

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES*Friday, October 16, 1992*

The House met at 1.55 p.m.

PRAYERS[MR DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]**PAPERS LAID**

1. Report of the Review Team appointed by Cabinet to advise on systems to reduce existing delays in the Administration of Justice. [*The Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs (Hon. K. Sobion)*]
2. Report of the Auditor General on the Accounts of the Trinidad and Tobago Tourist Board for the year ended December 31, 1985. [*The Minister of Finance (Hon. W. Mottley)*]
3. Report of the Auditor General on the Accounts of the Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission for the year ended December 31, 1990. [*Hon. W. Mottley*]
4. Report of the Auditor General on the Accounts of the Agricultural Development Bank of Trinidad and Tobago for the year ended December 31, 1991. [*Hon. W. Mottley*]

*Papers Nos. 2, 3, and 4 to be referred to the Public Accounts Committee.***ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS****Caroni (1975) Limited
(Road Acquisitions)***The following question stood on the Order Paper in the name of Mr. Subhas Panday (Naparima):*

19. Could the Minister of Planning and Development state:
 - (a) 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, I have to ask for a deferral of this question for one week. We are preparing the reply.

Question, by leave, deferred.

**Colonial Road
(Barrackpore)**

20. Mr. Subhas Panday (Naparima) asked the Minister of Works and Transport:

- (a) Is the Minister aware of the deplorable condition of New Colonial Road, Barrackpore?
- (b) What steps are being taken, if any, to repair same?

The Minister of Works and Transport (Hon. Colm Imbert): Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Minister of Works and Transport is aware that New Colonial Road, Barrackpore is in need of repair.

In 1991 repair work was carried out on this road. Approximately 800 square metres of roadway was upgraded and repaired at a cost of approximately \$170,000. In addition, 200 metres of concrete box drains were constructed along a section of the roadway in order to improve road drainage. So far, in 1992, 600 metres of road repair has been completed and at the moment re-surfacing of the more critical sections of the roadway is being carried out using hot asphalt mix. Efforts to further improve the conditions of this roadway will continue.

Street Lights

26. Mr. Mohammed Haniff (Princes Town) asked the Minister of Public Utilities:

Would the Minister 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, the Minister of Public Utilities has been advised that a sum of \$650,000 has been allocated for installation of new street lights in the current year 1992.

The Minister has been informed by the Ministry of Local Government that the 1992 allocation with respect to street lights is for work on specific projects in Arima, Couva, Tabaquite and Talparo.

Further, the Minister of Public Utilities wishes to draw to the attention of this honourable House the fact that he is of the view that there is need for a re-examination of the policy with respect to the installation of new street lights. In this context, he proposes to review the matter and subsequently outline a new approach in due course.

Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Rural Electrification

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

Would the Minister state:

- (a) Whether funds have been allocated for the purpose of undertaking new rural electrification projects in the current year?
- (b) If the answer to (a) is in the affirmative, would the Minister inform this House where those projects are to be done?
- (c) What is the criteria used for selecting the areas where projects are to be done?

2.05 p.m.

The Minister of Public Utilities (Hon. Morris Marshall): Mr. Deputy Speaker, a sum of \$497,673 has been allocated for the purpose of undertaking new rural projects in the current year. The Minister of Public Utilities has been advised that electrification projects are to be undertaken throughout Trinidad and Tobago in this regard.

Some of the areas which will benefit are as follows: El Carmen Estate, Santa Cruz; Heights of Guanapo, Waller Field; Marin Bay Road, North Manzanilla; Foster Road Extension, Toco/Manzanilla; Mount Cabrit, Toco; Manuel Junction; Piparo Road, Tabaquite; Lawrence Lalla Trace, Nariva; Milling Road, Nariva;

Walk Street Extension, Mayaro; Guppy Hill Trace, Mayaro; Cuche Trace, Rio Claro; Cow Trace, Caparo; Calenso Trace, Navet; Esmeralda North, Las Lomas; Sou Sou Lands, North Las Lomas No. 2; John Persad Trace, Caroni.

The Minister of Public Utilities has been advised that projects are selected on the basis of need; the total cost, the maximization of the number of consumers in the community who would benefit, as well as the overall social benefits.

Tableland Police Station

28. Mr. Mohammed Haniff (*Princes Town*) asked the Minister of National Security:

Would the Minister indicate:

- (a) Whether Government has any plans to rebuild the Tableland Police Station?
- (b) If the answer to (a) is in the affirmative, would the Minister state when the project is likely to commence?
- (c) If however, the answer to (a) is in the negative, would the Minister state whether any repairs are planned for this said police station and when would it commence?

The Minister of National Security (Sen. The Hon. Russell Huggins): Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Government does not have any plans to rebuild Tableland Police Station. The condition of the station is very good. Any repairs to be effected are minimal and will be undertaken as and when required.

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

Central Market (Traffic Congestion)

- (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 National Security (Sen. The Hon. Russell Huggins): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I ask that this question be deferred for a period of two weeks.

Question, by leave, deferred.

Sangre Grande Hospital

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

Is the hon. Minister aware of the following problems that exist at the Sangre Grande Hospital?

- (a) That corn flakes boxes are used for entering patients' records?
- (b) That there is only one toilet on each ward of the hospital to accommodate in excess of twenty patients per ward?
- (c) That some of the said toilets are not functioning?
- (d) That there are AIDS patients housed together with other patients in the same wards?
- (e) That there is no pipe-borne water at the hospital?
- (f) That nurses are refusing to wash their hands in the water provided in dirty water barrels?
- (g) If the answers are in the affirmative, would the Minister state what immediate action is contemplated in relieving the said situation in the hospital?
- (h) Would the Minister also state whether he intends to relieve all the other problems that exist at the hospital as outlined to the Minister when he met with a delegation of nurses from the said hospital?

The Minister of Health (Hon. John Eckstein): Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Minister of Health has been advised by the Hospital Medical Director of the Sangre Grande Hospital that:

- (a) In June, 1992, there was a shortage of casualty patients' record cards at the Sangre Grande Hospital. The Manager of the hospital sought alternatives. Cuts of bristol board were obtained from the Government Printery and unused physiotherapy and pay record cards were substituted. When these were depleted, the Trinidad and Tobago Printing and Packaging Company assisted with cardboard cuttings

which came from material used in the making of corn flake boxes. This was used for a brief period, only in the casualty area. Casualty cards have been available for the past two months and are now in use.

- (b) Toilet facilities on the wards are as follows:

Ward	Description	Beds	Toilets
1	Paediatrics	6 14 cots	2
2	Male Surgical	14	1
3	Gynaecology and Female Surgery	25	3
4	Obstetrics	23	3
5	Female Medical	14	1
5	Male Medical	14	1
Extended Care Unit (10 Geriatric beds and 41 Psychiatric beds)			9

- (c) All toilets at the hospital are functioning well.
- (d) Aids patients are treated in the same wards as other medical patients. The mode of transmission of AIDS does not preclude this, and this approach is considered appropriate for the treatment of AIDS patients. The required isolation nursing procedures are always initiated.
- (e) There has been pipe-borne water at the Sangre Grande Hospital since its inception. In June 1992, there were some problems with the water supply. Water was turned off from the central main supply for extended periods. was called in and the storage facilities and emergency distribution system were upgraded. At present, the hospital enjoys an adequate supply of water.
- (f) There are no dirty water barrels at the Sangre Grande Hospital. In the period during the difficulties referred to above, plastic containers were used for storing water. There has been no report of nurses refusing to wash their hands with the water collected in the containers.

The Minister of Health met with nurses from the Sangre Grande Hospital who were primarily concerned about the changes in their duty roster. The matter was discussed. In attendance was the Director of Institutional Nursing who subsequently arranged a meeting with the nurses with a view to resolving this issue. The Minister does not recall any other matter being raised for discussion at his meeting with the nurses.

Mr. Sudama: Mr. Deputy Speaker, could the Minister tell us exactly what has happened with these cuttings of the corn flakes boxes which were used for record purposes.

Mr. Eckstein: I have absolutely no idea what has happened with those cuttings. I would assume that when the medical record cards became available, the information that was on them was transferred to the permanent cards.

Mr. Sudama: Perhaps the Minister should find out.

Police Officers (1980—91)

Mr. Krish Jurai (Nariva): Mr. Deputy Speaker, before I ask this question, I should like to draw to the attention of this House that I submitted it on September 11, 1992 for oral answer. Today, I am seeing on the Order Paper that it is down for written answer.

I wish to draw to the attention of this House, that I am seeking an oral answer to this question. If the hon. Minister is not prepared to answer today, I am prepared to wait another week for the answer.

Thank you.

34. Would the Minister state the following with respect to the period 1980 to 1991:

- (a) How many batches of police officers were trained and number per batch passed out?
- (b) How many of these officers were promoted and to what rank?
- (c) How many of these officers hold acting appointments and for what periods?
- (d) Have there been any instances of junior officers being promoted over senior officers?

- (e) If the answer to (d) is in the affirmative, what is the criteria used for promotions?

The Minister of National Security (Sen. The Hon. Russell Huggins): Mr. Deputy Speaker, his wish will be complied with.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Will the hon. Minister of National Security repeat that for me, please?

Sen. Huggins: The Member for Nariva indicated that if the Minister wishes he can answer the question orally next week. I am prepared to do that.

Question, by leave, deferred.

ADJOURNMENT MOTION (LEAVE)

Mr. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj (Couva South): Mr. Deputy Speaker, the matter which I wish to raise as a matter which is definite, urgent and of public importance is the refusal of the Government to provide financial assistance to the National Council of Indian Culture for its promotion of Divali Nagar as part of the celebration of Divali. I say refusal, but I think I should say “refusal and/or failure and/or omission” of the Government to give such assistance.

2.15 p.m.

The matter involves the promotion of Divali as part of the multi-dimensional culture of Trinidad and Tobago. I say it falls within this category, because the Government has stated, only last week in an answer by the hon. Minister of Culture that the Government's policy is that there exists a multi-dimensional culture in Trinidad and Tobago, and this policy is to assist national groups which are involved in the promotion of integral aspects of culture. It would appear that the issue involves not only the refusal to assist this particular group, but also the whole question of—I am sure that the Government would want to respond—its assistance for the promotion of Divali generally, Divali Nagar being an integral part of the promotion of Divali as has been recognized over at least the last two years.

The policy of the Government seems to be that last year it supported the promotion of Divali Nagar by a financial grant of \$300,000. So the issues which arise and which I would ask you to consider are, first of all, the apparent failure of

the Government to implement a policy, which it says it has, to assist in the promotion of a multi-dimensional culture of Trinidad and Tobago. The policy of any government is a policy of the people of the country, and, therefore, it is a matter of urgent public importance where it is apparent that that policy is not being adhered to.

When one looks at what the hon. Minister of Culture said in her reply, with respect to multi-dimensional culture, one sees evidence that the Government is saying that it has such a policy. When one looks at the Government's financial grant last year, one sees that the Government is saying that there exists such a policy. To our knowledge, there has been no decision—

Mr. Valley: I thought the Member would be making a case for this as urgent and of public importance. He seems to be arguing the case at present. That should be done later this afternoon, if you allow it, Sir.

Mr. Maharaj: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am trying to show the importance, if there is a question of policy.

One of the aspects, in order to show that it is a matter of definite urgent public importance, is the question of the failure of the Government to implement the policy which it says it has.

The second aspect, which I would submit in support of the contention that it is a matter of urgent public importance, is that the Constitution in section 4 imposes a duty on the Government to promote religious observances.

The third issue is that one sees that it involves the question of whether the implementation of the policy which the Government says it has is conforming to the principle of equality of treatment. In other words, if the Government is not implementing its policy with respect to Divali, the question arises: Is it conforming to the Constitution? That is to say, is there equality of treatment in the promotion of integral aspects of the multi-dimensional culture of Trinidad and Tobago.

The other point which I should like to draw to your attention is that the Government was recognized that Divali is a national religious festival, that is why it was declared a public holiday. Initially, Divali affected about 300,000 Hindus, but now it affects the nation as a whole—it is a national festival. In that context, one sees that it is of urgent public importance because it is regarded as the biggest cultural event.

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In my letter to you dated October 16, one sees in (4) that it is the biggest cultural event outside Carnival. It provides spiritual energy to the nation; it provides opportunities for businesses; it also generates employment; it attracts tourists from the United States, Canada and the Caribbean.

Divali Nagar and Divali celebrations start on Sunday. Divali itself is celebrated on Sunday, October 25, so one sees the importance of it and, in my respectful submission, where the Government has said that it has the policy and has been adhering to this policy, and an issue arises where it prima facie shows that it is not adhering to this policy, the question arises, under Standing Order 12(2), whether a matter of definite, urgent public business arises. Mr. Deputy Speaker, subject to your ruling, I respectfully submit that the Opposition is entitled to have this matter debated. Thank you very much.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member for Couva South, I have listened carefully to your submission and I am satisfied with the claim that the matter is definite and of public importance. And given the time, as stated Sunday 18, it is also urgent.

The matter will then stand over until six o'clock this evening.

**JUSTICE
(COURTS' BACKLOG)**

The Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs (Hon. Keith Sobion): Mr. Deputy Speaker, on May 15, 1992 I made a statement in Parliament concerning the problem of delays in the administration of justice. I was careful in the course of that statement to avoid any approach which could have been considered negative as is the wont of so many when dealing with problems, particularly those that are national in scope.

The focal point of that earlier statement was to announce that Cabinet had agreed to the appointment of a team comprised of members of the legal profession in private practice and those employed in the state sector, representatives nominated by the judiciary and the magistracy, a representative of the Legal Aid and Advisory Authority and a management expert.

The terms of reference of that team were stated as follows:

To analyze recommendations for improvement to the existing system of justice in civil and criminal areas, (including the holding of inquests) and to advise on systems to reduce existing delays for immediate implementation.

The team was further required to submit its report and recommendations to Cabinet within four weeks.

2.25 p.m.

Before proceeding any further, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I should like to place on record the Government's deep appreciation to the chairman of that team Mr. Dennis Gurley and the members who assisted in putting together a detailed, comprehensive and practical report in just a week over the already confining time frame allotted to them. Service in the national interest without remuneration or reward often passes unnoticed and on my own behalf, as Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs, I applaud the team for rising to the challenge in the manner in which they have done.

The Cabinet received the report in June, 1992, and have considered and approved in principle the recommendations which have been made. The report has been forwarded to several agencies for more detailed analysis and for implementation thereafter.

In my earlier statement I alluded to the fact that the crisis situation which exists demands that this matter be accorded the highest priority on the national agenda and that we can no longer continue to pay lip service to the problem. I said then that we must act, and act swiftly. I recall that statement to signal to this House and the population at large that we are on the verge of ensuring positive action with respect to this problem which impacts adversely on the day-to-day lives of our citizens, and threatens in a deleterious way to affect our democratic way of life.

The time has also come in this context where consideration ought to be and in fact is being given to the appointment of a permanent commission to work with the relevant agencies to ensure that the delivery of legal and judicial services in this country becomes a motivating example to our Caricom neighbours, the Commonwealth group of nations and the wider world community.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, permit me to give a brief summary of the activities of the team and an overview of the contents of the report. The team conducted its deliberations in four stages. In the first stage of its deliberations, the team had a total of nine meetings, over a period of 26 hours, to consider and discuss a variety of reports, papers, memoranda, articles, treaties, submissions and letters which were concerned with the problem. The members also shared with one another their views and opinions on the problem and discussed possible solutions thereto.

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The second stage of the deliberations involved the team meeting with several concerned bodies and persons including the honourable the Chief Justice, the Honourable the Chief Magistrate, the Chairman of the Law Commission, the Chairman of the Public Services Commission, the Commissioner of Police, together with his Deputy Commissioners, Assistant Commissioners and other heads of departments of the Police Service; the President of the Law Association, Mr. Allan Alexander, together with Mr. Michael De La Bastide, Queen's Council and member of the sub-committee of the Law Association's own committee on delays in the administration of justice.

In the third stage, the team was divided into two groups, each with responsibility for the different jurisdictions, civil on the one hand and criminal on the other. Each group held several meetings to identify and formulate specific recommendations and to prepare a working draft of the report.

The fourth and final stage involved the return of the two groups to review and marry the specific recommendations of each group and to agree to the report in a final form. The report is structured in such a way as to categorize the recommendations under four broad headings:

- Infrastructural: Recommendations concerned with major expenditure, buildings, facilities and other conveniences;
- Legislative: Recommendations which required an amendment to an Act of Parliament or entirely new legislation;
- Procedural: Recommendations which can be addressed by way of practice direction or require an amendment to the Rules of the Supreme Court; and
- Administrative: Recommendations which require the implementation of systems.

The report is further divided into three main categories dealing respectively with the Supreme Court, the Magistracy and the Family Court.

An overview of the recommendations: In attempting to generalize the nature of the recommendations, the team noted that if there is to be any meaningful and significant improvement in the quality of administration of justice, it will be necessary for several things to be done, including *inter alia*:

- The increase of the judicial establishment;

- Commissioning of additional court buildings;
- A substantial revision of our management systems to include the use and benefit of modern information management systems and technology;
- To introduce specialized training in human resource management; and
- To seriously examine the approach to the practice of law so as to eradicate the root causes of the slow pace of the administration of justice.

Quite apart from reporting on the general framing of the report, it may be useful for the national community and this House to be alerted to certain specific recommendations which have been made.

