

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES*Friday, January 29, 1993*

The House met at 1.40 p.m.

PRAYERS[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]**AMARJYOTH SABHA (INC'N) BILL****Presentation**

Dr. Rupert Griffith (*Arima*): Madam Speaker, I wish to present a report of the Special Select Committee of the House of Representatives appointed to consider and report on a private bill for the incorporation of the Amarjyoth Sabha and matters incidental thereto.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

**Cocoa and Coffee Cess
(Overdue Payment)**

98. Mr. Krish Jurai (*Nariva*) asked the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources:

Would the Minister indicate what steps are being taken with respect to the long overdue payment of Cocoa and Coffee Cess for the year 1992?

The Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources (Dr. The Hon. Keith Rowley): Madam Speaker, the sum of \$4,981,253 was paid on January 8, 1993 to coffee farmers in respect of the 1991/1992 crop. No price support is required for cocoa, because the premium prices that continue to be fetched on the international market for those countries' fine quality cocoa do not require government support.

Mr. Jurai: A supplemental question, Madam Speaker. Would the Minister indicate why payments were so late in coming?

Dr. Rowley: While the Ministry of Agriculture has the responsibility for passing these funds down to the farmers, the Ministry of Agriculture is simply a conduit for the Ministry of Finance and I am not in a position to answer as to why the Ministry of Finance has cash-flow problems.

**Sangre Grande Government School
(Rebuilding of)**

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

Would the Minister state what steps are being taken with respect to:

- (a) The rebuilding of the Sangre Grande Government School?
- (b) How soon can we expect to see the said school back on stream?
- (c) Is the Minister aware that because of the closure of the said school, children and parents alike suffer severe strain because of the shift system in operation at the St. Francis R.C. School to accommodate children from the Sangre Grande Government School which is now closed?
- (d) If the Minister is so aware, would he state what immediate steps are being taken to alleviate the situation?

Mr. Jurai: Madam Speaker, I had addressed my question to the Minister of Education but I see it is under the hon. Minister of Health. I have no objection if the Minister so wishes to answer.

Madam Speaker: I gather that it is a typographical error.

The Minister of Education (Hon. Augustus Ramrekersingh): Madam Speaker, the Sangre Grande Government Primary School was demolished in 1991 to enable its replacement on the same site. It is one of the schools included in the Fincor loan facility project for rebuilding.

The tender for the rebuilding of the school was awarded by the Central Tenders Board in December, 1992 and the contract is expected to be signed in the first week of February.

Construction should begin two to three weeks after the signing of the contract and is expected to last one year. We, therefore, expect the physical building to be ready not later than the third term of the 1993/94 academic year.

The school building has been demolished, but the school has not closed. It functions on the basis of a shift arrangement with the St. Francis R.C. School. The Minister is aware that this shift arrangement causes some dislocation both for children and their parents, as well as for teachers. Unfortunately, there are no

other neighbouring schools to which children might have been transferred. It is a difficult situation, but one which is unavoidable.

The other option would have been to have the children continue to attend the school in a building which was rapidly becoming a danger to their safety.

The Minister does not consider the situation to be one of "severe strain" to the children and parents, though it is of some inconvenience to them. Efforts, however, have been made to minimize the problem. These efforts include:

- (1) The assignment of the cleaners of the Sangre Grande Government School to the St. Francis R.C. School.
- (2) Transfer of the allocation for goods and services from the Sangre Grande Government Primary School to the St. Francis R.C. School.
- (3) Arrangements with the Ministry of Works and Transport to assist with routine maintenance and repair work of the St. Francis R.C. School.
- (4) Regular meetings involving officers of the Ministry of Education with the schools' parent/teacher associations and the Roman Catholic Board of Management to lighten the burdens imposed by the shift arrangement.

**Nariva Government School
(Reopening of)**

100. Mr. Krish Jurai (*Nariva*) asked the Minister of Education:

Would the Minister give reasons for the delay in the reopening of the Nariva Government School?

Is the Minister aware of the following at the said school:

- (a) The renovation of the said school has been completed.
- (b) The school has been refurnished over a year ago.
- (c) Because of the continued closure of the school, children are facing severe hardship in obtaining their education.
- (d) As a result of the prolonged closure of the school, children are hard-pressed because they have to travel to the Manzanilla Government School which is about 4 miles away from the Nariva Government School.
- (e) There is no school bus in the area.

- (f) The Manzanilla Government School is overcrowded and there are over 150 young children on the school's waiting list.
- (g) If the Minister is aware of these problems, will he state what is he doing to resolve the situation?

The Minister of Education (Hon. Augustus Ramrekersingh): Madam Speaker, we are aware that the Nariva Government School was repaired, refurbished and re-painted and that these activities were completed in July, 1990. However, the infant block housed in the principal's quarters was considered in September 1989 by the county medical officer of health, St. Andrew/St. David, to be unsatisfactory and unsafe. He recommended that this part of the school be demolished. Demolition was done early in 1992.

The Minister is not aware of any refurnishing of the school.

The Minister is not aware that children are facing, as the hon. Member puts it, "severe hardship" in obtaining their education. Their education continued at a nearby school, the Manzanilla Government School, while arrangements were completed for reopening of the repaired building.

Even though classes were not held at the renovated Nariva Government School, it is not correct to say that the school was closed. Classes were being accommodated at the Manzanilla Government School, some 2.2 kilometres away, and not 4 miles, as indicated in the question. The children were not hard-pressed, as is being suggested, but clearly, there would have been some inconvenience as a result of the longer distance to the school.

The Minister is aware that there is no school bus service in the area. This Government re-introduced a school bus service in early 1992, albeit on a limited scale. A commitment was given at that time that as resources became available, the school bus system would be expanded.

Even though the entire school population of the Nariva Government School was transferred to the Manzanilla Government School, the Manzanilla Government School is not overcrowded, nor does it have a waiting list of 150 children. As at December, the enrollment of the Manzanilla Government School was 295 children, and the enrollment of the Nariva Government School was 69. The total number of students using the Manzanilla Government School, therefore, was 364. The original design capacity of the Manzanilla Government School is 380. Additionally, the extended eaves of the building and the refurbished annex

for post primary classes provide further accommodation. The administration of the Manzanilla Government School has indicated that there is no waiting list.

Classes at the Nariva Government School resumed on Thursday, January 14, 1993 and registration of additional pupils commenced on January 18.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Jurai: A supplemental question, Madam Speaker. The Minister, having admitted that there is no school service in the area, is he now saying that this is not imposing severe hardships when children have to travel four or five miles to the Manzanilla Government School?

Hon. A. Ramrekersingh: Madam Speaker, before answering the question directly, I realize that I am talking in kilometres and the honourable Gentleman is talking in miles, but the distance which I have been given is 2.2 kilometres and not four miles.

The question about the school bus service is quite clear. We restarted a school bus service. That school bus service includes the use of PTSC buses, as well as the use of maxi taxis in certain areas. The Ministry of Education has supplied the Ministry of Public Utilities with the relevant data in relation to the transport needs of all schools. It is a question of resources becoming available and then the allocation. The commitment has been given that as soon as the resources become available, the school bus service will be expanded.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Minister of Local Government and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Madam Speaker, I beg to move that Private Business, item 11, be taken before Public Business.

Assent indicated.

AMARJYOTH SABHA (INC'N) BILL

Adoption

Dr. Rupert Griffith (Arima): Madam Speaker, I beg to move,

That this House adopt the report of the Special Select Committee of the House of Representatives appointed to consider and report on a private Bill for the incorporation of the Amarjyoth Sabha and matters incidental thereto.

Question proposed.

Question put and agreed to.

Report adopted.

Question put and agreed to, That the bill be now read the third time.

Bill accordingly read the third time and passed.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Minister of Local Government and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Madam Speaker, I seek the leave of the House to take the Motion on the Supplemental Order Paper at this time, please.

Madam Speaker: At this point, before we embark upon this motion, may I remind members of the media that permission has not been granted for the live coverage of the proceedings of this debate. I ask members of the media to note that aspect of the matter.

Assent indicated.

CENTRAL TENDERS BOARD (AMDT.) BILL

Senate Amendment

The Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs (Hon. Keith Sobion): Madam Speaker, I beg to move the following motion standing in my name,

That the Senate amendment to the Central Tenders Board (Amdt.) Bill, 1993, listed hereunder be now considered:

Question proposed.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 5.

Senate amendment read as follows:

Delete this clause and substitute as follows:

Act No. 36 of 1979 "5. All contracts made between the National Insurance Property Development Company Limited and the Government acting on its own behalf shall, notwithstanding any law to the contrary, be deemed to have been lawfully made, as if this Act had been in force at the commencement of the Central Tenders Board (Amdt.) Act, 1979."

Mr. Sobion: Madam Speaker, I beg to move that the House doth agree with the Senate in the said amendment.

Question proposed.

Question put and agreed to.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Minister of Local Government and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Madam Speaker, I beg to move that the motion, as I have been advised by the Clerk of the House, standing in the name of the Leader of the Opposition, be taken at this time. We have confirmed that the Government is willing to accede to the request of this motion.

Assent indicated.

CORRUPTION ALLEGATIONS

Mr. Basdeo Panday (Couva North): Madam Speaker, the motion that stands before this House, reads as follows:

Whereas recent responses by the Government have demonstrated that it is not prepared to implement its 1991 General Elections pledge to the country that if it formed the Government it would ensure accountability at all levels:

And whereas governmental actions including but not limited to its actions in the handling of the Pegasus issue, the Port Authority insurance issue, the issue involving the allegations of the existence of a drug cartel in the Police Service and the issue of public funds being used by directors of the Airports Authority for their private purposes are unsatisfactory and are not in the public interest:

And whereas the machinery which exists for the selling and/or disposition of state assets and for Government entering into contracts with foreign firms, companies, consultants and/or lobbyists facilitate the commission of corrupt acts:

And whereas the existence of the present machinery by which Government and/or governmental bodies account to Parliament and to the people facilitate secret government and also promote the commission of corrupt acts, abuse and/or misuse of power by public officials and/or encourages the lowering of standards of conduct in public life:

And whereas Government . . ."

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There is a typographical error, which I correct immediately.

