

*Leave of Absence**Friday, October 9, 1992***HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES***Friday, October 9, 1992*

The House met at 1.45 p.m.

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

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members I have granted leave from this sitting to the hon. Member for Barataria/San Juan, Dr. Linda Baboolal, for the period October 7—11, 1992; and to the Member for Couva North, Mr. Basdeo Panday, and the Member for Point Fortin, Dr. Vincent Lasse, who are away attending the Thirty-eight Annual Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference, Nassau, Bahamas.

REAPPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEES

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, several Special Select Committees were unable to complete their deliberations in the last session and leave was granted for those Committees to be reappointed in this session. In this regard the following persons have been appointed to serve on the undermentioned Special Select Committees:

Ahamad TrustMr. Desmond Allum (*Chairman*)

Mr. Hedwige Bereaux

Mr. Jarrette Narine

Dr. Carl Singh

St. Ann's Spiritual Baptist ChurchMr. Desmond Allum (*Chairman*)

Mr. Andrew Casimire

Mr. Cyril Rajaram

Mr. Subash Panday

Rescue MissionDr. Rupert Griffith (*Chairman*)

Mr. Hedwige Bereaux

Mr. Jarrette Narine

Mr. Sahid Hosein

Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj FoundationMr. Desmond Allum (*Chairman*)

Mr. Hedwige Bereaux

Mr. Jarrette Narine

Mr. Sahid Hosein

Maingot Village Sumatee SabhaDr. Rupert Griffith (*Chairman*)

Mr. Edward Hart

Mr. Cyril Rajaram

Mr. Mohammed Haniff

Universal African Improvement AssociationDr. Rupert Griffith (*Chairman*)

Mr. Andrew Casimire

Mr. Cyril Rajaram

Mr. Chandresh Sharma

PAPER LAID

Twenty-fifth Report of the Salaries Review Commission—Review of Salaries and other Conditions of Service of the Holder of the Office of Special Adviser (Protective Services) Ministry of National Security.

Written Answer To Question

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[The Minister of Local Government and Minister in the Ministry of Finance
(Hon. K. Valley)]

WRITTEN ANSWER TO QUESTION

Purchase of Lands and Buildings

7. The following question stood on the Order Paper in the name of Mr. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj (Couva South):

Would the Prime Minister give particulars of land and/or buildings which the Government has purchased, leased, rented, agreed to purchase and/or agreed to lease and/or agreed to rent since it came into office in 1991 stating the particulars of the land and/or buildings in question, the names of the parties to the respective transactions, the sums of moneys involved and any other material aspects relevant to the transactions?

The Minister of Local Government and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are asking for a deferral of this question. Oh, this is for written answer?

Mr. Maharaj: But I have not got it.

Mr. Valley: You will get it in due course.

Question, by leave, deferred.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Multi-Dimensional Culture

8. **Mr. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj** asked the hon. Minister of Community Development, Culture and Women's Affairs:

- (a) Would the Minister state whether there exists in Trinidad and Tobago a multi-dimensional culture of which calypso, steelband, chutney and tassa form integral parts?
- (b) If the answer is in the affirmative, would the Minister state whether her Government intends to spend any moneys in 1992 on the promotion of such multi-dimensional culture?
- (c) If it does, would the Minister state the amounts it spent or intends to spend on the promotion of African songs—music and culture, calypsoes, steelbands, Indian Songs—music and culture, Spanish Songs—music and culture including parang and the music and culture of other ethnic groups in our country?

The Minister of Community Development, Culture and Women's Affairs (Sen. The Hon. Joan Yuille-Williams): Mr. Deputy Speaker, culture is always multi-dimensional. The culture of Trinidad and Tobago therefore, as of other countries of the world, manifests itself in multi-dimensional form. Calypso, steelband, chutney and tassa are a few of the multi-dimensional forms through which the musical aspects of our culture find manifestation.

Government intends to, and has spent moneys on cultural action programmes during 1992 for the promotion/enhancement of culture and the arts. Insofar as culture has a multi-dimensional manifestation, such moneys can be viewed as being spent on "multi-dimensional culture."

Government has expended funds through the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and Women's Affairs on various cultural action programmes, through grants to various organizations/agencies. These agencies are not disaggregated by ethnicity and therefore it is not possible to disaggregate the sum spent by ethnicity, as the question asked.

Therefore, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if the hon. Member for Couva South would wish me to give a list of all the groups and organizations to which money has been disbursed, I can do so if that would satisfy him.

Mr. Maharaj: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I should be grateful if the hon. Minister could supply the list of names in writing.

San Fernando General Hospital (Bed Space)

17. Mr. Subhas Panday (Naparima) asked the hon. Minister of Health:

- (a) Is the Minister aware that patients occupy beds in the corridors and verandahs of the San Fernando General Hospital?
- (b) If the Minister is so aware, would he state what steps are being taken to correct this unsatisfactory condition?

The Minister of Health (Hon. John Eckstein): Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Minister is aware of the overcrowding at the San Fernando General Hospital. The hospital was constructed in the year 1954 to accommodate 450 beds. Today, 653 beds are accommodated within the same physical space of the hospital.

In June of 1992 construction of a new hospital wing was initiated and the work is progressing on schedule. It is estimated that the building will be completed in 24 months' time. When completed, accommodation will be provided for 200 additional beds.

Marabella Police Station

18. Mr. Subhas Panday (*Naparima*) asked the hon. Minister of National Security:

Could the Minister state when the Marabella Police Station will be commissioned?

The Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs (Hon. Keith Sobion): Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Marabella Police Station was completed on June 2, 1992 and was commissioned on September 23, 1992.

Mr. S. Panday: What is the strength of the police complement at the Marabella Police Station?

Mr. Sobion: I would be in a position, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to have that answer provided to the Member for *Naparima*.

The following question stood on the Order Paper in the name of Mr. S. Panday (Naparima):

Caroni (1975) Limited (Road Acquisitions)

- 19.** (a) Could the Minister of Planning and Development state whether or not the Government intends to acquire from Caroni (1975) Limited the M1 and M2 roads?
- (b) If so, when?

The Minister of Local Government and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Mr. Deputy Speaker, we ask that this question be deferred for one week.

Question, by leave, deferred.

**Princes Town Constituency
(Street Lights)**

25. Mr. Mohammed Haniff (*Princes Town*) asked the hon. Minister of Public Utilities:

- (a) Is the Minister aware that a high percentage of street lights are not presently functioning in the constituency of Princes Town?
- (b) Is the Minister aware that in a number of cases these lamps have been removed and never replaced?
- (c) If the answers to (a) and (b) above are in the affirmative, would the Minister state what steps are being taken to repair these said street lights?

The Minister of Public Utilities (Hon. Morris Marshall): Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Minister of Public Utilities wishes to advise that maintenance work on street lights was performed in the months of January and February of 1992 in the constituency of Princes Town and available information does not support the claim that a high percentage of lamps are non-functional.

1.55 p.m.

The Minister of Public Utilities wishes to advise as well that the Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission has no reports to support the claim that a number of street lamps were removed and not replaced in the constituency of Princes Town. When reports are received they are investigated by the Commission, as far as I am aware, and if verified, all efforts are made to have the lamps replaced.

The following questions stood on the Order Paper in the name of Mohammed Haniff (Princes Town):

**Street Lights
(Funds)**

26. Would the Minister of Public Utilities state:

- (a) Whether any funds have been allocated for installation of new street lights in the current year 1992?
- (b) If the answer is in the affirmative, would the Minister state what steps are to be adopted by citizens or organizations in order to get the new street lights installed?

Rural Electrification

27. Would the Minister of Public Utilities state:
- (a) Whether any funds have been allocated for installation of new street lights in the current year 1992?
 - (b) If the answer is in the affirmative, will the Minister state what steps are to be adopted by citizens of organizations in order to get the new street lights installed?

The Minister of Public Utilities (Hon. Morris Marshall): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I discussed questions Nos. 26 and 27, with my colleague, the Member for Princes Town, and it is acceptable to him that I request a postponement to next Friday. I do so request.

Questions, by leave, deferred.

The following question stood on the Order Paper in the name of Mr. Krish Jurai (Nariva):

Central Market (Traffic Congestion)

30. (a) Is the Minister of National Security aware that serious congestion occurs daily in and around the Central Market on the Beetham Highway, Port of Spain?
- (b) If the answer is in the affirmative, would he tell this honourable House what steps are being undertaken to rectify this problem?

The Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources (Dr. The Hon. Keith Rowley): Mr. Deputy Speaker, clearly there is some confusion here. This question was not directed to me, as you would see in the wording. I should like to ask for a deferral of one week, since the Minister to whom this question is directed is not here, and I did not take responsibility for it.

The Government would like to answer the question, but clearly it is a matter of traffic, and apparently it has gone to the correct Minister, who I presume is working on it.

Question, by leave, deferred.

**Health Centres
(Shortage of Nurses)**

32. Mr. Krish Jurai (*Nariva*) asked the Minister of Health:

- (a) Is the Minister aware that the following health centres at Sangre Grande, Manzanilla, Cumuto, Coryal and Biche are without the required number of nurses for administering basic health care?
- (b) If the answer is in the affirmative, would the Minister state the following:
 - (i) What steps are being undertaken to fill the said vacancies?
 - (ii) How soon can we expect to see these vacancies filled?
 - (iii) What steps are being undertaken to ensure that resident nurses are stationed at health centres approved for same?

The Minister of Health (Hon. John Eckstein): Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Minister is aware that there is a shortage of nursing staff in the community services.

There are 372 nursing students in training at the present time. When these trained nurses fill the vacancies at the hospitals, the more experienced nurses will be released to meet the shortfall in the community services.

We can expect to see these vacancies filled by August of 1993, when the first batch of nurses will be qualified to fill some of the vacancies at the hospitals.

Consideration is being given to refurbishing quarters earmarked for community nurses as some of these quarters are dilapidated. As soon as the quarters are made habitable, arrangements will be made for their occupation by the relevant nurses.

Mr. Palackdharrysingh: Mr. Deputy Speaker, would the Minister state what steps will be taken between now and August, 1993 to have an adequate supply of nurses at these centres?

Mr. Eckstein: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the only recourse available to the Ministry of Health is to train nurses. You must be aware that we lost a considerable number of nurses in the past four years and we are now seeking to train nurses in large numbers to fill the vacancies that have been created as a consequence of this massive migration of nursing personnel.

Mr. Palackdharrysingh: The answer is “nothing”.

ADJOURNMENT MOTION (LEAVE)

Mr. Ramesh Maharaj (*Couva South*): Mr. Deputy Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order No. 12(1) and 12(2), I gave notice, and I seek leave to move the adjournment of this honourable House, for the purpose of discussing a definite matter of urgent public importance, namely, the state of the affairs at the Licensing Office, which arose as a result of a work-to-rule at the Licensing Department.

The work-to-rule started on Monday, October 5, 1992, consequent upon the appointment by the Government and/or the Minister of Works, of Mr. Richard Mc Comie, a member of the police service, to the office of Transport Commissioner, an office within the public service.

The workers at the Licensing Department and the Public Service Association have alleged that the appointment of Mr. Richard Mc Comie is unconstitutional and smacks of political interference in the exercise of the functions by the Public Service Commission. They alleged that the appointment can create a serious precedent for institutionalized patronage by Government in making appointments within the public service. Their views on the unconstitutionality of such an appointment are supported by the views expressed by the Privy Council in the Trinidad case of Endil Thomas and the Attorney General.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the state of affairs is of urgent public importance as it poses a serious threat to life and public safety on the roads, gives rise to public inconvenience and to prejudice, adversely affects the rights of litigants, creates further delays in the administration of justice and threatens an increase in crime and breaches of the law.

Having regard to this state of affairs at the Licensing Office, there cannot be an inspection of any vehicles, whether new or old; no driving tests are permitted; the sales and transfers of vehicles are adversely affected. These are specialized trained officers and are responsible for detecting vehicles being driven with defective brakes, steering and in many cases without insurance. The effect of having uninsured vehicles on the roads means that people who are involved in accidents, if they are injured, can lose any right to recover against the insurance companies, and the actual perpetrators of the offence may be persons of straw. Apart from that, these officers play an important role in the detection and prosecution of motor vehicle theft.

Adjournment Motion (Leave)
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Mr. Deputy Speaker, one sees that the work-to-rule affects the public interest, it affects life on the road, property and, in effect, the interest of persons who may be injured on the road. It is important for these officers to give evidence in cases, both in the magistrates' court and in the High Court, and their absence from the courts can cause further aggravation in the administration of justice in the sense of the delays in the administration of justice.

2.05 p.m.

One knows that motor vehicles can be used in the commission of crime and the state of affairs as it is, can in effect involve an increase in and a non-prosecution of some criminal offences. It can in effect encourage breaches of the law. Although the cause of the situation may be the unconstitutional action of the Government, I am not on the cause for the purposes of this. I am on the state of affairs which exists at the licensing department. And in my respectful submission the facts qualify the matter as being urgent and of public interest.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member for Couva South, I received your notification and after careful examination, conclude that it is quite clear that the operations of the Licensing Department have not come to a complete stop, and there is no indication that the work-to-rule has had any serious effect on the operations of that department. As such, the matter does not qualify and I therefore refuse to allow the request. If you wish it could be brought under Standing Order 11.