In respect of the Supreme Court:

- (1) That steps be taken to establish a third division of the Court of Appeal, with a view to making one of the divisions a dedicated criminal division;
- (2) That a High Court be established at Arima to take the burden off the assizes at Port-of-Spain. This court would have jurisdiction to hear matters arising in Arima and the eastern counties. This measure will also relieve jurors from those areas from having to travel to Port-of-Spain to fulfill their civic duty;
- (3) That the post of Deputy Registrar be created for the San Fernando sub-registry;
- (4) That Computer-Aided Transcription be introduced in all the civil trial courts and that the training for CAT reporters be increased in 1993;
- (5) That the Supreme Court and the Magistracy be made a closed department, that is a department where it is recognized that the work involved is of a specialized nature and that the personnel required to function within it should be subject to special training;
- (6) That a comprehensive approach to computerization of the courts be undertaken, particularly to assist in the management of the case flow and the retrieval and reproduction of documents;
- (7) That a system of law clerks be established to assist judges in legal research and with drafting of judgments.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I may say that the latter recommendation will have tremendous implication on the quality of the legal profession in the years to come,

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as it serves to introduce the young graduate directly to the heart of the legal system.

The team recognized that improvements which require legislative action are not necessarily at the core of the problem. They have, however, identified quite significantly the need to increase the statutory rate of interest on judgment debts to commercial levels. The effect of this recommendation will greatly reduce the tendency to prolong court matters with the knowledge that the interest rate which the court can later impose is *de minimus*.

This recommendation, together with the recommendation that insurance companies can be joined in the action immediately, along with the insured, will have an important effect on reducing delays. Running down actions now account for 40 to 50 per cent of the matters which are filed on an annual basis.

With respect to matters of procedure, the team has identified specific rules of court which ought to be amended and which will simplify the procedure from the time of the filing of an action to the time of hearing.

These recommendations included not only matters relating to interlocutory processes, but also to the wider use of skeletal arguments and the actual presentation of the case at the trial stage.

More importantly, a novel proposal for the management of cases will permit the judges of the Supreme Court to have greater control over how the case progresses through all its stages.

On the administrative front, greater attention will be paid to management systems and the use of modern-day technology. Other recommendations in this regard will be the development of an outreach programme whereby the population will be sensitized to the operations of the court, its procedures and their rights and responsibilities as citizens within the judicial system.

With respect to the Magistrates' Courts, like representations have been made in the major areas, including the case-flow management system and the Computer-Aided Transcription system. Recommendations have also been made for additional magisterial districts for specified areas east and west of Port of Spain.

Significant among the recommendations requiring legislative actions are those related to the conduct of preliminary enquiries and coroners' inquests. The enactment of legislation to permit committal to the assizes by virtue of sworn statements and the use of the voluntary bill of indictment will reduce the time spent

by accused persons in the remand section of the prisons and eliminate the wastage of productive man hours in attending court and the transportation of prisoners from prison to court and from court to prison.

Similarly, a simplified procedure for the conduct of coroners' inquests will facilitate the expeditious determination of those matters and bring relief to the population at large.

This, too, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is true of the recommendations relating to the liquor licensing procedure which now requires thousands of citizens to attend sessions of the committee for the renewal of licences when there is no objection of the grant of the required licence.

I trust, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I have given a useful insight into the report of the team which was established earlier this year. Let me hasten to say it is by no means exhaustive.

It would be remiss of me, however, if I did not refer to the section of the report which deals with the Family Court. In an era when we are moving towards specialization in our court structure, this recommendation is particularly welcome. This will require that the Law Commission review with urgency the Family court Bill of 1986 for presentation to Parliament. The court will have at its disposal in-house social services which will be designed to provide appropriate practical conciliatory services which will reduce the strict legalistic approach to matters of that nature.

The implementation of the recommendations of this report will be a significant step forward in improving the quality of our judicial and legal service. I have had the co-operation of all the necessary agencies and in particular the Chief Justice, who, as holder of the office primarily responsible for the administration of justice in this country, has given the fullest support to the team in its deliberations.

In closing, I recall that from time to time the media and others have engaged in unfair and irresponsible criticisms of our institutions. On the occasions when I have had to respond, I cautioned against that kind of destructive approach. It was not meant then, nor is it meant now to be attempting to muzzle the media, as has been expressed in certain quarters. All I have intended to signal is that the problems which face our country and its institutions cannot and will not be solved by irresponsible action motivated by hidden agendas.

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The report of this team on delays is a clear demonstration of what can be achieved if persons within our society are guided by responsible and mature approaches and sincerity and dedication to the national interest.

It is my pleasure, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to note that this report has been laid in Parliament and I would also, in accordance with the policy of this Government, provide further updates as the implementation process proceeds.

I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Mohammed: Mr. Deputy Speaker, may I inquire from the learned Attorney General whether he proposes to bring that report for a debate in this Parliament, even if it is just to take note.

Mr. Sobion: Mr. Deputy Speaker, in response to the Member for Caroni East may I say that the matter is being given active consideration.

Mr. Mohammed: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not know what matter is being given active consideration, whether it is the report or whether it is the fact of having a debate. Can that be clarified, please, and how soon?

Mr. Sobion: The matter that is whether the report should be debated in Parliament.

Mr. Maharaj: Could the Attorney General say whether the report dealt with the question of the method of selection of judges and magistrates and the criteria for their appointment and elevation? If it did deal with it or if it did not, can he say whether he thinks that there is a direct connection between delays in the courts and the matters which I have mentioned as to the method, selection and criteria for appointment of magistrates and judges?

Mr. Sobion: Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I signalled in the statement, this is really the first stage of what is a major exercise. Consideration, as I said, is being given to the appointment of a permanent commission to oversee problems related to the judicial and legal system. The matters referred to by the Member for Couva South have not been raised in the report. They are matters, however, to be noted.

Mr. Sudama: Mr. Deputy speaker, I seek clarification. The Minister in noting what he termed the unfair manner in which the media have reported on this question of delays and so on—if I quote him correctly—said that there are those

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who have hidden agendas. This is rather a strong accusation being made with respect to the press and so on. Could he elaborate?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Could the Member make the point? What is the matter for clarification?

Mr. Sudama: I want to know definitely whether he knows that there are people in this country who have hidden agendas and who they are; whether he has information to that effect or whether he has just come to this House to make wild charges against the media and other people.

Mr. Sobion: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have outlined in my statement the matters which I think are relevant and I do not think that I need to elaborate with respect to the matter raised.

PETROLEUM TAXES (AMDT.) BILL

Bill to amend the Petroleum Taxes Act, Chap. 75:04, presented by the Minister of Finance; read the first time.

PETROLEUM PRODUCTION LEVY AND SUBSIDY (AMDT.) BILL

Bill to amend the Petroleum Production Levy and Subsidy Act, Chap. 62:02 presented by the Minister of Finance; read the first time.

INCOME TAX (IN AID OF INDUSTRY) (AMDT.) BILL

Bill to amend the Income Tax (In Aid of Industry) Act, Chap. 85:04 the Minister of Finance; read the first time.

CARONI (1975) LIMITED

[FOURTH 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. Deputy Speaker: I remind the Member for Caroni Central that he has 30 minutes of speaking time left.

Mr. Palackdharrysingh: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Sir, let us look at page 1 which states:

“This report reveals the agenda for action which in the opinion of the Tripartite Committee is necessary to awaken the sleeping giant that is Caroni Ltd. And in so doing to transform the Company into an even more significant player on the economic landscape, and to lead it to fulfil its considerable potential as a catalyst for greater agro-industrial development in Trinidad and Tobago.”

It is my contention that, given the time frame envisaged, five to eight years, and with the goodwill of other concerned actors, no viability is possible unless the PNM Government clears its Augean stables of its massive mess of corruption and square pegs in round holes in the company, and indeed in other state enterprises.

The Tripartite Committee identified the steps it intends to take in the following areas: Financial restructuring, sugar operations, organizational structure, diversification, land development, human resource, Caroni and the wider environment, among other things.

While it is laudable that the committee has produced an agenda for action, an equitable sharing of the cost of adjustment and transformation, I have very serious misgivings about the credibility of any plan that says it will turn the company around, because I cannot see any demand for accountability and any provisions for evaluation of stewardship in the company.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if you check how the staff of Caroni (1975) Limited operated during the past: Free from control with additional freedom from summary dismissal; managers are beyond question for performing at barest minimum acceptable standards; budgetary control is an illusion in the company.

I should like to quote from the 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,” June, 1991. I quote from page 16, section 56:

“The critical stage of the budgetary process is the starting point of the process, where the estimates are formulated, where the norms are established and where standard costs are defined. In practice it is the Managers of the Sections, Areas, Divisions and Departments who set their own targets, establish their own norms and 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.”

Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the transformation that the report envisages simply a whitewashing of the sepulchre leaving a mass of dead weight PNM bodies inside it, or is it a thorough cleansing aimed at total renewal for viability based on competence and devoid of patronage?

Again, when you take a look at the purchasing procedures in the company, you will see that they are scandalous. Pages 16 and 17 state:

“...Rule 4.02 of Caroni (1975) Limited Tenders Procedures 1986, the Tenders Committee/Sub-Committee... provide effective autonomy for the Managers so far as the purchase of goods and services is concerned.”

It was found that radical reform in the purchase procedures would achieve considerable savings and reduce corruption. Again, these matters are not addressed.

It is very clear to me that no matter what form you try to bring externally from a parent, holding or whatever company, unless the units that constitute the entire concern are held accountable with proper mechanisms and procedures, you are going to be wasting time.

With respect to human resources—and much has been said about employment—it is the operational managers who enjoy the autonomy in the hiring, disciplining and firing of workers in addition to their powers in the fields of budgeting and purchasing of goods and services.

The human resource department is purely advisory and one could appreciate the fact that the hon. Minister indicated that it was time to reintroduce the apprenticeship system. The apprenticeship system in any industrial company would, of course, identify the areas and the particular type of skills needed to run that company. It was indeed a sad decision to have disbanded that apprenticeship scheme and, in so doing, leave the field open to the hiring of persons in particular fields without the relevant qualifications and expertise.

I am happy that sort of apprenticeship scheme will be reintroduced. If it is going to be beneficial, I hope that when the young people are trained in the

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particular fields in which the company needs the expertise, they are going to be hired by the company as people who have been trained for particular roles in the industry and not to bring people from outside, as has been the practice.

Look at the cane farming department. It has been pointed out that there are special conditions in the field of cane farming and transport with respect to opportunities for irregularities. It is said that in the sugar industry everybody wants to work in the cane farming section, because that is where the money is.

No serious attempt has been made by the cane farming department to examine the authenticity of the contracts and quotas of farmers on their books. That has been pointed out. It has also been said that weighers at Caroni (1975) Limited drive Super Saloons and own houses valued at over \$300,000. Is it not outrageous to see can weighers pulling up at the side of a scale in Super Saloons?

It is also pointed out that while that corruption started at the scales with weighers and farmers, the disease became endemic and the corruption of robbing farmers became entrenched in the department and the company also fell victim to that disease. But nothing is being done to stop the corruption in the department because the operations managers close their eyes and do not wish to put in place an audit department with adequate resources to deal with the matter. The department is likely to get progressively worse. It is no wonder there is the high cost of production in the company, especially in the cane farming department and especially with respect to the production of cane by the company.

It is also important to look at the transport and engineering section where, again, the operations manager has a free hand with regard to appointments, promotion, transfers and discipline. The managerial and supervisory staff, as has been pointed out, still remains. What this report considers to be the old-boys brigade—this brigade protects their group loyalty and interest within the company so that it is virtually impossible for anybody to get in.

2.55 p.m.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the staffing pattern of Caroni Limited—and I dare say maybe in some other state enterprises—is a sort of hangover from the colonial times, where you have managers being given housing, transport, yardboys and all this sort of thing. Can we not move away from that syndrome? Why have all these things got to remain the way they are? In so many ways they are unnecessary. It must send up the average cost of production of a tonne of sugar. So you merely do not blame the hardworking field labourers or factory workers for the demise of the

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company. You must look where unnecessary costs are created, with nobody having the will to stop it.

We take, again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, an item called transport. Do you know that Caroni Limited has a fleet of transport vehicles, which are under-utilized because they go for the option of hiring contractors? In so doing they get an opportunity to 'cook up' the arrangements and, therefore, corruption is rampant. In that respect, you are going to find the cost of transportation rising to even higher levels and at the same time persons who are employed as decision makers within that department get more pay for less work.

What this debate is showing, as we take note, is that when a state enterprise fails, it is not failing because ownership of state enterprises is bad per se; it is failing because of the human weaknesses that are inherent in the system. And it is the decision makers who must identify and eradicate those problems.

We live under an unfortunate system. In order to be in the seat of Government and show that we have popular support, we take the wrong decisions in putting those who are less competent to run the affairs of the nation. So, you would have to look at this in that context, because you know what is going to happen. We have moved from a situation of colonialism to a situation where we thought we were going to have a nationalist climate and spirit; that many of the entities and resources of the country were going to be owned by the people of the country; and that we had moved to giving ourselves the opportunity for development. But you would recognize that this movement has not succeeded in the way it ought to, because those of us who are in charge of the political directorate have not taken measures to make those who are going to serve the nation understand that they cannot get more out of the system than they put into it. That is why it is crumbling.

If we are reverting to privatization and to the free enterprise system in its purest form, you know what is going to happen? While GDP might increase, we are going to have severe distortion in the distribution of resources; we are going to have a strong, powerful, small, elite, group and the masses of our people would be marginalized more and more. That is what is going to happen.

I am afraid that when we look at this motion to take note, it is not merely taking note of one entity called Caroni Limited, that it is taking note of the nation; that it is taking note of a disease that is surrounding us in Trinidad and Tobago

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and, indeed, the Caribbean, like so many Third World countries; a disease that we cannot cure because many of us believe that to hold power is to share the spoils of the country without ploughing back into the country that which we have taken out.

We may go through the entire report, but we have to take a very dispassionate view. Because you see, whether we are on this side now or on that side later [*Interruption*] we are going to have the same problems to deal with. I think the Member for Barataria/San Juan is very enthused about the proposition. We shall invite her to participate. But we could look at other areas like the materials control section, purchases of stores and so on, and see, again, that what has been happening in the company was that the stores managers have been side-lined in a way.

You have engineers etc who make their decisions to buy things that they do not use and to store them up *vaille-que-vaille* on company premises. That is the sort of thing that is happening, and in that respect we find that many of the resources are badly mismanaged and that if you go to take an inventory of what is there, you are going to find it is virtually a litany of lamentations on the failure of the materials department to follow procedures laid down for the proper documentation of purchases and proper custody of materials and records.

I also have to draw your attention to the question of planning. Now, in many companies, especially companies like Caroni Limited, there is need for a corporate planner, one who has to take a sort of total overview of what is happening. When you have such a post vacant in the company for some time, there would be a lack of co-ordination running riot in the departments which are not subject to some form of scrutiny, and in that respect, a culture is going to evolve where those who are employed and have some measure of authority seek to get for themselves all that is possible.

3.05 p.m.

We look, also, at the question of security merely to say that in years gone by the security complement has been reduced severely to dogs and vehicles; and other forms of communication have not really been in effect in the company.

Because of that you find that pilferage goes unchecked. If you were to carry out a check on what was lost in the company, you are going to find that pilferage is indeed very great. What we are talking about today is a culture that operates within the company, a culture in which there is virtually no mechanism for proper

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accountability and where the general attitude seems to indicate "it is the state resources so, we do not care". If that is to continue to happen it is sure that not only Caroni (1975) Limited is going to run bust, and we are going to make political football out of it, but also many other companies.

What I hope to signal is the fact that we need our industries to be productive, efficient and competitive. If we cannot cultivate these attitudes in our citizens, then we would have lost the boat for moving this nation forward. That is very clear to me. I do not care how long I might sit or do not sit here. Once I am convinced that there is the elimination of poverty, reduction of crime and unemployment, adequate provision with respect to education and health, I would be a most satisfied citizen.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I just want to remind the hon. Member that he has three more minutes speaking time.

Mr. Palackdharrysingh: Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is what my concern is about. As I end this contribution today. I want to quote from this book, *The History of the People of Trinidad and Tobago*, and of course the author is the late Eric Williams. I have acknowledged his scholarship; that I will not deny. Also, I have acknowledged some of the very salient and pertinent things he has said. Some of them are really immortal and it is in that immortality the greatest challenge remains to the PNM. He says on page 282:

"There are those today who see in nationalism and self-government nothing but an opportunity for establishing their own little clique and having around them a mass of clients and proteges whom they push forward at the expense of others."

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it goes on to say:

"The slackers and the thieves and the confidence men in the age of Independence are the enemies of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. If a man must steal, as long as he is in his right mind he will not steal from himself.

I continue the quote:

"On August 31, 1962, a country will be free, a miniature state will be established, but a society and a nation will not have been formed. After August, 31, 1962, the people of Trinidad and Tobago will face the fiercest test in their history whether they can invest with flesh and blood the bare skeleton of their National Anthem 'here ev'ry creed and race find an equal place.' That

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is their challenge. They may fail. Others more important and better endowed than they have failed conspicuously. That would be no justification for their own failure. But merely to make the attempt, merely to determine to succeed, would be an enormous tribute to their capacity, a powerful inspiration to frustrated humanity, a wonderful opportunity for self-gratification. This will be their final emancipation from slavery, this will be their final demonstration that slavery is not by nature and that the Humblest antecedents are not inconsistent with greatness of soul.

'For I will make you a name and a praise among all people of the earth, when I turn back your captivity before your eyes, saith the Lord.' ”

Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Dr. Carl Singh (Tabaquite): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I stand here to address this honourable House on the motion which stands in the name of the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources.