. . . is aware of the present deficiencies which affect integrity in public administration and which result *inter alia* in waste and mismanagement of the financial resources of the country which resources can be used to provide relief for the unemployed and those afflicted with poverty:

And whereas the Government has displayed impotence in taking any effective steps to redress the injustice caused to our people by the afore-mentioned matters:

Be it resolved that this honourable House express its lack of confidence in the Government in its failure to stop and/or reduce the growing tendency of corruption which has occurred under its regime and which is likely to continue unless the deficiencies mentioned herein are arrested by a government.

2.00 p.m.

Madam Speaker, it seems as though history repeats itself. As I was entering the Parliament today, I was confronted by a very hostile mob at the entrance to the Parliament which shook—

Madam Speaker: Members in the public gallery I will ask you to take note. If you wish to remain in this House you will have to be quiet. The rule of this House is that you be silent while the proceedings are taking place, otherwise you will be put out.

Mr. B. Panday:...Which said mob shook placards in my face (probably right up so I could not see where I was walking). But they did not know me so I proceeded through this hostile mob, forcing my way through and entered the Parliament where similar jeering took place. I do not mind that. I am an old soldier of this kind of thing. That, I take in my stride every day. The point I wish to make is, that what is happening in this House today is reminiscent of a similar act under the old PNM when we were debating the O'Halloran affair. Identical. We were going to debate the O'Halloran affair and the other side brought down their supporters to jeer and they spat in the face of the Member for Tobago West and the Member for Tabaquite who later became Speaker, was assaulted. Why? They were seeking to raise the issue of corruption. I raise that for only one single purpose, show that the new PNM is exactly like the old PNM.

Mr. Bereaux: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. The Member for Couva North said and I quote what he said, "There was a hostile mob out there but he

proceeded through this hostile mob" But he is now saying that the same thing happened because that alleged incident *[Interruption]* The point of order is that he is untrue. You do not tell me to sit down. He is not speaking the truth *[Interruption]*

Madam Speaker: The Member for Couva North may continue.

Mr. B. Panday: Thank you kindly, Madam Speaker. I said on that occasion some years ago the old PNM was in office and Members of this House were assaulted. It proves a point. I am happy that the PNM has brought some of their supporters in this House today and I hope they come every Friday because this is the way they will learn what is the real PNM. They will learn that they are not the PNM, they are the beast of burden of the PNM; that the PNM is here and they rode their backs to get into power and today they will hear how the money goes while they are unemployed, while they suffer with hunger and deprivation; today they will hear how their money is spent, money which could have provided employment for them, they will hear how it goes. One thing I want to do, in fact, they are working, I am a trade unionist and I am going to insist on pay for them at the old LIDP rate, not the new LIDP rate. They must be paid. They have come here and if they have been promised they were going to get paid, they must be paid. As a supporter of workers—

Madam Speaker: Proceed with the motion, please?

Mr. B. Panday: Yes, I will proceed with the motion. There is much more of this to come. This motion is about corruption. Madam Speaker, I have heard about the rule of law and the rule of thumb. We are about to see the rule of thugs. That is what we are about to see. That is corruption.

Madam Speaker, when I got this note saying that the Government was prepared to debate this motion, I thought, maybe, the Prime Minister has begun to get good advice for a change. Because he has been trying to stifle debate on corruption and surely he knows that the more you stifle it the more it raises its ugly head. I did not know that the idea was to agree to this motion and then try to come and intimidate me and prevent me from debating it. If that is the case, then he has another thing coming. He does not know this old warrior, he does not know him at all. I want to make it clear at the outset what we in the Opposition hope to achieve by this debate, not merely to expose corruption—in fact, any further exposure of the PNM will be indecent exposure. They will be naked. We hope not only to expose corruption but we hope to persuade the people, if not the

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Government, that the time has come to set up institutions and mechanisms, regulations and procedures, checks and balances to abate and lessen, if not, eliminate completely, corruption. That is what we hope to achieve. Therefore, it is sad—I would not argue that now but I do not think you have power to do it. what you just did. Under Standing Order 88, the *Press* is allowed in here

"...under such rules as the Speaker may make from time to time—"

Madam Speaker: The hon. Member is well aware that before live coverage can be undertaken in this House the previous permission of the Speaker must be obtained. No member of any media obtained permission, therefore, I warned the media that indeed, no such permission has been obtained and they ought to refrain from live coverage. It does not mean that the proceedings of the House will not be reported but the live coverage is what I was referring to.

Mr. B. Panday: If that is a rule of this House then it must be the first rule that has to be changed, because the whole question of the freedom of the press is to enable them to report what happens here and no reason has been given why simultaneous coverage has been banned. That must not be the power of the Speaker. We have a House Committee for that, but be that as it may, I will debate that at another time. I am not going to take up my time here today on that. In order to persuade the Government to set up institutions, machinery and mechanisms to deal with this burning issue of corruption, it is unfortunate that in order to make my point, I am constrained to make references to actual incidences of corruption in the society and I am afraid I will have to also make reference to the reaction of those in power at the time the issue of corruption was being raised.

Madam Speaker, since corruption has, during the past 30 years of the PNM rule, become so endemic a part of the society, obviously, I can only refer to a few cases. The general idea however, is to demonstrate how the insidious hand of corruption burrows deep into the body politic while the so-called exemplars of society beat down and snuff out the voice, as if it were, in the wilderness crying out against abuses. I want to demonstrate to this society of hypocrites what they have done to this society. That is what I want to do. It is equally important to demonstrate to the entire society, and to the unemployed and particularly to those who are about to be retrenched in the public sector, it is important in a debate such as this to demonstrate that there is a direct link between the corruption of the Government and their sufferings.

2.10 p.m.

That is going to be my purpose. People in this country have to understand that when they suffer for water, electricity, housing and jobs, it is directly linked to corruption in the government. Once they understand that, I have no fear; they would not assault me, but they have to understand. I hope they come here every Friday. You should pay them to come every Friday.

Corruption, insofar as it is going to pertain to this debate, in our respectful view, takes several forms. It takes the form of naked bribe-taking by public officials, such as has been the case of O'Halloran, Boysie Prevatt, and there was a Minister who was known as the "Shoe Box Minister"—I would not call his name—and that is because he used to receive the cash from a certain contractor in a shoe box. As a matter of fact, he is rearing his head again with the new PNM. The physical taking of money in order for favours is a form of corruption.

Another dimension of corruption is the covering up and or defending actions of corruption, whether it is by setting up a half-hearted enquiry, or an investigation that is not an investigation. That is an act of corruption. For example, we have the notorious case of the Airports Authority and the Pegasus contract; the Port Authority and the insurance contract.

Another dimension of corruption is influence-peddling about which we have heard little in this House. Influence-peddling for reward, directly or indirectly, for example, appointing or causing to be appointed your family, close relative, spouse or friend in positions in which you anticipate the exercise of influence in order to perpetrate corruption. Today we shall raise certain appointments to the Airports Authority, as examples of what we mean by dimensions of corruption.

Corruption also involves the appointing of, or condoning of the recruitment of workers or employees on the basis of race, party affiliation, nepotism, patronage and favouritism. Today, we intend to argue that is the root cause of why WASA is collapsing, T&TEC is firing people and the Port Authority must lay off people. We intend to link the two together and to make people understand once and for all, that if they tolerate corruption in one regard, they pay for it. They cannot get away. They cannot escape payment if they tolerate corruption. If they vote for the PNM knowing it to be corrupt, they must expect that they will suffer.

We intend to draw that link and to show from statements from WASA itself why WASA is WASA and why today the Government is going to retrench people from WASA and the Port Authority. That is a form and a dimension of corruption.

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Corruption also involves using state resources to campaign, or for partisan, political purposes. Again, we intend to use a statement made by the Prime Minister recently, in which he seeks to divide the society in order to perpetuate that group in power. I want to make it absolutely clear, that when we say PNM in this debate, we mean that group in power, not the masses who voted for them. The masses who voted for them are suffering.

Influence-peddling itself takes many different dimensions. We say that to argue that anonymous letters must never ever be referred to, in order to deal with corruption, is to misunderstand the whole nature of this society, so that, we are going to argue that if the people of this nation and the Government are convinced that there is need to set up machinery in order to deal with corruption, then the kind of machinery you set up has to be related to the society.

It has to take into consideration the smallness of the society and we are a very small society; it has to take into consideration the fact that we interface very intensely in this society. We live in crucible-like conditions, because if there is a rumour in Port of Spain in the morning, you will hear it in Cedros in the evening, because we interface so intensely. Because we interface so intensely, the opportunity for the Government to victimize people who make reports are clear.

When we got permission for this motion, I started a file on corruption for the debate and this is the size of the file. This is the second file and information keeps coming in all the time. I make that point only to say, that if you are going to tackle corruption, you have to tackle it on an ongoing basis, not on an *ad hoc* basis, like having someone give a report on something, and someone else gives a report on something. It is not like that at all, but on an ongoing basis.

You have to set up a kind of institution where people are not afraid. That is to say, you have to allow anonymous reports, but you must not allow them to come out in the open as we are forced to do it here. The only reason why we are forced to read anonymous reports in Parliament is that they are afraid to set up a committee of Parliament, where we can deal with it privately. So, because they have not done that, they are forcing us to do it in the open and then they are forcing the Speaker to say, do not broadcast it. You have to find a way to allow people to make complaints without being victimized.

I am not talking about people from the South. I am talking about people from Laventille who come to my office every Friday and complain about how they are being victimized on the LIDP. How is it called now? URP? The new name sounds

like a belch, like you are belching out something; URP, BURP, something like that. People come to my office, where they beg, complain and cry. They are people from Laventille, John-John and Waterhole. They cry and say how they are being victimized and they are afraid to talk because those who run the programmes in the area will victimize them.

I do not know if they are telling the truth. I presume that they are, but what I am saying is that, should people like that not have a place to complain and have their complaints dealt with? As I said, the debate is not only to expose the corruption and the involvement of those present in this House to defending corruption in the past, but it is also to get them to agree to set up machinery to deal with corruption.

2.20 p.m.

It is hoped that the debate will accentuate the need to establish institutions and mechanisms which will work and, as I say, they must have regard for our small size, to our intense interfacing, to the plural nature of the society, to our demographic distribution, to our historical and cultural background. If you do not take these things into consideration, you cannot get out of it.

They brought in the very powerful Scotland Yard and they complained that the police were afraid to talk to them. They could not get the co-operation of the police. You have to set up an institution whereby people can talk. Why do people write letters? Not only to me—I receive hundreds of anonymous letters—but even when they write to the press, they are afraid to put their names for the press to print them.

