive system or the Westminster system.

Sen. Broomes: Mr. Deputy Speaker, what he has done is to confirm my assessment that he was not able to understand what I was talking about. In the Westminster system you do have committees.

Hon. Member: That is why the people did not elect you and you will never get a seat in this House.

Mr. Panday: Do not forget that they do not want you in Diego Martin West.

Sen. Broomes: If I had the same abilities as some of the Members opposite, I would know how to deal with Diego Martin West. I would go down there and seize all the party cards and put in a new executive, and I would be there, but I do not have that kind of capacity.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was saying that we do have committees in the Westminster system, but a Member has got to appreciate the difference between that kind of committee and the kind of committee that they are proposing. They are different animals altogether. As I told some friends in the other place, I will not charge any fees for these pieces of advice but sometimes I feel I ought to.

In our Constitution there are many people, including the Chief Justice, who are appointed on the advice of the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition. Why are they picking on this to make this point at this time? If they have a more fundamental point to make about it, they can make it, but why pick on this? There is no reason at all. The whole system is built up like that for the reason I have explained.

Hon. Member: Why promise to amend the Standing Orders? He should go back from whence he came.

Sen. Broomes: The next point which the Leader of the Opposition moved to was clause 6. On that same point, he said that the President must not have the power to terminate. If he consults to appoint, he must also consult to terminate. The Constitution is there. All we did was to follow what is there. All those offices wherein persons are appointed upon consultation by the President, with the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition, in all those cases, the President has the discretion to terminate. You cannot ask the President to consult again to terminate. It is contrary to the construction and the spirit of our Constitution, as it is.

He spoke about clause 16 where we mentioned exemptions from liability of Members of the Board.

Mr. Valley: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. I just want to get some clarification.

Hon. Member: That is not a point of order.

Sen. Broomes: Mr. Deputy Speaker, is he on a point of order?

Mr. Valley: I am on a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. What the Minister is saying is that under the Constitution, wherever the President has the right to appoint, after consultation, he has the right to dismiss without consultation. I do not think that is correct.

The point I am making is that, although I did not speak on the bill, the one thing that disturbs me is the fact that the President seems to have the right to dismiss Members without consultation.

Sen. Broomes: So, Mr. Deputy Speaker—

Mr. Valley: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wonder whether you will give a ruling on the point of order, please.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Chair does not recognize that as a point of order. Would the Minister continue.

Sen. Broomes: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Valley: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am saying that the Minister made a representation with respect to the functions of the President which is not correct under the Constitution.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It is so recorded.

Sen. Broomes: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the next concern of the hon. Leader of the Opposition was with the clauses dealing with the power of the Minister to stop activity when the security of the state is involved. This is dealt with in clauses 71 to 73. He made the point that the criminal law is sufficient to deal with such instances. I wish to state categorically that the use of the criminal law is a different matter altogether. The clauses in this bill, 71 to 73, are dealing with stoppage of an illegal activity. If the criminal law were to come into play, we cannot stop the activity. We are talking about national security being involved. The same people who say that you do not take sufficient care of national security, when you put in a provision like this—and sometimes I think they do not read it properly—they just take a glance and they see that a Minister can stop something and they oppose it, but this is stoppage in the interim. While the criminal law slowly moves—as it is moving down at Chaguaramas—to deal with the matters, you have to stop it.

The clauses go on to say that the person can go to the High Court, and from there to the Court of Appeal, but it says also that when the person goes there, the Minister can tell the court that because it is a national security matter. I shall quote clause 73 which says:

"Where on an appeal against a direction made by the Minister under section 71..."

That is the stoppage direction—

"the Minister certifies that in his opinion it is contrary to public order, public safety or national defence to disclose the grounds for believing that the appellant was using the means of telecommunication of which he was deprived for purposes dangerous to the security of the State then. . . "

And the important phrase is—

"unless the High Court or the Court of Appeal, as the case may be, thinks fit to order otherwise, the Minister is presumed to have had reasonable grounds for so believing."

This is the provision of which so much was made. But this is really a restatement of what is, in fact, the common law, which was developed in England over centuries. People always ask me why do I refer to England, but where does one refer to when the common law that one uses was developed there? Where else will one refer to? One has to refer to England; and of course, there is no need to make any apology for that whatsoever.

5.50 p.m.

Our law developed in England. At first it was Crown privilege and then it evolved to become public interest immunity. At first it belonged only to the Crown, then it belonged only to the Minister; now it belongs to anybody in a position to take care of national security, and any such person in any matter in any court in England—and that is the common law which is applicable to Trinidad and Tobago—can go to the court and certify that national security is involved and, therefore, he cannot give the evidence. The saving clause as we have it in this legislation is, "unless the High Court or the Court of Appeal as the case may be, thinks fit to order otherwise".

