

*Leave of Absence**Friday, March 13, 1992***HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES***Friday, March 13, 1992*

The House met at 1.30 p.m.

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

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Members, the Speaker is attending a seminar on parliamentary practice and procedures in London. She will be out of the country for the rest of the month.

I have granted leave of absence from today's sitting to the Member for Point Fortin (Dr. V. Lasse) and the Member for Tobago West (Miss P. Nicholson).

**PAPERS LAID**

1. Annual Report of the National Insurance Board—July 1990 to June 1991. [*Minister of Finance (Hon. W. Mottley)*]
2. Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission—Annual Report 1986. [*Hon. W. Mottley*]
3. Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission—Annual Report 1987. [*Hon. W. Mottley*]
4. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Point Fortin Corporation for the year ended December 31, 1985. [*Hon. W. Mottley*]
5. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of National Quarries Company Limited for the year ended July 31, 1983. [*Hon. W. Mottley*]
6. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of National Quarries Company Limited for the year ended July 31, 1984. [*Hon. W. Mottley*]
7. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Trinidad and Tobago (BWIA International) Airways Corporation for the year ended December 31, 1988. [*Hon. W. Mottley*]
8. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Trinidad and Tobago (BWIA International) Airways Corporation for the year ended December 31, 1989. [*Hon. W. Mottley*]

*Papers Laid*

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9. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Chaguaramas Development Authority for the year ended December 31, 1987. [*Hon. W. Mottley*]
10. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Trinidad and Tobago Tourist Board for the year ended December 31, 1982. [*Hon. W. Mottley*]
11. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Trinidad and Tobago Tourist Board for the year ended December 31, 1983. [*Hon. W. Mottley*]
12. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Trinidad and Tobago Tourist Board for the year ended December 31, 1984. [*Hon. W. Mottley*]
13. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of Trinidad and Tobago National Petroleum Marketing Company Limited for the period ended March 31, 1991. [*Hon. W. Mottley*]

*Papers 4, and 9 to 12 to be referred to the Public Accounts Committee.*

*Papers 5 to 8 to be referred to the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee.*

#### ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

##### **Cleaning of Cesspits (Backlog)**

7. **Dr. Sahid Hosein** (*Siparia*) asked the Minister of Local Government:

Could the Minister state what plans his Ministry has to deal with the enormous backlog of cesspits that are to be cleaned given the fact that an outbreak of cholera is imminent?

**The Minister of Local Government and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, the ability of the corporations to clear the backlog of cesspits is affected by the shortage of functional cesspool emptiers as well as by problems inherent in the separate functions of collection and disposal of faecal waste. The rate of collection is determined by the availability of operational cesspool emptiers, while the rate of disposal is directly related to the distance of the faecal waste dump from the collection point. While the corporations collect, the waste disposal sites are controlled by the Water and Sewerage Authority. In the situation of the emergency, WASA was requested to facilitate the disposal exercise.

Of the 48 disposal emptiers owned by the corporations, 28 are not functional. Efforts are being made to access unspent balances held by the former county councils to finance repairs of non-functional cesspool emptiers, thereby enabling corporations to carry out the routine functions promptly. An assessment of the entire fleet of cesspool emptiers is being conducted.

In view of the imminent threat of cholera, the Minister of Local Government requested the Solid Waste Management Company to assist the corporations in clearing the backlog. Work has already begun in St. Patrick, Caroni, Victoria and St. George East as well as St. George West and will be extended to other regions.

**1.40 p.m.**

### **Foreign Currency**

- 8. Mr. Krish Jurai (Nariva)** asked The Minister of Finance: Would the Minister state how much foreign currency has left this country since the Prime Minister's statement that the Trinidad and Tobago dollar would be linked to the floating exchange rate?

**The Minister of Finance (Hon. Wendell Mottley):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, the hon. Member's question is not clear. The hon. Prime Minister never said that: "The TT dollar would be linked to the floating exchange rate." However, I shall assume that the hon. Member was referring to a statement reported in the *Trinidad Guardian* of January 7, 1992, which stated: "...Government's intention in keeping with its manifesto pledge ultimately to liberalize exchange control".