I also want to deal with how this Government has reacted to our request to deal with the issue of corruption. So, Madam Speaker, a very good point at which to start would be to look at the history of corruption—and, as I said, since I cannot deal with all, I shall deal with only some—to show how the Government has responded to allegations of corruption and to link that with what is happening in society today. This corruption business is not something which started today. It is not just today we are quarrelling about this. We have been arguing about this for nigh on 10 to 12 years.

I have been able to collect a few mementos from the newspapers which are very revealing. This deals with that DC-9 scandal, because it is from the very DC-9 scandal, as a matter of fact, which, as far as we are concerned, that we tried to deal with corruption in this House.

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Madam Speaker, this present PNM says that they have nothing to do with the past and so on. I will show you how the present PNM defended corruption in those days. I start with a copy of the *Express*, Saturday, August 30, 1980 in which it says:

“The Government is taking action against Navarro and company for a possible breach of the Exchange Control Act in the \$1.3 million BWIA pay-off scandal.

This was announced in a broadcast to the nation last night by Public Information Minister, Patrick Manning.”

Now, it has got to be somebody else. It cannot be the present Prime Minister, because he is an innocent babe; he knows nothing about these things.

If the Information Minister in 1980 is in this House, will he stand and identify himself? He is not here, as I thought.

“This Cabinet today considered a report presented by the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance with respect to the McDonnell Douglas Report to the United States Securities and Exchange Commission in which BWIA’s acquisition of three DC-9 aircraft was associated with ‘questionable payments.’ The Prime Minister is reported to have said as follows...”

The importance of this is, at that time, there was an allegation that O’Halloran, a high Government official and or influential businessman were involved in corruption. Instead of trying to identify the high Government official and the businessmen, in fact, what they were doing was going after Navarro, exactly the kind of red herring you see taking place right now. That is one of the reactions of corruption to which I want to come.

So that in this issue of the DC-9, the first point that I wanted to make is that we could not find out who was involved. They would not attack the issue as it really was, but drew a lot of red herring and the present Prime Minister was a party to that. That is my argument here today and that is the relevance of this, that the present Prime Minister was then Minister of Information and he was helping the Government to cover up at the time.

I will tell you how he spoke about Pakistan in the issue of September 6, 1980, just so that you may know that the stand that we have taken has never changed:

“Is the Prime Minister, Dr. Williams, himself involved in the DC-9 pay-off scandal?”

United Labour Front Opposition Leader, Basdeo Panday raised the question in the House of Representatives yesterday when attempting to have the matter aired under the agenda which deals with adjourning the House to discuss matters of ‘urgent public importance’.”

Do you think it is from today we are having this trouble?

“According to Mr. Panday, there was a ‘growing feeling’ in the country that the Government’s relative silence so far may be due to the fact that the Prime Minister himself is involved.”

What we were saying is, clear the Prime Minister’s name. The purpose of that big debate was to get people to clear the Prime Minister’s name because the country was asking. “Why was he not tackling these fellows, O’Halloran and so on? Is the Prime Minister involved?” We were trying to raise the matter so we could clear the Prime Minister’s name. Today we hope to clear the current Prime Minister’s name, too, and one of the major purposes of the debate is to clear the Prime Minister’s name. We know the Prime Minister will answer many questions.

“Mr. Panday’s impassioned plea had no influence on Speaker Arnold Thomasos...”

No. I do not want to raise that.

The then Information Minister, Manning, is reported in the *Sunday Express*, October 19, 1980 as saying:

“Information Minister Patrick Manning made very heavy weather, both in the House on Friday, and later in a television and radio hook-up over what he confesses to be a deliberate suppressing of information by ‘a local newspaper.’”

And the *Sunday Express* headline was:

“You cannot mean us, Mr. Manning.”

Even today, as there is an attack in the media for exposing corruption, his pattern has not changed. Truly it has been said a leopard cannot change its spots: Exactly as he was attacking the media for exposing corruption, which turned out to be correct, he was telling them that they are irresponsible, just as he told me I was irresponsible.

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Twelve years ago the Prime Minister stood up in this House and called me irresponsible for raising the O'Halloran affair, called Humphrey irresponsible for raising the O'Halloran affair and twelve years later he stands up in the House and calls the Member for Tobago East—I suppose he must be responsible, he would not take off his gloves for him. That is the same pattern. The people in this House today who have not got jobs must realize that it is money spent on DC-9 and on corruption in Tesoro, and corruption in the Caroni Racing Complex, that is why they are suffering today; they have got to understand that. If they do not understand that they will understand nothing. I am glad they are here today to hear how the PNM is defending corruption then and is defending corruption now.

I continue to read from the same article:

“The disclosure of the \$1.3 million pay-off by McDonnell Douglas to sell three DC-9s to BWIA in 1976 would never have hit the headlines unless the US Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) was involved.”

The sum of \$1.3 million in 1980. If that money were used in order to set up those same people who want to kill me here today, in business, in small businesses, today they would not have needed the Government, they would not have needed to sell their souls and their bodies for 10 days, they would have been engaged in little businesses where they are minding their children and expanding their businesses and bringing in their families and hundreds of thousands of families would have been involved in small business today. They would not have been looking for 10 days if, instead of covering up in 1980, instead of covering up \$1.3 million pay in bribes—that is only one deal I am talking about, I am coming to the others a little later on.

““ And it was one basis of this follow-up review that the \$1.3 million made in ‘questionable payments’ in Trinidad and Tobago was revealed, when the committee filed its report with the SEC on July 29, 1980.....”

That was what the then Minister of Information was trying to cover up in those days:

“The distinction, however, is not clear...”

I read from the article:

“...clear-cut as Mr. Manning appears to be making out and, in this context, it might be useful to refer to an article we carried on our Centre Pages on August 16, headlined: ‘What Is A Questionable Payment’ in which the following information was provided:

‘Building on the integrity disclosure concept and the suspicions aroused by the Congressional hearings on the Watergate scandal, which revealed a pattern of illegal political contributions by American corporations...’

And so on. People were raising it.

October 20, 1980: “No trace of \$\$ paid out.”:

“‘The Government of Trinidad and Tobago was not provided by the SEC with the names of the individuals allegedly involved.’”

At that time, his position was, “What do you want us to do? We cannot do anything.” The Securities and Exchange Commission made a report, but they did not call names. So because they do not call names, they do not know what is involved here and they took no steps to find out, they let one die and they let one go. But the important thing is one of those persons involved in that thing walked into this country recently and walked back out. The Government said he was a private citizen. When he took \$1.3 million, what was he taking? Private money? He was taking those same people’s money. It was their money he was taking, and he walked in and walked out.

As far as I am aware, and my friend who practices more criminal law than I do will tell me, time does not run against the Crown. So that if someone commits a corrupt act against the state, it is not like a private case, where you cannot bring it after four years, it lives forever. Time does not run against the state. So if they were interested in that, they would make investigations. “He come back into the country as though nothing happened.” Something should have been said. I go on and I do not intend to read all of these. “No trace of funds paid out”. All these are more questions to be answered and so on and so forth.

Exactly as they did in those days, they are doing this time. When that happened, they filed a gagging writ. A gagging writ is a writ that, once you file it, you cannot talk about it any more. They filed a gagging writ then and they are filing gagging writs now. Gagging writs are being filed now in order to prevent a discussion on corruption.

“Meet us in Mexico, said McDonnell.

Information Minister Patrick Manning Friday detailed for the House and later to the nation in a radio and television link-up...”

And so on. He said the people are saying they are afraid to come to Trinidad. If big, strong, independent aliens of this country are afraid to come to Trinidad, what

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do they expect of poor people in Trinidad when they come to complain? These people are Mafia, they will shoot us and kill us. Was it you, Sir, who said, "we shall meet in Mexico, we shall talk in Mexico"? "Our man in Washington".

I love this one. This one appears on November 9, 1980, the Sunday opinion of the *Express* of that date, "Another word from Mr. Manning", and it reads:

"Mr. Manning's invitation to invoke the name of the state of Pakistan to rescue the integrity of Trinidad and Tobago from the murky DC-9 affair would have been more fitting on the eve of the Islamic festival of Eid ul Fitr.

But perhaps he thought it just as well that in an attempt to throw light on the problem surrounding the sale of those McDonnell Douglas DC-9s to British West Indian Airways, he should take to the airways on the eve of the Hindu festival of Divali.

What Mr. Manning revealed on Thursday evening is that the government is in a litigious mood."

In 1980 they were in a litigious mood and in 1998 they are still in a litigious mood. Litigious to file a case to prevent people from talking about corruption. This leopard has not changed its spots. The identical pattern of corruption 12 years ago repeats itself in this House.

If this population wants to vote them back in, vote them back in and they will have to continue to suffer until they realize in their mind and heart that they are the cause of their suffering.

"DC-9 affair: Ex-BWIA director speaks out."

The only one I want to read out in the whole big bundle here, there is so much, Madam Speaker, that I know that I am not going to make it with the time I have. *Sunday Express* called for the "Time for the whole truth". I would love to read that out. Where they called for the truth:

"If Mr. Manning is not prepared to tell us these things, then he had better permit the pregnant and most explicit silence on these directly relevant issues to speak for itself."

Cover up, again. "Expose the high Government official", says the *Express* of December 21, 1980.

While all that is going on, Madam Speaker, this is the most beautiful headline I have seen in a long time:

“John Humphrey and the DC-9 affair: Voice in the wilderness.”

They humiliated Humphrey. They battered, badgered and ridiculed him. They brought people in this House to spit upon him when he raised this issue of corruption. How different is that from today? But importantly, Madam Speaker, and I say I am doing this to show you a pattern. Exactly as the present PHM says, those fellows are talking about corruption. Where is the hard evidence? They say to bring the hard evidence, “if you have no hard evidence, shut up”. As though we are the police, as though we control the CID. We can tell them to go look for information and bring it to us and tell us if we do not have information shut up.

On March 28, 1981, that is 12 years ago. “Government promises action... but only on hard evidence, says Manning. We are going to have action, but only on hard evidence, but only on hard evidence, says Manning”. We are going to have action, but only on hard evidence, 1993. “If you do not have hard evidence, shut up”. But they would not set up mechanisms in this House, they would not set up a committee of Parliament to investigate matters such as these, in which situation we can legislate powers to that committee to allow them to call upon the members of the security services to collect information and to summon people to give evidence upon oath to produce documents on the bane of contempt.