Today, the economic scenario of Trinidad and Tobago is at the crossroads. Once, the ship of state, Trinidad and Tobago magestically sailed the Caribbean sea, giving loans right, left and centre. Today, we have borrowed to the extent that our elasticity allows. Now, we have to move in another direction to keep that ship afloat. We have had impositions of conditionalities, and as a result, our borrowing powers have been reduced. We are now moving in the arena where we are going to dispose of our real assets to keep the ship afloat. Are we moving in the way of the golden goose? I hope not.

A period of 10 months has elapsed since the new Government took office and over this period we have had more than 20,000 people added to the unemployment list. No real employment has been created over this period, unless we consider the LID programme as is, employment. I look at it more as a social service to assist those who are desperate, but of course, it is not administered this way.

The economic flagship of Trinidad and Tobago rested basically on the oil industry. Today, the oil industry is moving towards merger for survival. They are now realizing that to probably survive, merging is the thing to do. The scenario today is very reminiscent of the calypso during the 1986 general election sung by Gypsy, "Captain, the ship is sinking", and the electorate recorded indelibly in history what was the result.

Caroni (1975) Limited was acquired in 1975. At the time it was stated that this acquisition was due for the purpose of saving jobs. Very noble! Caroni (1975) Limited really has been treated like an orphan, a stepchild; indeed, the Minister said it is a ward of the Treasury.

3.15 p.m.

In the 1960s the first Prime Minister remarked that there can be no mother India, no mother Africa, no mother China but mother Trinidad and Tobago. A real mother would not discriminate against any of her children but the measures that are adopted in Caroni Limited suggest otherwise. Caroni (1975) Limited employs approximately 1,000 persons at the clerical and managerial level; about 10,000 to 12,000 persons in the field and another 5,000 or 6,000 persons farming cane outside. A total of about 15,000 to 16,000 persons are directly involved in the sugar industry in Trinidad and Tobago. A safe calculation would be, to multiply that by six or seven, and this will bring us to more than 100,000 persons who are in one way or another dependent for their livelihood on the sugar industry. This is not a small number.

The Minister stated that in order to keep Caroni (1975) Limited afloat over the last 17 years, it required inputs from Government to the tune of about \$2.7 billion. If this is taken over the period, it could be \$150 million per year. That is a lot of money, but when we compare other state enterprises which have been propped up over the years by the Treasury, we can see there is no parallelism with these other state enterprises.

Take for example British West Indian Airways. We bought two or three airlines in the sixties and we declared that we have an airline. We want to compete with British Airways and the other big agencies. Are we really in a position to compete; then, at the same time to give the perks that the bigger companies give? No way! What is bothering about this is that whenever loans or moneys are paid to these other state enterprises, they are given as subvention. They are not carrying *pari passu* an interest and they are not repayable loans.

The same thing happened when Iscott was run by Government. Again, it was propped up; the Treasury paid the money; no loans and no interest. Whenever money is paid on behalf of, or to Caroni (1975) Limited, it is done on the basis of a loan and with interest at bank rates. These were some of the factors which were responsible for the large stated amount of \$2.7 billion paid over 17 years to Caroni

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(1975) Limited. This is the situation. Why the disparity in the treatment of different agencies of the state? This then suggests that things are otherwise.

When you come to the crunch of the whole situation, Caroni (1975) Limited brings in foreign exchange to the tune of \$100—\$150 million. Not only that, but it saves foreign exchange by producing food for the country. It is in a dual capacity that Caroni (1975) Limited is making a tremendous contribution, and when you consider the population that is dependent directly on Caroni (1975) Limited for survival, it is about 10 per cent of the population of Trinidad and Tobago. If you should extrapolate, if we have 10 companies of this magnitude, we have no unemployment problem in Trinidad and Tobago. It would take care of the unemployment situation. So then, spending \$150 million to keep a state company like Caroni (1975) Limited afloat is no problem.

The Tripartite Committee appointed by Cabinet with membership of Government and Caroni, of the labour side and the farming community was mandated to produce an agenda for the survival and profitability of Caroni (1975) Limited within a certain time frame. I think the committee as a whole must be complimented on the manner in which the task was approached and brought to fruition within the time frame given.

It is in essence an abridged form of Prof. Spence's Report in 1978. Indeed, that is really the document that should have been implemented since 1978. The PNM Government has been accustomed to setting up commissions of inquiry, but with no political will whatever to implement their recommendations. The health situation is an example of this. The Julien Report which was brought about in 1958 was not implemented. As a result the situation in health is what it is today.

We had the Spence Report in 1978. It seems as though there is always something to counter a report. One report is produced and another one comes to counter that one. In limbo, nothing happens. The Rampersad Report came in as a counter to the Spence Report. You have here the Tripartite Report being countered as there is no denial of the existence of the Booker/Tate Report. We look at this motion before the House; are we just having an exercise in futility? Or, will these reports go the way of the others to collect dust? This is my fear about the whole exercise.

In medical practice one seeks a second opinion sometimes to safeguard the patient's condition and we get the best results before a definitive action is taken. I see nothing wrong with the Government's seeking a second opinion, but level with

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this House and the country. Tell us you have a second report, let us cull from the two the one one that suits the sugar industry and implement it, with a true spirit of unity, and hopefully things will mature in the way we expect them to. We must not fool the country and say nothing about this report, for there is in fact no denial that the Booker/Tate Report is lying somewhere on the desk of the administration.

3.25 p.m.

The report has been brought to the attention of the House and discussed. I should just like to mention briefly some of its recommendations. The Commission recommended that sugar cane be produced on a 60—40 basis, with probably this target being achieved by 1997. We all know, and as the Member for Caroni Central remarked, there is a tremendous amount of leeway for corruption in the farming of canes, transporting and delivery to its destination.

This should move right on to 100 per cent of cane produced by farmers. Let the farmers produce the canes; let Caroni (1975) Limited mill the canes and produce sugar etc. They can produce cheaper and better and in the quantity that the Government needs. In addition, this would move a tremendous number of people in the cane-farming area into the productive aspect of the industry, and would take up some of the slack in unemployment. As Members have stated over and over, the sugar industry is a culture, and these people are culturally brought up to deal with that, and I think it should be in their hands.

The one vexing point about this sugar cane production is that the farmers plant the cane, reap it, and sell it to the milling company. The canes are processed, sugar is produced and it is sold, but, to get the final payment, it takes the farmer six to eight months. Why should this be so? There should be a time frame. Six weeks after the end of the crop, the final payment should be made. We are in the middle of October, the crop ended at the end of May, five months has passed and there is no word as to when the final payment will be made. This is very unsatisfactory. Is the State using the money realized from selling the sugar, tax free, for a period of six months, before they make the final payments? These are questions people ask. Why the delay? The sugar has been sold; it has been exported, why six months before final payment is made? They have to prepare their carts, trucks and so on for January to reap the cane. The moneys are required. Everybody else is getting paid, but they are kept back. This is something that should be addressed seriously and early.

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The land problem is another vexing problem. Some time in the late 1940s, during the Tate and Lyle era, I believe, lands were made available in the Williamsville area for housing for sugar workers and cane farmers. The prices of these lots were fixed and, at that time, with the expenses and other factors put together, the people who occupied the lands were able to build homes. These lands were given at the rate of \$5—\$7 per year on lease, initially for a period of 25 years. What has happened recently, is that when these people who were occupying these leasehold lands went back for renewal, they were treated differently. Today the company is asking between \$650 and \$1,575 per annum. These are people who have been living on these lands for more than 30 years. Many of them have retired and are getting the great pension of \$150 per month; they are sick; they are indigent, where are they going to get \$650 to \$1,575 to pay their annual lease. This is not fair. Is this what the caring Government is all about? This is what I cannot understand. They are not going to tractor down these houses and repossess the land. What are they going to do? Sell the houses and put the people on the road? Put a little human face on the administration, because these are people who have worked all their lives on the sugar estate. Sweat and blood tell the story.

Quite rightly the Tripartite Committee recommends the reduction of the labour force in the sugar industry, by attrition—if I may use that term—mechanisation and voluntary resignation. This is reasonable, but you are not going to tell me that you will encourage someone to leave and offer him a pension of \$150 a month. Let us be realistic. That is not all. Sometimes these unfortunate souls collect a wee bit from national insurance and, believe it or not, if these two figures add up to \$5,000 per year, they are denied, old age pension. These people's pension, NIS and old age pension should be paid under one umbrella. Surviving to the age of 65 in the sugar industry alone, demands that these people be given that without any qualms whatever. Another burdensome part of this whole exercise is that you would find these people going to a Justice of the Peace or someone to sign a cheque—which has to be endorsed—for them. They have to get medical certificates from time to time to say that the recipients are alive. Sometimes these poor people have to hire a car, take a relative with them, spend a whole day to collect the pittance allotted to them. This is inhuman.

Quite a bit has been said about diversification for the survival of Caroni (1975) Limited. They have increased the tonnage of sugar that can be produced over the year. Fine. They have moved on to cattle and beef and other agricultural products, but one aspect of this was not mentioned in the diversification programme, and I

think that this was dealt with extensively in the Spence Report—the fermentation side of the sugar industry.

Sugar provides carbon and energy and we can make the micro-organisms do a tremendous amount of work for us and, most importantly, the micro-organisms do not go on strike. We can produce things from the fermentation aspect such as industrial chemicals, antibiotics, paper and many other important ones; vinegar which is acetic acid. The raw material is available. We import TT \$300,000 to TT \$350,000 and we have these elements here. The cost of setting up this is not phenomenal. The diversification must not go as window dressing, to say that we are doing this or that; we must be realistic about it. We are going to move into a different technological field. Everybody would not be absorbed in the fields, but in the technological area where our education system should be so modulated as to move people in the direction where occupation is available.

3.35 p.m.

Implementation of the Tripartite Committee Report should be done with the utmost alacrity and seriousness, for the economic flagship is really sinking. Let us work together and awaken the sleeping giant that Caroni (1975) Limited is.

When the oil industry was booming, we made the sugar industry look bad. We must always remember that Caroni (1975) Limited makes a contribution of about 25 per cent in the non-oil sector of the economy.

The motion before this House reads:

"Be it resolved that this House take note of the report of the Cabinet-Appointed Tripartite Committee on Caroni (1975) Limited."

I find it rather strange, having given us the document on Caroni (1975) Limited, to ask us to take note. One of the prerequisites of being a Member of Parliament is that you must be able to read and write the English language. Why then do we come to Parliament to take note?

Mr. S. Panday: Only.

Dr. Singh: The Member for Couva South has suggested an amendment to this, which reads:

"Be it further resolved, that this House accept and approve the recommendations set out in the said report and that the Government take immediate steps to implement the recommendations therein."

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The Government has a choice. What is the choice the Government has in the present scenario, what will they do? Abandon the sugar industry and let it go to the squatting population, or dispose of Caroni (1975) Limited—and I doubt very much that we can get a local buyer, so again we would have to go to a foreign country for that and probably further enslavement of our population.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think the Government has no choice but to accept these recommendations—not merely to accept them, but to go in full speed and implement these recommendations made by the Tripartite Committee. This will assist the unemployment situation and economic problems would also be assisted in this move. Later generations would say that those who took the decision in 1992 to implement the recommendations of the Tripartite Committee, were truly honourable men.

I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Krish Jurai (*Nariva*): Mr. Deputy Speaker, the first thing I want to do is to refresh Members' memories on some of the salient points made by the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, the Member for Diego Martin West, when he presented this motion.

The Minister gave an update on the urgency with which he treated this matter. He said he met with Caroni (1975) Limited on January 6, a mere matter of days after he was appointed Minister. This was to indicate how seriously he was taking the matter. He went on to say:

“When we were inaugurating this arrangement there was scepticism in some quarters—not from the Government, because we were confident that good sense would prevail. There were those who felt that we were setting up another committee to make another report go on the shelf.”

Mr. S. Panday: Like the Booker/Tate.

Mr. Jurai: Continuing:

“To allay the fears of those cynics and also to ensure that we work within a time frame which will expedite the thing as quickly as possible—because this is a matter of great urgency—I asked the committee to do its works and report within 12 weeks.”

which the committee did.

The report was received, as the Minister stated, on Sunday, July 19, 1992. He took it to Cabinet on July 23 and Cabinet accepted the report. The report was laid in the House on Friday, July 24, 1992.

This report is a document of things to be done, as he stated. The Minister went on to say:

"I would be very surprised if there is any informed or non-malicious voice in this country that can say that this discretion is not the most reasonable option. It was not arrived at through emotion, it was not arrived at through ulterior motives; it was arrived at out of a consensus, a tripartite approach, where we all want to survive. We are committed to doing the best that we can to give the industry the best chance to survive."

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what bothers me is that the Minister gave his conviction that he is genuinely interested in settling this matter. But he comes to this House and asks us to merely take note. If Cabinet has accepted the report, why not act? Why not come to this House and say: "We agree and we are going to introduce it". Do not come here to hoodwink the population at a time when an election was in the air. The same old PNM tricks all over again.

They have the 1978 Spence Report, a comprehensive document. The PNM never acted on this report. Today, it has a condensed version of the report and they are coming to tell us to take note. It cannot keep fooling the people all of the time. We must be serious and I am hoping that this evening the Minister will pronounce on all that we have said here and will tell this House that he is going to pay sugar workers their just due as early as possible.

As I said, the Spence Report was brought to Parliament, it was debated, but lo and behold nothing came out of it. Other plans were brought: The Rampersad Plan, the St. Cyr Plan, the Dookeran Plan—all the plans just to stall the works. This is a plan that should have been implemented.

As I said in my budget speech earlier this year, the PNM Government is not interested in agriculture. Since 1956, it has not done anything for agriculture. It is time that this Government got serious or got out and let someone else do it.

We are confronted with yet another plan today which goes under the name of "Strategic Review—An Outline—Restructuring Proposals for Caroni Limited". Again, this plan has come side by side with this latest plan, as previous plans were alongside this one.

The Booker/Tate Report contains recommendations which are detrimental to the sugar industry. So on the one hand the Minister is saying he has come to save the sugar industry, but on the other he has a hidden agenda somewhere to destroy the industry. What is he really up to? Is he going to save it or destroy it? Let us know. We want to know this evening.

Some of the recommendations in that hidden agenda are the harsh retrenchment of the labour force and further unemployment. Prior to the election they had all the answers for solving the unemployment problems in this country. Today they come here and want to close down the industry and put more people on the breadline.

We have the oil industry, BWIA, Trinidad and Tobago Printing and Packaging, Solid Waste Management, Dunlop Limited and others to follow—all these people are unemployed. There have been over 1,000 people placed on the breadline within recent times. The Government cannot continue to fool the people all the time. It said it would solve the unemployment problem but today we see that the unemployment problem is growing by leaps and bounds.

The plan also says that they are going to increase a day's work from two and a half tonnes to eight tonnes. Are they going back to slavery? This is a serious issue. Men are struggling and are barely surviving in the sugar industry. At the present time, they have to cut two and a half tonnes, now they want to increase that to eight tonnes. I presume it would be for the same wage.

A further reduction in wage is recommended. Have they really seen a cane cutter at work? These people get up at four o'clock in the morning with a flambeau, they have to cover themselves from the soot, grime and all the reptiles, the scorpions in the field and now there is the recommendation to reduce the wages further? The Minister cannot be serious. He should throw away that plan and implement this tripartite plan.

What bothers me most, is that the hidden plan says that they want to close the diversification plan. This is a very serious issue, because Caroni (1975) Limited produces over 3,500 acres of rice and this produces, according to the estimates for 1992, 15 million pounds of rice estimated at \$12 million. This is import substitution; we are growing food at home.

Caroni (1975) Limited is providing food for the nation. Are we going to close down rice production? Citrus, over 3,000 acres which would bring in a gross

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revenue of some \$15 million by 1995/1996. What about the livestock industry? Over 5,000 head of sheep, cattle and others; all of this is produced by Caroni (1975) Limited.

The aquaculture industry, which is now booming, cascadura and prawns, the estimate on that is about \$20 million. How serious is this Minister when he says he is going to use that hidden plan to close off that diversification plan? As a matter of fact, that plan should be expanded as wide as possible.

I, Mr. Deputy Speaker and let me quote from an article talking about food. "Too much spent on food imports", dated October 6, 1992, in the Trinidad Guardian. This was stated by the Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Agriculture, Mr. Andrew Casimire—*[Interruption]* Do not get worried; you are not going to the police station—"Over the years imported foodstuff causing considerable leakage in foreign exchange which we we can ill afford at this time." He went on to say:

"... domestic food crop agricultural sector has never been able to satisfy the country's needs and over the years the country has had to depend on imports to satisfy between 75 and 90 per cent of its needs in various categories.

This, he said, was too much of a dependency syndrome, and left the country much poorer in terms of money leaving our shores.

'An examination of trends in agricultural production and incomes over the recent past causes us to conclude that our policies and institutional arrangements have been insufficient to counteract the inhibiting influences of the various constraints on growth in the agricultural sector.

He added, 'As we move into the 21st century we will be faced with a wider range of constraints which are international in nature and these are over-supply, structural shifts among producers and consumers, science and technology and protectionism'.

He explained that in analysing the agricultural sector and recognizing the constraint to development, his Ministry has established the following policy objectives:- To increase food security and self-sufficiency levels on the basis of nutritional importance, opportunities and comparative advantage; to earn foreign exchange through exports of traditional and non-traditional commodities; to ensure adequate farm income; to have food produced at

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affordable prices; to encourage value added through agro-processing; and to adopt and utilize appropriate technology and to foster entrepreneurship making greater use of market signals.