Mr. Maharaj: Mr. Deputy Speaker, just for clarification, may I enquire where the facts that the Licensing Department has not come to a standstill. I am not questioning your ruling; I am merely asking for a clarification. It is based on facts. I am merely asking, where can I find those facts?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have ruled on the matter. As of the interest of the Member, that information could be very adequately provided by the Licensing Department which is still in operation.

**PERSONAL EXPLANATION
(Misstatement)**

The Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources (Mr. Andrew Casimire): Mr. Deputy Speaker, my attention has been drawn to a statement made by the hon. Member for Naparima in this honourable House during my absence last Friday. The Member told this House

that he held a meeting with me as Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, and was told by me that the Government does not intend to honour or implement the Tripartite agreement on Caroni (1975) Limited, which is now being debated by this honourable House.

Mr. S. Panday: That is not what I said and the Member for Toco/Manzanilla is misleading the House.

Mr. Casimire: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to read from *Hansard* where the Hon. Member stated:

"I led a delegation to the Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Agriculture and at that meeting with him, he said, "Let me tell you at once, we cannot implement all of that in the Tripartite Report.".

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wish to take this opportunity to inform this honourable House that I held no meeting whatsoever with the Member for Naparima, nor with his union, nor with his firm concerning Caroni (1975) Limited; neither did I make the statement, ascribed to me, to him or to anyone else.

I consider the statement made by the hon. Member to be entirely false in content, and callous and mischievous in intent. The statement by the hon. Member is clearly designed to confuse the public as well as to dilute and undermine the work of the committee.

Finally, I take this opportunity to inform this honourable House that the Government of which I am a part accepts the recommendations of the Tripartite Committee and will seek to implement them with all sincerity and purpose.

I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. S. Panday: Mr. Deputy Speaker on a point of order, I should like the Member to indicate to the House what the meeting I held with him was about.

Mr. Casimire: Mr. Deputy Speaker, in reply to the question asked by the Member for Naparima, I wish to reiterate that I had no meeting with him on the question of Caroni (1975) Limited.

**VALIDATION OF THE FIFTH REPORT OF THE ELECTIONS AND BOUNDARIES
COMMISSION (TOBAGO) BILL**

Bill to validate the Fifth Report of the Elections and Boundaries Commission on the boundaries of the electoral districts in the electoral area of Tobago. The Minister of Local Government; read the first time.

CARONI (1975) LIMITED

[THIRD DAY]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question [September 18, 1992]:

Be it resolved:

That this House take note of the Report of the Cabinet appointed Tripartite Committee on Caroni (1975) Limited.

Question again proposed.

Mr. S. Panday: Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I was saying on the last occasion, this Government has brought this motion to this House but their activities lacked bona fides. I should have thought that the Member for Diego Martin West, would have made a personal statement on the issue of the Booker/Tate Report. But instead, we find the Member for Toco/Manzanilla a while ago trying to give a spurious explanation. I demanded of him: Tell me, did we hold a meeting and what was the context of the meeting? But he refused to answer it I would not waste my time in dealing with something like that, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The more important issue that this Government had set up the Tripartite Committee in April, and immediately upon that, the Minister, the Member for Diego Martin West ran away to England like a thief in the night, and he invited Booker/Tate. It seems to me that the blows that I gave you on the last occasion sent you for restoration. I cannot make you out today. Yea got a good sandpaper job.

2.15 p.m.

This Tripartite Report was submitted in July, and one week thereafter, Booker/Tate handed their report to the Minister, the Member for Diego Martin West. The point I am making is that he has not had the courtesy to come to the House and say that this PNM Government in 1992 is similar to the PNM Government of 1991, when it had two reports in its hands, and came to the

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House with only one report. We know that the most dangerous report is the Booker/Tate Report, as it recommends at page 27 the reduction of the labour force of Caroni (1975) Limited. It also indicates that they should change the method of harvesting cane into cutting and wing-rowing and to increase a day's work from two—

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Member is quoting from a document. Could he identify the document he is quoting from, please?

Mr. S. Panday: All I want to tell him is that it is the report that Booker/Tate has submitted to him. He has it on his desk. He knows about it. I will give him the name in a few minutes.

Dr. Rowley: The Member has quoted page 27 of a report and made a statement. I should like to have some proper clarification. Once again, the Member is misleading the House. I ask could the Member state the document he is quoting from at page 27? Produce it.!

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Will the hon. Member state the name of the report?

Mr. S. Panday: The report is the Booker/Tate report on Caroni (1975) Limited submitted to the Member for Diego Martin West.

The point I am making is that on Wednesday October 14, Booker/Tate will be returning to Trinidad at the invitation of the Government to continue the work.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Deputy Speaker, can I assist the Members of this House by informing them that the Member is misleading the House? That is not true. Once again the Member is not speaking the truth. The Member is just being irresponsible.

Mr. S. Panday: Booker/Tate is coming to Trinidad and Tobago on Wednesday to continue the work they have started.

I am asking the Member for Diego Martin West to indicate whether Booker/Tate was here and had an inquiry into Caroni (1975) Limited, at the same time the Tripartite Report was being prepared, and whether he has the report on his desk? Answer the question, whether that is so or not. Do not try to pull any wool over the eyes of this House and the country, because we say that you lack bona fides.

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The Government boast that it is going to pay \$30 million. Do you know what Cabinet decided and what instructions were passed on to Caroni (1975) Limited? They passed on the instruction to Caroni (1975) Limited that the Treasury is dry; sell the lands and and pay the \$30 million. They believe that selling land is like selling hops bread. That is why there is justification for the march which the Member for Couva North had taken, because they have set no action in train to pay that money. They have told Caroni (1975) Limited to sell the land to make up the money. We ask them to deny it, or to tell us where they intend to get that money from to pay the sugar workers; whether they have indeed had communication with Caroni (1975) Limited.

The other point I was making was that the Government has brought this motion to Parliament merely to take note. As we have indicated before, there are several pieces of legislation which have to be put into place before this Tripartite Report could be implemented. I mentioned on the last occasion the Cane Ordinance Ch. 23:12 as amended by No. 33 of 1977; The Cane Farmers Rehabilitation Board Ordinance No. 19, 1961; the Sugar Industry Special Funds Ordinance Ch. 23:14 which came into effect in 1947; the Sugar Quotas Ordinance Ch. 23:13; the Sugar Industry Control Board No. 14 of 1966 and the Agricultural Small Holdings Act Ch 59:53.

Unless these pieces of legislation are looked into we are saying that the Government has come to this House merely to gain some political mileage, or take up parliamentary time, because of Government's lack of a legislative programme. It has nothing to do and is merely wasting time.

I should like the Member for Diego Martin West to indicate where the Sugar Industry Control Board is. Sitting in the account of the Sugar Industry Control Board is the sum of \$395,000.00. That board was dissolved by the former government. A committee was set up under Dr. P. I. Gomes. That committee was supposed to have taken account of the assets of the SICB. They took \$395,000.00—

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*]

Hon. Member: Again! [*Interruption*]

Question put and agreed to.

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Mr. S. Panday: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I claim injury time. Could you kindly indicate what is my position now?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Continue.

Mr. S. Panday: Thank you.

The point I was making was that this Government has a fund in the sum of approximately \$400,000.00 in a bank in Port of Spain. That fund should have been used to repair roads for the cane farmers because that money is from a welfare fund to repair roads. Instead, it took the money and put it in the name of a former PNM Senator. It would not try to withdraw the money to repair the roads for the farmers. When we asked the Member for Diego Martin West if he intends to repair any access roads in the constituency of Naparima, he bluntly said 'no', but the Government has money in a fund in a bank and it would not take it out to repair the roads for the farmers. That is why we say that this motion is merely to hoodwink the nation.

Ask the Member for Toco/Manzanilla if I did not discuss that question with him when we met at the Ministry of Agriculture.

2.25 p.m.

Mr. Casimire: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Member for Naparima did discuss the question of the fund with me at a meeting at which he appeared on behalf of his union.

Mr. S. Panday: Having discussed it with him, we ask the question: What has his Ministry done since then to assist the farmers? This goes to show, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that nothing has been done.

We the cane farmers feel that this situation is untenable, and that if the Government really cares about the sugar industry, there are funds in their possession which they can utilize to assist the industry to start the crop next year. The roads in the cane-farming areas are in a deplorable condition. The Government has the money, and we are asking: what does the Government intend to do about that? Now is October; harvesting begins in January; there is enough time. That is the kind of insensitivity, lack of foresight, the lack of intelligence, the lack of will that the PNM has displayed in dealing with the sugar industry.

Another issue is final payment for the farmers. The Government sets the price of cane prior to the commencement of the crop, so that the Government knows

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what price farmers are going to be paid at the commencement of the crop. When they sell the canes they are paid a first interim payment, which is about 60 per cent, and Caroni will take the product of the farmers, sell it, obtain the proceeds and keep the farmers in abeyance. Cane farmers are the few farmers in this country who sell their goods and not know when they are going to get final payment.

We have held several meetings with the Ministry of Agriculture and we have asked them to set the infrastructure and the mood for production, if they want cane farmers to produce. We had reached agreement, with the former Government that cane farmers would be paid their final payment six weeks on the completion of a crop. The reason for that is that farmers would be able to get their money, plow it back into the field so that they would get a better crop the following year. That is all we are asking for. Farmers want to contribute to society; they want to produce, but the Government stands as an obstacle in the way of progress of the farmers. *[Interruption]* Are you grunting or barking *[Interruption]* He looks like a dog, but he grunts.

The point I am making is that the farmers are asking for their money in order to produce. At this point, they do not have money to buy chemicals; they do not have money to pay to clean the canes or to attend to their plantations. What we would find next year is that their crops would not be at the level at which they would have been if they had been given the final payment. Instead, do you know what this Government does? It keeps the cane farmers up until Christmas Eve. Cane is a seasonal crop so that when they produce short crops they can sell the short crops and get an income for Christmas.

Instead, this Government keeps the money up to Christmas Eve and when everybody in society—public servants, army, police—has gotten their money and bought their Christmas goods, cane farmers are swelling like crapauds trying to give their children the basic necessities, but up to Christmas Eve day farmers do not know if they are getting their money. And when you go to the bank on Christmas Eve day and try to get your money out, no sooner you come out of the bank, than your wife spends all the money on consumer goods, so that by the time the crop starts the following year, the farmers are in a worse position than they were the previous year.

That was the colonial attitude. That occurred in the days of colonialism and it continues in the days of the PNM, so that the Government has no intention of helping cane farmers. It does not care about cane farmers. That is why today cane

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farmers are beseeching this Government to tell them when they will get the final payment for canes which have been delivered in 1991. We ask the Government to make a statement if it is interested. Cane farmers cannot take it any more and they have said that if they are being asked to increase production and that is the kind of attitude which will be meted out to them, they will be unable so to do.

I met with the Member for Toco/Manzanilla. I want to ask him if we did not discuss the final payment for cane farmers. He has denied that. He said, "Trying to get it. I will have a meeting with you in two weeks' time". In two weeks' time when we called the Member he was hiding; we could not find him. It is not that we have been coming here merely to complain. We have been sitting with the Government since June to assist the farmers and when you push them in a corner, instead of telling you that they cannot make any headway, they hide from you. As a matter of fact, he called me the day after the meeting was supposed to have been convened and said that the meeting had been postponed.

As for the Member for Diego Martin West, when I spoke to him about it, he said that he was tickling the Minister of Finance and he could not get a reply. I know the cute Member for St. Ann's East, tickled properly, would surely produce results.

Dr. Rowley: Just to put the record straight Mr. Deputy Speaker, I said no such thing to the Member for Naparima. I do not tickle Members of Parliament.

Mr. S. Panday: If he says so, but I know I spoke to him. Could the Member say whether I asked him about payments and he said that he was speaking to the Member for St. Ann's East about it?

Dr. Rowley: Does the Member make any distinction between speaking to and tickling?

Mr. S. Panday: I know that he told me he was tickling him all during waking hours and did not get a response. I did not want to use that but now that he has told me I just want to refresh his memory.

I am certain that the Member for Diego Martin West would make a statement today in this House as to when cane farmers will receive their just due. The latest I heard, and I should like him to refute it, is that Caroni had sent all the documents to the Ministry of Agriculture, six weeks on completion of crop. What we heard today is that they are thinking of December 12 for final payment to cane farmers. Could the Minister confirm or deny that? If he denies it, could he indicate to

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farmers when they will be paid the final payment? Also, would he be kind enough to indicate to the farmers whether payment will be made in accordance with the agreement which was reached two years ago with the Minister of Agriculture, that the Government would make every effort to pay cane farmers their final payment six weeks on the completion of their crop? These are the things we should like to hear.

2.35 p.m.

The Government says that in order to produce 60 per cent of the canes, it is going to introduce new varieties. As the Member for Princes Town will tell you, no significant new variety has been developed since 1942. The Minister come and says that cane farmers will produce more canes with the new variety. And since he has even given a timetable to produce 60 per cent of the cane by 1997, we ask: Where are the new varieties? Have they been sent to the farmers? And in truth and in fact, can the farmers plant those new varieties in time to meet the deadline set in the Tripartite Report?

Also, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we ask the question: What incentive, if any, does the Government intend to give the farmers in order to produce more canes? For example, does it intend to assist cane farmers with cane insurance? Because cane is a very expensive and risky business and many people's canes are being burnt down in October, November and December. The crop starts in January and farmers can lose all their holdings. We ask: Does the Government intend to give the farmers incentives so that they could take the risks that the Government is asking them to take?