How does the court do that? The court does that by having the power to ask the person who is making the claim, to outline the evidence privately. "In private" is different from "*in camera*" because *in camera*, you have the other side represented. "In private" it is only the judge and the Minister and when the judge has heard that, if he is not satisfied he takes the Minister back into court by the scruff of his neck and he says, "Sir, please stand and give the evidence." So we

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have to trust the court in this case; and it is not absolute power of the Minister. He must have it because if he does not have it, then he cannot stop the activity that is undermining the national security of the state. He cannot stop it until he calls policemen and tells them, "Well, look, something is happening there". An arrest is then made and they go down to Chaguaramas for preliminary enquiries.

What is interesting is that the similar provisions in the British Telecommunications Act 1984, are nowhere near as circumscribed as these provisions. What do they say? What I emphasize here is the vastness of the power, the vagueness of the Authority, the way it is uncircumscribed. Not like ours.

"The Secretary of State may, after consultation with a person to whom this section applies..."

Such a person as defined lower down is the Minister, the Director of Telecommunications and anybody who is working for them.

"give to that person such directions of a general character as appear to the Secretary of State to be requisite or expedient in the interests of national security or relations with the Government of a country or territory outside the United Kingdom."

That is the provision in here. Now that is power. Subsection (2) says:

"If it appears to the Secretary of State to be requisite or expedient to do so in the interests of national security or relations with the Government of a country or territory outside the United Kingdom, he may, after consultation with a person to whom this section applies, give to that person a direction requiring him, according to the circumstances of the case to do or not to do a particular thing specified in the direction."

That is power. It says further:

"A person shall not disclose or be required by virtue of any enactment or otherwise to disclose anything done by virtue of this section if the Secretary of State has notified him that the Secretary of State is of the opinion that disclosure of that thing is against the interests of national security."

That is power, not this. This is nothing at all.

I come now to the hon. Member for Naparima. I must tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that when the hon. Member for Naparima was two-thirds of the way

through pronouncing a certain word, I feared that he might be about to follow the hon. Member for St. Ann's West in using certain words which were ordered struck from the record. Because the word here is facsimile, but he called it "fackismile". What bothered me about that—and I am making a serious point—I know if you are going to a debate, and you are reading the bill that is going to be debated and you meet a word that you do not know which is clearly important in the debate, you are going to look it up. The point I am making is, did the hon. Member prepare himself for this debate? If he did, what did he think that "fackismile" meant? [Interruption]

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

Sen. Broomes: The hon. Member in his contribution claimed that the bill was brought in isolation and there was no policy context in which it was brought. This is not true at all because the bill was brought in the context of the communication and information policy outlined in the *Medium Term Macro Planning Framework*. That plan is outlined at chapter XXVIII starting on page 245 and there are some 148 paragraphs in that chapter. I will refer the hon. Member to that part of the *Medium Term Macro Planning Framework*. It is stated there what is intended for the future of the telecommunications industry and a close study of it will show that this bill was brought against that background.

He spoke about the addendum to the White Paper and he wanted to know who prepared it. Well I do not know who prepared it, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is a Government publication and an addendum to a White Paper. What I want to stress is that the purpose of this bill is to establish an independent authority to deal with telecommunications and to respond swiftly in an industry in which swift response is necessary. If hon. Members would look at the draft bill in the White Paper they would see that the board was to be appointed by the Minister and in further discussions, we said that this is too important a matter to leave in the hands of the Minister, let us lift it a bit. So we changed it to say, "by the President after consultation with the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition."

6.00 p.m.

I do not know where this addendum came from but if you look at it, it has proposals which are contrary to this outlook; where you lift the thing and put it in the hands of the President, after consultation. There are many proposals in that addendum which are directly contrary to that.

Although I do not know anything about it, by way of assistance I would refer the hon. Member to paragraph 28:37 of the chapter in the *Medium Term Macro Planning Framework*. There he will see that Trinidad and Tobago's interests in this organization, that is INTELSAT, is represented by Textel as signatory and operator of the network. Against that kind of background, it was necessary to lift the thing out and any proposals that came had to be looked at against that kind of background.

Mr. Palackdharrysingh: Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the Minister telling the House that he does not know about or that he does not care to know an addendum to the White Paper, coming out of the Prime Minister's Office, with very powerful recommendations in them?

Sen. Broomes: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will tell the hon. Member that it is a Government document and the source was never important to me. There are so many Government publications, whose authors I do not know, including the very White Paper; I do not know who wrote it. It came to me. It is a White Paper and there is an addendum to it and I accept that. So, in that sense he may be right in thinking that I do not care to know.