If they want hard evidence, that is how they are going to get it. They are not going to get it by my sitting down in my office and people writing me anonymous letters. But just as they say then, they say now. “Manning again fails the DC-9 test”, *Sunday Express*, March 19, 1981. I want to say that he is now failing another test, probably the most failing Prime Minister there has ever been. So if he wants it, it is here. It is here, all of it.

Then there was the Caroni Racing Complex. You remember that, do you not? Again, we have done work on that. We have done work on the people’s moneys that they took in Caroni Racing Complex, whereby, today, they have no jobs, they cannot get work. Again, “Forecast was wrong”, October 23, 1980.

I want the people of this country to know what happened to their money, to know if they are suffering today what happened to it.

“Racing Authority boss John O’Halloran has blamed the 100 per cent increase in the new cost estimate of the proposed Caroni Racing Complex on consultant management errors plus real increases.

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Last week, Mr. O'Halloran, at a press conference had announced that the original estimated cost of the complex, \$120 million, had swollen to \$240 million and yesterday at the authority's city headquarters, the Chairman spoke of the reasons for the high cost."

So that is \$100 million dollars of their money, almost three quarters of the entire budget for the LIDP project this year—sorry, the URP project. If that \$100 million, had been taken to set them up in small businesses, today they would not be hungry. Hundreds and thousands of families would have been feeding themselves and not looking for handouts from the Government. But the Member for Laventille, I know, would hang his head in shame, because he was one who said that his greatest ambition is to remove his supporters from the dependency syndrome. What is being done is digging them deeper and deeper into that syndrome, not setting them up in small businesses. That is corruption. So the real cost of the Racing Complex, money spent on plant and so on, until eventually—

Madam Speaker: Hon. Member, is this a prelude to the motion?

Mr. B. Panday: The motion is on corruption, I think, and I think I am speaking on corruption.

Madam Speaker: I am looking at the points that have been itemized under the motion and I am trying to see the relevance.

Mr. B. Panday: I am drawing a pattern of what happened in the past to what is happening.

I know it must be very hard on the Prime Minister to listen to all of this. The Racing Complex, "Millions gone without trace", and eventually that was closed down. You know that, Prime Minister George Chambers closed that down. He closed that down and hundreds of millions of the people's money was lost.

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. B. Panday: Then there was the Tesoro affair. Corruption takes all sorts of forms. The ones that are engaging our attention at the moment are the handling of what is called the Pegasus issue, the Port Authority insurance and a police drug cartel.

I am sure, with respect to the Airports Authority, the Prime Minister must be convinced in his mind that he made a boob. When there was this allegation of the Airports Authority issue, I stood up in this House and I said that he was going to compromise the position of the Chairman of the Integrity Commission, do not do it. I remember him telling me, "So what if he wanted to refuse, he can refuse."

As it turned out, I was right. What is he going to do about the Chairman of the Integrity Commission now? Now that he has exposed him to light, he should never have done that. Now he has subjected him to criticism, now he has put himself on the line. They have put him there. What is going to happen there? How is the Integrity Commission going to run now? Because this report is so riddled with inconsistencies, it should never have been written.

I am not saying this alone, the newspapers have reported all the inconsistencies which have occurred. Some of these inconsistencies are unbelievable. First of all, it has now come out that there were two reports. What are they going to tell the country about the two reports? They are going to leave this issue hanging there. There have been two reports. If there were two reports, what was in the first report, what was in the second report? Why was that information hidden?

People are coming out and saying now, (they reported in the press) that they gave evidence before the Commissioner, but they have not heard anything about their evidence. I warned them not to do that to the Chairman of the Integrity Commission. I warned them about that.

Now the Chairman has written a report which is very difficult to understand. He is saying, first of all, that when the Pegasus submitted proposals, they should have been thrown out. But then he goes on to say because they were not thrown out then, the Authority is kept from raising the issue now.

That indicates that the Chairman totally misunderstood what he was supposed to do. This is not a complaint by the Authority. The Authority is making no complaint. So what do they mean when they say that the Authority is stopped? That is not an issue at all. Let me read this to you, to show you that I told them to make public the terms of reference of the gentleman who was going to investigate this Pegasus contract. I told them that. They would not listen. I told them such a gentleman should not have been appointed because they will expose him. They did not listen and this is what happened. It says in this report at page 12, which is now known as the Collymore Report:

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“I have pointed out above what I believe to be the failures of Pegasus to satisfy the rules of requests for proposals in this regard. While the Airport Authority could have validly exercised its right to reject the Pegasus bid on this aspect, it did not do so, but continued to treat with them. It follows now that the Authority must be stopped from raising any objection on that score since they must be presumed to have become aware of these deficiencies and yet continue to treat with Pegasus.”

That is not the issue. That is not why they set up this Commission. It is not that the Airports Authority is complaining and that somebody is saying that the Airports Authority must now be stopped from complaining. This is a complaint by other bidders. This clearly indicate that either they gave secret terms of reference which we do not know of, but it certainly has nothing to do with the terms of reference and it goes on later to say:

“But again, I would apply the same reasoning...”

And it says that:

“...the Authority would now be stopped from raising any objection on that score.”

The Authority is not raising any objection, it is the Authority involved. The Authority is not raising any objection. I understand that some of the things were cut out because they did not line up in law.

When I read this report, I realized that either we do not know what terms of reference were given, or that the terms of reference given were not made public because at one point I see the Commissioner saying that the evidence before him would not support judicial review. That is the identical point I wanted to make. So it seems as though the Commissioner was looking at this thing to see if an action for judicial review could be substantiated.

The Government obviously told the Commissioner—because he is not an ordinary person, he is a very intelligent man— “listen, look at this thing and see if they could bring a case against us”. That is why he put the legal element in which had to be removed. But it is also why he said that the evidence before him would not support an action for judicial review. Judicial review was never an issue.

2.50 p.m.

This gentleman finds—and I think you have to read this report in a particular way. You have to read this report as though the Prime Minister asked Mr. Justice

Collymore to look at this matter and see if there can be judicial review; otherwise, I cannot understand this part. I read from page 7:

"Maritime submitted a proposal which was a comprehensive submission in the nature of a tender document while by contrast the assessment of Pegasus proposal was couched in the following language by Dr. Rana K. Singh who was a United Nations expert commissioned to assist in these proposals."

And I quote:

"Pegasus proposal does not appear to have been fully worked out and is essentially an expression of interest in participating in the further development of the airport facilities. Their principal objective seems to be in taking over ground facilities and concessions for a very high fee and on initiating a hotel project with a golf course."

Pegasus was submitting proposals for something else. They were talking about a hotel, a golf course and taking over ground facilities and so on, but you know they end up getting the contract. Mr. Prime Minister, can you truthfully say that you are satisfied in the teeth of all that has transpired?

You see, it is very unfortunate that this thing should occur with the Airports Authority. It has raised several other concerns which make life very unfair for certain people. The Prime Minister should never have permitted it—at least, Mr. George Chambers did not. That is, it is well known that the dear spouse of the Prime Minister, for whom I have the greatest respect, was employed as a public servant in one of the ministries. How did she get over to the Airports Authority? Who transferred her there? This is the wife of the Prime Minister I am talking about. How did she leave her job? Was she seconded? Who offered her the job to go there? Now, all of this is going to create unnecessary problems. What are the qualifications for the job? Were other people invited to have the job? All of this is bound to create a cloud which nobody wants in this country. You know all of this could have been dealt with so quietly if you had agreed with us to set up a committee of Parliament to deal with these matters. Do you think I enjoy dealing with so sensitive a matter in public? If you think I would enjoy it, I would deal with it, you know!

Dr. Rowley: Do not threaten me.

Mr. B. Panday: No, it is you who threatened us. What I am saying is matters of such a nature should be dealt with in private. You caused it to go public. Set up

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the committee of which I am calling so that people would not have to make allegations about innocent people in public. That is the thrust of my argument. That is all we are asking. Allegedly innocent persons—of course, people are innocent until proven guilty. This again raises the other matter with respect to this same contract and Pegasus.

A most disturbing piece of evidence has come to us. It is true that this evidence has come to us in an anonymous letter, but I am not going to read it. Do you know why I am not going to read it? I am not going to read the anonymous letter because I am going to take the advice of the *Express*. The *Express* says that you must not read the anonymous letter, you must just adopt the facts in it. That is great reading. They say, “do not read the anonymous letter, adopt the facts.” Well, I do not care what the anonymous letter says. Here is the anonymous letter; they have copied it to you, too.

Do you know what is interesting? What interests me is what cannot be refuted. Do you know what cannot be refuted? What they appended to that letter. What they appended to that letter is a document dated September 17, 1992—it is not a public document—on the letter head of Phelps, Montano and Company, talking about a \$25,000 payment. Payment for what? It could not be for legal services, and I will tell you why. It could not be for legal services because Phelps, Montano and Company is a firm of lawyers in Trinidad and any work which is going to that firm goes to the firm, and any cheque which is paid to that firm for work which it is doing is paid to the firm.

Do you know what happened in this case? I have here a photocopy of a cheque for \$25,000 being made to Mr. Montano, and on the same day that Mr. Montano received \$25,000, Mr. Montano wrote back a cheque to Miss Donna Prowell who is a member of the board of the Airports Authority for exactly 50 per cent, \$12,500. So, I am not reading the anonymous letter, I am reading the appendices. I do not want to go further than I have to with my legal colleagues.

Do you think the way to have dealt with this was to refer this to the DPP? The DPP has been acting in that job for how long?

Mr. Maharaj: Four years.

Mr. B. Panday: For four years the DPP has been acting in that job and waiting for confirmation. You will not appoint people so you would not give them security. You put that person now in jeopardy. You know what this country gives. We have to live with the country in which we live. So you hand it over to the DPP.

Should you not hand it to the Fraud Squad? As far as I am aware, under the Constitution, the DPP has no power to investigate. As far as I know, the DPP has no power to investigate anything. If the DPP has no power to investigate, what is he going to do with that?

Mr. Sobion: Madam Speaker, for the information of the hon. Member, the matter to which he refers has been referred to the head of the Fraud Squad. On receipt of the information by the DPP, he referred it to the head of the Fraud Squad.