The farmers are asking whether the Government is serious—and we want to indicate that the Tripartite Report is silent. On this, that is why they are introducing it now—whether the Government intends to introduce insurance for farmers with their crops; whether the Government intends to provide extension services of the Ministry to the cane farmers so that they may have better husbandry. We are asking whether we shall be left at the mercy of Caroni (1975) Limited, because the farmers see the company in this whole scenario as competing with them and the company has been acting that way with them so that the farmers cannot depend upon Caroni (1975) Limited to assist them in any meaningful way.

Another issue which has to be dealt with is the establishment of a Sugar Industry Control Board. The Act is in place, but the Government has failed to have that board implemented because the present situation is that Caroni (1975) Limited

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has a monopoly on the purchase of cane. So when the farmers go to Caroni (1975) Limited and the Government says it intends to pay cane farmers by quality—increased quality is getting an increased price; they say that system is working in Jamaica and Barbados—we say that our situation in Trinidad and Tobago is different from the rest of the world. We have our own peculiar problems in that 90 per cent of the farmers produce 10 per cent of the cane. That method of sampling will indeed produce serious problems if the company is doing the sampling, the testing and making the decision. If the farmer is aggrieved, to whom does he have to complain? He has to complain to the company.

Furthermore, cane is a seasonal crop. The tc-ts ration—tonnes of cane to tonnes of sugar—reaches its peak in about the month of May. Farmers reap their cane by spells. If the company decides that they are going to victimize certain farmers and give them spells out of time, the farmers will have problems. And to whom do they have to complain? The company. But it is the company that is creating the problem. We are asking Government to establish the Sugar Industry Control Board—*[Interruption]* so that if farmers have problems, they could report to an independent body and that body could protect them.

With Caroni (1975) Limited behaving as it has been with the farmers, we have decided that cane farmers need extra protection and we have called upon the Government to assist the farmers. If I may make my point, the moment they decide to pay people according to quality, they will find that the person who is determining the quality of the product, could drive the farmer out of the market. That has happened—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I will just tell the Member he has five more minutes of speaking time.

Mr. S. Panday: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If that situation prevails, the person who is buying could drive you out of the market. The point I am making is, and it is very visible—what has happened to the tobacco farmers? The tobacco farmers have become an extinct species because of that same mechanism of trying to control the price by quality. Unless the proper mechanisms are put into place, we will find much confusion in the industry, and what the report has set out to achieve would certainly be negated.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, before I take my seat, I should like to ask a few questions which I hope will be answered before the debate is concluded: Has Booker/Tate been invited by the Government? Has Booker/Tate submitted a report? Is that

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report in the Government's possession? What are the recommendations of that report? Why did the Government not tell this honourable House that it had two reports? And what does it intend to do with the Booker/Tate Report?

Further, I should like the hon. Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources to indicate when cane farmers will receive their final payments for canes which have been sold and delivered this year. Also, what mechanisms have been put in place for the payment of the \$30 million which was promised to the sugar workers. Also, if the Government has indicated that it will follow the Tripartite Report, whether the moneys which are due and owing to people who have retired from the company between 1983 and today's date—and which the Tripartite Report has recommended that the Government should pay—will be paid to those people. Finally, the Government must say whether Booker/Tate are coming back to this country and for what purpose they are returning.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Hedwige Bereaux (*La Brea*): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise to make my humble contribution to this debate on a motion that this House take note of the report of the Government appointed Tripartite Committee on Caroni (1975) Limited under the chairmanship of Dr. Kusha Haraksingh.

Any debate on Caroni (1975) Limited or the sugar industry, whether in this honourable House or elsewhere in this country, usually generates the now familiar charges of marginalization, victimization, alienation, discrimination and even the preposterous claims that there are attempts to ensure that Caroni (1975) Limited and the sugar industry fail because the majority of the workers and those involved in the industry are of a particular ethnic group.

I shall begin my contribution by establishing my nexus with Caroni (1975) Limited, to the county, to the company and to the sugar industry. I was born in the sugar producing district of Longdenville and spent my primary and secondary education days at Chaguanas and Cunupia. I played cricket and football under the shadow of the smoke stack of Woodford Lodge Estate. I taught school in the districts of Couva and Caparo for over 10 years. My maternal grandfather was a cane farmer and cane farmer superintendent of Woodford Lodge Estate and of Waterloo Estate, which are now incorporated into the fold of Caroni (1975) Limited.

I have several relatives and friends who have worked in the sugar industry both in the fields and in the factories at all levels. Indeed, I have close relatives who are

at present cane farmers. Of course, if I were to call their surnames I might offend those among us who are concerned about ethnic and cultural purity and who are in a constant battle to prevent commingling of the various groups in the society.

Suffice it to say, that I understand in great detail the concerns and anxieties of those involved in the sugar industry and Caroni (1975) Limited. Accordingly, I am able to empathize, and to appreciate the complexity of the socio-economic problems lurking therein. I can also understand how easy it is for these concerns and anxieties to be exacerbated and manipulated by the unscrupulous among us to suit their own selfishness. I therefore endorse, without reservation the comments contained in the final paragraph of page 3 of the report:

"Consequently, reasoned action, timely intervention and a genuine concern for the human dimension of the industry comprise the indispensable tools for securing the cherished goals of viability and profit."

Having laid this groundwork establishing undeniably my competence to comment authoritatively both from experience and a people's perspective on any plan to deal with Caroni (1975) Limited, the sugar industry and by extension agricultural development and agro-processing as it involves Caroni (1975) Limited, I shall now quote from the People's National Movement election manifesto for the 1991 general elections, page 16, "Resources, Agriculture/Land Reform, Caroni (1975) Limited":

"The PNM is committed to the development of our agricultural sector as a major generator of employment, economic production and foreign exchange, and as a primary instrument in the economic diversification process.

During the decades of the 1990s, the issues of agricultural development, food production and food security will become some of the most critical matters with which small, developing nations will have to reckon. Three developments give rise to this view:

- economic globalization,
- trade liberalization
- earning of foreign exchange,
- the unification of Europe, due to begin in 1992.

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For countries such as Trinidad and Tobago, immediate attention needs to be focussed on the consequences of these developments on:

- levels of employment,
- traditional export agriculture, and
- food security insofar as foreign exchange will be available to import food."

That lays the groundwork in respect of Caroni (1975) Limited. It continues:

"The PNM recognizes the critical socio-economic importance of Caroni Limited and therefore is committed to the preservation of the company and its growth and development as a fully diversified agro-processing company."

And the indication is contained in the report itself, a report which has been accepted by the Cabinet. You heard the hon. Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, indicate that since 1975 Caroni was a ward of the Treasury. It has received loans and advances from the Treasury to the extent of \$2.138 billion. I am constantly told of how bad things are at La Brea, which I admit. And there are things we are concerned with. But La Brea and Lake Asphalt have never been given \$2.138 billion, loan guarantees to the tune of \$220 million—for instance, the loan guarantees, when they are paid and which are to be taken over by the Government, this \$2.138 billion, which, the Government intends to wipe off and leave the losses of \$625 million, will have the effect of making Caroni (1975) Limited a company which will not be liable for tax for 20 years. All these things underscore the commitment of this Government to making Caroni (1975) Limited, to preserving Caroni (1975) Limited as a fully diversified agro-processing company.

There is the question of the \$200 million involving payments which have not been made by the company to PAYE, Health Surcharge and NIB. The point is, and I think I would be remiss in my duty if I did not say that the Government has decided that it is going to wipe off this payment against lands which were acquired from Caroni (1975) Limited over the years. I want to deal with both aspects of it. In the first instance—and I feel that in this House some comment must be made on it—the question of not paying over PAYE—all businesses are unable to pay their income tax from time to time. But where a business takes money from the worker and does not pay it over, no responsible person would disapprove of such

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behaviour. Those persons who have been on the board of Caroni cannot absolve themselves.

In fact, I should like to draw your attention Sir, to the provisions of the law, which of course, also apply to Caroni (1975) Limited, that where a company cannot pay its debts, and a director continues to allow it to operate when he knows that the debts cannot be paid, that the company is insolvent, that director is responsible in law for the debts created. I am not calling on the Government not to honour the debts. The commitment is to deal with agriculture properly and responsibly and Caroni (1975) Limited, because of its peculiar situation, has to be the linchpin and the bedrock upon which the agricultural thrust is made.

Many comments have been made in this House on the question of the payment—the \$200 million was a payment for land acquired by the Government. I happen to know by membership in another organization that even the largest block of land, which was acquired for the Point Lisas Estate, was agricultural land and by no stretch of the imagination would it have been worth \$200 million, all of the land that was required. But be that as it may, an agreement once made is sacrosanct and it must be kept.

There has also been comment on the question of the various activities which Caroni (1975) Limited carries out, which are alleged to be activity of a local government nature, I should like people to know that Caroni (1975) Limited is not the only company or state enterprise which carries out that kind of activity. And we have to look at that. I know there are several oil companies which fix and maintain miles of road. When we look at Caroni (1975) Limited, it is not a question of how much it has done, it is more a question of the critical role which Caroni (1975) Limited can and must play if we are to move forward. I just thought I would comment on this particular aspect of the situation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is also in the manifesto:

"The PNM believe the future of Caroni Limited must be the subject of agreement between the Government and the relevant trade unions."

It speaks about diversification and the range of products into: Rice, citrus, livestock, aquaculture:

"As Caroni Limited continues to produce sugar, the PNM sees an expanded role for the cane-farmers as the company concentrates on sugar manufacturing and the diversification process."

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True to the commitment contained in its manifesto, on Friday, April 3, 1992, the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources by a statement made in this honourable House—and I shall quote from that statement as contained in Appendix I to the Report of the Tripartite Committee. In that statement, the Minister stated:

"A Tripartite Committee comprising representatives of the Government/Caroni (1975) Limited, the sugar workers and the cane-farmers be established to develop an agenda aimed at putting Caroni (1975) Limited on a viable footing over an agreed time frame, identifying resource needs and sources as well as responsibilities; the parameters of the resulting negotiations to be largely constrained though not confined to the acceptable elements of earlier detailed studies and reports in respect of Caroni (1975) Limited."

The cane-farmers and the sugar workers' organizations were invited to be part. The Committee was to be chaired—

"The Tripartite Committee be chaired by the Chairman of Caroni (1975) Limited.

The Committee report no later than 12 weeks."

this was the draft agenda:

- "(a) The role of Caroni (1975) Limited as a sugar cane producer;
- (b) The acceleration of the diversification process;
- (c) Land management; and
- (d) The long-term survival of Caroni (1975) limited as a viable, workable entity."

Of particular significance is the manner in which the agenda corresponds with the commitment in the manifesto. You would notice, among the members of that committee were Mr. Basdeo Panday of the All Trinidad Sugar and General Workers Trade Union and Mr. Sam Maharaj; Mr. Samaroo Ramsingh of the Trinidad Islandwide Cane Farmers Association (TICFA); Mr. Raffique Shah of the National Farmers and Workers' Union—*[Interruption]*

True to the commitment, the report was signed by all 11 members of the committee, notwithstanding that one member, in a fit of pique and churlishness purported to take back his signature. I congratulate all members of the committee for being able to achieve consensus on this important aspect of national life and

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development. The kudos which I have just given have been influenced to a large extent by the fate of the previous plans.

My own experience—and the comments contained in page one of the report:

"Accordingly, the achievement of consensus has been the guiding principle of this exercise, buttressed by the conviction that no plan for viability will succeed unless it commands the support of all the actors in the drama."

We have reached the point of having all the stakeholders in Caroni (1975) Limited agree on the direction in which the company should go and they have embodied their consensus in a report to which they have all appended their signatures.

The next step is implementation. The members on the other side have focussed their attention and their contributions to a large extent on the presumption that the Government does not intend to and will not implement the report.

Mr. S. Panday: And cannot.

Mr. Breaux: One can understand their concerns, given the history of previous plans, even plans of the Government in which their own Members were Ministers and of which they had formed an integral part. Even those plans were not implemented, therefore, we understand the situation. However, as the report points out in respect of Caroni (1975) Limited and sugar, the shadows of the past loom more lengthily than elsewhere, but we have to overcome this. That is the challenge. The Minister himself recognized this in a statement to Parliament in which he said:

"... there has been a plethora of well documented studies and initiatives aimed at resolving these seemingly intractable problems. These have all met with limited success not so much as a result of any fundamental disagreement on goals and objectives as much as a lack of consensus on the ways and means of tackling the problems and how they should be prioritized."

In order to emphasize my point, let us examine the comments of the Member for Couva South in his contribution. He appeared to be concerned about whether the report which is now being debated binds the Government to the extent that any decision reached in this House can be enforceable in a court of law. If I wanted to be uncharitable I would say I cannot blame him. He is forced to react and to judge

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the action of others by the company he keeps. They hug by day and stab in the back by night.

3.05 p.m.

Mr. S. Panday: Like the PNM.

Mr. Bereaux: But really, I sense the mischief which he is trying to create but it is unnecessary, of course. He is of the view that a motion to take note, if passed in this honourable House, would be of no effect as there was no reference to implementation of or its being adopted as Government policy. Further, he quotes from Griffith's book on *Parliament Functions, Practice and Procedure* or should I say misquoted, or quoted out of context. It would appear that his learned junior did not brief him properly, as I should be most surprised to discover that the legal luminary from Couva South could make such an elementary blunder, or would deliberately try to mislead this honourable House.