When I say I do not care to know, there are so many things in this life I would like to know; so many books I would like to read; some of them I have bought and have on my shelf for over a year, and I have not gotten around to reading them. Given the constraints of time and so forth, and the most efficient way of using the little time at my disposal—I am now over 50 years of age—I accept that there are some things I will never know, and that is one that I do not give very high priority to.

Mr. Palackdharrysingh: It is really sad.

Sen. Broomes: Now, the hon. Member was also concerned about two-way flow. Well, of course, this manifesto is such an important document. It is the first manifesto, in this country, that everybody knows backwards and forwards. I think it is really a document that, perhaps, 50 to 60 years from now will be here; it is so important a document. This manifesto says clearly—and it was read out by the hon. Member for St. Augustine—that the policy is two-way flow. That is the policy. So, I assure the hon. Member, that this is the policy.

I went to a Caricom conference in Jamaica in March, and this was such a big topic of discussion. But, hon. Members have to bear in mind always—especially

when they read out things in this manifesto and say "Where are they?"—that things take time. The important thing is that you must have the policy and be working towards it. That is what "manifesto" means. That is what is being done; and he will find that the new media institutions will be encouraged to have a certain minimum percentage of local production—not only locally but also to try to export as is said here. It is the intention that this should happen.

The hon. Member wanted to know what "consultation" means in respect of the appointments. Well, I really cannot give that advice free of charge. There was a case some time ago when the former President appointed somebody, and I believe the matter went to court. What I recommend is that the hon. Member read the records of those proceedings and he will get a good idea of what "consultation" means.

Mr. Palackdharrysingh: Now, you are very evasive.

Sen. Broomes: I assure the hon. Member that I am not being evasive. You see, that is really a legal matter. I have given him the source free of charge; I have told him where to find it and I am really not going to give him further advice free of charge.

He talked about the infringement of human rights and I think he referred to the inspectors. In clause 44 provision is made for inspectors. As my friend, the hon. Leader of the Opposition keeps saying, "this is awesome power". He likes this word—I am sorry I used it—and he latched on to it, "awesome power". We must to have inspectors and it can be used for all sorts of things, including undermining the security of the state. So, you make provisions for inspectors just as you have weights and measures inspectors and so forth.

He did not read subclause (2) which makes it mandatory for the inspector to have a warrant in certain circumstances, and to be accompanied by a police officer. Now, there is nothing more that can be done. We have inspectors; in two instances they can go by themselves when they are only going to check records and leave them there, but if they want to take away anything or enter certain places, they have to get a warrant and in addition, be accompanied by a police officer. I find that quite unobjectionable and I am sure that when the Member looks at it more carefully, he will find so too.

Much has been made about the broadcast code. I remember that in my initial presentation of this bill, I drew to the attention of hon. Members, two things. One

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was that the expected content of the broadcast code—the type of content—is demonstrated by the proposals set out in the White Paper. You see, attached to the White Paper, annexed to it, is a draft bill and also a draft broadcast code. So that, when hon. Members start raising all sorts of bogeymen as to what this broadcast code would be, they must remember that it will have to be brought to this House and also that in criticizing it—as they will inevitably do—they will have the draft to guide them, which is in the White Paper, and they have the assurance that this is the guide, the intent, the kind of thing that the code is expected to contain.

6.10 p.m.

It is not necessary to raise these bogeymen and to talk about censorship and that sort of thing. You talk about censorship to a government which, when whoever wrote the White Paper said “let the Minister do it”, the Government said “no, let the President do it and let him talk to the Leader of the Opposition first”; then you come and talk about censorship. It seems unfair and unreasonable that these charges should be made.

The hon. Member also referred to the financial provisions as outlined at clause 63. We took exception to those as well. Clause 63(2) provides that the accounts required to be kept by the Authority shall be audited annually by an auditor appointed by the Authority and approved for such purpose by the Auditor General. According to my notes, the hon. Member insisted that the auditing must be done by the Auditor General. I do not think that he understands how burdened the Auditor General is. I believe he also suggested that the Auditor General should be given more staff so that he can do this. I do not think the hon. Member realizes how many other institutions would be ahead of this one for such attention by the Auditor General.

Mr. Palackdharrysingh: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. The hon. Member is attempting to mislead the House. The point I made was that such a statutory body should be audited by the Auditor General's Department and if there was a deficiency in staff, then that must be dealt with. It was strictly in the line of accountability, without trying to see the excuses. I suggested that such an arrangement would have led to accounts not being properly done in terms of accountability. Let him not try to mislead the House with some other spurious argument.