Indicators of the level of foreign currency outflows are net sales by the Central Bank to the commercial banks and net sales by the commercial banks to the public. This information is public knowledge, being available to the hon. Member through the monthly statistical publications of the Central Bank. During the course of 1991, and especially from June of that year, a combination of factors contributed to an increase in the demand for foreign exchange and a loss of reserves. These are:

- 1) The removal of the requirement that the commercial banks maintain a secondary reserve within the Central Bank. As a result, there was a rise in liquidity in the banking system and a rapid expansion in bank credit which translated into increased imports.
- 2) The complete removal of exchange controls over imports of visible items.

- 3) The removal of a substantial part of the negative list.
- 4) Statements made on the hustings in the run-up to the 1991 general election.

The outflows experienced early in 1992 have similarly resulted from a number of factors, but mainly the usual speculation that has come to be associated with the presentation of the annual budget. Net sales by the commercial banks to the public for the period January 1 to 31, 1992 amounted to US \$86.2 million. Data for the period February 1 to 18, 1992 are not yet available, nor is it possible to disaggregate the net sales which occurred in the period January 7 to 31, from data for the month as a whole.

Net sales by the Central Bank to the commercial banks for the period January to February 18, 1992, amounted to US \$8.5 million. It is to be noted that for the period January 7 to 31, such net sales were US \$86.7 million. However, for the period February 1 to 18, that is the period following the budget presentation, there were net purchases by the Central Bank from the commercial banks to the value of US \$6.2 million.

In the context of all this information, let me take this opportunity to reiterate a point which I made on January 14 last in the course of a television interview:

"We have set the objective in this recently approved budget to rebuild the country's foreign exchange reserves over the next several years. Prudence demands that our foreign exchange reserves should be substantially rebuilt as an essential step, prior to implementing any specific measure in currency liberalization. It should, therefore, be abundantly clear that currency liberalization is not within the immediate plans of this administration.

"In addition, the actions taken by the Central Bank in the recent past clearly demonstrate our intention to defend the exchange rate at its current parity."

**Mr. B. Panday:** Mr. Speaker, would the hon. Minister state, having regard to his statement that liberalization of the currency is not on the cards for the immediate future, whether devaluation is on the cards?

**Mr. Mottley:** Mr. Speaker, I will reiterate the last paragraph: In addition, the actions taken by the Central Bank in the recent past clearly demonstrate our intention to defend the exchange rate at its current parity.

**Mr. B. Panday:** Would the Minister answer the question?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The Member for Nariva, next question.

**Mr. Jurai:** I want to repeat the question just asked by my leader, Mr. Basdeo Panday, the Member for Couva North. Does the Government intend to devalue the dollar immediately?

**Mr. Mottley:** I thought that I was quite clear. But if you want another phrasing, the Government has no intention at this stage of touching the exchange parity.

### **Mitan River Bridge (Rebuilding of)**

**9. Mr. Krish Jurai** (*Nariva*) asked the Minister of Works and Transport:

Could the Minister kindly state what progress has been made with respect to the rebuilding of the Mitan River Bridge at Cocal and how soon the said bridge is expected to be re-opened to vehicular traffic?

**The Minister of Works and Transport (Hon. Colm Imbert):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, as B-1/46 on the Manzanilla/Mayaro Road, the bridge crosses the Mitan River Spanning 320 feet in four, 80 feet sections. The bridge is a single lane Bailey bridge. The southern span failed in September 1991, under the weight of an overweight vehicle. The Ministry of Works and Transport is, at present, undertaking the repairs and upgrading the bridge structure to allow the passage of conventional vehicles. The scope of work involves the driving of piles, complete reconstruction of the northern and southern spans and the strengthening of the two intermediate spans. Preparatory site work commenced before the Carnival period this year, with the mobilizing of equipment and materials. Full operations for the repair of the bridge began on Wednesday, March 4, 1992.

In the absence of unforeseen developments, the work is expected to be completed in nine weeks from the commencement of full operations. It is noteworthy that repair work to this bridge was planned and initiated by the Highways Division of the Ministry of Works and Transport within the first two months of 1992.

**Mr. S. Mohammed:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Minister says the work will be completed nine weeks after commencement of full operations. What does he deem to be the commencement date of full operation? You did say March 4, does that mean nine weeks from March 4?

*Oral Answers To Questions*  
[MR. MOHAMMED]

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I would like to get that cleared up, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

**Mr. Imbert:** yes.

**Mr. Humphrey:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, would the hon. Minister indicate whether the works now in progress are designed for permanent rehabilitation of the bridge or if it is a temporary measure that is being taken?