However, suffice it to say that the non-point he was attempting to make with reference to the efficacy of a motion to take note, was ably handled by the Member for Diego Martin Central, a non-legally trained person. Extremely embarrassing. So I shall not dwell further on it, as I do not wish to rub salt into the wound or to weigh him down with approbrium. The population of this country, does not need to employ legal remedies to force this Government to obey the law. This is a lawful, law-abiding and caring Government. We recognize the supremacy of the people—

Mr. Sharma: As demonstrated in the LIDP office in Fyzabad.

Mr. Bereaux: —and that the final sanction in the democratic process rests with them; and they recognize it too, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Sharma: As evidenced in the LIDP office.

Mr. Bereaux: As evidenced on September 28, 1992. However, I believe that the reply of the Minister in the Ministry of Finance, when he read from the Cabinet Note dated September 17, 1992 was quite clear and represents a decision and a commitment of this Government. Any person who is not solely bent on making mischief, but who is interested in ensuring that this plan is brought to fruition, would now seek to deal with the substantive areas of the report and in particular to comment on the possible pitfalls which I am certain litter the path of

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implementation; and on the prioritization of matters essential to the implementation of the report.

You see, the report, as comprehensive as it is, is really the skeleton, the bare bones, of a plan of mammoth proportions. I am certain that when this report comes to implementation the people who have to do it will come up against knotty problems.

Mr. S. Panday: You got the message.

Mr. Bereaux: That is why it is my view that the Members of this honourable House who are experienced need to deal with the report. Take, for instance the question of human resources. One of the points is discharging the arrears owing to the workers. It involves a partial payment of \$30 million before the start of the next crop. At one time the comments were that it must be paid before September 28; and another time the comments were that it should be paid some time on a fixed date. However when this simple and straightforward provision is looked at, it is more complex than it appears. It is tied to a 15 per cent increase in the price of sugar.

You would recall that on the last occasion when the price of sugar was increased in this honourable House, the Government received the full and vociferous furore and condemnation of the Members of the Opposition. They claimed that it would increase the cost of living. They also claimed that the price of soft drinks would go up and there would be unemployment *[Interruption]* I am grateful to the Member for Fyzabad. He has opened his mouth in this House once more and he said "some children have stopped sucking sweets." Some kind of thought has to be focussed on the manner in which the measure will be introduced and the productive mechanisms which will have to be put in place to ensure that as little dislocation as possible would occur. One would expect to hear some comments of this kind from the Members of the Opposition about introducing improved pension and retirement benefits.

I have noted that Caroni (1975) Limited is at present one of the few companies that have a non-contributory pension fund. The pension, as we all admit, is small. Incidentally, the state also has a non-contributory pension fund. Attempts have been made to have that enhanced; and in order to do so, attempts will be made to have it become a contributory pension plan.

For those of us who know about pension plans, whenever you have to go from a non-contributory to a contributory pension plan, several things have to be done. You have to talk about past service. You have to do a number of things. As I said

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I should have expected that with the combined expertise of the people in this House, we would be dealing with matters like that. I am just identifying some of the areas of difficulty which we shall see. Take for instance—and I am indebted to the persons who wrote this report rationalizing of the categories of the workforce. I think I would read from page 20.

Mr. Jurai: We accepted the report, you know.

Mr. Bereaux: You would understand what I am saying.

Mr. S. Panday: Read the top line of page 19 instead.

Mr. Bereaux: I am speaking about the casual and temporary workers.

"This is so especially in the case of temporary employees, who are recruited each year and terminated at the end of the crop or planting operations. Consequently, they do not obtain any cumulative benefits from service over several years. Many of these workers have been categorized as temporary employees for over 10 years."

The fact that the drafters of that report sought to focus on that is something about which those of us who worked in the oil industry and who represent people in the oil industry are very concerned, because there are several situations like that throughout Trinidad and Tobago. Whatever solutions are brought to bear on these situations, and the kind of knowledge gained, can also be used in other situations.

3.15 p.m.

Again, reintroducing an apprenticeship scheme, and establishing appropriate training and work-study programmes. I happen to know about the quality of the apprenticeship schemes that have existed on previous occasions in the sugar industry. I think it is a very good idea and an attempt should be made to have it dovetail, with the national apprenticeship scheme just announced.

Then, there is the question of undertaking of a management audit. Management styles and techniques in an industry which was monolithic and which we are now trying to cut up into selected and discrete areas would have to change.

In his contribution to this debate, the Member for Arouca North made reference to particular practices involved in the recruiting of labour, but embodied in a collective agreement. I recognize that the purpose of a trade union is to seek the best conditions it can for its members, and one can see basically, what the union was trying to do. Just for the record, I shall quote two short paragraphs:

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"The company shall choose from the candidates submitted by the union, provided they possess the necessary qualifications, preference being given to children of sugar workers."

Then I am going to read from the letter to the cane farmers, dated April, 8, 1992:

"We wish to advise, however, that the collective agreement with the representative union contains a clause which gives the said union absolute right to operate as an employment agency, in respect of all employment within a particular bargaining unit."

What I am saying is *[Interruption]* We are on different wave lengths. I am dealing with what we can do to put the industry right. I am not looking for confrontation, if that is what you have come here for.

The point about it is that whether it is correct or not—and without trying to detract from the union's right to bargain for its members and to seek the best terms and conditions on its members or their children—when a management believes that there exists some constraint on its ability to hire, I am saying if we are talking about implementation, we must talk about implementation just as the parties got together. What the Members on the other side are not appreciating is that we did not just get together and compile a report. There is consensus in the report. It is a consensus, and working together will have to go throughout the implementation process, if this Tripartite Report is ever to come to fruition. That is the message I am trying to bring across.

It is as though Caroni (1975) Limited and the Government, on the one hand, the cane farmers on the other hand and the workers representatives, are not in a three legged race, but a four legged race. Any of us who had taken part in a three legged race before, knows that in order to run, you have got to practice, go slowly and continue in the same rhythm, otherwise, it will not be done. The kind of impression coming across, and what I am hearing, is "you are not going to implement it". I am not getting—except from the Member for Princes Town—the impression that the whole implementation process is something which we have got to look at and analyze completely in order for it to be a success. *[Interruption]* I am just trying to lift the tone of this debate, so that we can all realize that it is something we have got to do.

We have got to look at this entire matter. Implementation is not for Government alone. You have a situation here where they were speaking about

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sugar operations. I listened with some care to the Member for Naparima. I could not understand all he was saying because his speech was garbled sometimes.

Mr. S. Panday: I do not look like a dog, neither do I bark.

Mr. Béréaux: Well, that may be the case. Farmers years ago produced more cane than the estates; they produced the bulk of the cane and if the industry will ever be viable again, farmers must produce a substantial proportion of the cane. *[Interruption]* I am going even further than that.

The Member for Naparima is more concerned with buying cranes from people and selling them back to others, than in dealing with the—

Mr. S. Panday: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. Could the Member indicate the source and the veracity of his information?

Mr. Béréaux: Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we were talking about the question of farmers and having them produce and deliver more cane directly to the factory, I was saying that in order for them to get that and be efficient, they need to have more equipment, and since the Member for Naparima is, I think, the legal adviser to the farmers, I am just—

Mr. S. Panday: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to inform the Member for La Brea that it is not he 'thinks', I am the legal adviser. I am qualified.

Mr. Béréaux: I thought that his business would be involved in assisting the farmers to acquire equipment. It is in that vein I was saying it. If he has another vein that he is thinking about, I am not interested in that. Any support which we give to the farmers is important. I want to leave him with a word from Goldsmith "a bold peasantry, a country's pride."

3.25 p.m.

I listened to the Member for Naparima and he was talking about the question of early payment to help with cultivation. I was thinking maybe he would come up with a programme they had very many years ago where, the farmers planted the cane early, and someone would go around and estimate the amount of the crop likely to come and some kind of representation would be made to give them some initial payment to assist through the rainy season. I would expect that he would have commenced on matters like that. That is what I am looking at. That is the kind of attitude, the kind of assistance, the kind of contributions we expect. I am going to give you another example.

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I was in Couva quite recently while this debate was going on and one person commented that in certain situations you would find that workers, for whatever reason, maybe lack of morale, tend to sabotage certain machinery within the factory. I am not blaming the worker. Any worker who is so misguided as to want to sabotage, who has not realized that there is a community of interest between him and his employer is not to be attacked but is to be counselled. Again, I repeat, if this report is to come to fruition and if we are to be able to put Caroni (1975) Limited on an even keel, the implementation process must come from assistance through the comments in this debate. One hears all the time that sugar for instance—

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. Bereaux: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thank hon. Members for giving me additional speaking time. There are several points on sugar and there are some fallacies that need to be cleared up particularly in respect of—you would hear people talking about how hard the sugar workers work and that nobody realized that. I know it. They talk about people cutting cane; everybody could cut cane. In the oil industry we worked round the clock—24 hours—but there is a question of productivity; 75 tonnes per worker. We have got to deal with that. Gentlemen have boasted that they represent workers and farmers. Let us hear the comments which they have to make on that.

This report calls for Caroni (1975) Limited to be the sole importer of sugar. Remember, we were talking first about Caroni (1975) Limited being put in a position where it would have at least a tax-free status for 20 years because in that way, without the debts and with that kind of structure and with that kind of privilege, the likelihood was we could get investment into Caroni. Then, in the same report we have a recommendation that Caroni would now be the sole importer of sugar and sweeteners. I know that the persons who did it are experienced and would have thought about it. However, I think the Member for Couva South was the one who has been warning us all the time about monopolies and the problems which arise from that. Mind you, in some instances monopolies are necessary, but the structures have got to be put in. That is the kind of comment

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that I was expecting to come, but I am not hearing it. I encourage Members of the other side to deal with it. This is the case.

I know the Member for Princes Town commented earlier on the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Committee. I have had experience in mortgages and we know for a fact that those sugar loans have performed well. Maybe, there is something we can learn from that. Let us look at this sugar industry and what we are going to do in a more structured way and in a spirit that would lend us to benefit from this. For instance, we are talking about diversification. I know that those farmers who make money from sugar are diversified. I know that when sugar was diversified in this country we made money from sugar. Mind you, the diversification of which we speak might have been of a different nature where you find in some instances farmers after they cut the cane they plant [*Interruption*] Whatever, you have the fancy name. I know what happens. As a result of that you had the buffalypso or the bison, as we called it in the days when it was used for transport.

It has always been said that very few ideas are new. Even now when you examine the very nature of the diversification programme that has been suggested, some of it harks back to the time when sugar was profitable. I know that there were various estates which always had their citrus. I know about those estates. In another place a comment was made on the question of agricultural diversification and how clay soils are likely to impact upon any attempt at agricultural diversification. The people who know everything about agriculture are not talking about that and, whether we should not go back and look at the method by which the drainage of clay soils took place and see whether we can repeat it and put some pilot project. I am putting all these things out so that the knowledge or the comments of other persons would inform the actions of those persons who have to implement this report.

In addition, in dealing with the payment to sugar workers, there was the question of transferring the lands to those who are living on company lands and renting, providing them with the house spot at a price. I have heard no talk from the legal persons on this. When I say at a price, a figure would be put which would come into their payments; whether these payments, would come under the Land Tenants (Security of Tenure) Act.

What is the situation? Has anybody considered the question of the Town and Country Planning Division. We all need to look at these things. I expected the collective wisdom of this Parliament would be brought to bear on these matters.

3.35 p.m.

I just want to deal with a few other matters raised by the hon. Member for Couva South. Of course, he was speaking at a different time, but he spoke about the question of the sugar workers after they had agreed to a consent judgment, they were able to record it and get a six per cent interest. I always admire the legal instincts of the Member.

It is necessary for us to get the true context in which this was done. The Member for Couva North who, unfortunately, is not here at this time was the leader of that union. The matter was before the court. It had been sent back from the Court of Appeal and it was settled. In the context of that settlement, no attempt was made to register the judgment, but that was the agreement. If you believe that it was not a good agreement, then it may be that the Member for Tobago East had prevailed upon him not to register the judgment, because he may have offered to pay early and then he was unable to do it.

I do not want to say that the Member for Couva North may not have been as wise, or sold out the sugar workers, but you know—

Mr. Haniff: What do you really think happened?

Mr. Bereaux: I leave that for you to judge.

Mr. Maharaj: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. As a point of information, the judgment was registered.

Mr. Bereaux: In closing, I should like to say that all 36 Members of this honourable House, when we presented ourselves as candidates for election, we paraded—and our parties did—our particular skills, expertise and qualifications. Caroni (1975) Limited is not a question of just Caroni. It is a question of the agricultural diversification, the agricultural bedrock of Trinidad and Tobago to some extent, our food, security and a number of other things. The time is now, when it is necessary—to borrow a term from another politician—to use the collective genius of this House to address this matter, and to work together for its implementation.

With that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I support the motion of the Member for Diego Martin West. Thank you.

Mr. Trevor Sudama (Oropouche): Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is an exercise of enormous proportions to get up in this House to speak after the Member for La

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Brea. I do not know whether I have the strength to speak in the wake of his contribution.

This should have been a historic debate in this House, because what we are trying to deal with here is the legacy of the colonial order in Trinidad and Tobago. If there is any sphere of economic, social activity which reflects that colonial legacy, it is in fact the sugar industry and the conditions of life in it.