"To be able to meet these objectives the basic strategy which the Ministry must follow is to create the conditions to make the agricultural sector more efficient and, therefore, more profitable. Some of these conditions are actively being prepared in an effort to lay the foundation for moving the sector into the 21st century."

After the Minister has said all this, he comes now and says by implication that he is going to close down Caroni (1975) Limited. How serious can you be, Mr. Minister?

When we look at the international scene we see that there is a decrease in the price of oil. There is also a decrease in the demand for sugar for export. Lo and behold, when the United States said that they were going to reduce the quota, the Minister of Agriculture never even blinked an eyelid. By comparison, when we look at what is happening in the Eastern Caribbean, in Dominica, St. Lucia and Grenada, because of the problems in the banana industry, those people are standing firm, they are going out to secure the markets for their products. They are going to the EEC and the United States. They stand firm. What is our Minister of Agriculture doing?

The US said they were going to reduce the quota and he sits quietly like a coonoomoonoo, not saying anything to the country. We also earn income from the distillery, the export—I mention the Caroni distillery—rum. The moment I mention 'Caroni', 'distillery' and 'rum', I see the Member for La Brea's lips get very moist. But I am talking about export, we are selling the rum to earn foreign exchange.

The Member for Arouca North spoke about subvention to Caroni (1975) Limited, which is greater than LIDP's. I do not want to go into that, because the Member for Oropouche dealt adequately with that. But I am sure he does not really know what he is speaking about. What I want to tell the Member for Arouca North is that Caroni (1975) Limited is not like LIDP; Caroni (1975) Limited produces food, rice, citrus and livestock—do you know about that? He has family in Caroni; let them tell him that.

In addition, Caroni (1975) Limited exports sugar to the tune of \$140 million; that is what the Minister said. Caroni (1975) Limited is a foreign exchange earner; LIDP does not earn anything—money is just going down the drain. You do not

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even see where it is going. When the Minister of Works speaks about ghosts drawing salaries, who created the ghosts, not the PNM? Now he says they are not going to pay them; they created the ghosts, they should pay the ghosts.

The Member for Arouca North went on to talk about ethnic grouping in Caroni (1975) Limited in relation to getting jobs. Is that so? He does not know. He has some pumpkin-vine family somewhere down in Caroni whom I presume he does not see at all. Caroni (1975) Limited has some 9,000 workers, but when we are speaking here about ethnic workers, we are speaking about field workers, the hardworking people, we are not speaking about the people in the offices, who control Caroni (1975) Limited. By whom are they appointed? The PNM Government appointed those people. What is causing the problem at Caroni (1975) limited? Square pegs in round holes.

Even today we can still see that they are trying to push a square peg into a round hole down at the Licensing Office. Here you have a man who has been acting in a position for over ten years. If he was not performing, get rid of him; do not try to push it down their throats now. The licensing people have a right to stand up to the Minister of Finance. When he goes to discussions at the World Bank, he gets jittery. He sits down there and does not know what they are talking about because he does not come back to this nation to tell us about the discussions that took place. Has he said anything? Come and tell this House what goes on there. We do not know; we want to know.

The Member for Couva South is one of the most eminent lawyers in this country. He is my attorney. He won the case very recently for my friend the Member for Caroni Central, who is a free man. You all tried to leave him down in the ditch, but he is standing here a free man today. *[Interruption]*

I wonder whether the Member for Arouca North has seen what has been taking place under the PNM and continues to this day. When he speaks about ethnic grouping, has he looked at the police service, the coast guard or the Army? Has he looked at the public service? What about LIDP? Who are seen there?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have had personal experience. In 1972, I applied to the Public Service Commission for a job after having worked in England in a civil service position for several of years. I had an interview at the Public Service Commission, up to today, no reply, no matter how much I call, how much I try.

Dr. Rowley: That happened with Caroni (1975) Limited, man?

4.00 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.05 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Mr. K. Jurai: Mr. Deputy Speaker, if I may continue from where we left off before the tea break, at that point I was saying that the PNM has a notorious reputation for having square pegs in round holes. We know that full well. I said this and I am re-emphasizing it in the hope that from today the attitude will change to ensure that the round pegs are inserted in to round holes. May I, for the record, repeat that I brought up the issue of the Licensing Office, but that I was not canvassing for anyone, I was merely pointing out what takes place under the PNM. Let me make this abundantly clear.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, today we hear a lot about trade liberalization. What does trade liberalization really mean to Trinidad and Tobago? To my mind it means one-way free trade from the United States to Trinidad and Tobago. The United States is looking for markets and Trinidad and Tobago seems to be one of the ready-made markets for US-produced goods. What we need to look at is what is happening on the international scene—the break-up of the Soviet Union, the end of the cold war—

Mr. Valley: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know it is getting late so that the Member may forget the motion we are debating.

Mr. S. Panday: He is taking note.

Mr. Valley: But I hope he knows that we are still on the Tripartite Committee Report.

Mr. Mohammed: Trade liberalization is relevant. They produce sugar there, boy.

Mr. Jurai: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am still on the Caroni issue. The Soviet Union purchases sugar on the international market.

Mr. S. Panday: They purchase sugar on the world market.

Mr. Jurai: I thought the Member for Diego Martin Central would have known that. You need some enlightenment; I will give it to you now. As I was saying, we have had the break-up of the Soviet Union, the end of the cold war; and with the rise of new economic giants—the EEC, the Pacific bloc, and now NAFTA—the United States is now placed in a dilemma because of the build-up of these new giants. So what they are looking for—they cannot enter Europe as freely as they did—they are seeking to expand into the Caribbean so they are

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trying to destroy the economies of the Caribbean islands. You can see it. They are reducing the sugar quota. Look at what they are doing to bananas in the Caribbean. When they destroy your economy they will be flooding your market with cheap, subsidized US goods. Let me quote an article entitled "US agri subsidy threatens world trade, says Ochoa" from the *Trinidad Guardian* page 5, September 9, 1992:

"The progress of global trade reform talks is threatened by a recent US Government decision to grant one billion dollars in subsidies to its food exporters, Foreign Minister Fernando Ochoa said Monday.

Addressing the opening session of a five-day meeting of the Economic System for Latin America (SELA), a Latin American economic think tank based in Caracas, Ochoa echoed complaints by regional countries like Argentina and Brazil over the US subsidy.

The Minister said the world economic order needed to be changed 'for a more equitable one which would allow the full participation of Latin America.

The policies we have adopted to open our markets will not be successful if they are limited by restrictive barriers,' he added."

'The international community should coordinate efforts to strengthen multilateralism and guarantee the access of our countries' products to the markets of the industrialized countries through the removal of tariff and non-tariff barriers.

'For that reason,' he added, 'we attach great importance to the Uruguay Round of negotiations taking place within GATT.'

'The talks', he said, 'generated expectations which have not been satisfied and are particularly threatened by the recent US announcement of a one billion dollar subsidy for US agricultural exports.'

'The future of world trade, consequently, is threatened because if a global agreement is not reached protectionist tendencies could increase in an ever more competitive world,' he added."

This is the point I was making. The aim, it appears to be, is to destroy your local agricultural industry and we have seen it at work. Because, as I said earlier, when the US said they were going to decrease the quota for sugar, not a voice was raised, nobody on the Government side said anything. Now, when I mention

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Europe and the Soviet Union, you are asking me whether I am on the Caroni issue. I am relevant. I am on sugar. What has happened, it seems, is that the US has teamed up somewhat with Britain, Tate and Lyle and Booker and so on; and they are out to destroy the Caroni diversification plan. So when you destroy your sugar industry, your livestock industry, your citrus and rice industries, what do you do? You import stuff freely. You have no choice. You destroy your agricultural industry and the US is highly subsidizing its industry. Booker/Tate is recommending this and the Government here is falling for it. It is a very serious issue and we need to look very, very carefully to determine the path we are going to take.

Recently, also, Iscott shipped some steel to the US. A small company—but the US said you are dumping steel into the US. How much steel can Iscott dump into the US? But no, they want to destroy your steel industry here, so that you have to depend on the importation of US steel. It is a long-term plan. Maybe the PNM Government cannot see it, but when they ruin your economy, you have no choice, you have to go begging on your knees to join NAFTA. But now is the time to stand firm and negotiate.

5.15 p.m.

Having said all this here this evening, I call on the Government to pay Caroni workers, not \$30 million but their full dues. I call on the Government not only to pay Caroni workers but to also pay all outstanding moneys due to public servants. Do not tell me they do not have the money because prior to the election they went on every platform in this country and told the people they were going to satisfy the demands of the public servants. Today, it is reported in the newspapers that November will be the time.

Now is the time to settle all the debts. I will tell you how you will find money to pay them as well. You are only fooling people. You fooled them in December, 1991. You did it again on September, 28. You are a cruel and heartless Government. You are not concerned about people. You act like sadists. You take joy—people are losing their jobs every day, but you are happy. You sit down comfortably and you are not concerned. Today we unmasked them. True PNM. We know who they are and what they give. Let the people, the country know that.

There are some people, especially in the PNM Government who think Trinidad ends by the Caroni Bridge. They are not concerned with what happens beyond that; they are not concerned with people. Even the Prime Minister recognizes this. Because do you know what? He does not want to live in San Fernando any more.

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He is moving to Port of Spain. Do you know his house is up for sale? I am telling you. The point I am making here is that the PNM do not see people as people. They need to see people as human beings, blood and flesh. The day they understand that they would begin to understand poor people's plight in this country.

In the national anthem it says, every creed and race find an equal place. Do we really have an equal place? The PNM do not live up to that criteria. Recently the Member for Tobago West made a stirring plea for the transportation of food for the people of Tobago. The PNM just sat there and said nothing. I should have thought that the Government or a Minister concerned would have come out and said, "We know the problem exists and we are going to sort that problem out, but no, they chose to hide behind the skirt of the Speaker who was sitting in the Chair at the time. Very quietly. They are not concerned with people at all.

The Member for Caroni Central gave an in-depth analysis of the Caroni situation as to why you have only Indo-Trinidadians working in that industry. They work hard for very low wages. If they had a choice they would not be there, they would have gone elsewhere. The PNM is not assisting those people in that area by providing better jobs and better facilities elsewhere. Let me advise the Government how it can make the payments to Caroni workers and the public servants.

I have noticed within recent times—[*Interruption*] certainly I am speaking as the shadow Minister of Industry—Tourism and the next Minister of Industry and Tourism—that there is a nice lovey-dovey relationship being developed between this Government and a certain insurance company. They are building a jail for \$200 million and every week the Minister of National Security or someone on the other side, is turning sod like a "sod fighter" all over the country; building police stations all over the country. If you can raise money to build a police station, let that insurance company finance the payment of Caroni workers and for the public servants. If they have the guts let them do it. Let the PNM Government encourage them to do it. They do not have that fortitude.

Caroni has property and it is in the report that with the sale and rental of commercial property, you can raise over a hundred million dollars in five years. Caroni exports sugar. They can use part of that to finance the payment. What about the rental of Government offices? Have you looked at these figures? Why do they have to pay these exorbitant rents for government offices? The VAT office is \$40,000 alone per month in rent to the McAL group. Why should we pay this kind of rent? Put up pre-fab buildings as they have in Licensing Office and they can save rent.

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And why must we pay \$135,000 a month rent to Isa Nicholas for the Customs and Excise building? Reduce these rents by 40 per cent and you will get money to finance the payment to Caroni workers and the civil servants. What about the unclaimed prizes for the national lottery between 1987 and 1992, over \$20 million. Use part of that money also. So you would pay your insurance company when they financed the payment to Caroni workers and, the public servants. And increase the price of sugar by a further 20 per cent and use part of that fund for repayment. This is how you are going to find the money. This is how I would have done it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I call on the Government, the Minister of Agriculture, to lay the Booker/Tate Report in this House this evening, so that we would be in a position to compare both and see which direction we would take. We want to know which direction the Minister of Agriculture is taking. And this is the only way to go, with the Tripartite Committee Report which we are at present debating.

May I remind this Government that we are not here to take notes. We have notetakers for that. And any time you are thinking of coming back with that kind of nonsense to take note, please do not bring it here because we are not going to take part in any such debate. I speak for the UNC as well. We are telling the Government to take notice of what I have said here this evening. I have outlined ways and means whereby they can finance the payment to Caroni (1975) Limited workers and also to the public servants. I honestly hope they will take these very, very seriously and put them into effect.

I have said much and I know the Minister of Agriculture is a man of integrity, a man who would be honest enough to stand up in this House and tell this House and this nation that they are not going to pay the \$30 million to Caroni workers, but they are going to pay them their full due. They are also going to pay the cane farmers their outstanding moneys as early as possible, they are going to lay the Booker/Tate Report in this House, and the Minister of Finance is also going to state here tonight that they are also going to pay public servants all moneys that are due to them.

Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Agriculture Land and Marine Resources (Mr. Andrew Casimire): Mr Deputy Speaker, I am indeed very happy this evening to speak after my good friend the Member for Nariva and, perhaps, neighbour because he is seldom in Nariva. He is more in San Juan than in Nariva. However, the matter before us is a very serious one indeed, and in spite of all the rhetoric we

have been hearing opposite, at least from my friend the Member for Nariva, I want to assure this honourable House that the Government is very serious in looking at the recommendations contained in the Tripartite Report.

You may recall, that it was at the insistence of my Minister that the Tripartite arrangements were put in place. Reference was made to some report called Booker/Tate; I do not know what that is.

5.25 p.m.

Perhaps, my friends opposite will be able to produce that report for us. As I said before, I am indeed very happy and as my Minister is now here. I shall give way to him.

Mr. Shamsuddin Mohammed (*Caroni East*): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am very happy to join the debate at this particular time. We had some apparent apprehensions emanating from the other side.

I congratulate the Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Agriculture on having ably discharged the responsibility of deputizing for his Minister. I think he did an excellent job. I also congratulate my colleague the Member for Nariva for a truly brilliant presentation this evening; the Member for Caroni Central gave a very philosophic dissertation on agriculture and the history of Caroni (1975) Limited. The venerable Doctor, the Member for Tabaquite, for his contribution today as well, and the other speakers who preceded me during the course of this debate.

I think that we are about to conclude this debate. When we are considering Caroni (1975) Limited and the Tripartite Report which is now before the House, I do believe that it is necessary for us to do so in the broader terms of a national agricultural policy. It is my respectful view that the hon. Minister did not adequately deal with that report in his presentation, in the context of a broader agricultural policy for Trinidad and Tobago. To me any debate on Caroni (1975) Limited must in effect take into account the future of agriculture in our country, in fact if we do want to have agriculture here.

There are those in our community who would probably say that there is no need for it, because we can import what we need much more cheaply. We have to look at that and perhaps in the course of his reply the hon. Minister will be able to put that in context, and tell us for example, what is the position of Caroni (1975) Limited in terms of the total agricultural scenario.

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During the course of the debate we have had some remarks which I consider to be very unfortunate. I shall come to those presently. The fact of the matter is that if we are considering Caroni (1975) Limited, I think it is not a question of statistics it is more than that; as my colleague the Member for Caroni Central was seeking to demonstrate to this House. There is a history about Caroni (1975) Limited. There are many persons who are involved. There is a whole culture involved in Caroni (1975) Limited. We are talking about over 150,000 persons, who in some way have to depend on the company.

We cannot come to this honourable House and flippantly seek to dismiss Caroni (1975) Limited and make comparisons with LIDP and other areas. To do that would be clearly oblivious to the scholarship that is contained in that book called *The History of The People of Trinidad and Tobago*. We must take that into account. When we look at it we must do so in terms of a discipline of our people; of the sufferings of our people; as people who have been successor to those who were engulfed in slavery; in terms of family life, the structure in our community and the contribution that has made to the community and nation of Trinidad and Tobago. That is how we have to look at this.

This is not a simplistic debate. This debate should go on for about four days, with due deference to the Member for Diego Martin Central. It is an important debate and perhaps the most important to have come up in this House for a very long time. We cannot treat it flippantly. It is important for us to take that into account. We have been told by Members on this side and by other contributors to this debate about the economic role of Caroni (1975) Limited over the years. What it has been able to do in terms of earning foreign exchange for this country; what it has been able to do in terms of infrastructural development of areas under its purview—we must take that into account—providing infrastructural facilities and the services that ought properly to have belonged to the state, and as a responsibility of the state. That is the context in which we must consider Caroni (1975) Limited.

In fact, you must consider all the workers who have been and are engaged in Caroni (1975) Limited. You have to consider them; their contribution; the circumstances under which they labour and toil and as an example to the rest of the nation, in terms of production, because we have been told that they are not paid by the day. Member for Arouca North, they are paid by task. You ought properly to know what a task is; when it commences and when it ends. That is the kind of

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thing that you are talking about. Apart from the workers amounting to approximately 10,000 there are over 5,200 independent farmers who are little Caroni (1975) Limiteds here and there, spread over the country making a just contribution to the whole economic scenario. These are the considerations that we must give when we are talking about Caroni (1975) Limited.

There are some people in the community who may believe that sugar is not important. Why are we talking about sugar and sugar-cane cultivation? They may ask; that maybe the time has come to disband sugar cultivation and to enter other areas of production. Sugar-cane production remains a very important activity in the whole international scenario. There are several countries that are engaged in sugar production. Approximately 100 countries of this world are involved in this same activity. There are some within our community who feel that sugar production should be dissipated and disbanded and that we should eliminate sugar cane cultivation. We cannot do that. We have to look at our agricultural policy as a whole to know how Caroni (1975) Limited can fit in, and whether it can be the base to catapult this society into a better position as we move in the years ahead. That is how it must be considered.