The appointment to the post of Director of Public Prosecutions is an appointment that is made by the Judicial and Legal Service Commission; as he knows.

Mr. Robinson: Madam Speaker, on a point of information. The Prime Minister can object to that appointment.

Mr. B. Panday: That is the point I was going to make. If the Prime Minister has power to object to the appointment of the DPP, and the Prime Minister now submits to the DPP a matter to be investigated, which involves his party, which is the subject of the Opposition's wrath on the whole issue of corruption, can you not see how you are compromising people more and more? Would the better system not have been the one I speak about all the time: a select committee of Parliament which will deal with these issues?

Hon. Member: How?

3.00 p.m.

Mr. B. Panday: So, Madam Speaker, the Airports Authority project, which is called PRIDE, I fear will now become the shame of all of us, because of the Prime Minister's handling of these matters. Madam, this is exactly what this motion speaks about—

"And Whereas the machinery which exists for the selling and/or disposition of State assets and for Government entering into contracts..."

and so on, is inadequate and should be strengthened. I was surprised when doubt was expressed recently whether we would agree to reform. I heard the Minister of National Security saying that they cannot have any reform in the Police Service because the Opposition is going to object. The Opposition has been asking for reform! If the Opposition were in control they would never make a "boob" like

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the Prime Minister made. Look at what has happened with that report of the "Yardies", the Scotland Yard people.

The report, as far as we know, because you are not giving us a copy of that, you are not letting us see that, that is your own private business, so we cannot see that. But what we know from the newspapers is that they could not get evidence. If they could not get evidence, I want to know how they could categorically say that there is no cartel. And if they could not get evidence, how could they say there is a hard core? But you know what they did? They split hairs.

When you tell them look for a cartel, they were looking for something like OPEC. They defined cartel the way Englishmen define cartel. We know what cartel means here. They do not know what cartel means. Cartel for them is OPEC. So they were looking for something like OPEC inside there. Cartel means a group of "fellas" who "doing their thing" together—that is what cartel means "a group of fellas doing their thing together", for us, as far as we are concerned in Trinidad and Tobago. That is why I say, have respect for people's culture, their upbringing, their history and so on in order to understand them. But the important thing about it is, they say there is no drug cartel. What I imagine they are trying to say is, there is no evidence that there is a conspiracy, but there is a hard core of police officers who are prepared to protect drug lords and the drug trade. Is the implication to be that they are doing it separately and unknown to each other? If that is the case, what a stupid argument. How many are involved, one, two, five, 10, 15, 20, 30, 40? How many are involved? If these policemen are acting without the knowledge of other policemen who are engaged in the protection, how come the man does not get arrested?

The only way drug lords could get away is if there is conspiracy between those who have power to arrest. So if there are people who are protecting the drug lords in this country, believe it or not, they are talking to one another. If they were not talking to one another and 'A' was protecting a drug lord, and 'B' was not protecting the drug lord, then 'A' trying to protect him, but 'B' locking him up! Except if 'A' and 'B' are talking. If 'A' and 'B' are talking, when 'A' is protecting, then 'B' is also protecting. So that the report itself, unless you really reveal the report to us, has created more problems than it has solved. So that now you have a Police Service in which there is utter chaos and you do not know what to do about it. You want to have reform, but you cannot talk to the Opposition about reform because you have a mandate to rule. That is unfortunate.

I also said in the preamble to my speech, Madam Speaker, that one of the major reasons for our people's suffering has been the issue of corruption. As a matter of fact, in case people believe I am just talking about this—"Corruption at all Levels says Manning," *Guardian* October 22, 1992. He was speaking to the students of St. Mary's College, and told them there is corruption at all levels in this society. Your Minister says that there is a crack factory here. If you have evidence that there is a crack factory, arrest the people! What are you waiting for? Arrest them! But all these are designed to protect the drug lords and to alert them. That is what they are designed to do.

I want to come to the motion. *[Interruption]* Of course, when you said 'no jobs for the boys', you did not include the girls. But that is beside the point. The point I wanted to make here, Madam Speaker, is that we are saying that corruption is one of the major reasons why there must be retrenchment of workers in the industry. Major reason. And I refer merely to the *Express* of Thursday, July 23, 1992, page 1—and it is not Panday talking, you know, Panday who is in opposition to the Government—"WASA Strikes Back—Mottley's 'outburst' hit by managers":

"Senior Engineering managers at the Water & Sewerage Authority (WASA) yesterday told the Public Utilities Minister Morris Marshall they objected to Government's use of its party conference to instigate internecine warfare."

You use your party conference to instigate internecine warfare, and you are using the Parliament to instigate internecine warfare in the country.

"The managers were referring to what they described as an 'outburst' by Finance Minister, Wendell Mottley, at the People's National Movement (PNM's) rally at El Dorado Senior Comprehensive two Sundays ago.

Mottley had lashed out at the State-owned enterprises and statutory bodies which, he said, lost millions of dollars each year and returned to the Treasury for subventions. He described WASA as a big spender and said that between 1986 and 1991 the Authority had received \$600 million in subventions.

The managers claimed that Mottley had tried to portray WASA as uncaring and did not say that the Authority was a repository for political patronage."

That is corruption. And I am not saying that. We are saying that that obtains in every one of the state enterprises; that they have become the repository for political patronage; and when that happens, they are bound to become

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dysfunctional, and when they become dysfunctional they have to close up and let workers go on the street. So it starts with corruption. Workers who are being retrenched must understand they are being retrenched because of corruption. That is what is causing them to be retrenched! The managers are asking—

"Are we going to be sacrificed at the altar of efficiency?...Is this another cynical manipulation of the Authority? We object to the Government using its party's conference to instigate internecine warfare? They are trying to say WASA is uncaring and not saying that WASA was a repository for political patronage."

Of course, the same goes on in most of the public utilities, but I have made that point because I want to make this statement here. I heard the Member for Arouca North, the Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Works, saying that Members of the Opposition are supplying names for DEWD, LIDP, URP, whatever you call it. I do not know which Members of Parliament you wrote. I want to say you did not write me. I also want to say that, had you written to me, I would not participate in that corruption. I want to give notice, that whereas some of our Members may have believed that was part of their duty, they have instructions: Nobody in this party has any power to submit the names of anybody to DEWD, LIDP or URP. That is not going to solve the problem. We are going to force you on this to set up a system whereby you are going to treat people equitably. Because people in Laventille are coming to my office and saying they are being discriminated against. Last Friday I was greeted outside by people of Laventille, who were saying that there was discrimination going on in LIDP and URP.

3.10 p.m.

Mr. Narine: Madam Speaker, is the Member for Couva North saying that no one from his party ever approached the office and ever sent any letters that appointed persons to select names on behalf of their constituencies? As a matter of fact, one person was fired this week from Couva South for sending names.

Mr. B. Panday: God help this country. If he cannot hear and cannot understand, God help this country. Is he a part of the Government? Is that man a part of the Government—that Member? Did he not hear what I said? I said if Members on this side had thought it was part of their function to do that, that has come to an end. He did not hear; he did not listen; he cannot read; he cannot understand? Did he not hear that?

Mr. Narine: Write and say so.

Mr. B. Panday: Not write and say so at all. I am saying this in the House today, and any Member of the party who does that in future is going to be disciplined. He wrote Members of Parliament and told them to submit names. If Members of Parliament thought they were doing him a favour by doing that, they must stop that. That is the point I am making. I prefer them to set up a system whereby they employ the people who are most in need. That is the important thing. No matter where they come from; no matter what constituency. Set up a system in which you employ people. Suppose somebody has a husband who is working, or a wife who is working, surely you cannot put that person—

Madam Speaker: The hon. Member has to wind up. You have two more minutes.

Mr. B. Panday: Surely they cannot put that person before a single parent with six children and no job. They cannot put that person behind somebody who is already employed.

My time has come to an end, but my file has not. We have raised two points here today. One is, that there is a perception in this country that there is corruption in the Government. Taken at its highest, there is none, but there is a perception of corruption. Even if that were the case, then the Government has a duty to set up institutions to investigate allegations of corruption in such a way that the fear is removed from among people.

Two is, that the Government has got to stop brow-beating people who make allegations of corruption. Every time you make an allegation of corruption, the Government brow-beats you. Either that Member tells another, "come outside, let me cuff you in your face," the other one said, "I will declare war on you," and all that sort of thing. You have got to make people feel comfortable in unearthing corruption.

So that we are hoping that the Members on the other side, before this debate is over, agree to set up mechanisms to deal with this issue of corruption. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources (Dr. The Hon. Keith Rowley): Madam Speaker, I am sure that the performance of the Member for Couva North is not the performance on which he has built his reputation, because when he indicated to the Government that he would like to debate the issue of corruption and the Leader of Government Business readily agreed, what I thought—and I presume my colleagues thought the same thing—

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was that the Member would have used the opportunity here in this House so that the Members could have participated in a debate which would have been enlightening.

The Member for Couva North spoke about serious issues—history. He was quite correct in raising some of the issues because those of us in the Caribbean who are familiar with our authors would remember the saying of Frantz Fanon, the famous writer from Martinique, that to ignore the past is to surrender the future. We have no difficulty with that.

The Member also said—and I agree with him 100 per cent—that this whole issue of corruption is something that you have to deal with on an ongoing basis. There is no day on which corruption begins or no day on which it ends, regardless of who is in office or who is in Opposition. But what the Member sought to do for the last 75 minutes, was to give the impression that every so often we must come to this House and go through that tirade, same old story, all over again.

In July 1990, I was at the University of Puerto Rico and I understand that a debate took place in this House, and every single thing which the Member raised here this afternoon, was raised in that debate in this House. So it was not as if this nation and this Parliament were wont for a debate of this nature, based on what he has presented to us this afternoon.'

Even before that, the issues with respect to the specifics of the DC-9 and the Racing Complex had been ventilated at the highest level in this country. In fact, the people of this country had, on a number of occasions, to adjudicate on those who were holding the reins of office at the time. I think by 1986, when the people decided to adjudicate as they saw fit on that occasion, the PNM government, under which many of those allegations were made and subsequently demonstrated, lost the election.