Sen. Broomes: I am not in the business of misleading the House. If I misunderstood what the hon. Member said, I am sorry, but I am saying what I understood.

Mr. Palackdharrysingh: You are a wicked man.

Sen. Broomes: I do not agree that I am a wicked man or anything like it. I really disagree strongly.

The point is, this is what is being done now in order to prevent a situation where you would require almost every public servant to work in the Auditor General's Department, if that department has to audit everything. It is a fairly common practice now for state entities to apply to the Auditor General, especially if they are empowered in this way, to appoint auditors to audit their books. In that way, the Auditor General still has the final responsibility. He also is empowered by law at any time to audit the books of any state authority of this nature.

Furthermore, subclause (3) shows that the audited accounts must be laid in Parliament by the Minister, so that in any event—

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Sen. Broomes: So that:

- (1) The Auditor General must approve the auditors.
- (2) The Auditor General or his Department can audit anytime he thinks it is necessary.
- (3) The accounts must be submitted to the Minister.
- (4) The Minister must bring the accounts to Parliament.

It is for hon. Members when they see the accounts—because this Parliament is supreme—to deal with them.

Of course, the Public Accounts Committee, which by tradition is chaired by a Member of the Opposition, has the authority to deal with those accounts. I think that these provisions are quite sufficient to deal with the legitimate fears of the hon. Member.

The hon. Member expressed a general fear that the authority conferred by this bill is open to abuse. I cannot argue with that because all authority is open to abuse and systems are usually instituted to take care of abuse. If there is any society which has systems to take care of abuse, which however refuses to take care of abuse, then do not blame just the government, blame everybody. Every single authority is open to abuse. I cannot promise the hon. Member to produce an authority which is beyond abuse.

The hon. Member for St. Ann's West referred to an Inspector in Vancouver because he had the same fears about the Inspector. I will invite the hon. Member to recall that he said that this Inspector was also a dog-catcher, or an Inspector of dog licences. Well, I do not know what was the calibre of that Inspector. You see, this point ties in with what I just said. That Inspector apparently abused his authority, but if you put an inspector of dog licences to inspect theatres, anything can happen. He will abuse his authority because his level is probably that of an inspector of dog licences.

I think they were wrong and also they could have gone to court. In this country, we have a spate of judicial reviews every Monday morning and any authority, Minister, or inspector, can be taken before the courts to face judicial review.

I think, more or less, I have touched on all the points of substance which were made in the debate.

Mrs. Donawa-McDavidson: Could I just make an inquiry? I think I raised in my contribution the urgency of getting the CTU in operation, because they have been dormant for three years.

6.20 p.m.

Sen. Broomes: That question was asked. I, as Minister responsible for Telecommunications, am Vice President of the CTU, succeeding my friend who preceded me in this post. We have a Secretary General, Mr. Ramnarine—who was here earlier—from Trinidad and Tobago who was duly elected Secretary General, who has a staff and quarters around Queen's Park West. I am in constant contact with him and I get very valuable advice from him on various matters. He reports to me. In fact, today or yesterday I got two reports from him which are still on my desk which I have not yet read. He alerts me on matters relating to telecommunications taking place in Trinidad and Tobago and the Caribbean, and

he alerts me on positions that the Government may wish to consider. He recently went to an important Conference in a Latin American country, I think it was Chile, just about two weeks ago, so it is very much alive and proving to be very useful. I do not know of the exact address but it is around the Queen's Park Savannah and I can give the address to the hon. Member as soon as I can put my hand on it, perhaps on Monday morning.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not claim the omniscience of some of my friends opposite, so I do not claim that this is necessarily the best of all possible bills. What I do claim is that I have probably spent more time than any of the Members opposite, studying the matters dealt with in this bill. I have probably spent a lot more time than they will ever spend because they are busy people.

We have produced a bill here which represents choices of an almost infinite set of options. We have produced it as a whole, we have brought it to this House and I think it is an excellent one. I read somewhere, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that "certainty is the solace of fools"; that is why I claim no certainty that these are necessarily the best options. Mind you, I do not know whether the person who said "certainty is the solace of fools" then added that he was not certain about that but he said so. I think these are among the best options, if not the best, set out in this bill, and I commend it to this honourable house for approval. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move that the bill be now read a second time.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a second time.

Motion made and question proposed, That the committee stage of this bill be taken at the next sitting of this honourable House.

Question put and agreed to.

Motion made and question proposed, That the House do now adjourn to Friday, October 19, 1991 at 1.30 p.m. [*Hon. B. Tewarie*]

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 6.25 p.m.