What we have seen in this debate, and the manner in which this motion has been presented to this House, and the very fact of its presentation, was not to deal with this problem in a broad perspective, but merely try to get political advantage out of the report itself. The timing of its presentation to the House, and the terms of this motion, "to take note," as if the very taking of note of this report will bring all the happiness and the desirable conditions which ought to prevail in the sugar industry. When we speak of the sugar industry, we are not speaking only of a sector of the country or a sub-group of workers; we are also talking about the political, economic and sociological order of Trinidad and Tobago; to address the question of the conditions of life—because this is the ultimate reason for bringing any question of restructuring to the attention of this House—the conditions of life; the inequities which have been imposed on people who for historical reasons have become entrapped in an industry for which there seems to be little future.

When you look at the relative wage levels in the sugar industry, you will find that of all the groups of organized labour, the sugar workers are the lowest paid. They are at the bottom of the ladder. Look at the conditions of their lives; the conditions of employment; where they work; the time they have to get up to go into the sugar fields to cut cane; when you see a sugar worker after he has performed his task, you will see that he is all covered with soot and grime. This is a daily fact of his life. When he goes home there is no water for him to take a bath because, again, of the political, sociological order in which he lives—a denial of equality of treatment and conditions for him. The conditions under which he lives are below the normal average for Trinidad and Tobago.

The first question was whether in fact something could have been done before to ensure the viability of the sugar industry and related industries, and indeed to secure his future in employment; to raise his standard of living; his opportunities and those of his children, because they too become entrapped in this mire of inequity in this society in which the sugar worker and his family find themselves.

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But that is not to be, given the political order and alignment and institutional setting in this country.

3.45 p.m.

I want to take some time here to indicate why that is not to be and also to indicate that while we acknowledge that there were some tentative steps being taken to address this historical situation, we are sceptical that even these steps will bear any substantial fruit to the workers in the sugar industry.

The Member for Diego Martin West, the Minister of Agriculture, was absolutely correct when he said in one of his very few moments of candour that over the years there has been no real attempt to restructure the sugar industry, and he also indicated in an interview with Cleveon Raphael in the *Trinidad Guardian*, that over the years Trinidad and Tobago, whether it was under the PNM or the NAR, never had an agricultural policy. I must commend his candour and his truthfulness on this occasion.

Therefore, one would want to ask: Who was responsible? True enough, although the Government had bought into the sugar industry by 1970, up to 1974, it was dominated by a foreign company as part of that colonial order of which I spoke. What has this Government—and the NAR between 1988 and 1991—done in terms of restructuring and really trying to bring some substantial measure of relief to the workers in the industry and to put the industry on a proper footing? When we look at the record it has been a dismal one of failure and indeed of indifference, because the Government is dealing with a constituency that did not support the ruling regime and, therefore, could easily be ignored.

In that context, I want to deal with this question of the sugar industry being a ward of the Treasury, in the words of the Minister of Agriculture and the fact that subventions to the tune of over \$2 billion had to be provided to the industry to keep it going, at least that is what is stated. I want to deal with that and question that figure. The impression given is that this enormous subvention from the Treasury was unique to the sugar industry in what was an act of benevolence on the part of the PNM Government.

What are the facts? Let me put this in perspective. The Member for Diego Martin West conveniently ignored what was said in this very report and why a subvention of this order became necessary.

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"This loan capital accumulated over the period since 1976 at the time when the domestic selling price of the company's major product—sugar—was effectively frozen..."

by act of the PNM Government—

"and at a time too when the percolating effects of the petroleum economy on rising production costs were all too evident".

The point here is that one does not take the sugar industry in isolation and compare it with costs. Costs in a country are related to the cost and price structure in that country. So that if costs of production in Trinidad and Tobago are relatively higher than say, in Australia and other countries, it is because in other sectors of the Trinidad economy, costs of production are also higher in comparison with what obtains overseas. So, one must compare like with like. One should compare a national cost of production to what obtains elsewhere. Therefore, if we have the petroleum economy having consequences on the cost in the sugar industry, that must be taken into account to understand why this figure of subvention was arrived at.

The report indicates that:

"Over the same period a significant amount of land assets of the company was acquired for national purposes",

without any transfer from the Government to Caroni (1975) Limited to compensate for that.

When you look at the fact that the price of sugar was frozen over the years, what was happening with costs and prices in the rest of the economy and the fact that much of the substantial assets of the company was virtually taken away and handed over to other agencies, you will understand why this accumulated figure of subvention has reached the level it has. This has occurred over a 14-year period, from 1977 to 1991. While much is made of this and much emphasis is placed on the care of the PNM Government for sugar workers, what the Government do not tell you is the comparisons. Even with respect to the loan capital, I have, on the authority of the former Chairman of Caroni (1975) Limited, in a report in the *Express* of Friday, June 1, 1990, which is headlined, "Caroni hit by Fictitious Loans", that this figure is made up to give the impression that Caroni (1975) Limited is a serious ward of the Treasury. Ramlogan is reported to have said that:

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"the vast majority of debts and losses of the company came out of the administration of a price control regime that treated with sugar less favourably than it did with other products..."

Ramlogan said the subsidies to the sugar industry by Government 'were accounted for as loans, unlike what was done for some other enterprises where subsidies were treated as normal revenue'.

Ramlogan said that fictitious loans had accumulated some \$600 million in fictitious interest..."

So that there are fictitious loans accumulating fictitious interest, and we have this figure bandied about here today of sugar workers being supported to the tune of \$2 billion over 15 years. He also indicated that the need for restructuring was there and never acted upon. He said that if the industry is restructured to allow farmers to produce all the cane, production costs can be reduced to \$1900 per ton. Why have you not acted on this? Why are you coming here to give a very false impression of the dependency of the sugar industry?

I am not arguing that the sugar industry ought not be restructured; it is overdue that we make all our industries viable, but it seems to me that the sugar industry has been singled out for attention in a particular political climate, and that is why I feel that this report that we have before us smacks of a kind of gimmickry with which we have come to associate any attempt to deal substantially with the problems of the sugar industry.

3.55 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I also have the authority of Mr. Joe Pires, who was formerly of the Chamber of Industry and Commerce and who was appointed to head a committee to look into the sugar industry. He makes the very significant point:

"Almost every country in this world which produces sugar has a guaranteed market for the sugar produced by its own farmers. We should not be the exception."

What he ought to have mentioned is not only a guaranteed market but also a guaranteed price in order to deal with the question of viability of this industry. When you look at what the comparative subventions have been to other state enterprises in Trinidad and Tobago which have been employing far fewer people, you will see a picture emerging.

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Let us look at the Iron and Steel Company. The last report of that company available to the public is one for the year ended December 31, 1986. For that year, the company incurred a loss of \$227,635,000 and the accumulated loss up to that year was \$1,559,477,000. That is only up to the end of 1986. When you take the figures for 1987, 1988 and 1989, you are reaching above \$2 billion in accumulated losses. And which had to be supported by the Treasury of Trinidad and Tobago. Not that this is a justification, but merely to put the subventions of Caroni (1975) Limited into some kind of perspective. Do not come here, like the Member for La Brea, who does not really know what he is saying when he speaks about a heavy burden. If Caroni is a heavy burden on the Treasury, so is Iscott, which was employing fewer than 800 people, and is supposed to be the pillar of diversification in Trinidad and Tobago where we understand that downstream industries in the steel industry are going to be protected at all costs. We are removing the negative list; we are liberalizing trade, but suddenly the steel industry is going to be protected at all costs, regardless of the price structure. There must be something behind that exception. But I will not deal with that today.

Let us look at BWIA. I want to tell you what the position is from 1983. The accumulated losses of BWIA up to 1983, were \$393,983,466, BWIA employs a few hundred people. In the year 1982, there was an adjustment, a write-off of \$300,038,652 to see if they could reshape the balance sheet of BWIA.

Now, when that was done, from 1983 onwards, BWIA continued to receive a subvention from the Treasury. In the first year, \$68 million; then \$62 million in 1984; then \$39 million, \$36 million and so on, until at the end of 1989, BWIA received accumulated subventions of \$320,345,207.

Mr. Valley: How much does Caroni receive?

Mr. Sudama: We are talking about 1983; Caroni has received it from 1977 to 1991. Hold on, you are an accountant.

Mr. Valley: I am not an accountant.

Mr. Sudama: What exactly are you?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we take the \$300 million write-off, we take the subvention from 1983 to 1989, a six-year period, of \$320,345,000, the accumulated losses of BWIA come to a figure of \$485,309,484. So despite the write-off, despite the subventions being given from the Treasury, as at 1989, the accumulated losses of BWIA were of the order of \$485,309,484. So when you look

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at the period 1983 to 1989, a six-year period, this Government saw fit to support British West Indian Airways, a losing proposition financially, another ward of the Treasury to the tune of \$1,105,693,323.

Mr. Valley: Mr. Deputy Speaker, my friend has been doing all types of things with numbers.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Gentlemen, we cannot have two Members on their feet. Will you give way?

Mr. Sudama: Yes. He has said something and now he has finished saying it.

Mr. Valley: He cannot talk about subvention and then talk about a loss—

Mr. Sudama: This is what they are saying, that the accumulated loan as well as interest on the loan is what is being written off. What I am arguing is that \$300 million was written off BWIA over the years and then from 1983 to 1989 they were given moneys from the Treasury to operate. After that period, BWIA still ended up with an accumulated deficit, after we write off \$300 million, after we account for the subventions, assistance from shareholders accumulated deficit of \$485 million. So, in fact, what are they doing? Why are they treating Caroni (1975) Limited as a separate case?

I shall not be too much longer with these figures, but it is necessary to make these comparisons and put the financial assistance to Caroni Limited in the context of what this Government has been doing with other state enterprises. And the sugar industry is one that has been employing 8,000 or 9,000 people, the largest employer among the state enterprises. There are claims on the Treasury being made by Iscott and BWIA of almost a like order, given the smaller time frame for which I am giving comparisons. WASA, from 1980 to 1982, \$1.6 billion. Not that I am saying that WASA should not be given some subvention for them to operate. PTSC, \$1.7 billion; Port Authority, \$1.5 billion. This is the order of assistance to these corporations, to these public utilities from 1980 to 1992.

Dr. Rowley: May I ask a question, please, just for my own edification? Do the numbers quoted on the utilities include moneys for the development programme like reservoirs, waterworks, new fleets and so on, development programme funds?

Mr. Sudama: What I am quoting is moneys for the operational expenses—

Dr. Rowley: Operating expenses.

Mr. Sudama: —operating expenses of these utilities. Now, just to round off this point about the question of liability, and how the increase in prices is important for a company to achieve viability. Trinidad Cement Limited, when it was fully owned by the Government was a loss-making venture. Cement is a key product, a basic product in the building industry. Trinidad Cement Limited is a monopoly. Trinidad Cement Limited was permitted to increase its prices, as BWIA was permitted to increase its fares between 1985 and 1991 by almost 300 per cent. In 1985 the retail price of one bag of cement was \$7.95; by 1991 that had risen to \$20.70.

Dr. Rowley: It is you who raised it.

Mr. Imbert: We are talking about your Government.

Mr. Sudama: In 1985 it was raised from \$7.95—1986—is your history correct—to \$12; 1987, it went to \$12.45; 1988, it went to \$17.95; and 1991, it went to \$20.70. What I am saying is that this is a private monopoly, a divested monopoly and it was allowed to do that. Yet, with respect to the price of sugar—and that goes to show you how, as we say in local parlance, different strokes for different folks. Here the Government is treating Trinidad Cement Limited differently; and the company is saying now that it has achieved viability, but it has done so only on the basis of being able to raise its price every year and over a six or seven-year period it has raised its price by 350 per cent. And accumulated losses were also written off for this company. That was before it was divested.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wanted to put that whole question of financial burden, and being a ward of the Treasury in the context of what has been going on with the other state enterprises to support my contention.

The Minister mentioned the ratio of sugar produced to employee being in Trinidad 75 tonnes, whereas in Australia it is 750. He should know that this is related to the level of capital investment in the industry. If you have higher mechanization, higher capital investment, you are going to have a figure of greater yield per employee. Therefore, you are not comparing like with like.

Now, we come to this question of diversification. When this Government had the opportunity when the oil dollars or petro-dollars were flowing in Trinidad and Tobago, Caroni (1975) Limited and the land and resources owned by the company should have been a pillar for diversification of this economy. Because by doing so

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we would have dealt with restructuring the economy, reduced reliance on the petroleum sector, and created greater employment opportunities. The attempted process of diversification on which this Government embarked where billions and billions of dollars were sunk into Point Lisas, did not achieve the diversification desired and created very few employment opportunities. It should have been a pillar.

When you understand, the socio-political order in Trinidad and Tobago, you will understand why very little was done by way of utilizing the resources of Caroni (1975) Limited for the purpose of diversification.

It was the predecessor of the United National Congress, the United Labour Front, who stated in the Parliament, that the high prices of sugar in 1974, 1975, would not have held for any long period. In 1977, a motion was brought to this House calling for the rationalization and diversification of the sugar industry. It was debated at length and a committee was appointed under the distinguished chairmanship of Prof. John Spence, who produced a voluminous report adopted by this House, and one would have thought that the PNM Government of the day would have taken note—as they are seeking to do now—of the recommendations of that report. The report was presented, it was accepted and adopted by this House, and since the Government had the majority in this House, it was adopted, pigeon-holed, forgotten and ignored, as were the people who were struggling in the sugar industry.