Just after the war, world sugar production amounted to about 20 million tonnes. Today, it stands at more than that, clearly demonstrating a progressive increase in sugar production in the world. Our neighbour, Cuba, has been engaged in sugar production for many years. We are talking about expanding Caricom and one of the prospects that exist is that Cuba could be in the Caricom region as an important sugar producer. You see how important it is to the culture of that country, and how important sugar cane production is in the whole international scenario. So that if today we have over 114 million tonnes of sugar being produced on the international scene, you will understand that we have a sizeable production coming out of sugar cane.

5.35 p.m.

There is also a whole range of other sweeteners which people use internationally. Here in Trinidad and Tobago sweeteners are used by persons suffering from diabetes and other diseases, but sugar cane production still accounts for 87 per cent of the sugar consumed in the world, while the other sweeteners amount to about 13 per cent. We must take that into account. Brazil produces over 250 million tonnes of sugar, and you will be surprised to know that out of

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that, 82 million tonnes is really used as sugar and the balance is used as alcohol, a special type of fuel for motor vehicles and other things.

My friend spoke about the break-up of the Soviet Union. That is important in terms of relationship and production. We have to understand and appreciate that. We see another dimension in which sugar cane is used as fuel for motor vehicles. It is important that we take that into account when we are talking about an agricultural policy, and determine whether we could use Caroni (1975) Limited as a vehicle for ushering in a new era of agriculture in Trinidad and Tobago. That is the important consideration. This country was producing, circa 1984, I believe 250,000 tonnes of sugar; now we have dropped to under 100,000 tonnes.

We have had all these reports: we have had the Soulbury Commission, the Goldenberg Commission; the Honeyman Commission, the Spence Report, the Rampersad Plan, the St. Cyr Report and the Directional Plan. The Member for Caroni Central quoted from another document. *Ad naseum*, we have had reports and all sorts of studies being done in terms of Caroni (1975) Limited. I think it would be useful if I were to refer to a contribution made some time ago in the other place, to which we on this side subscribed, by the representative of the sugar union. I am doing this for the record and to put this into perspective because I will be concluding on the point that we need to take the recommendations that have been made with respect to Caroni (1975) Limited as a base for putting agriculture on a sound footing in Trinidad and Tobago. We cannot in my view consider what we have been hearing about LIDP projects and subventions and consider that to be all. This Parliament has to go beyond that, and I shall probably ask the hon. Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources some time later on to set up a task force.

We hear about the West Indian Commission Report setting out a commission to help to implement all these reports. I doubt that the Minister has space for another cabinet in his office, with the number of reports. Look at the number of reports he has brought here today. These are only some, but I think he will get the message. We need to have an agency of some permanent nature, implementation-oriented, to push agriculture in this country, otherwise we and agriculture shall all go through. There are so many good reports. The finest minds at the university and in this country have come together at some point to make recommendations, and what can we say has been the consequence of these recommendations? What benefits have accrued to this country? What progress has agriculture made as a

result of all of this? I am suggesting that the time has come when we should have some kind of agency—a dynamic task force—with implementation uppermost.

We had a Food and Agriculture Corporation, but that has gone through. That was a very limited entity indeed, but it flopped. What do we have? They would come and present, and the Minister would get up and defend and quote from the manifesto—a lot of rhetoric—and then end the debate. That is another issue coming up. I sincerely would ask the hon. Minister to consider that it is important that we have some mechanism in place to do some serious consideration of the future of agriculture in this country.

The Tripartite Report is in my view one aspect—and a small aspect—of the total development of agriculture in this country and we have not been hearing of any concrete policies and programmes to further agriculture in Trinidad and Tobago.

Let us see what the representative of the union who was appointed a temporary Senator some time ago, had to say in Parliament. Just to put in perspective the Spence Report and the Directional Plan, I quote from *Hansard*:

"The basic recommendations of the Spence or Sugar Rationalization Committee provided for viability of the industry and at the same time all the workers who would have been displaced in the reorganization process would have been assured of a livelihood in the future.

The report provided a detailed analysis of the movement of production, productivity and cost of Caroni (1975) Limited, analyzed the operating costs in the firm, prepared a socio-economic profile of the people in the industry, enunciated a far-reaching programme of activities and changes to achieve economic viability.

This report was virtually rejected. It was submitted to a board and there came out another plan called the Rampersad Plan.

"The basic proposals of this plan (the Rampersad Plan) were to separate the growing and milling operations of the company and to retrench about 10,000 workers without any guarantee or assurance for the viability of the industry itself. The Rampersad Plan was a complete departure from the Spence or Rationalization Sugar Industry Report.

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Following the Rampersad Plan of 1980 was the report of the Professional Committee on a policy towards optimum utilization of resources allocated to the sugar industry, which became known as the St. Cyr Report of 1984.

The essential features of the St. Cyr Report were as follows:

- (1) The industry should be streamlined to produce 100,000 tonnes of sugar per year, 60,000 tonnes for domestic production and the rest for export.
- (2) Acceleration of the diversification programme.
- (3) Retrenchment of 4,500 workers
- (4) Increased use of mechanical operations
- (5) The hope of generating savings to the order of some \$90 million to \$110 million per year at 1983 cost levels and produce sugar at about \$3,000 per tonne.
- (6) Full rationalization of resources in 20—25 years."

5.45 p.m.

In 1986 the then Minister of Planning and Reconstruction, under the NAR Government, gave a commitment to maintaining the levels of employment and actively opposed retrenchment in the sugar industry. Under the NAR Government there was emergence of what was called the company's Directional Plan for the sugar industry. This piece of work, which brought together some of the finest minds in agriculture and other sectors of the country, including Sen. Spence, was realistic, viable, humane and therefore worth giving support to.

In fact, all the stakeholders in the industry, including the All Trinidad Sugar and General Workers' Trade Union, supported the Directional Plan and the basic objectives of that plan are to reduce continuously and in the long run eliminate dependence on the Treasury funds to meet annual operating deficits; to maintain and/or increase levels of employment in the industry through rationalization of the sugar production function, acceleration and expansion of the diversification and agro-industrial efforts and creation of new economic activity. A whole host of recommendations all intended to improve and to make Caroni (1975) Limited a viable entity.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, neither the Spence Report nor this Directional Plan ever saw the light of day. In fact at that time the Minister of Planning caused to be set up a diversification company which really never got off the ground, but it was a

complete departure from what was agreed to by the various parties. So that when we come now to consider Caroni (1975) Limited, we must, of course, take note of what has happened historically of the very excellent reports that were produced and presented but never saw the light of day.

We are coming now with this report and as has been rightly pointed out by my colleagues, there must be that fear, apprehension and concern as to whether the recommendations of the report would be implemented. We have to take account of that.

We have to make up our minds whether we really consider agriculture to be important in our country. We are a country that is dependent on oil. But to what extent can we say that we are using any part of the resources of oil in order to help agriculture? Have we really done that? Oil, we have said time and again, is a wasting asset; when the oil has gone, what would this country have? We need, therefore, to take some of our resources and direct them to the sphere of agriculture. We must bequeath something to posterity, something that would belong to them. It is something that we have to consider when we are making an examination of Caroni (1975) Limited; we have to consider the broader aspects of national development.

I ask: What are we going to do with Caroni (1975) Limited in the whole scenario of agriculture? What are we going to do with whatever resources we might have or will have in terms of developing other areas of agriculture in our society, in our nation? What about forestry? Have we had any plan enunciated by the Minister of Agriculture to tell us about the vast potential that might exist in the area of forestry that we can use in order to propel our economy further, to develop agriculture to some acceptable standard?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have to consider this. We cannot see Caroni (1975) Limited in terms of the backpay issue alone, or in terms of retrenchment alone. My submission to this honourable House is that Caroni (1975) Limited must be considered in a total picture of the development of agriculture in Trinidad and Tobago.

We are surrounded by the sea. We have resources. What are we doing to exploit the resources of the sea that surrounds us as an island in order to advance economic development and agriculture in Trinidad and Tobago? What is the evidence? Instead of expanding and being positive in our approach to the development of the resources of the sea, we find that what exists is being

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constricted. They are already doing it. What are we doing to help the fishermen? What is the present fate of the National Fisheries Company, which had a processing plant there? What has the Government done to date with regard to the National Fisheries Company? This matter was raised in the House previously, but we are not being kept informed as to what is taking place with that company.

Hundreds of people are employed there, the trawler owners and the board owners and the fishermen had access to that particular place. Are we really serious about agriculture in our country? Where is the evidence coming from the Government that it is really evolving some pattern or policy for the future of agriculture in Trinidad and Tobago? We are not getting it so, therefore, we have to draw conclusions. We have to ask, "Where is the plan?"

One would have thought that bringing out this new Tripartite Report we would have had something else going on or some positive statement, after 10 months, on how we intend to move agriculture in Trinidad and Tobago. We have not had it and I am saying that we have been deficient in agriculture. The Government must indicate whether it is serious about developing agriculture in Trinidad and Tobago. It is not only a question of putting in a document, and saying so-and-so in a manifesto or giving fine speeches. For here it closes down an important operation which was helping the fishermen of this country; the shrimpers, and they do not even come to this House and tell us what the status report is. All we hear is there are three or four people there, one getting \$7,000, another getting \$10,000. There is a personnel officer getting \$10,000 and there are no people working there.

These are the issues that we have to consider. We have to know that this country, in my respectful submission, will have to depend on agriculture in the future. Oil is a wasting asset. If they want to depend on manufacturing, where are the raw materials coming from? Are we producing the raw materials for our manufacturing industries? We still have to be purchasing them from abroad. So we have to expend foreign exchange in order to sustain manufacturing. What I am saying is that we are placing dependence on certain areas and we are abandoning one of the most important areas for national development in Trinidad and Tobago, and that is agriculture.

Take tourism, for example. While they seek to encourage tourism, and *prima facie*, it brings in a quick dollar, what is the cost of that dollar to the country? How much money has to be spent on other inputs before something can be earned out of that dollar? That must be considered. I am not saying to abandon these, because

they are necessary cogs in the wheel of development. They are all there, they co-exist. But we tend to deal with one and forget the other. Tourism is nice. Spend \$0.90 and get \$0.10 profit.

Are we giving sufficient thought to agricultural development? That is what we have to consider. We must not treat agriculture in isolation. That is why I say Caroni (1975) Limited has to be considered in a total way. We have to look at one sector in relation to another sector, and it is very important that we do that.

For example, you have the National Flour Mills existing as an industry. That company, of course, performs an important role in our society. But you are seeking to encourage farmers to grow. We have a coconut industry on which over 12,000 people depend for a livelihood. But do you know that while we have that industry here we were importing soya oil? That is the polar antithesis of that operation. They are seeking to have an industry on the one hand, but they are allowing Soya oil from outside to come into Trinidad and Tobago. So they are knocking the coconut industry. We have to decide what we are going to do with the coconut industry. We had problems months ago; at one time CGA could not buy copra from the coconut farmers. What do we do? We went and gave out licences and much soya oil came into this country. But we have to take a decision as to the future role of the coconut industry.

There are thousands of trees in the Cedros area, in the Mayaro/Manzanilla area. I expected to hear my friend the Member for Toco/Manzanilla support the coconut industry, but I have not heard a word from him on that in this honourable House. That needs to be supported. I tell you this, Mr. Deputy Speaker: we have to take a decision as to whether we want to go forward with a coconut industry.

If they say that coconut is no longer necessary to the country, that we shall import soya, in that exercise, what would happen? The registered farmer—the hon. Member claims to have a badge as a registered farmer—I think would, therefore, be fully *au courant* with the disease that is called “red ring”. Red ring disease is worse than AIDS and cancer. That coconut field cannot be replanted, you know. It would be decimated in no time. I look forward to support from my friend. He has to decide and advise the Government as to the future of the coconut industry in Trinidad and Tobago.

The trees are there. We get coconuts and copra, what are we going to do? We have to find solutions to the problem. CGA may come some time again this year and tell the coconut farmers of Cedros, “We are unable to take your commodity”.

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What are the Government going to do? Are they going to give more licences to bring in the foreign substance under the rubric of trade liberalization? We have to consider that. This debate is about Caroni (1975) Limited, but fundamentally it is about agriculture in Trinidad and Tobago; it cannot be separated from other sectors of the economy because they impinge on one another. We have to know how to harmonize things that will accrue to the benefit of our nation. I ask that this be considered.

We have to look at what is going on with the scenario of trade liberalization how will that impact on the whole agricultural sector? We know that announcements were made about protection, but to what extent does that protection go, how far-reaching is it? We know that in America and elsewhere, in developed countries, they give protection to their farmers. We know that the United States is the chief architect in that regard, who will do all of that, give them subsidy, give them protection, but through the IMF, it wants to impose conditionalities on the smaller, developing countries of the world.

Have we studied the full and true impact of trade liberalization on agriculture and the future of agriculture? The equipment, harvesters, machinery, spray cans, insecticides, fungicides, acaricides and all of these things, to what extent will trade liberalization impinge? What is the range?

What are we doing with regard to this whole trade liberalization system? It is important that we know that in terms of our agricultural development. We need to know it, because I know the people who are in beef or pig production have been complaining bitterly about competition from outside sources. What control mechanism exists to protect the local industry? I know that some protection exists for agricultural commodities, I am aware of that, but we need to educate people and inform the nation—and do not believe everybody reads the *Gazette*, that would be a misconception of communication, when we so assume.

ADJOURNMENT MOTION
(LEAVE)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, I have granted leave to adjourn the House to discuss a matter of urgent public importance to the Member for Couva South.

Divali Nagar
(Non-governmental Financing)

Mr. Ramesh Maharaj (*Couva South*): Mr. Deputy Speaker, thank you for granting me leave to raise the issue of the failure and/or refusal, and/or omission by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to give financial assistance for the promotion of Divali and Divali Nagar.

This issue brings into question and focus the lipservice which is paid to the promotion of the multi-dimensional culture of Trinidad and Tobago. One sees that the same thing that has happened to Divali has happened to the steelband movement. The steelpan has really been a national instrument since after the Second World War. People spontaneously given their expressions in the beating of instruments which led to the creation of the steelpan as a national instrument. But it took the PNM Government from 1956 to 1986—well, they did not even regard it as a national instrument, when, in truth and in fact, it is a national instrument. But just the other day, they woke up and recognized for whatever reason, that it is a national instrument.

I am saying this because I want to demonstrate—the Minister of Culture, at the last sitting when she was asked whether the Government recognizes that there is a multi-dimensional culture in Trinidad and Tobago said:

“Culture is always multi-dimensional. The culture of Trinidad 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.”

She also said the Government intends to and has spent moneys on cultural action programmes during 1992 for the promotion and enhancement of culture and the arts.

One knows that Hinduism as a culture, manifests itself in many cultural forms. There are classical music, classical songs and dances, and the national religious festival of Divali brings out a manifestation of the culture of the Hindus.

I started off by speaking about the steelband. When one looks—and I want to deal with some of the multi-dimensional aspects of the culture of Trinidad and Tobago very quickly, to show that not enough is being given to the culture for the promotion of culture in Trinidad and Tobago. I want to say this in an attempt to show that even in respect of the issue which we are debating, one sees that it was

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the obligation of the Government to try to find out which groups in Trinidad and Tobago are interested in the promotion of Divali as a part of the multi-dimensional culture of Trinidad and Tobago.

The obligation was on the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to find out, because there are many groups in Trinidad and Tobago which are involved in the promotion of Divali. I should have thought that the Government would have gone to these groups to try to talk to them and would have been able to give some assistance in whatever form. It may not only be financial assistance. I have a list of many groups—I do not intend to call the names of the groups—but one can think of the Hindu Institute of Trinidad and Tobago, the Sanatan Dharma, and many other Hindu groups.

If I may say so, I spoke with Mr. Hans Hanoomansingh, the president of the National Council of Indian Culture, this morning and this afternoon, and up to the tea break he has had no communication from the Government in respect of a letter written by the National Council of Indian Culture since July, 1992 for assistance with respect to Divali Nagar. My information is that the letter is dated July 9, 1992, and there has not even been an acknowledgment or communication.

Mr. Valley: Are you sure it was not September 9, 1992?

Mr. Maharaj: My information is that it was July 9, 1992. If it was September 9, 1992, I stand corrected. I got a fax from Mr. Hanoomansingh and I spoke with him up to a short while ago.

One sees that this Government has treated the steelband movement with contempt. One looks at the kinds of moneys it has given the steelband movement which is an integral part of the culture of Trinidad and Tobago, one sees the pittance given. One sees that the Government has not even tried to market steelpans. But surely one would have thought that a government that is seriously interested in the steelpan as a part of the culture of Trinidad and Tobago would have ensured that the steelband was marketed, that the men and women who play these instruments are treated like professional musicians. Most of them are so poor that they are, in effect, “scrunting”.

I should have thought that if the Government were really interested in the promotion of culture and one sees—I am trying to show how we are just paying lip-service to culture. The dance groups in this country which have to portray the culture of Trinidad and Tobago are also neglected.

One sees the Carnival arts, if it were not for a man like Peter Minshall, who has been able to get some recognition individually—what effort has the Government made to promote the Carnival arts inside and outside Trinidad and Tobago? One sees that people in London, Toronto, Miami, Germany and other parts of the world have tried to have carnivals. But what has the Government done to really capitalize on this to promote the culture of Trinidad and Tobago?

The production of musical instruments: Some of our people make drums, quattros. What has the Government done, what is it doing to market these things, to really show that it is interested in promoting the culture of Trinidad and Tobago?