So it is not to say that nothing has happened in the interim. So I cannot, for the life of me, understand why my colleague from Couva North would have hyped up a debate of this nature, bring us all here this afternoon, having agreed earlier on to debate a statement by the Prime Minister—we took the unprecedented step to allow a statement by the Prime Minister to be debated in this House. We had planned to debate today the Prime Minister's recent statement about what we are doing with the country and what we have in train. They asked to have it debated. Under the Standing Orders, we did not have to agree to that, but since we saw that something useful could have come out of that, we agreed. Subsequently, my

colleague from Couva North asked to have a debate on corruption. So we said, yes. So we forego that motion of substance and came here this afternoon and in Shakespearian style you could say, a tale told by the Member, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing. Because after 75 minutes there has been no enlightenment. I anticipated that the Member would have brought us into focus somewhere. In fact, it was he, himself, after about 70 minutes of a 75-minute speech, said, "I will turn my attention to the motion."

Madam Speaker, having said that, I would want to use my opportunity to respond to the Member and to the issue of corruption. What does the motion say? The motion in paragraph one says that the Government is not prepared to implement its commitment. What is that commitment, a commitment that the Government made to the matters relating to corruption? I turn to page 7 of the PNM manifesto, which says, under "Administrative Framework":

" There will be accountability at all levels."

At page 45, under "Integrity", we say:

"The PNM reaffirms its commitment to integrity in public life and to this end proposes a review of the integrity legislation to strengthen the Integrity Commission and to empower it to better discharge its functions."

So those are commitments we made in writing, and of course, our commitment which we state from time to time, of morality in public affairs. So the PNM's position is very clear.

Paragraph two says:

"WHEREAS governmental actions including but not limited to..."

And there are four specific things in that paragraph: The Pegasus issue, the Port Authority Insurance issue, a drug cartel in the police service, and public funds being used by directors of the Airports Authority for their private purposes.

3.20 p.m.

Let us look at them one by one. He is saying that the Government does not intend to keep its pledge and its actions are unsatisfactory in the public interest. The Pegasus issue.

The Airports Authority has invited proposals from local and foreign people to deliver a project. The Authority, under a board, is carrying out its work. The Minister responsible is the one who would report to Cabinet, because at no stage

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in the game does the Airports Authority come into this Chamber and report. The Cabinet takes a decision to have an inter-ministerial committee oversee, because it is an unusual kind of contract. It is not one where the Government is using Government's money to build something; it is asking people to come, bring their money and build something for the state in a joint venture arrangement. It required an oversight.

That is a decision of the Government of the day and we stand by the decision. An inter-ministerial committee has oversight for the situation. Because, if something goes wrong, my friend from Couva North would have come here and said "The Government turned its back on it; the Government paid no attention to it; the Government is responsible; the buck stops here" and he would have been quite right to say that.

Having done that, aggrieved parties started to make certain charges and allegations, and, of course, these things are news. The news is carried, we all read the news and we see certain statements. After a period of time, one gets the impression that it is sufficiently disquieting to want to find out what went on in the Authority's handling of the matter. So, what did we do? The Government asked the Head of the Integrity Commission—because the whole question that was being raised, after a while, was the integrity of certain officers who might have been involved in discharging the public affair. So, one asked the head of the Integrity Commission, who is not a Government appointee; the Commission is not an arm of the Government. The Commission is an arm of the state and its primary function is to deal with matters of integrity insofar as it relates to public officials. Who better could one have asked to adjudicate? The Government asked the head of the Commission to look into the matter to see whether the conduct of the Airports Authority, or any other public official, has been above board. That was done, a report came in.

Of course, we are hearing "I do not like the report" and "I do not like what it says". In fact, this afternoon, my colleague from Couva North went right up to the point of saying, not in as many words, but one can read what he said. Basically what he has done in the Chamber, this afternoon, is to bring the integrity of the head of the Integrity Commission into disrepute. Because, he has made no bones about the fact that the head of the Integrity Commission colluded with the Prime Minister to prepare a report, to bring the Government out of a hole. I say "Shame on you!"

Hear his alternative. He does not want the head of the Integrity Commission to look into a matter of public integrity. He wants a committee inside the Parliament to do it. I want to ask him, this afternoon: Do it how? To go and speak to him? He says he wants a committee in the Parliament to deal with corruption. He goes on to raise the question of the DPP and the Fraud Squad. He is saying "If we had agreed to some committee in Parliament, that would not have happened". Assuming that we have a committee in Parliament to look at this matter, what machinery of the state will they use to look at it? What investigative arm would they use? They would not use the Fraud Squad; they would not use DPP; they would not use the Integrity Commission; they would use their own personal and private intervention so as to further their own private agenda. I say no way!

We are the Government of the day and we use the state's institutions. Before, I go any further, Madam Speaker, and before I end up like him and run out of time, I want to address this question to him. The question to him is this: What aspects of the state's machinery, that exist today, which we are not using, which he had available to him when he was in Government, which he would use and we did not use, did he pay any attention to when he had the opportunity? He made heavy weather here, about bringing papers from way back in the 1970s and 1980s.

I am saying, Madam Speaker, that he is the one, who called the nation a society of hypocrites. I can say, if that insult should be applied to any member of the national community, it should apply to the Member for Couva North. The biggest hypocrite in Trinidad and Tobago. Do you know why I say that? All of this about the PNM and the PNM; 30 years—in fact, this is now 31 years of being in Government; apparently the first year was fine. He knows all of that, but when he wanted to advance his own personal agenda, he took the number one PNM of the day, my friend from Tobago East, and followed him into government.

In 1986, the person in this country with the highest PNM credentials was the Member for Tobago East, and the Member for Couva North followed him into government. No crime in that. Nothing is wrong with that. I am not arguing against that.

Mr. Maharaj: And we would do it again.

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: I am not arguing against that, because people do change.

Mr. Robinson: I am merely asking that the Member for Diego Martin West explain clearly what he means. His language may not be the same as mine.

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: But it is my speech, not yours.

Madam Speaker, I am not criticizing the fact that he made an arrangement to get into Government, but since in his hypocritical way he chose to speak the way he spoke this afternoon, I am saying we must examine what happened when he got into office. If we look at paragraph 4 of the motion which says:

And whereas the machinery which exists for the selling...state assets. . .

and it goes on to say—

And whereas the existence of the present machinery by which Government and/or governmental bodies account to Parliament and to the people facilitate secret government and . . . promote . . . corruption"

So, he is saying that he is aware that the present machinery that we are using "facilitates secret government" and promotes corruption. I am saying that it is the same machinery that he was using when he was in Government. I am saying that if he were so crazy about reform that he is carrying on about, he got himself into government in 1987; 33 seats, not even requiring support from the other side.

When he saw what faced him in government, what did he do? By April of 1987 he started to attack his own Prime Minister; by December, 1987 it was clear he was on his way out; formed a party inside the party and got himself dismissed from government, quite deliberately. He found himself in a position as acting Prime Minister and political leader of the largest faction inside the coalition and he was so concerned about dealing with corruption in the way he is saying—because this corruption issue predated his ascendance to government.

He said here, all of this happened before 1980; he quotes from 1980. So, when he got into government he knew exactly what the situation was. How did he handle it? In his normal irresponsible way; he walked out on his responsibility. No fault of the government. Now, he comes into the Opposition to tell the Government we should not use the Police Service; we should not use the DPP office; we should not use the Integrity Commission, we should use him to investigate allegations of corruption.

Do you understand? Do you understand why I am saying he is a hypocrite of no mean order and what we are facing here has nothing to do with the issue of corruption. All of us in this House, in the public gallery; I have heard nobody in this country get up and say "I support corruption". It is my view that the citizens of this country would like to see that fade out of our community. I am a politician,

and politicians have political agendas. This motion is basically one on the political agenda. "Let us try to resurrect the issue of corruption and see if it can help us in the plight we found ourselves in the Opposition." That is what it is.

A decision taken, very clearly, at the political level and that is why when the Member for Couva North came here this afternoon, and spoke for 75 minutes, he could advance not one single new item. All he did was rehash the same things we have been hearing over the last year. Even the cheques that are presented here. The Member for Couva South introduced in this Parliament over the last few weeks, this question of the transaction of cheques with private individuals, one of whom operated on a board in the state sector. Same thing he came back with today. It is not news. In fact, in the media he would have seen what kind of action is taking place on that particular matter. Do you think it is historical? I talk about the Member for Tobago East.

3.30 p.m.

When the Member for Couva North spoke about the PNM, giving the impression that the PNM was this basket of worms, it did not bother him at all in his corrupt little mind to take the Member of Parliament for Caroni East, out of the PNM, last election, and take him into his bosom. He is coming here and pointing his fingers at Members of the current Government on the basis of anonymous letters. He is coming here seeking to give the impression that we have this magnitude of things to deal with and the Government is falling back on its commitment and is encouraging corruption, when he as political leader, *magna cum laude* in his own party, picked up from the PNM—talk about old and new PNM.

If the fact that allegations are made, damn you for life, what about the allegations made against the Member for Caroni East, who as a Member of the PNM—I can tell you I have had to face allegations with respect to the said WASA you are carrying on so much about? Do you remember that? Do you remember WASA and the Minister of the day? But when it was convenient for the Member for Couva North to take him into his party and to offer him to the electorate, all sins forgiven. Hail fellow, well met. Hypocrite! You are not impressing anybody in this country because we know you for what you stand for. Hypocrisy of the highest order. *[Interruption]* I can tell you it is as a result of the last election in Trinidad, that caused the panic to step in. When on the night of the election, I was asked by the press what do I expect to happen now, the records will show my

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comment was, what we can expect to happen is panic in the Opposition camp and more irresponsible behaviour because the last election in this country in September of last year, showed them to be on their way into oblivion. This is the attempt to recoup.

In the editorial of today's *Express*, my name is mentioned. The Editor said I am out of place to introduce the issue of race into this whole matter. I consider myself an academic so I can discuss any issue academically without emotion. I can raise the issue of race and discuss it. I belong to a race.

When I spoke about the racial connotation, it was in the context that on our side of the Government we have our ears to the ground and we get information too. And long before their plan started to unfold information had come to me as to what the nature of the plan will be. The nature of the plan was this; that they believed that this party has no commitment to anybody other than those who are of African origin and if they put the Member for Diego Martin East under pressure and create *[Interruption]* I have no problem with my bald head. Woman love it! My wife loves it!

Mr. Robinson: May I say that the hon. Member has a different reputation in Tobago, where he is from.