Today, the Government comes to speak about caring and how much concern it has, when it has perpetrated the kind of victimization and vindictiveness against these workers over the years, culminating in—for the first time in Trinidad and Tobago—an appeal of an industrial court award in 1985, under a PNM Government, in which my good friend the Member for San Fernando East was a prominent Minister, as was the Member for Arouca South. The Government was not caring then. Suddenly, in 1992, it becomes caring and concerned with the welfare of sugar workers in this country. That is to show you the level of hypocrisy we have to deal with.

I am saying that the fact that there is no action, going back to 1977—that report was adopted in 1978—nothing was done with respect to restructuring the sugar industry when the Government had the money, when oil dollars were flowing and, according to the late Prime Minister, money was no problem. Money was no problem, but apparently it was when it came to restructuring the sugar industry.

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It is not as if it did not have advice on alternatives. I am reading from this report by Mr. Joe Pires:

"In 1981, the Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Industry and Commerce sponsored a symposium at the Sevilla Club, Caroni on the topic 'Achieving Food Security - now or never.'"

So the Government lost an opportunity in 1978. It ignored the Spence Committee recommendations. It has this symposium which recommended that an immediate diversification programme be implemented, since the country still had sufficient financial resources to afford an immediate large-scale transformation of the industry.

In 1981, we imported over \$900 million worth of food. The advice of the symposium was not accepted because the Government of the day was not concerned; the Government of today does not care about the sugar industry and the welfare of the people engaged in it. Many of these imports are essential as of this moment. With proper planning and implementation, however, 50 per cent of these could have been substituted within ten years or even less. Had this recommendation been acted upon in 1981, by 1992, we would have had a substantial reduction in our food import bill.

There are alternatives and it is not as if the Government does not know them. So when it comes here and speaks about diversification and so on, as if it is coming with something new, as if they are serious, we ask: If it was not serious before, why does it think this country should think it is serious in 1992? Some of the same options were open. For example, the statement goes on to say:

"If the new technique of manufacturing bread from cassava starch and other starches which I saw on the television recently is indeed practical, then we could possibly get over the 50 per cent mark in the same ten years. We would have to devote considerable acreage to growing cassava to produce the starch, but the acreage is available.

Why must we keep good soil in sugar-cane cultivation when there are possibilities of growing other crops that can produce much higher earnings per acre than sugar-cane?"

What the union was concerned with is the employment, keeping the people who would have been displaced employed. Whether they were employed in cultivating sugarcane or not was not the question. They had to be kept employed

and they would have been so employed in a diversified agricultural industry producing other crops:

"An acre of cantaloupe or musk melon has the potential of earning \$20,000 to \$30,000 in gross revenue. The costs involved and the technology involved are expensive, but even if we earn a net return of 10 per cent, the \$2,000 to \$3,000 we would make as a profit would still be equal to or more than the entire gross revenue from an acre of sugar-cane. Pineapples are another crop with enormous potential earnings per acre. Many other crops such as mangoes, guavas, citrus, carambola, avocado, melongene, onions and other crops can all gross over TT\$10,000 an acre."

Government had the money then, why did it not make any attempt at diversification? With 7,500 acres of export crops grown by dedicated farmers, we could earn as much as or more than we earn from all the sugarcane we now grow. It will cost us much less to produce. The total net foreign exchange will be considerably higher than we now earn from our sugar exports. Whatever we do, it has to be planned. We have to learn new techniques. We have to buy or learn the technological packages. We have to teach people to grow the crops. We have to convince them these are crops, unlike sugarcane which takes care of itself, are crops which need constant tender loving care and attention. You farm these crops, you grow sugarcane.

Other things that we must consider are the production of beef, mutton and dairy products. Milk and all the dairy products in metropolitan countries are highly subsidized. Indeed, we pay approximately 25 per cent of the true cost when we purchase these goods in Trinidad and Tobago. We buy them at a price that is much cheaper than they are sold for in the countries in which they are produced. This is the international economics of agriculture production and the state of agricultural food products.

It is a gross indictment against this PNM Government that very little has been done and whatever has been done, whatever was initiated on any scale to deal with the problem, was done in the post-1987 period, under the chairmanship of the former chairman, Mr. Vishnu Ramlogan, of Caroni (1975) Limited. That is a fact of life; it cannot be denied and ignored. Therefore, it puts the relationship of the PNM and the sugar industry and those employed in it in some kind of proper light.

The Government speaks about downstream industries in steel; it wants to project that at all costs. What about downstream industries in sugar? What about

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the utilization of the by-products of sugar to maximize its value, the value added ? For if you took the industry as a whole, the production of sugar, its by-products and the maximization of value, it would have become a much more viable industry than it is today solely with the production of sugar dependent on variable external prices, frozen prices at home—an industry teetering on the brink. But they are not concerned about downstream.

A bagasse plant was started at Caroni (1975) Limited at Brechin Castle and within a matter of a few years that came to grief under the gross mismanagement of people appointed by this PNM Government, producing a product which others have shown can be satisfactorily produced and as a proper substitute for wood. Producing such a product as the Cuban's have done. They are not concerned. Money is no problem. Let the thing go downhill once there are some PNM hacks employed in positions of authority in these state enterprises who gain benefit at the expense of the Treasury. Because much of this \$2 billion we are speaking about here was a result of the mismanagement imposed on Caroni (1975) Limited from the time a former PNM Government took control.

One of the first acts it did—and I am coming to employment practices; I have much to say about that—when it took over Caroni (1975) Limited was to install a man named Sam Warrell, now deceased, as personnel manager—putting square pegs in round holes.

The reason this industry is in the state it is today, is that when the Government took over Caroni Limited it was producing 250,000 tonnes per annum. In the space of nine short years (1994) that production was reduced to 64,000 tonnes. The present Government comes here speaking about viability and so on, as if viability is something that drops from the sky and is not related to management practices, plans, restructuring of the industry or to the price of the products being sold. The Government comes here today to shed crocodile tears over the hapless sugar industry and the plight of those engaged in it.

When they speak about diversification, it is the essence of hypocrisy on the part of this PNM Government. When it had the money, when it could have done something, it would not have cost a great deal. For example, the Government is speaking about capital input in this current diversification programme. Capital funding in one instance of \$80 million for 1993 to 1997 and in another instance of \$34.9 million. A grand total of \$134.9 million, the grand figure of capital investment in the sugar industry under this plan, as if that is going to get us somewhere.

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When we had billions and billions of dollars; when the Government was prepared to sink over \$2 billion in Iscott and the other energy-based industries at Point Lisas, it could not have spent even \$100 million or \$500 million in trying to restructure the sugar industry.

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. Sudama: Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are looking at a situation of opportunities lost under the PNM to deal with the sugar industry, to deal with the whole question of diversification of the agricultural sector of which Caroni (1975) Limited is the key. It could have been used for improving productivity, for giving guidance to the farm community giving much needed expertise and disseminating expertise in agriculture. This Government never had a vision for agriculture because it is of the mentality, "Look here, agriculture is not important, man; whatever we cannot produce in Trinidad and Tobago we can buy overseas.

Without any thought for the question of food security; without any thought for the question of employment-creating opportunities. If you invest \$100 million in agriculture, it could create ten times more jobs than if you invest \$100 million in a capital-intensive industry.

4.25 p.m.

We have argued from this side that what we need is a balance in investment. Not that we should not invest in the energy sector, but to overwhelmingly put our financial resources in the energy sector is merely to go the same route as we have been going in the past, of putting all our eggs virtually in one basket and in that process working counter to any diversification strategy. Because to convert our dependence from petroleum to heavy industry, whether it is steel or petrochemicals is not really diversifying the economy of Trinidad and Tobago.

Even with the limited range of sugar production and its by-products, this Government has failed to maximize the potential of that industry and the products involved. When we could have had, for example, the chemical industry developed on the basis of the by-products of sugar; when we could have had various resins developed; when we could have had a host of other products developed from the by-products of sugar, this Government did not see it fit even to make the initial

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investigation, far less to invest any money in that industry. Their vision has been so myopic, so totally myopic.

When you look at what resources are available to this country, and the fact that we have only petroleum, some asphalt—which is under the control now of the Member for La Brea, because nobody else must touch Lake Asphalt—and when you look at the condition of our roads, you would want to know what the Government has been doing. We have some petroleum; some natural gas; asphalt, marine resources. What has the Government done to develop these things? Very little and it comes here today, 1992, 36 years after having attained power in 1956, still talking about the same issues; still having done nothing concrete to deal with the basic structure of the economy particularly with the agricultural economy of this country. Absolutely nothing. Why now, today, this big song and dance about this Tripartite Committee Report As if this is the gateway to heaven for the sugar workers?

Mr. Valley: It may well be.

Mr. Sudama: Any gateway opened by the PNM Government has to be a gateway to hell. I am convinced of this. After our experience with them for 36 years.

4.30 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.05 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Mr. Sudama: Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we took the break for tea, I was indicating my own skepticism about the commitment of this Government to diversification of the sugar industry in the context of an agricultural policy for Trinidad and Tobago. I am convinced that given our experience over the years, with Government's attempts to deal with this problem of restructuring, rationalization and diversification, there is cause for skepticism and concern about their commitment and their intentions.

Today, we come again to discuss and to take note of a limited plan for restructuring. I should like to mention in that context not only the John Spence Report and its recommendations for rationalization, not only the views of the Chamber of Commerce in 1981; there was also the Rampersad Plan which was submitted to this Government again for dealing with the problem of restructuring the sugar industry and making it viable, and then of recent vintage, was the Directional Plan which was submitted in 1987/1988. That plan was agreed to both

by the company and the union representing the sugar workers. That too was ignored, so that over the years we have had these recommendations, reports, plans and a lot of old talk on paper and nothing has been done. Therefore, it is up to this Government to convince us that in some way it is different in terms of its commitment to implementation. It has to convince this House and from what it has said so far, nothing convincing has emerged in this regard.

Mention has been made of the fact—and this is a further cause for worry and concern on our part; this has not been denied by the Member for Diego Martin West, the Minister of Agriculture—that while the Government has this Tripartite Committee plan signed by the three parties, it claims, that there was also an invitation by the Booker/Tate company to visit Trinidad to do some sort of investigation and submit recommendations on the sugar industry in this country. We are a bit concerned. Why was there the need to do this when it told us that it has the Tripartite Committee recommendations on which it is going to act? Why was there such a committee? The Minister has not denied that, a delegation from the Booker/Tate company was here; they have done some work and the purpose of that was similar to what was done with respect to the Tripartite Committee.

We question the Government's intentions. Is it an attempt to hand back the sugar industry to foreigners in return for some sort of investment in the sugar industry? What is the purpose? This is all secrecy, hush hush. Is it in an attempt to get money to pay off its debts, that the Government is going to sell off the sugar industry, as it has committed itself to selling off other state enterprises with one and only one objective? Does the Member for Diego Martin Central deny that is a stated policy of his Government that it is going to privatize and divest in order to be in a position to pay off its debts?

Mr. Valley: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am simply making the point that is not the only objective of the Government's divestment policy.

Mr. Sudama: I should like to know what are some of the other objectives. After having sold off, privatized or divested, whatever word the Government want to use, it has reduced its indebtedness; what other objective is there?

Mr. Valley: There is a motion under "Private Business" by my colleague the Member for La Brea. The Member opposite would be suitably educated then.

Mr. Sudama: If I am to be educated by the Member for La Brea, I should ask to be spared such attempts. We should like to hear further from the Government as to what will be the next objective of divestment. Is it going to be the Prime

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Minister's residence which I understand has been suitably elevated in value in order to pay off foreign debts?

I do not see any plans by this Government, any idea how we are going to get this economy moving, how we are going to get growth, whether it is in the agriculture, manufacturing or oil sector. This Government has been there for nine months. We have been treated to a lot of rhetoric and old talk over these last nine months, but nothing concrete. And all the evidence we have had is that this economy continues on a path of negative growth, decline; and this is going to worsen when we have the trade liberalization policies in place which the Government has embarked upon. The unemployment situation will deteriorate and I am sure it will have an impact on the escalating rate of crime in the country and all the other social ills with which we are confronted.

Here today we are concerned about a significant sector of the agricultural economy and to what extent something meaningful could be done to revitalize and get that sector of the economy growing. As I said, we express in this debate our skepticism on that score.

5.15 p.m.

One of the reasons the Government invested in Caroni (1975) Limited when the foreign company Tate and Lyle indicated that they were no longer willing to continue with the industry as indeed, why it got moving into other state enterprise ventures was, not only to control significant sectors of the economy, but also to protect job in the industry. There were no other opportunities for job creation, so that decision was taken. Today we have the query about employment practices at Caroni (1975) Limited. I have to deal with that because it is a mischievous kind of propaganda which is being perpetrated, started by the Member for Laventille West and now picked up by the Member for Arouca North, this talk of monopoly of jobs at Caroni (1975) Limited by the sugar union. This is a blatant untruth.

The context in which that issue was raised when we complained about discrimination in the employment in the LIDP projects throughout Trinidad and Tobago, on the 180 projects, the counter to that was not a denial that there was discrimination, political and otherwise on that LIDP projects; the counter charge was that if the Government is discriminating on LIDP, we of the Opposition are discriminating at Caroni (1975) Limited.