Last week, if I may refer to the answer which the Minister of Culture gave, one sees with respect to Pan Trinbago for 1992, all that has been given in money is \$451,000. With respect to the National Carnival Commission, all that has been given is \$5 million. Is the Government really serious about the promotion of culture in Trinidad and Tobago?

What has happened with respect to Divali? As you know, Divali is really regarded as a religious festival. It is a festival which the Government of this country has recognized as a national festival.

Although initially Divali used to be celebrated by the Hindus and very few people of other religions, I think we can safely say that Divali is really a celebration, a festival in which the entire country participates.

As a matter of fact, Divali is one of those festivals where there is abstention by people who really celebrate it or who want to follow the teachings of Hindusim. There are also people who celebrate it but who do not follow the teachings of Hinduism. It is a festival in which no meat or alcohol is served and in which you have classical music, dancing, portrayals of the religious teachings of Hinduism. In effect, a manifestation of the culture.

We saw from the information that I have researched, that in 1991 the Government of the National Alliance for Reconstruction, and there is successorship in government of policy, considered Divali Nagar and Divali such an important and integral part of the multi-dimensional culture of Trinidad and Tobago that they decided to promote and assist in Divali Nagar. They provided a 15-acre parcel of land and granted to the National Council of Indian Culture a sum of \$300,000. The Council of Indian Culture spent of its own funds about \$2 million on the preparation of infrastructure.

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My information is that the National Council of Indian Culture made a request to the state for assistance and although it submitted a report which estimated that it would cost a very considerable sum of money to stage Divali Nagar, the request for assistance was for the sum of \$1 million.

I think that the People's National Movement has recognized that Divali is important for Trinidad and Tobago. If I am permitted to refer to some newspaper clippings which I have been able to get and if I may take it before the general election of 1991, on October 31, in the *Trinidad Guardian*, the headline is "PNM to light up 25,000 deyas":

"The People's National Movement would light some 25,000 days around Balisier House on Victoria Avenue on Sunday as part of the party's Divali celebration. The party will be serving Indian delicacies at its headquarters and will cater for some 50,000 persons, according to Public Relations Officer Mr. Wilson Mitchell."

March 9, 1992, the *Express*, page 3:

"Maraj: 'Hinduism will enrich Trinidad and Tobago'.

External affairs Minister Ralph Maraj pledged to assist the Hindu Institute of Trinidad and Tobago in hosting the World Hindu Conference in this country. He also made a personal commitment to ensure that Hinduism not only services, but is used as a vehicle for the enrichment of national consciousness."

He went on to say how Hinduism was important for national development.

We have a situation in which—and I do not intend to spend very long on this motion—it is recognized that it is important for the fostering of national unity for a government to ensure that all integral aspects of that multi-dimensional culture are promoted and treated equally. I think the Government has said that it is committed to that.

The PNM in its manifesto, as my friend the Member for Diego Martin Central said—I almost regard that book as a religious book and have it all marked up—they have committed themselves to that. This is really a question of the Government saying, "Listen, we have a policy and our policy is that we are committed to promoting this multi-dimensional culture. We are committed to promoting equality of treatment. We are committed to ensuring that there be equality of treatment and the promotion of religious observances."

6.15 p.m.

I do not think it should have been necessary for me to have to file this motion seeking your leave, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to raise this matter as a matter of public importance. I did not think it would have been necessary, with a Government that has given that kind of commitment, that we would have had to come to this House to ask for a debate to find out whether the Government is going to do anything and, if anything, what. We should not have to come to this House to tell the Government that it should have made inquiries. It should have a list of the organizations that it has consulted, that it wants to assist in promoting these aspects of culture in Trinidad and Tobago, not only for Divali, but also in respect of Carnival, Parang, Phagwa, other aspects of the culture of Trinidad and Tobago.

If this Government were serious about that, then we would still be debating the motion to note. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I should like to give this Government a bit of advice and that is, when it talks, when it makes promises and commitments, it probably need machinery to implement those promises. Therefore, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I close by saying that I wait upon the Government for them to say what commitment it is going to give today in respect of the promotion of the culture of Trinidad and Tobago and, in particular, the culture, Divali, as an integral part of the multi-dimensional culture of Trinidad and Tobago.

The Minister in the Prime Minister's Office (Public Administration)
(Sen. The Hon. Gordon Draper): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Let me begin by, indeed, reiterating the Government's commitment to culture, art, and all religions in Trinidad and Tobago. The hon. Member opposite began by identifying a letter. Let me put the record straight, immediately. The letter was in fact received on September 7, 1992. That was the date of the letter we received, requesting assistance for this year's Divali celebrations. The letter was received by the Ministry of Community Development, who recognizing that their own budget would have made it difficult for them to provide the level of support which they considered necessary, requested the Office of the Prime Minister to seek funding for this particular activity. That Office has, over the last couple of weeks, been attempting to identify the details of the budget relating to the proposed festival and the matter is, in fact, currently before Cabinet.

Let me, however, indicate, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that this Government in 1992 has, in fact, demonstrated within the limits of our financial resources its commitment to the whole range of cultural and religious activities, festivals and

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associations to which the Member has referred. Indeed, I think he quoted from a response of the Minister of Community Development in which she outlined the disbursements over 1992 and I think that, for the benefit of the honourable House, I shall just restate some of them because he named some of the very associations that she indicated.

The National Parang Association	\$50,000
The National Dance Assoc. of T&T	\$50,000
The Santa Rosa Carib Community	\$30,000
The Network Riddum Band	\$11,589
Indian Arrival Day (for a range of associations totalling)	\$24,000
Phagwa (range of associations)	\$17,000
	\$42,500
	\$25,500
	\$ 5,000

The point I am making, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that we recognize that within the existing constraints, we have to find ways to provide a range of associations, religious groups, and cultural forms with some measure of assistance. While we should like in each case to be able to do more, we have to find ways to spread it. It means, therefore, that when one association comes with a request for somewhat over \$1 million, we need to examine the extent to which our existing resources could provide assistance to that organization.

As the hon. Member himself has indicated, last year the request was for somewhere in the region of \$3 million. The Government, last year, found itself able to provide \$300,000, plus the land. Again, in the context of difficult financial times, we are seeking, to find ways to ensure that we can provide assistance consistent with that kind of level which was provided last year, but we recognize that the mechanisms to do this require a ministry—whose budget itself is depleted—to seek from the Ministry of Finance the necessary approvals and the identification of those funds. That takes some time, and while we recognize that the festival itself is pressing upon us, the Government is committed—and I state to this honourable House, to providing to the festival a sum of money to assist it in the running of this year's festival.

Mr. Maharaj: If that commitment was there, could the Minister explain why the organization was not consulted—spoken to, or communicated with at all? No acknowledgment of the letter, no communication whatsoever.

Sen. Draper: Well, I do not know whether the organization itself has attempted to get back on to the ministry. But it has sought to use Parliament as the mechanism to do that. The ministry has been working on the request; and if there was all that concern with it, the organization could have picked up the phone and called the Minister, but instead it seeks to use Parliament as the ground to deal with that kind of issue. This is an abuse of Parliament.

Mr. Maharaj: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order, I do not think the Member could say it is an abuse of Parliament having regard to the ruling. I do not think so.

Sen. Draper: May I continue, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It seems to me—

Mr. Humphrey: Apologize to the Deputy Speaker.

Sen. Draper: It seems to me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the organization could have contacted the ministry by way of follow-up, rather than seek to bring the matter to the fore, through this mechanism. That is the point I am making.

Mr. Maharaj: That is the abuse.

Mr. S. Panday: No acknowledgment!

Sen. Draper: And I say we live in Trinidad and Tobago. The telephone is very close by.

Mr. Sobion: But they prefer to bring it to the Parliament.

Deputy Speaker: Members, let us have some order. Would you continue, please, Minister Draper.

Sen. Draper: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I started by saying, and I shall continue to say that the Government has stated its commitment to support a range of religious and cultural art forms. The Government has demonstrated its commitment to do that over the year by providing sums of money, within the context of its resources. The Government has committed itself to supporting this particular festival about which we now speak, and the Government will, consistent with decisions/approaches in the past, continue in this light.

Mr. Humphrey: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I welcome the hon. Senator to this House, but I would like him to explain the notion of his Government that lobbying Members of Parliament is an abuse of Parliament.

Sen. Draper: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am not saying that people cannot lobby. What I am saying, however, is that in the context of relationships between organizations, one to the other, having written a letter of this nature, it seems to me that that organization could have had other means of communication with the ministry to get the necessary clarification. That is all I am saying.

6.25 p.m.

Mr. Maharaj: The Member is presuming that the organization contacted us to raise the issue. But, on a point of order, the organization did not contact us. We saw it in the press and I decided. And I should have thought that the Government would have seen it. I decided to contact the organization. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Let us have some order please? Will the hon. Minister continue. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Humphrey: Would the Senator give way? Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want the hon. Senator who is speaking on behalf of the Government and his party to indicate whether scoring political points is anathema to the politics of this country?

Mr. Draper: It seems to me that the organization has much more faith in the mechanisms and workings of the ministry because it is allowing us to do our work to get back to it, which is what we are doing. It is not being betrayed. I really do not think we need to prolong this matter any longer and I shall end on the note of (a), our commitment to providing funding consistent with funding which has been provided in the past, within the context of our economic situation, and (b) by restating our commitment to providing resources and. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Jurai: Would the hon. Minister state whether this was the only application received in that context, and how many he has replied to if there was more than one request?

Sen. Draper: May I also indicate in the same context that the same association was indeed in contact with the Ministry of Works this week for the use of a piece of land to serve as a car park, which has been granted. So that there is a mechanism of communication between the organization and the ministry.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was about winding up and restating our commitment to providing funding to the arts and culture [Interruption] We can decide to understand and not deal with it.

Let me conclude by assuring the hon. Member that this Government will honour its commitment. It is before Cabinet and a decision will be communicated to the organization in due course before the 1992 festival.

I thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

CARONI (1975) LIMITED

Mr. S. Mohammed: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I understand that that was the maiden speech of the hon. Minister in this House. I offer my congratulations to him. For a maiden speech he did have a baptism there. We should like to remind him—because I suppose he knows or he is presumed to know—that this is the House of the elected representatives. Collectively, this House represents the sovereign will of the people in accordance with our constitutional principles, and one must try to understand that in that scenario a politician, if he is not sensitive to matters that are contemporaneous with what else is going on in certain given situations, does not have a place in politics. Elsewhere in a back room or somewhere doing other permutations, but not in the arena of politics.

Hon. Member: In the Senate.

Mr. Mohammed: I am sure that the Member for Laventille West will concur with what I am saying because I think he, amongst the whole lot on that side, knows full well the import of what I am saying. We have a saying, “When the soul goes, you go onto another plane.” We have been hearing some new expressions in Parliament and I am sure in due course they will become a part of the vernacular and will become acceptable parliamentary language. When you are in a train of thought and it is disturbed it is very difficult to re-establish equilibrium and continue in the same vein. Mr. Deputy Speaker you might excuse me for any deficiencies in that regard.

I was trying, Sir, to make the point before the House gave way to my colleague the Member for Couva South, in a general way that this Tripartite Report should not be considered the determinant for the future of agriculture in Trinidad and Tobago. This report essentially has been a report to restructure the company and to make it viable. Certainly we should like this report to be taken as a compendium in the whole concept of the total development of agriculture

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in Trinidad and Tobago. That is the point we have been making and we should like that to be established. A very important report and this could be the thrust that we have been looking for in order to put agriculture on a proper national footing. I will continue to repeat that point because it is important.

There is a point I should like to make to this honourable House and to go back to the general election manifesto of the United National Congress. We have been using the PNM manifesto *ad nauseam* in this honourable House, especially the Members on that side. There is a point that is important in the future of agriculture in this country that we must properly take into account and that is, what we are doing or not doing in terms of improving the training and education of the farmers in this country. In other words, to what extent is the average person who goes onto a plantation, educated? Does he know about plants, about the chemicals, about the fertilizers, about how to run a business, how to manage a farm and how to manage agriculture? I will tell you what is happening. We mention here:

"Allocate to small farmers on long term leases, the lands which the government has acquired, for example, Nonpareil in Trinidad and the several estates in Tobago giving preference to farmers who show genuine commitment to farming the land. In this regard, the UNC will stop the present practice under which graduates from ECIAF and the Faculty of Agriculture are, by official decree, denied access to lands which the Government wishes to make available to farmers."

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we gave out 20 scholarships. I wonder whether the hon. Minister has done any monitoring of what happens with those recipients of scholarships, to those people who have been trained at the university. Where are they? What work are they doing? How many of them are behind desks doing work other than in the sphere of agriculture? Are we really serious about developing agriculture to the standard we should like to see it? It is important that the hon. Minister take that into account. It is a very important factor when we are considering any future development of agriculture in Trinidad and Tobago. It is important that we try to understand and to appreciate that.

I feel that one way we can move forward is by the education and training we are talking about. Utilize those people. Place them in the fields whether through Caroni Limited or private farms. We can place them there. For example, the last Government spent a lot of money developing estates all over this place instead of doing it in that way, we need some kind of policy evolving in that sphere where

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we can develop some of those farms to become viable entities. Take some of our trained people. There is need to do that.

My friend the hon. Minister is a registered farmer and I assume that he knows all the ramifications of cultivation. I assume that he knows those officers that they call extension officers in his Ministry of Agriculture. But I wonder whether he has done any examination of the role and functions of those extension officers. Imagine there is an extension officer visiting an area and he is supposed to see about insecticides, fungicides, fertilizers; all sorts of insects; irrigation. He is supposed to see about the animals. Is he supposed to see about the anthuriums too? A whole range of activities in respect of which he is not qualified. That is why they planted oranges in plastic bags and they all died.

This aspect of education and training is indeed a very important point one has to consider in order to develop the agriculture that we want in this country. We have to be alert and see. Really, now what does it stand at? Agriculture, I believe as a contributor to gross domestic product is barely between 2 1/2 and 3 per cent. Are we happy about that situation? What steps are we taking to increase that contribution? It is very low at this point and if we continue with what we are having at National Fisheries, and with what is happening with the coconut industry; and with what is happening with the people who are producing the beef, and with all other aspects of this industry we would see that we would be limping forward.

6.35 p.m.

What is happening? That is where Caroni (1975) Limited can come in as an example and provider of the wherewithal to many persons. For example, if we wish to create small-sized farms, it is something that we have to take into account when we are considering the future of Caroni (1975) Limited. We have to consider to what extent we can develop small farms which will be self-sufficient and provide an income for a family, and make them available to people in this country.

For example, if you drive through my constituency which enjoys a boundary with the Member for Caroni Central, all the aesthetics of life you will see there, verdant pastures and green citrus fields. It is a beautiful drive. I invite all Members of this House to take a journey through the Caparo area. Maybe the hon. Minister of Agriculture has seen it. I do not know. It is beautiful, acres upon acres—

Mr. 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. Palackdharrysingh*]

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. Mohammed: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am very glad for the very able support I am getting from the Member for La Brea. At one time he lived at Longdenville and he told me that he endorses what I say about the Caparo area. I must thank him very sincerely.

Those trees have just begun to bear fruit and with the rainy season we have some other problems with flooding—which is a separate issue to be dealt with. I am talking about the greenery and the beautiful citrus plantations there. You will see what this same Caroni (1975) Limited has been able to do in order to develop those citrus plantations. The hundreds and hundreds of acres that we have scattered—I think overall Caroni (1975) Limited has over 3,000 acres under citrus cultivation.

I think it has been studied and analyzed that about 40 acres could give a small-sized family enough to go by, because we need citrus. We are still importing concentrate from Belize. Everybody knows that. How much? We import about \$16 million worth of concentrate; yet we have vast expanses of land; we have the soil that would sustain and maintain citrus as a whole. What I am saying is that we have to use what Caroni (1975) Limited has actually done there as an example of what could be done in the whole scenario of agriculture.

If we have 3,000 acres developed there, we must consider whether we would want to shed any of those; plant more at Caroni or develop some of the abandoned estates. Do you know that there are hundreds of acres of land in Tobago not adequately used? This could be developed and made available to small families in this country. So too, there are other lands in Trinidad. We have to look at Caroni (1975) Limited and all that this report has said that can be done. We must go forward and we must think ahead what we must do with agriculture in Trinidad and Tobago.

I am suggesting as one of the mechanisms that we try to create small farms and make them available to people. We need to understand the soil types that we have in this country. You will be surprised that in the El Socorro area, on one side of the road there is one type of soil and on the other side there is a different type of soil. We know that in areas where Caroni (1975) Limited has lands, there is a lot

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of acidity in the soil. There is poor drainage and with the vagaries of the weather, you need proper irrigation systems.

We have clay soils. We have to determine what it would best suit the interests of this country to cultivate. We hear a lot of talk about planting different crops, but it is not all the crops which can be sustained in a particular soil. There is need to ascertain the soil quality you have and what will be the best crops to plant in that area. Who is doing that?

We have had some reports, perhaps in the past, but they are not being co-ordinated and nothing is coming out of them. In fact, you will find that there may be a few persons at the Ministry of Agriculture who are concerned with this type of exercise, but I do not know to what extent they have really been doing anything in terms of determining what is the best type of soil we have and how best we could make use of what we have; to what extent the Government as a whole is making any assessment of the types of soil we have and what will be best suited to the soil; to what extent the Ministry of Planning and Development is engaged in any exercise of determining the type and suitability of soil for crops we may want to plant.