**Mr. Imbert:** The work is repair work. It is expected that the repair work would have a useful life of between 10 to 15 years.

**Mr. Haniff:** Would you permit a supplementary question, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Would the hon. Minister please tell us if this is the Bailey bridge that is being repaired, and even if it is not, how long has this Bailey bridge been there?

**Mr. Imbert:** Yes, it is a Bailey bridge. At this time I am not in a position to say how long it has been there. I would seek the necessary information.

**Mr. Haniff:** For further clarification, the Bailey bridge is being repaired. When is it expected that the Bailey bridge will be made available for the extended use, that is, the Bailey bridge being made available for other purposes?

**Mr. Imbert:** In due course.

**Mr. Jurai:** Stemming from the Minister's statement, can he state clearly whether the bridge will be opened before mid-May, 1992?

**Mr. Imbert:** That question has already been answered. If you compute nine weeks from March 4, you will get your answer.

### **Princes Town Market (Rebuilding of)**

**10. Mr. Mohammed Haniff** asked the Minister of Local Government:

Could the Minister state:

- (i) Whether the Ministry intends to construct a new Princes Town market and if the plans which have been already prepared for this market will be used for this project?
- (ii) Which site has been identified for the said market and what steps have been taken so far to prepare the said site for construction?

**The Minister of Local Government and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, consideration is being given to the construction of a new market in Princes Town. However, experience has shown that the traditional approach to the location and layout of markets does not appear to be acceptable to vendors who prefer to sell outside market structures.

In view of the current thinking, which tends to diverge from the traditional enclosed structures for market vending, the approach to construction of markets must be revised. Given the existing financial constraints, the kind of market accommodation to be provided should be determined before a new market is constructed. The planning units of the Ministry of Local Government is conducting research at present on the subject of market accommodation and vending.

The site originally identified for the new market is that of the former Victoria County Council and the District Revenue Building. However, until a policy on market accommodation is determined, a site cannot be finalized.

**Mr. S. Panday:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, what are the plans of the Government in respect of the vendors who are selling on the pavement at the present time?

**Mr. Valley:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are concerned about that not only in Princes Town but also in Chaguanas, Sangre Grande, Couva, Marabella.

I would like to inform this House that Cabinet recently appointed a committee to look at the Chaguanas Market situation where vending on the street is a big problem. When I spoke with the committee, I thought that we would give that committee until May, but because the Cabinet thought this matter was urgent the Cabinet asked that the committee report in April, so that we will await the results of that committee.

**Mr. S. Panday:** Further supplemental question: Will the vendors be harassed during that period?

**Mr. Valley:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, the laws of the country must be respected in the interim.

**Mr. Haniff:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, please allow me a supplemental question.

Will the hon. Minister please inform this House whether plans that have already been drawn at a cost of over \$1 million, are likely to be abandoned?

**Mr. Valley:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, it seems preferable to me that we spend \$1 million and avoid spending \$20 million, than to spend \$20 million plus \$1 million with the vendors still plying their trade on the streets, rather than in physical structures.

**Mr. Hosein:** Will the Minister cite his source of information that has led him to conclude that the vendors prefer to sell on a roadside rather than sell in a properly constructed market.

**Mr. Valley:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is a study done by Dr. Sealy from NAMDEVCO—*[Interruption]*. I think most of us would know that wherever we go, in these market sites, whether it is Tunapuna, Couva, Chaguanas, we see that the traditional structures are not appealing to the vendors, so that we have to look at a different approach.

**Mr. Hosein:** Would the hon. Minister agree that roadside vending, especially on market day, is a result of overcrowding of existing facilities?

**Mr. Valley:** Hence the reason for the setting up of the Bhaggan committee.

### **Princes Town Car Park (Opening of)**

**11. Mr. Mohammed Haniff** asked the Minister of Works and Transport:

Could the Minister:

- (i) Indicate to the House when the new Princes Town car park will be opened and what arrangements are being made for its operations?
- (ii) State when will construction of the new administration building at the said car park commence?

**The Minister of Works and Transport (Hon. Colm Imbert):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Princes Town car park is now 80 per cent complete. It is anticipated that it will be completed by August, 1992. On completion, the car park will be handed over to the Ministry of Local Government to manage its operations.

The construction of a new administration building to house Government offices in Princes Town is at present in the planning stage. Since the construction of the car park at the site in question, there are no plans to construct a new administration building at this site. Several possible alternative sites for the new building have been identified. The Government is also in the process of seeking to identify funding for the construction of this new building.