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: As long as that reputation does not link my name to his, I am okay. The point I was making and the statement I made in public outside this House, was that information had come to me about the strategy, and the strategy was that the Opposition would put pressure on the Member for Diego Martin East, expecting that this party—if the party is sufficiently embarrassed—will dump him. And if the Government has to dump a Minister then we admit that the whole Government is corrupt, and then they are on their way to Government. That was the strategy. When that came we saw the thing unfold. We saw the Member for Couva North coming with his anonymous letter. We saw his colleagues coming after, picking up the contents of the letter and making an issue out of it. The point I am making is that what we are dealing with is a strategy of Opposition politics; using the Parliament to advance their political position. Nothing wrong with that but do it decently. We object.

The Port Authority insurance issue. We will hear more about that later. One of the bases for the motion is how the Government is dealing with an allegation of a drug cartel in the police service.

Madam Speaker, a Member on the bench made a statement which meant that the Government moved with "undue haste" in taking action in a state agency where there were allegations of corruption. The judge said the Government moved with "undue haste" yet, my friend from Couva North, files a motion and the basis of the motion is that the Government is doing nothing.

With respect to the specific allegation of a drug cartel in the police service, within a matter of hours of that allegation being made by a deputy commissioner of police, the Government acted. They sought two of our prominent citizens and asked them to talk to the the accuser. Unusual situation. Talk to the accuser and find out if there is basis for an investigation. A report was submitted to the Prime Minister. On the basis of that the Prime Minister and this Government took certain action and today, we are in a position to take further action with respect to this whole matter.

The Member for Couva North's name is on this motion. Allegations of police misconduct did not begin on December 16, 1991. It was there long before. You were in the Government when the police service was also demoralized, and instead of staying there and contributing to any improvement in this country, you choose to take to the road and—what is it? Hugs by day and stabs by night. That was your contribution. I can give you the assurance that at the end of this Government's term, Trinidad and Tobago will have a much improved police service and will come to grips with crime in this country. No thanks to you. It was only last week the Minister responsible came to this House voluntarily and gave a statement as to what is transpiring with respect to this whole issue of the police service.

One of the first acts of the Cabinet of this administration was to pick up the report which was commissioned by the last administration, which looked at the Police Service. We had the O'Dowd Report. We picked it up from there. It was work done and we put a team in place to implement those recommendations. We are a responsible Government. But you are coming to tell me that the Government's action is encouraging corruption and you want a no confidence motion in the Government. One part of the motion says:

“And whereas the machinery which exists for the selling and/or disposition of State assets and for Government entering into contracts with foreign firms, companies, consultants and/or lobbyists facilitate the commission of corrupt acts:”

The government of which he was a part, I would say the number one man, the government of which he was acting Prime Minister sought to dispose of the assets

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of Crown Reef. The PNM was not in government until December 16, 1991. Between 1986 and the end of 1991 another government was in office and during that time took steps to divest itself of the Crown Reef Hotel. As far as the records will show, the government of the day got proposals and was dealing with a company from Bermuda. Much work was done on the Crown Reef matter. It was not completed before the government went out of office.

3.40 p.m.

This Government came into office; reviewed it and we are continuing using the same company. I am not aware that at the time when the last administration set about to divest itself of a portion of the Crown Reef shares, he was not part of that Government. It is his irresponsibility that gave him no influence. Do you understand? No additional machinery was used. The Government, through its Cabinet was taking certain actions and we did not have a problem with that. It was the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. He comes here today and talks about this Government doing the same thing; it is facilitating corruption.

National Fisheries. Under the previous administration, the Government went out and sought proposals from members of the public including foreigners, and at one stage, the Government had indicated that it was prepared to enter into an agreement with a Venezuelan arrangement with National Fisheries. That was not concluded. However, the fact is, from the point of view of accountability and governmental approach, I was not aware that any parliamentary committee was set up to handle that. So, how is it that suddenly, the PNM is acting under the same arrangements today, the same control and regulations, but the PNM is encouraging corruption.

CONOCO, a foreign company, came into this country during the last administration in a joint venture arrangement in which the government had a serious stake. I am not aware that any special Sunday morning tripartite arrangement took place in the square. It was handled by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. I have no problem with that. Of course, today we are carrying out governmental activity, and suddenly he comes to file a motion that this Government is encouraging corruption. The Member for Couva North is an irresponsible person who must not be taken seriously.

In his motion, he talks about the lowering of standards of conduct in public life. He should know about that. There is no greater lowering of standards in public life in this country, than to see my Leader of the Opposition insult the

Speaker of the House, and storm out of the Parliament on every occasion, like a spoilt school boy. I can tell you that you are putting pressure on your decent colleagues, because I know that they do not want to walk with you, especially my friend, the Member for St. Augustine, because say what you want about him—

Mr. Humphrey: Leave me out of this please! Madam Speaker, I seek your protection. I do not want any recommendation from the Member for Diego Martin West.

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, you were there when they walked out, and you saw how slowly he went out.

So, when he talks about lowering of standards, that is just brass-face on the part of my colleague from Couva North.

Paragraph (6) talks about the Government's impotence. Impotence! This paragraph must have been written by the Member for Oropouche, because the Government is dealing with so many issues and fronts at such a hectic pace, that I fail to see how anyone, except somebody preoccupied with the word impotence, could put that in a motion. He talks about the PNM riding the backs of people. He is annoyed that certain persons in the national community came down here today to listen to this debate. Society of hypocrites, he calls them. Disparage them in the worst way.

I am here Friday after Friday, and on many occasions, especially when there are motions to be filed by my friend from Caroni East, he makes reference to how many people he brought. I have brought no one here. They are here of their own free will in the public gallery. The approach of the Member for Couva North is that when I make an allegation, even if you have a defence, do not raise it, because if you raise a defence in response to a specific allegation, you are accused of supporting corruption.

That is his approach and that is why he is so testy and base in his conduct to the Head of the Integrity Commission, because the Commission's Report did not tell him what he wanted for his political purpose. I thought he would have been satisfied if the Commission had said that there is nothing wrong and you have trust in the Commission, so you are happy that, at least, in Trinidad and Tobago, there was a problem where some things appeared to be in a certain way and we are hearing that it is not so. I am happy to hear that. No! He is upset that he did not hear what he wanted to hear. So, destroy institutions, destroy character and he is now calling for the head of the DPP.

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He talks about matters relating to the pre-'86 period of the DC-9 and to the fact that a certain person came to this country and left without this PNM Government taking action. He was in a Government and had the same information which he has now, that he read here today, because they all predate his ascendancy to the Government. I want to know what charge he laid, or what action he took to get the individual charged for an offence. I also want to know, and as he should know, there is one person in this country that a court of law adjudicated upon for corruption, and said that the person should be prosecuted. The person entered this country while he was in Government and went out.

I am not talking about allegation here now. I am talking about the ruling from Justice Deyalsingh on a particular individual who came in here while the Member was in the Government, and walked out scot-free. He comes here today and says that a person against whom no charge has been laid, when he had every opportunity to lay a charge against the person, the person should have been tarred and feathered. I say, see that for what it is.

I want to say something. The other side, led by the Members for Couva North and Couva South, has made a career of calling for a certain arrangement which is alien to this Parliament, which is government by committee, so that they can have executive authority without responsibility. We have been rejecting that, but what he is asking for, is to have in this system at "his say so" and at his convenience, the US-type system, where parliamentary committees have executive authority and investigative powers. In one breath, he wants the US system. He wants reform.

We are saying that we can discuss reform, and when we come to agreement on reform, we will reform. We are not just jumping into something, horse trading as he says, 'give me this, because I want that'. We are not doing that. We are going to have reform, but reform will come after a process of consultation and clear thinking, not in response to blackmail. At the same time, he wants the US system for his purpose. If he were looking at the US system as it is operating now, he would have seen the role and respect that are being given to the wife of the present President, and would have felt ashamed of himself for coming to Parliament today to raise matters relating to the Prime Minister's wife in her professional capacity. Absolute disgrace and this House should censure him for that!

3.50 p.m.

Madam Speaker, I am married—*[Interruption]*—shut up. I am married to a professional person, who has her own life and her own profession, operating in the national community. I hate to think that one day my wife, acting on the basis of her professional capacity, would be subjected to the barbs and arrows of the likes of the Member for Couva North. Disgraceful! He should hang his head in shame—*[Interruption]*—The women in this country must note his conduct, because I think that is an attack that must not go unnoticed. What he is saying to us is that there is no level to which he will not sink to advance his political ends.

Mr. B. Panday: I thought he would want to explain that.

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, with respect to my friend for Couva North, I could go on for the next hour; I do not have the next hour. Enough said about him.

I want to refer specifically, Madam Speaker, to questions of corruption in the public life of Trinidad and Tobago. Because if we are talking about corruption, we cannot bring it down to political ends. If we are really interested in ensuring that the public system works and works according to the regulations we have in place, then when they come here to talk, let them come with facts.

I am talking now about situations that exist right here in the public administration of Trinidad and Tobago. My friends from Tobago East and Tobago West would be more familiar with what I am saying now, because I have said it before outside, but since we have a debate going on here on corruption, I think it is opportune for me to raise a couple of matters.

Madam Speaker, Tobago is being serviced, carrying out government policy under the House of Assembly. It is not a political party; it is an arm of the state, put in place by the Act of 1980. I have been raising the point time and time again when I was a Member of the other place. I raised it outside on public platforms, and I am raising it here today. I am calling on my colleagues on the other side, all 15 of them, if they are so interested in fighting corruption in the state sector, I would like them to respond to what I have to say now.

Madam Speaker, the Tobago House of Assembly is supposed to fall under the ambit of the Central Tenders Board Ordinance of 1961. If you look at the schedule, you will see the last name there: "Tobago House of Assembly". Madam Speaker, I can tell you without fear of contradiction that does not apply in Tobago.

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They are a law unto themselves in the Tobago House of Assembly. The people who know it the most are persons who held governmental office in this country at the highest level, the ex-Prime Minister. Because having functioned outside the ambit of the Central Tenders Board, towards the end of 1991, when it was abundantly clear that they were going to lose the election, a mad rush was made at that time to properly and legally remove the Tobago House of Assembly from under the Central Tenders Board Ordinance. The act was not complete. So today I am asking: what is the status of all the acts committed by the Tobago House of Assembly outside the law, which is the Central Tenders Board Ordinance?