I do not know what is the performance of those persons who are in the Ministry of Agriculture. We do not get a report; we do not know. Sometimes you get the impression that we are moving with agriculture in a *vaille-que-vaille* way. You have been moving in a way that, apparently, you are seeing darkness and you are not seeing light at the end of the tunnel. We need to see a demonstration of action in this area of agriculture. Get your people whether it is from the Ministry of Planning or whoever it is and let them do that.

I am told that in my friend's constituency in Longdenville, a couple of years ago, there was some assistance given for a particular programme with regard to soil type and irrigation. I think it worked beautifully. I understand there was an increase in the production of cane. The tops were used to feed animals. It was clearly demonstrated there that it was a successful exercise which could have been used elsewhere. I understand it was never followed up. Maybe the hon. Minister could check that. I understand that people have taken away the pipes to use them for their own private purposes. We have not had any follow-up to that kind of action to know what kind of work you have to do in swampy areas.

I have already pointed out to this House that in El Socorro where I live, and many persons know there, you had the best rice, watermelon and vegetables, but

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salt water came in and spoilt the swamp. The same thing happened in Felicity. There were lands which were available for cultivation and again there was seepage of salt water. There is this same problem in the Oropouche area. We are not having any coherent action or enunciation of any policy to guide this country with regard to our irrigation problem.

How are you going to advance the cause of agriculture? Are you really serious about agriculture? These are the areas which you need to attack. This is not talk for talk's sake. This is talk that is based on solid foundation, careful studies and examination of what is going on. That is why I call on the Minister, and the time is propitious to consider really setting up a task force to push agriculture ahead. Would he consider that? What will he tell me? Another committee again! Let us use this as an example for moving forward. That is what we need to do, but how are we going to implement it if we do not have that kind of thrust in the programme for agricultural development? It just cannot work.

If we can have a report, "Time For Action" which we have not yet seen in this House to consider and we do not know when it will come, the cart is before the horse. That should have been here for us to debate already. You are going to start a commission there. I was impressed with the idea that whatever they are going to set up there, they had the prospect of implementing it.

Mr. Valley: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I think we need to correct the Member. He did get a copy of Time For Action. He said he has never seen it in the House.

6.45 p.m.

Mr. Mohammed: I do not understand the incoherence of the Member for Diego Martin Central. I was talking about a debate. I am not talking about seeing the report. We have all the reports at the Twin Towers. I have the report at home. What is the big thing in that. I am making a point in connection with a provision in that report and I could have seen that provision only because I read it. I heard about it when we had that meeting last week and I am impressed with that idea, so I am advising the Hon. Minister that we need an implementing agency for some decisions that are being taken here and in the whole scenario of agriculture. The Minister can probably say whether or not he is in favour. This report, I am saying, is only one aspect of the total development of agriculture. You may use that as a vehicle, but it is not going to solve the problems of agriculture in this country; that is not going to solve the problems that we would have in the future if oil declines.

What is this country going to rely on if oil dissipates? What are we going to do? How are we creating and building a society to meet that type of situation? We need to depend on agriculture to provide food for this nation, give families a decent living, and save very valuable foreign exchange. We on this side have said that foreign exchange saved is foreign exchange earned. Why can we not go that way, notwithstanding that it may be three per cent of the gross domestic product. We need to and can go beyond that.

Long ago people virtually planted all the things they ate. I do not know if anyone remembers that. The registered farmer might know. In those days, people planted their own rice and vegetables around the house. They hardly had to buy anything. People felt that if they could feed themselves it was an important thing, but they needed to do more to get the money to buy other things they required. When we are a small, developing country, that kind of interdependence has to exist and co-exist, if we are to survive. We can go a long way if we develop agriculture to have something that this nation can exist on. And we have people who are interested, committed and who will be prepared to put their energy, time and effort to make it a success.

It is ten months since the Government assumed office but we have not heard anything about the future development of agriculture in Trinidad and Tobago. When are we going to hear? We have "chirrip-chirrip". Now and then we would hear a statement. We need more than that. We need to know where we are going in agriculture, and we are giving the hon. Minister enough time in order to find out.

There are so many areas that one can speak about. What about the question of a lending policy to farmers? Can some kind of joint enterprise be arranged between ADB and Caroni (1975) Limited? What are we doing to help the farmers in this country? We are having demonstrations outside this Parliament and seeing things in the newspapers about ADB selling people's property, but that may be because of the moneys they have borrowed from the international lending agency. They have conditionalities, too, but they have been heartless about it.

I have pointed out to this House already that the whole area of poultry production in this country is self-sufficient now. We have been able to achieve that, but do you know what is happening? The difficulties have been mentioned already. A man may grow a batch of 9,000 chicks and after nine weeks all he may get is \$5,000 or \$6,000. How can that pay him? We asked the Minister to sit with

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the contracting parties and arrange something. There needs to be some concensus *ad idem* in terms of the price of chemicals and feed. It has not been done. A contract is pushed in your face. They do not sit down and determine the price of the feed and the chemicals. When the nine weeks is over, they collect their chickens and they bring a cheque for you. The money cannot pay for your water rights, your bagasse, your electricity nor the worries and headaches you may have in getting up to take care of the chickens. It cannot. It cannot work. Where are we going?

In effect we have to develop some kind of monetary system to assist the farmers. They will need to have soft loans and to be properly monitored. Right now they cannot pay their loans because they are not getting sufficient income in order to repay the loans, take care of their families and other expenses they may have. Again, I ask, "Where are we going?"

What about ornamentals? How are we going with that? I see the Member for St. Ann's East is an expert in that area. Have we directed any thoughts to that area? Have we developed any lending policy? Where can the farmer get money now? Can anybody tell me where a farmer can borrow money for agriculture now? There are people who would be willing to go into the anthurium business and we can use the farm of the Member for St. Ann's East as a model where they can see expertise. The farm is clean and beautiful, well presented and well produced. *[Interruption]* I do not know if it is a monopoly, having regard to company now being kept. You do not know what may happen, but that expertise is there.

I think there is a market outside. I was told by a colleague lawyer who has quite a plantation that he has gone into the passion fruit business. He said he has orders from Germany and he cannot supply, but poor fellow he does not seem to know all the mechanics about agriculture. He is probably not using all the chemicals he should; he is not getting the production. There are areas, but who is advising about these things? There are a few people who are making genuine efforts here to export vegetables and other commodities. What is the input of the Government in that? Who is directing them on that? It is a set of private people. One fellow who is no longer working at BWIA started to export pumpkins, ochroes, crab, callaloo and shadon bene. These are areas that could be tapped. What mechanism do we have existing at the level of the Government to advise people and guide them in these areas?

People need to know. We do not want someone buying 10 acres of land and putting the wrong crops there. Not all soil will tolerate tomatoes; not all soil will tolerate papaw. There are certain bacteria and other diseases in the soil which will kill your crops. You need to know about these things. Where is that advice, where is that guidance coming from?

6.55 p.m.

I do not know what business acumen the extension officers have, they may know a few things—I have encountered some of them, I asked them a few questions—I do not have a badge like them—and they did not know some aspects of the production. But they should be business-oriented people to sit down with a farmer and say, “Listen, a rotary hoe will cost so much, this ploughing will cost so much, your nursery will cost you so much, banking will cost you so much. You need to have 6,000 plants in an acre of tomatoes, your production of plants will be 15 pounds.”

You work with all of that so you can give him a projection; having regard to soil condition and irrigation it is advisable and prudent for him to grow an acre of tomatoes. Therefore, the output will soar, if you get x, y and z price, he knows he will make so much. Nobody knows. We have no guaranteed prices operating in our system. So even that is a chance. All the hydroponic business has virtually gone dead. I think some of the gentlemen on that side will know that. There is no sustainable market for the commodity; when you plant with hydroponics, your production is greater.

When you pick the tomatoes, the sweet peppers or whatever, there is not a proper market to dispose of the produce. It costs \$400,000 for one acre of hydroponics to grow tomatoes. When you are picking the tomatoes in abundant quantity, and you go to the market you encounter a depressed price. We are speaking about serious agriculture here, badge or no badge. I am giving these as examples to alert the Minister of Agriculture to the fact that these are some areas that need to be looked at. I am saying all this because I have not been convinced up to this point that there is any cohesive government programme for advancing agriculture. If there is, where is it? Do not give me rhetoric and quote page 46 of our manifesto. I do not want that. The Member for Diego Martin East said on a platform some time ago that when you are in politics you can say something on the platform and you are not bound to implement it. I heard him talking about that—rhetoric, beautiful words in a nice cover.

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When I am talking, at times, I tend to look at the Member for Diego Martin West and sometimes he evokes some confidence in me and I feel good. Sometimes I feel I could believe him. Sometimes I feel he knows what he is about, but at other times he makes me very depressed. So I am appealing to the good side of him—I am not saying is a Jekyll and Hyde—to really look at the aspect of agriculture and this Caroni (1975) Limited exercise as an opportunity to catapult agriculture to where it properly belongs in this society.

I am not speaking about the question of the pure mechanics of this expenditure and income and fixing up a company. If this company is being fixed up, it must be fixed up for the betterment of Trinidad and Tobago. It must be related not only to the 10,000 workers and the 150,000 people who depend on it. It must go beyond that. It must radiate and permeate the entire society so that everybody will become aware of and fully appreciate what agriculture is, what it has to offer to this nation and what prosperity can be reaped as a consequence of a good agricultural policy. That is what I am saying. I hope my friend will take that into account.

My friend the Member for Arouca North—I felt very sad the day I listened to him. He made some statements that I believe were unbecoming of the gentleman that I knew so long ago, but political postures can cause one to change one's view. But when you remain committed to a cause, no political posture could change that. How could the Member for Arouca North, who sings bhagans and who goes to Phagwa and I love to hear his voice—have you ever heard him, Mr. Deputy Speaker? I have heard him and he is a very good singer. I should like, on this occasion, to excuse him for the words that he uttered from that position as Member for Arouca North.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Just to answer the hon. Member's question, I have heard the Member for Arouca North singing the bhagan and I want to assure him I enjoyed it very much.

Mr. Mohammed: I am very glad to see the support I am getting, first from the Member for La Brea and now from the Deputy Speaker. So I hope the Member for Arouca North will appreciate the promotion I have given him here this evening.

I would advise the Member for Arouca North to be true to himself. History is on his side. History is on my side. History is on everybody's side. Do not seek to distort history. Do not make statements—I almost used an adjective which I would have regretted—do not make statements and speak about 95 per cent coming from

one ethnic community. Do not make statements about LIDP, comparing \$95 million more than LIDP got. What is the object of making a statement like that? Whom does the Member want to please and placate in the society? That is a hypocritical statement, it is untrue of his character and he must be true to himself.

The hon. President of the Republic came to this House and said, "Speak the truth, it will liberate you". "Fear no one". I regret very much the statement made by the hon. Member for Arouca North.

Mr. Haniff: You must excuse him, he was told to say so.

Mr. Mohammed: If he was told to say so, I do not know. That creates a distinction between men and boys.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, my colleague the Member for Naparima, in my view, made some telling points to this House. We say in criminal law you are either mute by malice or mute by visitation of God. The Member for Naparima made a statement to the effect that there is some report called a Booker/Tate Report.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Let me just inform the hon. Member that he has three more minutes of speaking time.

Mr. Mohammed: I thought that with my charitable dispensation this afternoon, time would not have been a factor in my contribution.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I take note of that and I shall stop at that point. I shall say this, Mr. Deputy Speaker: If, in fact, there is a Booker/Tate Report, in my respectful submission, that would be nothing but the perpetration of a deceit on this honourable House and the people of Trinidad and Tobago. If there is such a report, this House should have been informed.

I sincerely believed the Minister when he presented this Tripartite Report and said, this is the position of the Government. I really accepted it as an honest expression that we are going to move ahead with this Tripartite Report. Then I am to hear from the back door—I do not know how authoritative it is, I have heard no denial of it—if, in fact there is a Booker/Tate Report, how did it come into the scenario? This hon. Minister owes an explanation to this House and to the country. If there is such a Booker/Tate Report, that would discolour this Tripartite Report. The credibility of the Tripartite Report would go asunder if, in fact, there is a Booker/Tate Report which speaks about retrenchment, diversification and all these things.

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Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wait with bated breath to hear the response of the hon. Minister of Agriculture. I want to compliment him on his presentation; it was a very objective presentation, but if Booker/Tate comes now to turn this yellow cover into some other colour, I do not know. We ought to have been informed that Booker/Tate was doing some exercise here. It will become just like the Rampersad Plan vis-a-vis the other plan that we had, and that is not nice. He would lose confidence and credibility in the country if there is such a report.

If there is that report, what do they plan to do with it? Bring it here and burn it. Burn it and let this one go ahead. What are you going to do with that report if it says to kill the diversification programme and retrench people? What are you going to do when this report says something else? People would lose confidence in you. I invite the Minister to go to Woodford Square and burn that report. He must not even come to this House, he must go and burn it and that would be a true test of his credibility.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thank you and hon. Members for your kind indulgence.

The Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources (Dr. The Hon. Keith Rowley): Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me start by saying that this debate has extended for a much longer period than I, myself, had expected. I think Members on the other side will agree with that, because when this motion was put before the House, the initial reaction from those on the other side was that it was not worth the effort, that it was meant to hoodwink, and a number of comments like that.

As the debate progressed, one heard Members on the other side, including the last speaker, saying that this debate is a significant one and, in fact, he did say it should go on for another few days. I hope not. He ended on the note of the Booker/Tate Report and that took me back to the presentation of the Member for Naparima.

Immediately the question was proposed, the Member for Couva South made a very extensive contribution I sought to take notes as he spoke but I ended up with only one line, because in summary all that was said by the Member for Couva South amounted to the fact that he did not believe that the Government had any intention of implementing the report; he wanted a commitment, something he could go to the courthouse with. Basically, what he was saying is that he did not believe the Government's approach would be taken to a conclusion and he wanted a commitment to demonstrate that. I cannot argue with that. One could only go so

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far to demonstrate certain things. There is no law in this country which says that I can force you to believe me if you do not want to believe me. That is a question of trust.

The Member for Couva South did not deal with any component of the report other than backpay and to the extent that the Government has spoken time and time again and the action plan itself specifically addressed that, I think that is simply a question of "time will tell". However, the Member for Caroni Central and the Member for Princes Town did make some points and before I get into the meat of the debate, I wish to compliment them on their presentations because it probably took much public difference of opinion for them to have said some of the things they did. But the Member for Caroni Central introduced his presentation by quoting from the writings of Dr. Williams and that would have explained his position in coming to some of his conclusions in this debate.

The Member for Naparima reminded me of Act V, Scene V in MacBeth. Mr. Deputy Speaker, being a literary person, you will remember the time in MacBeth when Seton came in to announce the death of the queen and MacBeth had to respond by saying that "a poor player that struts and frets upon the stage and then is heard no more; a tale told by an idiot full of sound and fury signifying nothing". I was driven to remember that quotation, because the mischief in this whole debate was sought to be introduced by the Member for Naparima. In fact, he has not been only mischievous; I think he has symbolized a level of irresponsibility that does not augur well for his party or this country nor the Commonwealth as a whole.

I believe that when the Member for Naparima sees a report like this, which comes out of a consensus, especially a consensus in which his own leader was a player, he would have been more certain to deal with the contents of the report. I do not know where he got certain information from—but to have picked up such information which relates to a report and to have come to the House and to have so misled his colleagues and this House, I think that is an act of the grossest responsibility. I intend to deal with that.

My friend the Member for Caroni East ended his contribution with the Booker/Tate Report. Mr. Deputy Speaker, yes, there is a Booker/Tate Report. *[Interruption]* I do not know what he is banging the desk about.

Mr. S. Panday: You have hidden it from the House, let us see it.

Hon. K. Rowley: There are a number of reports relating to Caroni (1975) Limited. What is peculiar about the Tripartite Report is that this report arose out

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of a situation where the Government for the first time was a party to discussions, seeking a consensus of all the parties, having given a commitment up front to implement that consensus whenever it is arrived at. That is what makes this Tripartite plan different. We have said so time and time again.

It is not another report, it is an action plan. Since the Government was a party to the hammering out of that action plan—

Mr. Maharaj: I wonder if the Minister would give way?

Hon. K. Rowley: One moment. Since the Government was a party to hammering out that action plan and since the Government gave a commitment that it would stand by that consensus, the Government had to be in a position to understand what it was dealing with.

When it agreed to something in the Tripartite plan, it knew on what basis it was agreeing with that.

Therefore, to pick out a particular report that you have heard about and come to the House and totally misrepresent it and accuse the Government of being underhanded, is to not understand at all what you are here for. There are many other reports that did not come here. There are a series of reports. I, as Minister of Agriculture, being involved in this, have to inform myself and so does my ministry. We have to inform ourselves to take part in these discussions based on fact gleaned from wherever.

Look at this report, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This is a diagnostic review from Price Waterhouse. The date of it is December 12, 1991. I have heard not a single word about this report from the Member for Naparima. It has all kinds of recommendations. So to give the impression that there is some mysterious Booker/Tate Report that was not laid here and as a result of that there is some underhanded business going on—Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is one of the many reports on Caroni (1975) Limited.

This report is the report of the Institute of Management and Labour Relations, dated February 28, 1992. The point I am trying to make is that a series of reports were converging even at the time we were talking about a tripartite approach. We had much talk about the SRC Report of 1978. Since then there have been many other reports.

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It is in recognition of all of these things that this Government said that it would ask the committee to come together, all the interested parties, sit down and deal with all the information coming from whatever source and develop an action plan which we would take forward. It has nothing to do with Booker/Tate, Price Waterhouse or whatever.