**DAILY-RATED EMPLOYEES  
(REVISED REMUNERATION)**

**The Minister of Public Administration in the Office of the Prime Minister (Sen. The Hon. Gordon Draper):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, today I wish to inform Members of the honourable House that in keeping with Government's commitment to implement the special tribunal award in respect of monthly-paid public servants, the need has arisen to consider as well the position of the daily-rated workers employed by Government. Negotiations have been taking place between the Chief Personnel Officer and the National Union of Government and Federated Workers for collective agreements covering the years 1984 to 1986, 1987 to 1989, and 1990 to 1992 on behalf of these workers.

These negotiations have been conducted on the basis of guidelines given by the previous ministerial committee responsible for monitoring industrial relations. On November 20, 1991, an agreement was reached between the parties that with effect from January 1, 1990, the cost of living allowance of \$12.84 per day should be consolidated with a wage rate as of January 1, 1987, and that, thereafter, a fixed cost of living allowance of \$1.31 per day should be paid for each day of service for 1990. The wage rates referred to are still current and came into effect on January 1, 1983. No agreement has so far been reached with respect to the cost of living allowance to be paid for 1991 and 1992.

In view of the decision to implement with effect from March 1, 1992, the award of the special tribunal which ordered, *inter alia*, payment of revised salaries and cost of living allowances to monthly-paid public officers, the Government has decided that the above-mentioned agreement referring to employees covered by the joint negotiating committee, should also take effect on the same date. It is estimated that a total of 33,000 full-time employees will be covered under this agreement.

Accordingly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, with effect from March 1, 1992, Government will implement revised remuneration for the daily-rated employees of central government, the municipal councils, excluding the Port of Spain Corporation and the San Fernando Corporation, which are not represented by the NUGFW. It will include the Tobago House of Assembly and certain statutory authorities and other agencies represented by the joint negotiating committee.

*Daily-Rated Employees (Revised Remuneration)*  
[HON. G. DRAPER]

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The agreement is as follows:

- (i) A revised wage rate, consisting of a sum of \$12.84 per day, consolidated with a basic wage rate existing as at January 31, 1987; and,
- (ii) A fixed cost of living allowance of \$1.31 per day for each day of service from March 1, 1992, until such time as agreement is reached on a rate of cost of living allowance for 1991.

Also, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is to be noted that following the suspension of the cost of living allowance of \$12.84 per day in 1987, an adjusted cost of living allowance was authorized for workers receiving lower levels of pay by a Ministry of Finance and Economy Circular, No. 10, of May 19, 1987 and a Comptroller of Accounts Circular, No. 15, of June 29, 1987. However, in light of Government's decision to implement revised agreements from March 1, 1992, these adjusted rates which are being paid on the basis of the circulars mentioned would cease to apply.

The implementation of this decision is estimated to cost \$101.1 million, provision for which has been made in the 1992 Budget.

**EMPLOYMENT AND JOB CREATION  
(NATIONAL SYMPOSIUM)**

**The Minister of Labour And Co-operatives (Hon. Kenneth Collis):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, the official unemployment rate in terms of the latest information from the Central Statistical Office, presently stands at an average of 18.8 per cent for the first nine months of 1991. This represents an average total of some 92,900 persons, a figure which is annually augmented by some 20,000 school leavers entering the job market.

It is commonly believed, however, that were the definition of the unemployed expanded to include the number of persons who were no longer actively looking for gainful employment, principally because they have become discouraged after long periods of fruitless job hunting, the national unemployment rate would be higher. The problem of unemployment is even worse in certain depressed administrative areas where the rate is higher than the national average.

In order to combat the negative effects of these unacceptably high levels of unemployment, the need to seek the input and commitment of businessmen, union leaders, youth groups, cultural groups and non-governmental organizations, in mounting a major national effort to address this crisis was recognized. Such an

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effort was recognized in the form of a national symposium on employment and job creation.

With this in mind, Mr. Deputy Speaker, towards the end of February, an informal planning committee comprising the Minister of Labour and Co-operatives as chairman, and a number of Government Ministers, Senators, and technocrats began planning activities towards staging this symposium. Given the gravity of this situation, the intention is not to host another talk shop on the topic, but that out of this symposium should come implementable proposals for alleviating unemployment, whether the projects associated with those proposals are to be implemented by the public, private or jointly by both sectors.