Let me put some facts before this House. First of all there is this practice that only for the daily, hourly-rated workers and task-rated workers, is there a clause in

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the collective agreement which says that an employment register will be kept at the union where people from wherever they belong, whatever their residence, whether they belong to the union or not would register, and when vacancies are created a number of person's names are submitted. The final choice of those who are employed has never been made by Caroni (1975) Limited. That is a fact of life.

Furthermore, the really lucrative jobs at Caroni (1975) Limited, the monthly paid, clerical, administrative, executive and technical jobs are in fact recruited directly by Caroni (1975) Limited. There is no register for them by the union and that in fact is over 1,000 permanent jobs. The union does not have the option of submitting any names. The Member for Arouca North should find out how those appointments are made and who are directly involved.

As I indicated, there is a pattern in Trinidad and Tobago—when you look at the state enterprises and public utilities—where those who are in charge of personnel, invariably are PNM appointees; whether it is Caroni (1975) Limited, T&TEC, the iron and steel company at Point Lisas or BWIA. Check it out and see who are the heads of the personnel departments dealing with recruitment in these state enterprises and public utilities. You are coming to talk about these daily-paid jobs—the cane cutters—at Caroni (1975) Limited as if this arrangement is specific to Caroni (1975) Limited.

The National Union of Government and Federated Workers has a similar arrangement of recommending names. Contractors and General Workers Trade Union has a similar arrangement of recommending names. How is it when there is something in the collective agreement with respect to Caroni (1975) Limited on this matter, it is as if this is so out of the ordinary?

Mr. Narine: Would the Member give way for me to clarify the point he is making.

I came from the National Union of Government and Federated Workers, there is no clause like that. The only time you become a member of the union is after you are employed. As a matter of fact, in the Port of Spain City Corporation it is the Amalgamated Workers Trade Union that represents the workers. It does not have that clause. The Workers and General Contractors Union in San Fernando does not have that clause. Apparently, the Member was absent when I read the letters.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Sudama: Apparently, he does not know what he is speaking about. This point was made publicly by the Contractors and General Workers Trade Union of San Fernando. What is behind this statement? What kind of discrimination is implied? Is it political discrimination, that the people whose names are sent up to Caroni (1975) Limited and recommended there, and Caroni (1975) Limited makes the choice, are they Members of this political party? Is that the basis for the discrimination? Is it the basis that they belong to one ethnic group and that is where the discrimination is practised?

It is discrimination in favour of one ethnic group. That is the basis of this practice which they are condemning. It is obvious to everybody that with regard to the daily paid and the task workers at Caroni (1975) Limited, those are some of the lowest wages of organized labour throughout Trinidad and Tobago, and they involve some of the most menial tasks.

Who has applied? Nobody is preventing anyone from coming down there and putting their names in the register. How many persons applied for these cane-cutting jobs and the other menial tasks for which the union sent up names for the final choices to be made. It is symptomatic of this Government that when it is confronted with a problem, it does not deal with the problem; what it does is make a charge and say, others are doing it—a false charge in this case—and therefore somehow it is entitled to discriminate.

5.25 p.m.

It shows that the politics in this country really has not advanced an inch, although the PNM has been in charge for so many years. We ask for the issue of employment practices to be made transparent. It is a very critical problem which has bedeviled our politics, sociology, social relations and economics. Take for example Iscott, which is located in the heart of Couva in the sugar area, less than 10 per cent of the persons who are employed there come from that vicinity. They come from Diego Martin and they come from the East-West Corridor. *[Interruption]* It used to be Iscott when the appointments were done, and it was taken over by Ispatt. They have come from all over the country, except from the region where that plant is located. Is that accidental? When they talk about ethnic bias in terms of employment at Caroni (1975) Ltd, I ask the question: Who wants to do that kind of menial labour for those wages?

There was a situation at Lake Asphalt and there was not a word from that Government. There was a PNM meeting to which, I understand, the general

manager of Lake Asphalt was invited. When he approached the meeting there was this loud protesting by PNM members and, in fact, assaulting the general manager, Bill Ramrattan. Do you know what one of the placards said, Mr. Deputy Speaker? "Too much 'ram' in Lake Asphalt". What exactly is the implication of such a placard? Was that an inference of race? What was it? We are talking about employment practices: they have made allegations.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Member has five more minutes speaking time.

Mr. Sudama: What is the implication? At Lake Asphalt there are 260 employees, of whom 17 are Indian; but we understand that there is too much 'ram' at Lake Asphalt. Check at Contractors and General Workers' Trade Union in San Fernando. There was this PNM official who went down to Skinner Park and looked at a list on which there were some Indian names and publicly remarked: "What all you people want to make this? A Bangladesh?" It was taken up by the former Mayor, Dr. Mootoo: it was even taken up by the Contractors' Union. All these things are going on and here we have this nonsensical allegation that there is ethnic and political discrimination in employment at Caroni (1975) Limited, when the people employed by Caroni Limited would do anything to get out of the oppression and the living and working conditions and seek some other form of employment. It is a historical fact that they are trapped in the working conditions in that industry and, in the absence of other employment, have to continue under those conditions. Here we have again to answer this nonsensical allegation where racial remarks are being continually made by Members of the PNM with regard to employment practices at other state corporations in Trinidad and Tobago.

I did not want to raise that issue but I thought it needed a rebuttal in the light of the fact that it is continuing as a basis of propaganda by the other side. There is not a word from the Member for San Fernando East, who proclaims that this is a Government of national unity and that he is pushing the country forward. You have blatant racism being expressed by members of his own party and he says nothing. It is a fact. *[Interruption]* It is nonsense? It was in the newspapers. What did you say or do about it? You condone it. Why do you not do something if you are this great Government of national unity and you want to see this country go forward? They speak with forked tongues. They say one thing in public and in their private campaigning and mobilizing, they say something else. That is what they are—a Government of the greatest hypocrisy and one which has been nurtured in discrimination, political, ethnic and other types, but regional discrimination this time.

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Mr. Deputy Speaker, we would support any measure which we feel genuinely is in the interest of restructuring the sugar industry and indeed in the interest and welfare of the sugar workers of Trinidad and Tobago. I am not convinced that the Government is serious about this. I am not convinced that the Government is committed to the recommendations which it seeks to implement. I feel that over the years we shall see, as we have seen in the past, a weaning away from whatever commitment it has made to the recommendations in the report. In short, I do not trust the Government. Thank you.

Mr. Raymond Palackdharrysingh (*Caroni Central*): Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is extremely sad when we have to look at the sugar industry and believe, in some quarters, that it is an ethnic issue. The sugar industry in these parts has its historical importance, and any fundamental restructuring or getting away from the sugar industry would, of course, have its own historic importance.

I have a book here called, *The History of the People of Trinidad and Tobago* written by the late Dr. Eric Williams. Any time we are talking about the sugar industry, for all would-be debaters on this matter, this has to be a critical book. While I recognize the scholarship of Dr. Williams, I am not too sure that I followed him in his practice of political philosophy and what he did. I think he did a great disservice to this country by his treachery in politics.

5.35 p.m.

We must not forget that our African brothers and sisters were the first people to be involved in the sugar industry. We must understand that the emancipation of slaves brought about a different condition. What happened, unfortunately, was that after the emancipation of slaves, it was the planters who got compensation of £20 million from Britain, and not the slaves. That was an extremely sad day. After emancipation our African brothers and sisters went out of the sugar industry; by and large they left. I want to quote this section because this would put things in perspective in this debate. I quote from page 95 of this book;

"No account was to be taken of the former slaves. The metropolitan government had emancipated them and paid compensation not to them but to their owners. Only one voice was raised in favour of compensation to the slaves, the powerful voice of Victor Schoelcher of France. 'If France owes compensation for this social state which it has tolerated and is now suppressing,' wrote his commission, 'it owes it rather to those who have suffered from that state rather than to those who have profited thereby'.

Schoelcher wished to compensate the victims of slavery. He was overruled. The metropolitan government compensated the beneficiaries of slavery. It was compensation not for the deprivation of liberty but for the expropriation of property."

I feel that the metropolitan countries still owe our African brothers and sisters in this country some measure of compensation for slavery. That is where I believe some of the antagonisms and some of the bitterness should be directed. It should not be against East Indians in this society. East Indians did not come to this country to put out our African brothers and sisters from sugar. The only thing that was king in this country at that time was sugar. All the other variables, be it human resource and whatever, were to subserve the interests of the sugar planters. Any student of West Indian history would know that.

The contribution to the economy by the East Indians, as well, again documented by Dr. Eric Williams, who had concern for the transition of sugar labour from the African brothers and sisters to the East Indians. He wrote, at page 109:

"One can only wonder today how it was possible for any country that had abolished Negro slavery on the grounds that it was inhuman to justify Indian indenture with its 25 cents a day wage and its jails. The Europeans had distorted and maligned African civilization in order to find an alibi for Negro slavery. In the same way they distorted and maligned Indian civilization in the 19th century in order to justify Indian indenture."

Mr. Deputy Speaker, one begins to understand that the common enemy ought to have been the plantation system. The common enemy ought to have been those metropolitan planters who sought profits at all costs in this industry rather than the well-being of African slaves who were here or even indentured labourers coming from India. This ought to be the context in which we see the sugar industry in this country.

We must take note of how in the early days there was stigmatizing of the Amerindians, Africans and East Indians as being lazy and filthy. Be that as it may. That period, the East Indians came here because it was felt by the metropolitan powers that they needed a source of supply of labour that was not forthcoming here. One could understand our African brothers and sisters feeling, that when the East Indians came to the sugar plantations, that they destroyed the bargaining power the Africans had with the planters, in that while there was no

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alternative source of labour, it was possible to get better pay for their labour on the sugar plantations.

The indentured labourers came here on contract with the hope of returning to India, not to settle here. In the past the white slaves who were here previously could not bargain. The African slaves could not bargain and now, as a last source of supply the East Indian, who wanted to return to India, by and large, basically, was being induced to remain in this country. You see there came a time when to every four East Indians being, so to speak, imported to these shores, five of them wanted to return. They found that sort of passage system was hard and therefore—*[Interruption]*—So there were five passages for every four coming, because four were coming and one was going back, so it involved five passages. I do not see the difficulty in that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the inducement for Indians to stay in this country was land in lieu of passage back to India. The African brothers and sisters were not given that option because of the historical circumstance. The poor white planters did not have that and the only planter class was the metropolitan foreign planters. It was for the first time in the history of indentured labour that there was a small planter class emerging in the form of East Indians in this country.

Naturally, the African brothers and sisters left the drudgery of that industry and went out to the more urban areas where they took up some of the other jobs, craft and so on. It was not a case where the East Indian indentured came here to cause antagonism with anybody. The history of the East Indian person in this country, started with his indenture where he was to replace the African brother and sister working on the sugar plantation at a lower level of wages. That must be understood. It is well documented in this book by Dr. Williams on page 119.

Today, because of the pressure of our socio-economic development and because of the political culture that has been evolving during the years prior to independence and after independence, we are not seeing the issue as we ought to see it; we are seeing us on one side and them on the other. Therein lies the wickedness of the system, because, obviously, if you go into Caroni, you would find people who want food, clothing, shelter, health, education; if we come to Port of Spain, we are going to find the same thing. Therefore, the struggle in this matter is a struggle for us to survive as a country economically. That is why we cannot take the issues that we are dealing with in Caroni and make it appear that a certain

group of people on this side control Caroni (1975) Limited and all that goes on there. The same ought not to happen in respect of our African brothers sisters, because in both slavery and indentureship we experienced some of the same hardships and difficulties. Those excruciating experiences should not set us apart but should pull us together. Our common enemy as it was in the past is still the same today. It is the alienation of all our peoples from those factors that would provide for us a decent and better standard of living. And that has to be taken into account.

I want Members to know, that if there is a preponderance of—and I would not say of one ethnic group, I am going to name the group—East Indians in Caroni, then it is because of historical reasons.

There was a symposium—held some time ago and I think I recognize that some Members of the Government who attended. I want to quote what the Sanatan Dharma Maha Saba stated in its position paper on this matter. I quote from page 1:

"The Hindu connection:

Hindus owe their presence in Trinidad to the sugar industry. In the early 19th century, the plantocracy then engaged in sugar production lost their cheap labour source because of the emancipation of African slaves. Attempts to use Chinese and Portuguese labour proved disastrous because of their unsuitability for laborious field work. Finally, attention was directed to the Indian sub-continent where various means were employed, some surreptitious, to lure immigrants to the West Indies.

Our destiny in this land began on the 30th of May 1845. From the early immigrants to the present day, Indians have been physically and psychologically bound to the sugar industry. Further, it is to be noted that approximately 75 per cent of these people today continue to be Hindus and that the majority of the employees of State-owned Caroni (1975) Limited and the sugar-cane farmers themselves, are members of the Hindu faith.

Rooted in the Hindu psyche there is a feeling, a spiritual attachment to nature which flows from deep within the bowels of Hinduism. From time immemorial there has been a Hindu concept which believes that the spheres of existence and the powers which dwell in them are principles from which the physical or elemental world develops."

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What has happened here, is that they came to these parts, they brought with them their culture, they brought with them their understanding of the world from a religious point of view and they sort of juxtaposed that with the economic conditions where they worked. That is why, today, we must not look upon what is happening at Caroni (1975) Limited as a situation which was designed—particularly by those of us who represent and come from Caroni—to keep this country polarized.

It is time for all of us in this country to have a very dispassionate view on Caroni (1975) Limited and also ethnicity and then we will begin to understand.

Dr. Rowley: Tell Sudama that.