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Local Government and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think this is an appropriate time to take the adjournment.

In moving the adjournment, I beg to move that the second reading of the three bills introduced today be taken at our next sitting, which I would propose to be on Monday. The bills are: The Petroleum Taxes (Amdt.) Bill, 1992; the Petroleum Production Levy and Subsidy (Amdt.) Bill, 1992; and the Income Tax (In Aid of Industry) (Amdt.) Bill, 1992. And that these bills be taken as a package since they are interrelated.

Question put and agreed to.

Hon. K. Valley: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move that the House do now adjourn to Monday, October 19, 1992 at 1.30 p.m.

Crime (Princes Town)

Mr. Mohammed Haniff (Princes Town): Mr. Deputy Speaker, as you will no doubt be aware, I gave notice of my intention to raise a matter on October 10, 1992, the subject matter being the increase in the incidence of crime in the Princes Town area, the most recent occurrence being an armed robbery committed on Wednesday, October 7, 1992, at the Revenue Office in Princes Town.

In recent times, because of the increase in crime in and around Princes Town, I have had reason, based on reports coming from residents, to become very concerned about what is happening and what has not been happening as far as the Government is concerned in the Princes Town area. In Princes Town, unlike most of the other areas of Trinidad and Tobago, we believe we can control and we should be in a position to control that crime situation there if we are given the facilities, based on promises made by this Government.

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To give you an idea of what has been happening in recent times, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have some information which is very saddening to us and to people of the Princes Town and indeed to the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. The information I have tells us that during the months of August and September, some of the crimes and offences committed in Princes Town are as follows: On August 2, robbery with violence; house breaking and larceny, same date, and larceny and we go on, amounting to 28 that I have been able to pick up with for the month of August.

I have not been able to pick up with all the crimes and offences in that area, but to have come up with 28 such offences, all sorts, house breaking, larceny, school breaking, stealing of animals predial larceny, stealing of cars and what have you, in the month of August alone—28 such crimes that I have been able to pick up from fishing around and getting information from people and reports coming in, it all shows the seriousness of the situation.

In the month of September, again I picked up similar information, 34 such offences, and it is alarming. As a result, in Princes Town now, we feel neglected. This Government says that it is committed to the nation and that it is going to deal with the crime situation. I stand here today in all humility, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to ask of those in authority to remember Princes Town and the surrounding areas.

What really caused me to come to this House with this matter, is that same incident at the Revenue Office in Princes Town which I just told you about which occurred on Wednesday, October 7. We have been looking at the others and hoping that some preventative measure would be implemented so that we would not have this kind of criminal activity continue in and around Princes Town.

I wish to quote, Mr. Deputy Speaker, from the opinion of the *Sunday Express*, April 14, 1991. The article: "Rising crime rate from deep disorder":

"In this nation of 1.2 million souls, a robbery occurs every hour and a half. A violent robbery takes place every three hours. Every 4.3 days someone is murdered. Every 2 days a woman is raped. Break-ins occur once every hour as do violent crimes."

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that bothers me and a number of other law-abiding citizens of this country. I took that information and I tried to relate it to what was happening in Princes Town and my information is that the crime rate in Princes Town and surrounding areas is on the increase. We are very concerned about that,

so I came here and I thought I would let this Minister, the House and the Government know what is happening and ask them whether they are, in fact, prepared to implement some measures that we have heard about in this House and give the police and the people of Princes Town the necessary security.

Let me give you an idea of what took place on October 7. The Revenue Office in Princes Town, which is about 400 or 500 feet from the police station, unfortunately, up to that time, did not have any security. I cannot understand that, because the Licensing Office has security; the courthouse has security day and night. When it is not the regular police, it is special security next door.

Mr. Maharaj: The Prime Minister's empty House at Marabella has security.

Mr. Haniff: I understand that the Prime Minister's empty house at Marabella has security. What I am saying, however, is that all the other Government agencies have security. On October 7, three bandits, I am told, with cutlasses and guns ran into the Revenue Office, jumped over the counter; one of them stuck a gun at the female cashier, a mother of two. Another wielded a cutlass over the supervisor, again a woman. That Revenue Office employs about 18 people. Among them are about eight or ten trainees. The majority of employees are females.

That incident, caused real havoc in Princes Town, not only with the workers of the Revenue Office, but also to all concerned, because there are still agencies where there is not adequate security. It caused the Revenue Office not to function for two days thereafter, Thursday and Friday, from ten o'clock on Wednesday, October 7.

As a result, several of the senior officers visited the office to express their sympathy. But sympathy will not do. Who went down? The Commissioner from the Inland Revenue Department, the Revenue Officer V and the Revenue Officer IV and extended their sympathy. That was very nice of them. I do not know whether any one of them carried sympathy on behalf of the Minister concerned. I doubt it very much, but I am subject to correction.

7.25 p.m.

What is worse, however, is that these people could not even function in the office or even in their homes. So what does sympathy do in such a situation? I was told by one of these ladies who were terrorized, that while she was in her kitchen thereafter, her son ran up the stairs and she was scared to death because every other noise she heard around she became scared, and that is the situation. I ask, in

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that context, who is responsible and why was there not security at the Princes Town Revenue Office prior to this incident taking place? When the senior officers came, they did not fail to inform me and the workers that it was not their fault. These are public servants. For years they have been making recommendations for security to be put there.

Let me add immediately, since this incident took place, I understand that there is a policeman there. I do not know whether it is a temporary arrangement, but the people there are still very scared and I do not know whether they will be able to forget this incident. Let me add, however, it is my understanding—I do not have it confirmed—that while the Licensing Offices and the post office etcetera have security, in other parts of the country the Revenue Offices are still without police security. We all know they collect the revenue which is collected at the Licensing and other government offices; and they go there. Let me tell you what happens in Princes Town. An armoured vehicle with armed policemen takes the money from the Licensing Office to the Warden's Office and they leave, and the Warden's Office is without any security. They take it from there in a bag to take it to the bank without any security. Somebody has to be mad!

Member: PNM!

Mr. Haniff: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am sure, because I did not come here to flim flam as one of the Members said. I did not come here for that. I came out of genuine concern. You see, Princes Town is a nice place. I do not know how many people know about Princes Town and its environment. It was once represented in this House by the PNM. Unfortunately—as far as they are concerned—that will not happen again! What is important, however, and why we wonder what is taking place and what is not taking place, is that in the last local government elections, the UNC won 100 per cent of seats of the local council. I am the representative of Princes Town and I am called upon to raise in this House and other places the issue of security in and around Princes Town.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I listened to a debate and I quote from *Hansard* of July 31, 1992 a speech by the Minister of Consumer Affairs; inter alia she spoke about plans by the Government and if—I say if, but she was saying when—they are implemented.

"...I think that pretty soon, under this Government, we shall be able to sleep with our doors open and our cars unlocked."

You see that? That is dreaming. Because when are they going to draw up the plans and implement them? If this is to happen, we would all welcome it. But you know which homes we shall be able to leave unlocked? Those that the thieves have already gone into. Those are the houses that we shall be able, perhaps, to leave unlocked, because at that time everything would have been gone.

So that while this caring Government—and I said “caring”—so they say—is working on their plans, I ask the Minister of National Security, with whom I am not very comfortable—let me say that publicly—because I got the most arrogant reply today from that Minister when it came to the Tableland police station. I respectfully invite all concerned to go and look at the physical condition of the building and the surroundings and the facilities in which the police officers are housed in the Tableland police station.

To come here and tell this House, "the Government does not have any plans to rebuild Tableland police station; the condition of the station is very good," that person is a stranger to the truth. That is not so and I most respectfully inform this House. I am not saying what I heard; I was there. The officers took me around. In fact, I complimented them on having the courage to continue to work under those conditions. The Minister went on to say, "repairs to be effected are minimal and will be undertaken as and when required." I inform him most respectfully that there is need for repairs and attention immediately.

Mr. S. Panday: Policemen deserve better.

Member: So, he is a liar, then.

Mr. Haniff: This document that they are quoting from known as the PNM manifesto says, among other things concerning the police service:

"Adequate transportation for the police service."

In Tableland there is one police vehicle and in Princes Town there are two. One is marked Police, the other is for the security and other officers. It is not marked 'Security' and as a result on this unfortunate day, the 7th, when a young man ran to the police station at Princes Town, there was not enough manpower, and there was no vehicle, otherwise the culprits would have been caught. I spoke with senior officers there and they told me that if they had had vehicles—the two that they have do not always function properly—they would have been able to apprehend the culprits.

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Mr. Deputy Speaker, do you know what is happening at Barrackpore? The Barrackpore station encompasses an area in Princes Town and is commonly known as Princes Town, and I am not speaking here only of the constituency of Princes Town, but also of the areas in and around. In Barrackpore there is one vehicle, an open-tray Datsun van—a pickup. I witnessed this. The police had to pick up a criminal; and two policemen came, the driver and another one, they got help to put this person who was being taken up for alleged crimes, tied him with rope and put him on the tray of the van.

Member: Like a pig! They treat “Palacks” better.

Mr. Haniff: You know why? The police usually call me and ask me to see what I can do so that they may get adequate number and type of vehicles for them to do some of what they are expected to do.

Mr. Maharaj: They regard you as being more important than the Minister!

Mr. Haniff: That is the situation, and as you can see, it is bad. It is really bad in and around Princes Town. Let me give you an idea of some of what causes crime. Vendors come to Princes Town, facilities are bad. No facilities to sell; police run them off the streets; no facilities, all sorts of hardships encountered. They go back to the country and start planting marijuana instead of tomatoes and different things and crime starts occurring. We must get rid of that. We want a market in Princes Town. That is one aspect of it. When I spoke about it, this hon. gentleman, after giving an explanation which he knows will not do, sat there and laughed, to my amazement, just as though he felt he deceived someone. Sit there, where are you going—

Mr. Valley: The Member does not understand that the Princes Town Corporation is responsible for the market. He cannot understand that.

Hon. Member: Do not blame him.

7.35 p.m.

Mr. Haniff: Your colleague says, “do not blame him”. You see, I understand what I understand; and you understand what you understand; but you do not know what you do not understand.

We have a situation in Princes Town. The Minister of Public Utilities gave me a reply. It is in *Hansard*. He said it is not true that the street lights are not functioning. I challenge anyone within or outside this House that no less than 25

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per cent of the street lights in Princes Town and around are not functioning regardless of this report. That causes crime. The bandits like the dark; therefore, there is need to put street lights in Princes Town so that we may get some of them out of this criminal activity. When I asked about the criteria for electrification I got an explanation that there is need to run electricity all over the place. I have about 10 projects with the National Self-help Commission. We need help. The people are willing to do it. Electrification is important to brighten up the environment and to keep the criminals away.

In the area of the Tableland police station along the Naparima/Mayaro Road there are no telephones. To my surprise! It is the main road leading to Mayaro, a populated area and all is not the Princes Town constituency. As you go along that road on the left side is the Princes Town constituency. The Member for Ortoire/Mayaro will agree with me. There are no telephones in that area. If one sees a criminal around, the police cannot be contacted through a telephone. You cannot call your friends and colleagues and ask for help.

Criminal activity in Princes Town is increasing and we do not want it to reach the proportion as in other parts of the country. My experience in Princes Town is that illegal drugs can be had just as though you are going to buy a little something on the counter. The police know where it is being sold. The police need to get the manpower, machinery, equipment and all that goes with it so that they may take steps to stop what is happening. The potential is that things may get worse. In fact, it is getting.

We ask that the authorities concerned go down and look at what is happening in Princes Town. I would be willing to show them around and point out what is happening. All sorts of things are responsible for crime. When you look at what is happening in certain other parts of Trinidad—it says “region”, not “constituency”—there are 10, 11 and 12 LIDP projects. In Princes Town there are two. Do you know who is selecting? The defeated PNM candidate and her brother are selecting the people. They say that it is computerized. I ask, in all humility, Sir, how come it is computerized and there are people repeating fortnight after fortnight and hundreds who have registered are not getting anything to do? When you cannot get permanent jobs, if you are not considered on the LIDP project, and there is nothing coming to you, you go out and commit petty offences.

Those things can be removed. I say to the authorities in Princes Town and other areas bordering Naparima, and Tabaquite, lovely areas; decent people, we

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must take steps to prevent the crime situation from escalating. Do you know what? These are some of the things that we must do. I have said in this House before, I am the Member of Parliament representing Princes Town and not even one “ten-days” can I get on the LIDP project for the worst case in the area, but others are getting 4, 5 and 6 ten-days. Do you see what is happening? Tell me what criteria should be used? Do we have a computer in LIDP that is not turning up the names of those who really deserve but is only coming up with one set of names?

When I spoke about that situation in this House on the last occasion, my friend the Member for Arouca North told me—which is just a matter of a fortnight ago—he was going to try to take steps to remedy that. I am relating this to the situation of crime. This is what I am telling you. Because if they get a little employment, their criminal activity, petty as it may be, would be reduced. That is the situation. I did not come here to make jokes and I did not come here to raise this matter because I want to raise something and have the opportunity to say something. It is bad and it is worsening. In that situation and in consideration of the time of the evening, I want to end by asking: Is the security at the Warden's Office permanent? If those persons were in a private firm they will at least get one week off and perhaps, a little change to visit a doctor and get medical advice and that kind of thing. That trauma! Do you know how difficult it is?

What are the arrangements when you are a public servant under those conditions? Who will take the responsibility? I plead through you Sir, with the hon. Members in this House who say they care and have a responsibility, that if things are bad in other parts of the country definitely, we need to deal with the situation but do not allow those areas which are not so bad yet, to get as bad as the other areas. Let us go down and prevent it from escalating to the kind of conditions we do not want. The people of Princes Town have all sorts of potential. They are gardeners, all sorts of things. Of course you will have the criminal element. If proper steps are taken by this Government who says it cares, we can reduce it further. Give us the opportunity to keep Princes Town and surrounding areas a beautiful place.

I thank you very much, Sir.

The Minister of National Security (Sen. The Hon. Russell Huggins): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am going to show much greater consideration for the time of the evening. I want to re-emphasize a position that I have taken on numerous occasions and that is, this Government is very concerned about the crime situation

in this country. Those on the Opposition Benches can say what they want. I want to make it clear that we are concerned and I am also satisfied with the attempts we are making, so far, in addressing the situation.

7.45 p.m.

On the particular issue that there is an increase in crime in Princes Town, of the reported crimes committed for the period January 1, 1992 to October 15, 1992, there were 264. For the comparative period, January 1, 1991 to October 15, 1991, there were 270 crimes committed in the Princes Town area. I do not know that that represents an increase. I agree that it does represent that there is a serious crime problem in Princes Town, and that like the rest of the country this Government within its limited resources is trying its best to address the situation.

I am aware that every Member of Parliament is going to champion his own cause. I get it from the Parliamentarians on my side, and from the Parliamentarians on the other side. If I take on everybody, I would build a police station every day; buy 50 cars every day; and I would do all sorts of things. This situation requires careful consideration, and I have looked at entirely. The approach that I have decided to take in terms of accommodation is to address the most urgent cases first.

For example, I recognize that Princes Town is in dire need of a police station and for months now I have been trying to find a site for it. I have the money to build a police station in Princes Town, but the station to be built there cannot be accommodated on the site of the existing one. Together with the Ministry of Works, we are seeking to find alternative accommodation. As soon as that is found a new police station will in fact be constructed in Princes Town. Likewise in Sangre Grande, there is the crying need for a police station. Again, I have the money to build a police station there, but one does not just walk into an area and find a place waiting there to build a police station. There are many things to be considered.

Mr Jurai: Would the Minister give way to a question, please?

Mr. Huggins: I do not have much time. Wait!. Hold on.

We are looking at the situation and I feel very comfortable that at the end of the day the matter will be addressed. I have also made it quite clear that when we

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came into office we found a terrible situation which they had part in. They were part of the last Government that allowed this to fester in this country. We are taking a very careful look at this situation of crime in this country, the situation of dealing with the police service for example.

I am aware that there are many persons who have criticized me for my actions in terms of the police service. I want to make it clear and I am very happy to say that there are many good police officers in this country. However, there are others who are determined to bring the police service into disrepute. And I am going to deal with those officers. I have heard that I am not the Police Service Commission and I cannot do it, but there are ways of dealing with things. To show this Government's determination, the matter is going to be dealt with.

Mr. Maharaj: How is that some of them have \$.5 million in American banks?

Mr. Huggins: I do not know. You probably helped them get it there.

Mr. Maharaj: Would the Minister deny—

Mr. Huggins: Are you standing on a point of order?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, please, please!

Mr. Huggins: I will give you a say.

Mr. Maharaj: Can the hon. Minister deny that police officers who have bank accounts in the United States still occupy top positions in the police service?

Mr. Huggins: As I was saying, we are fully cognizant of the crime situation in this country and what needs to be addressed. We are looking into them and I assure this House and the country that before long, the matters will be addressed.

Going back to the crime situation in Princes Town, in the list provided me here, for this year so far there has been a marked reduction in the different types of crimes occurring in Princes Town, as opposed to last year. The only area where there has been a 200 per cent increase is the area of serious indecency and unnatural offences. I am tempted to ask the hon. Member whether he can give me any assistance in dealing with this situation. I have noticed that it rose since his stewardship. It is a matter which I will discuss with him elsewhere.

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Let me give the assurance that this Government is addressing the situation of crime. We are very concerned about it. I feel confident that at the end of the day we would have dealt with the matter.

I thank you.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 7.55 p.m.