In order to ensure the success of the exercise through the effective involvement of the national community, it was also decided to embark on a pre-symposium national sensitization exercise, even prior to the formal announcement of the symposium by the media. In this regard, the committee has met and continues to meet various national interest groups. The public is hereby invited to submit, as early as possible, but not later than March 31, 1992, such written proposals as they may wish to make in this regard to the Ministry of Labour and Co-operatives, which is the secretariat. They should also identify constraints to the successful implementation of their proposals and particularly those constraints which could be effectively addressed by Government. Selected ministries have also been requested to submit position papers.

The symposium will be a two-part exercise. The first part, scheduled to take place on April 7 and 8, 1992, will be for the presentation and discussion of specific proposals made by invited delegates. This will be followed one week later, on April 14, 1992 at which proposals, which have been defined through intervening workshop activities, will be approved for implementation. The venue for the symposium is the Chaguaramas Convention Centre. A full publicity programme will be launched with a press conference on Wednesday, March 18, 1992, at which selected members of the planning committee are expected to be present. Further details will be given during this publicity programme.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago wishes to underscore its commitment to providing jobs for our citizens and this symposium represents a major step in this direction.

**Mr. B. Panday:** On a point of clarification, Mr. Speaker. Would the hon. Minister state whether this symposium would be similar to that held by the hon. Prime Minister George Chambers soon after he came to power, in 1981? Also,

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[MR. B. PANDAY]

having regard to the pre-election statement by the PNM that they had all the answers for the unemployment problem, is this symposium designed to elicit views contrary to the plans that the PNM has for unemployment?

**Mr. Collis:** All this is in addition to what the Member just said.

**2.10 p.m.**

**SAKINA JUMAN (PENSION) BILL**

Bill to make provision for the grant of a pension and gratuity to Mrs. Sakina Juman, [*The Attorney General*]; read the first time.

**CUSTOMS (AMDT.) BILL**

Bill to amend the Customs Act, Chap. 78:01, [*The Attorney General* ]; read the first time.

**ADJOURNMENT**

**The Minister of Local Government and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move that this House do now adjourn to Friday, March 20, 1992 at 1.30 p.m.

**Mr. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj (Couva South):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, before you entertain that motion, I would like you, as the presiding officer in this House, to consider that there is an Order Paper before you in which after “Public Business” there is “Private Business”. The Parliament does not work in this way, in that, if there is an Order Paper in which there is other business and the Government does not have any business then it is the duty of the Government to continue with the other business.

There are certain reasons which have been advanced by the Leader of Government Business but, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if we are serious about the spirit of parliamentary debate and true effective representation, this is not the way in which Parliament works, and we are asking the other side to reconsider its decision to move the adjournment of this House. If they do not do that, there would be certain reactions from us on this side of the House to demonstrate that they are not serious about governing this country and that they are, in effect, only “pappyshowing”. We have serious things to be discussed in this House. They are on the Order Paper; they involve the rights of the people and whether justice can be truly achieved with the machinery that exists.

*Adjournment*

*Friday, March 13, 1992*

I make an appeal through you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as the presiding officer, hoping that the other side would not pursue this motion.

**Mr. B. Panday:** We would like to move to Private Business.

**Mr. Valley:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am really amazed at the Leader of the Opposition in this House.

We had consultation. I consulted with the Leader of the Opposition; I told him that we were unable to proceed.

**Mr. Maharaj:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am not the Leader of the Opposition. He is calling me the Leader of the Opposition.

**Mr. Valley:** The Leader of the Opposition in the House, the Chief Whip—

**Mr. B. Panday:** On a point of order. You did not speak to me.

**Mr. Valley:** The Opposition Chief Whip, Mr. Deputy Speaker—  
*[Interruption]* I am willing to learn, and I learn rather quickly.

As I was saying, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I consulted with the Chief Whip. I told him why Government was unable to accede to the request. I also spoke with the Member who was on the floor at the time, the Member for Oropouche, whom you would notice is not here. So they are well aware that we are unable to accede to the request.

There is an arrangement that “Private Members' Day” is the fourth Friday in the month.

**Mr. B. Panday:** That is the day “Private Members' Day” takes precedence.

**Mr. Valley:** We have set it aside for Private Members' Day.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*House adjourned accordingly.*

*Adjourned at 2.14 p.m.*