Mr. Palackdharrysingh: Prof. La Guerre has indicated in this position paper that it would be foolish to try to send people from Caroni to work in Charlotteville or to send people from Toco to work down in Icacos and so on. There is some sort of geographical connection to the places where we live, where we interact, and so on.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me just quote this last paragraph on page 121, “The contribution of the Indians,” and this is from the same book by Dr. Eric Williams:

“The Indian cane farmer in Trinidad, cultivating cane on a small plot of land which he had been allowed to buy in exchange for a return passage to India, represented a challenge in Trinidad to the traditional method of production in the British sugar colonies in the West Indies. To that extent the indentured Indian immigrant, the last victim in the historical sense of the sugar plantation economy, constituted one of the most powerful social forces for the future in the struggle for the establishment of a proper social structure and modern industrial relations.”

Mr. Deputy Speaker, today, if we understand what forces shape our institutions, our lives and our educational upbringing, we would understand that as much as we come here to exist and to live, we ought not to be antagonistic to each other but rather should find the common enemy and work out plans for the survival of all our people.

Now that we have spoken about race and ethnicity—which has a slightly different connotation—the society must loose open its bowels to see what is happening. I will not take umbrage at what is being said by the Member for

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Laventille West. He must be under pressure and he does not know where the pressure is coming from. Therefore, he must be willing to take it as the line of least resistance. I do not know.

I want us to examine this matter again because in my own existence in this country, I can safely say—I am speaking merely for myself—that I have not had any real cause to cry discrimination against me as an individual except recently—and unfortunately, I had to be arrested because I believe that those practices were not in the best interests of a community, and therefore, I had to act in a particular way so as to “conscientize” the community.

Hon. Member: Word, boy.

Mr. Mohammed: You learn from this side, boy.

Mr. Palackdharrysingh: Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are those who are fossilizing systems of injustice and so on; others must keep knocking at it until it is broken. We all go to the tearoom and sometimes we can get bake and salted fish or roti; we can get everything and we sit and eat it. I am sure the fellows go for bara after the campaign meetings when they want a quick something to bite. If we are not careful we are going to go in a direction that will divide us further and further.

I want you to know that the conditions at Caroni (1975) Limited are extremely serious. But, as was pointed out by the Member for Oropouche, what we should aim at is to have all our industries working efficiently, have our industries producing so that we can sustain them and even make a profit. When moneys are made and spent all of us, in some way, benefit. The better off our citizens are economically, the better it is for us.

Mr. Eckstein: Read two Williams' books and you will come to this side, you know.

Mr. Palackdharrysingh: Mr. Deputy Speaker, having made that point, it is now important to look at the matter before us which is the Tripartite Report. I should like to call it, for convenience, the Haraksingh Plan, because he was the chairman. I merely want to look at its terms of reference and recap some of the salient features. It says here, on page 4:

"The Committee recommends the following steps:

- 1(a) That the Government of Trinidad and Tobago treat the loan capital of Caroni Ltd. amounting at 1992 to \$2.138 billion as a subvention.

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- (b) That as a consequence of the above, the company's profit and loss statement be adjusted to reflect the accrued interest related to the loan capital.
- (2) That the Government assume responsibility for the outstanding loan with FINCOR of \$100 million due in the year 2001 and of \$120 million due in the year 2004.
- (3) That the debenture on the Company's assets in favour of the Government established in 1973 in conjunction with a World Bank loan of US \$12 million, which was fully repaid in 1987, be now officially released.
- (4) That the accrued liabilities amounting to \$200.2 million at the end of 1992 of PAYE, VAT, Health Surcharge, and Lands and Buildings taxes be settled."

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is the objective of the report. Of course, I must say that if the Member for Couva North affixed his signature to the report, it must have merited some worthy consideration. Because, if I know him well, he is not the easiest man to sign reports of this nature.

Other speakers have stated that they are going to support any measure that is going to improve the efficiency of Caroni (1975) Limited to make the company viable, to diversify it with respect to producing things that would find markets. We all have an obligation to support this report.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we cannot forget some of the things that bedevil us, and it is time for us to remind ourselves about them, and particularly the Government. Throughout the debate I have heard no reference, really, to a report entitled "Report of the Committee Appointed By Cabinet to Undertake an Independent Investigation into the Financial Affairs and Management practices of Caroni (1975) Limited". The date here is June, 1991. It is really frightening to see what is inside that report. As a matter of fact, in the *Trinidad Guardian* of Thursday, August 8, 1991 you will see a bold headline: "Caroni riddled with corruption, inefficiency embedded in the company's culture."

That is a situation that we must closely examine and when we do so we are going to ask ourselves why we have not tried over the years to do something about this matter. Caroni (1975) Limited, if one looks back at the figures with respect to profit and loss, one will see very clearly that in 1975 there was some measure of

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profit. After that, the company seemed to be going farther downhill. If we want the answers, they are all in this report. I do not know how this report has not surfaced in this debate before, but those persons who have signed this report are Vindar Dean-Maharaj, Chairman; Peter Farquhar, Member; and Earl Nesbitt, Member/Secretary. My information is that these gentlemen are quite credible in terms of what they are about and they have some measure of credibility in what they are going to do.

It is time for us to look at what is happening. Before we do so, it is interesting to note what the hon. Minister of Agriculture had to say. I think he recognized the problems, but I am not too certain that he indicated to this House in any serious way that the Government had the political will and resolve to deal with the matter. I quote from his speech:

"The question at Caroni (1975) Limited is whether or not it can be restructured to enhance or retain most of its positive aspects while reducing or eliminating its escalating losses. Clearly a policy of inaction would lead inevitably to total collapse. That is what we are facing at this point. If we take the position of business as usual—in fact, we do not even have that option."

He pointed out that substantial hundreds of millions were given to the company. He also identified some of the problems which exist within that system, where such kinds of expenditures and levels of employment obtained immediately jump out at you when you look at the company's low cane yields, low cane quality, poor factory performance, excessive man-hour levels and low productivity in operational and overhead costs.

These have been identified in broad and general terms, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am not saying that it is comprehensive—it may not be comprehensive enough—but nowhere in his presentation subsequently did the hon. Member indicate some of the measures that were going to be taken to reduce some of the inefficiencies that plague the industry.

6.05 p.m.

This report that I have would indicate that management practices in the company were exceptionally bad. Whether you change the name from Caroni, whether you give it a new mission status; whatever it is, in the end it is going to boil down to how these units operate from an economic point of view whether the micro-economics at those institutions is going to be in a way that would indicate that profits are going to be made. These are matters that have not been addressed.

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You see, sometimes it would be to the advantage of politicians to make general statements, without giving any indication as to how inefficient industries can be made efficient. Those are some of the matters that must be addressed. We know very well, and the Member for Oropouche pointed it out, that it is not the sugar workers that have really run down the industry, if I may use that term. As a matter of fact, the sugar workers recognize that their livelihood depends upon that industry. There were times in the recent past when those same sugar workers when called upon, would respond to the management of the company, and even work free so as to make the company viable. But wherein lies the problem? Whether the company is changed or restructured, if there is not the political will to eliminate from the administration and management of not only Caroni, but also any of other economic organization, those people who are free-loaders, those, as they say, who are square pegs in round holes, the company must "bust".

When you look at management practices, you find that in finance, for example, managers do their own thing. There are not sufficient stipulations or rules to keep financial practices and accounting in a manner that would ensure some measure of performance or value for money spent. So when you start having these things, then you see what has been happening.

Let me quote from this report and what it says here with respect to finance at Caroni Limited:-

"In practice, it is the managers of the sections, areas, divisions and departments who set their own targets, establish their own norms, define their own standards. The Operations Manager and his Heads of Departments who preside over these managers, never undertake any serious critical analysis of the proposals submitted to them. The Financial Controller, who has a lower status in the hierarchy than the Operations Manager, does not in practice question the estimates that are submitted to him."

That is a case, of where we have an institution, but the proper guidelines are not given. I wonder, also, whether the proper personnel are hired. If any country is to survive, it would have to do so on the economic performance of its major industries. And if that has to be so, then those who are in charge, the political directorate, must first, among other things, ensure that those who will be put to run the organization will be those who display a level of competence and commitment to the particular organization to which they belong or work for, but we did not have it here.

Are we suffering, in this country, from a general malaise of not really permanently belonging just being transient? In a way we merely want to take out of the system and not put back. If we continue that, I am afraid that we are going to lay a very poor foundation for posterity. I am afraid that we are going to descend lower and lower into the ranks of poverty and mismanagement; move from—they say Third World; I do not know if there is something like a Fourth, but it could be. If that could happen, then sooner or later we are going to have situations that we do not want to have; maybe, like the Guyanese or Haitian situation, where economic existence is a very, very tenuous one—very slim indeed. That is the kind of situation we would have if we do not pull together. I want to make the point in a most serious way, that if we are to take this country forward, there is only one consideration, and that is, that all of us must put our shoulders to the wheel. All of us must feel as part of this country; all of us must know that we belong.

Mr. Mohammed: Share in power.

Mr. Palackdharrysingh: All of us, as much as we share in responsibility, must also share in the privileges. It is very simple. In a society such as ours if any one-third stops functioning properly, it could damage our balance of payments, our balance of trade and it could affect productivity to the extent that it is difficult to survive. That is the kind of motivation that we need, not merely to come here all the time and throw punches and believe that we are knocking out one another for political gain. No matter who takes power in this country, when you go out there to deliver, that is the crucial matter.

Some believe that we sit nicely in this Parliament, but from the time we leave these so-called hallowed precincts and we get out there, our constituents are at our throats. Whether you are a Minister of Government, or a member of the Opposition, it is the same demands that are going to be made on you. Therefore, it is important, it is critical that we reduce the antagonisms we have; that we integrate ourselves with one another; that we share in the responsibilities and correspondingly, if there are privileges, we share in them as well. When we set up as a Government, we install ourselves as the Parliament, and we believe we have absolute power. In five years we are going to see what the population would say. So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think you understand that we have problems. We have to look to organizations like Caroni.

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Motion made, That the House do now adjourn to Friday, October 16, 1992 at 1.30 p.m. [*Hon. K. Valley*]

Question put and agreed to

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 6.15 p.m.

WRITTEN ANSWER TO QUESTION

The following question was asked by Mr. Krish Jurai (Nariva):

Rice Importation

31. Would the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources state the following for the period 1986—1991:

- (a) How much rice was imported into this country and the value of same per year?
- (b) How much paddy was produced by Caroni Limited and the value of same per year?
- (c) How much paddy was produced in Nariva Swamp and the value of same per year?
- (d) How much paddy was produced in other parts of the country in areas not mentioned above and the value of same?
- (e) Would the Minister state from which countries rice was imported into Trinidad and Tobago?

The following reply was circulated to Members of the House:

Rice imports by country of origin, quantity (000kg) and value (TTS):

1986:

Country	Quantity	Value
Colombia	19.0	89,386.0
USA	23,514.0	20,074,991.0
Guyana	3,176.0	3,127,922.0

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Country	Quantity	Value
Brazil	131.0	312144.0
Thailand	2,561.0	3,074,803
Total	29,401.0	26,679,246.0

1987:

Country	Quantity	Value
USA	54,794.0	37,045,521.0
Thailand	358.0	454,834.0
Guyana	514.0	637,225.0
Japan	0.4	578.0
Total	55,666.4	38,138,158.0

1988:

Country	Quantity	Value
Colombia	2.0	12,899.0
Japan	0.3	2,356.0
Guyana	2,080.0	2,437,19.0
St. Vincent	1,000.0	2,418,378.0
USA	28,117.0	40,834,394.0
Thailand	1,771.0	2,210,332.0
Total	32,970.3	47,915,551.0

1989:

Country	Quantity	Value
USA	49,393.0	62,931,814.0
United Kingdom	1,248.0	1,843,339.0
Grenada	500.0	1,224,999.0
St. Vincent	100.0	2,290,190.0
Total	51,241.0	68,290,342.0

*Written Answer To Question**Friday, October 9, 1992***1990:**

Country	Quantity	Value
Mexico	0.3	3,469.0
USA	33,440.0	47,716,183.0
Taiwan	1.0	14,236.0
South Korea	1.0	4,459.0
Total	33,442.3	47,738,347.0

1991:

Country	Quantity	Value
Colombia	5.0	51,802.0
Dominican Republic	0.1	500.0
Canada	0.2	250.0
Hong Kong	1.0	1,289.0
USA	22,857.0	47,620,612.0
Taiwan	10.0	50,443.0
Guyana	1,675.0	3,037,962.0
Total	24,548.3	50,762,858.0

Source: CSO's Trade Reports

(B) Paddy produced by Caroni (1975) Limited:

	Production (kg)	Value (\$)
1986	690,000	1,134,608
1987	2,070,000	3,490,587
1988	2,197,404	3,712,029
1989	4,108,622	6,660,901
1990	5,081,265	8,411,275
1991	5,408,963	8,767,673

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- (c) No specific data is available for rice production in Nariva Swamp. The records do not differentiate the production of rice by specific areas in Trinidad.
- (d) Paddy produced in other areas including Nariva Swamp and excluding Caroni (1975) Limited:

	Production (kg)	Value (\$)
1986	1,710,000	3,351,600
1987	3,671,077	7,195,310
1988	4,556,472	8,930,685
1989	5,697,213	11,166,537
1990	9,286,002	18,200,563
1991	10,584,524	20,745,667