The last time I raised a matter in respect of Tobago, my friend from Tobago East got up and challenged me and said “you are a Minister of Government; what are you doing about it?”, in short, “ what can you do about it?” What I am doing about it is calling on my colleague today, the relevant Minister, to tell this country and this Parliament whether what I am saying here is correct and what action he proposes to take, including resorting to the courts to get the Tobago House of Assembly to obey the laws of this country. That is what I am doing about it.

Madam Speaker, what is the upshot of all of this? The Member for St. Augustine will know because he served as a Minister of Works in this country for a time, how vulnerable you are when you hold particular portfolios, especially that particular portfolio. I was in the other place —

Mr. Robinson: Madam Speaker, may I state for the benefit of this House and for the benefit of the country that any imputation made against the character of the Member for Tobago East by that Member or any other Member in the House or in the country, I ask an impartial enquiry into it so that it is perfectly open and perfectly accountable.

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: I welcome that. But you see, Madam Speaker, when I said the Member for Couva North is a hypocrite, I am now going to extend it to my friend from Tobago East. Because as Prime Minister and a lawyer—
[Interruption]

Mr. Robinson: I am rising on a point of order now.

There is a place for parliamentary decorum in this House and the word “hypocrite” used against a Member is out of order.

Madam Speaker: Will the Member please take note.

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: I bow to your ruling, but the word was used there against the national community by the Member for Couva North. I was not aware that it was a different word.

Madam Speaker: He did not object at that point.

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: The Member for Tobago East did not object then.

Madam Speaker: I will ask that the hon. Member please take note and continue. *[Interruption]*

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, as Prime Minister he was in a position to know and he knew, and that is why in 1991 he took steps to try to correct it and take it out of where it was at the time on the eve of the election.

Mr. Robinson: Madam Speaker, I strongly object to these accusations made by the Minister without any enquiry. I have indicated that I am willing to have a public and open enquiry into any allegation or any imputation of impropriety or dishonesty or whatever there may be. I am ready to have an open, public enquiry. Let the Minister, with the agreement, of course, of the Opposition so that we are assured that the person set up is an impartial person—Let the Cabinet set up an enquiry. I say it because I have heard many allegations made by that Member publicly. I have on tape allegations made in the presence of the Prime Minister who has not seen fit to set up any enquiry and this is scandalous behaviour on his part.

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, all I will extract from that is the Member welcoming a public enquiry into the matter. I thank him for that because you see, I said his decorum would give you the impression that what he said should be taken seriously. Madam Speaker, he was the Prime Minister and the Central Tenders Board fell under his portfolio. I am saying if there was violation of the Central Tenders Board Ordinance in the Tobago House of Assembly, the person in this nation who was in the best position to know is the Prime Minister himself. So he knew.

Mr. Robinson: Madam Speaker, I am objecting.

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker.

Mr. Robinson: I strenuously object to imputations of improper conduct. I strenuously object.

Miss Nicholson: Tell him to withdraw it!

Mr. Robinson: This is scandalous behaviour under the cover of privilege.

Madam Speaker: I do not see any imputation of improper conduct at all. He is making—

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, I am saying that there are numerous examples which I will not quote now because of want of time. There are numerous situations in the Tobago House of Assembly where contracts have been awarded without reference to the Central Tenders Board.

Mr. Robinson: The hon. Member is misleading the House. He is lying to the House!

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker—

Madam Speaker: What are you saying? I did not hear the hon. Member, he is what? Misleading the House?

Mr. Robinson: I am saying he is misleading the House.

Madam Speaker: On what issue?

Mr. Robinson: I would like an enquiry into this matter so that both sides can be heard.

Miss Nicholson: For his accusation. He is misleading the House.

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, I have been called worse than a liar, by the former Prime Minister, the Member for Tobago East—let us move to another matter and he might get up again. Because you see, Madam Speaker—

Madam Speaker: The speaking time of the hon. Member is up.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, I will not be put off by the Member for Tobago East and his frequent rising.

Madam Speaker, a letter was written by the competent authority to the Tobago House of Assembly in 1986, pointing out that they did not have the authority to do certain things without reference to the Central Tenders Board. Madam Speaker, it has been going on with impunity.

I have in my possession a written document from the competent authority, pointing out to the Tobago House of Assembly that they do not have the authority to hire people under contract to service the public, but being a law unto themselves, aided and abetted by those who set themselves up as paragons of virtue and the nation's conscience, they have been awarding contracts with impunity to their drinking friends, their family and whoever else they want to, without reference to the existing regulations. This is not an allegation I am talking about, you know, I am talking about violation of existing regulations. In this motion, the Government is being accused of misbehaviour. In 75 minutes of speaking, the Member for Couva North could not point out a single regulation which the Government is breaking. Let me point out one which the Tobago House of Assembly is breaking right now, after advisories like this:

“The Tobago House of Assembly is not authorized to enter into contracts of service in respect of a public office on its own terms and conditions without the approval of the Cabinet.

In fact, even if the Tobago House of Assembly sought the approval of Cabinet to enter into such a contract, such action will fall foul of the provisions of the Constitution and will be *ultra vires* and thus void.”

That is the advice to the Tobago House of Assembly on that matter about hiring people on contract. That advice is dated November 19, 1992.

Madam Speaker, I will give you an example: The Assembly sought to hire a person into a public service position, because the Tobago House of Assembly Act makes provision for the Assembly to be served by a legal officer, understanding that they will hire a legal officer in the public service. They attempted so to do, but in being a law unto themselves and treating with their friends in a manner which nobody else could treat, they sought to get permission to have the person in the public service conduct private practice. The advice they received from the state authority was that that position was a full-time public service position and no permission could be granted to conduct private practice. What did the Assembly do? Take the same person out of the public service position and give the person a contract for the same salary as if he were in the public service and allowances above that. That is when they get advice from the country's Solicitor General that it is improper and illegal to hire anybody on contract.

It does not end there. There is one law for Trinidad and one law for Tobago. The officer is now working in chambers. The law says you are allowed a legal

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officer, but since they sent that one to the private chambers, they hired a second one on contract to do the work. While they know that they are operating illegally, they have the unmitigated gall to bring the same officer who was improperly hired to be legal adviser to the team to sit down with the Prime Minister who has taken an oath to uphold the law in this country.

The Member for Tobago East asked me last week Friday what action I intended to take: I am a Government Minister, what am I doing about it. He was daring the country to do anything about it. I am saying, Madam Speaker, we will do something about it because when I became a Minister of Government, I swore in the parliamentary chamber to uphold the Constitution and the law in Trinidad and Tobago and I will do that.

Madam Speaker, it does not stop there. The officer goes abroad, and while the officer is abroad, information reaching me is that the officer is still in receipt of the emoluments, including travelling. So last week, a matter was raised about paying the President certain emoluments. Maybe a good precedent was set illegally. Madam Speaker, you understand?

Then, while the officer is improperly hired, he goes abroad on some arrangement. The officer is brought back to advise on arrangements for amending the Constitution, for action between Trinidad and Tobago. They say "I dare you". You hear my friend from Tobago West, "Touch it, nah, touch it!" She is daring us to interfere with it. The advice from the state's legal adviser is that the act is illegal. I only hope the Attorney General, the Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister are listening to what I am saying because this is not hearsay, Madam Speaker, these are the facts.

Mr. Robinson: On a point of information. I was under the impression that the Prime Minister had approved of all of this: "Best possible relations ever". I thought so.

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, the question of the granting of scholarships: Members of the national community in Trinidad and Tobago can apply for scholarships which the state administers and whether you are in Cedros or Crown Point, if you are qualified, you apply, you are screened and before the scholarship is awarded it has to come to the Cabinet of Trinidad and Tobago. So every Member of Trinidad and Tobago has that privilege. But there is an additional arrangement in Tobago, where the Tobago House of Assembly improperly and illegally, sets about to award scholarships of state funds to

members of the national community in Tobago., I do not begrudge them, because I came out of Tobago with a scholarship, but I am saying, Madam Speaker, they are breaking the law when they do that. Because what they have done, what they have been doing in Tobago—

Mr. Robinson: May I ask a question, Madam Speaker, whether in the private discussions between the Minister, the Prime Minister, and the Chairman of the Tobago House of Assembly these matters were raised?

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, the scholarships granted to date have been confined so the spouses, the relatives of sitting Members of the Assembly or, additionally, functionaries of the ex-ruling party. Not an ad put anywhere! But wives, girlfriends, nieces and what not getting scholarships in Tobago. Right now, Madam Speaker, there are public servants who are on such scholarships.

In fact, I do not have time to go into all the details, but another irregularity which is of serious consequence is that in the Tobago House of Assembly for the last four years, 1988 to 1992, there sat a public servant as an elected Member of the Assembly. Madam Speaker, the laws of this country say that you cannot be a public servant and function in the Parliament or the Assembly or in the County Councils. The law says that—but not in Tobago.

As if to make it worse, I am asking how did this happen. I understand, Madam Speaker, that the said person, in receipt of emoluments as a public servant, living in Government quarters, improperly installed in the Assembly, is adjudicating and voting on matters in the Assembly. The question I ask: what about the question of a quorum inside there? What if somebody sued the Assembly on some act the Assembly committed when that person was part of the quorum? As of now, we have no idea of what the full implication of that is—anyway, I say no more.

Madam Speaker, the Representation of the People Act can get you into Parliament and into the House of Assembly. I understand that the person elected is, today, still a public servant, elected under the Representation of the People Act. I want to know how that could happen. It has happened. I am asking in the Chamber: Did it happen? And if it happened, how could it have happened? Because on nomination day you have to say whether you qualify to be elected and somebody must have said “yes”, and if the answer is “yes”, Madam Speaker, are we not dealing with something quite serious here? I raise these matters so that my colleagues and my friends could be aware of the extent of corruption. I am not talking about allegations—Corruption with respect to regulations.

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Madam Speaker, I am saying that this whole question of corruption is a useful political tool. We would all like to see it out of our national life, but there are those who will try to exploit it. It worked in 1986, so they believe it will save them now: Make allegations.

They talk about private people and cheques. Immediately, the cheques were referred to the state agencies set up for that—Fraud Squad, DPP, looking into the matter. They are not satisfied.

So, Madam Speaker, having given you that little snippet of what I could say about this whole issue on corruption, I am serving notice that I would like to amend the motion and I will amend the motion, Madam Speaker, immediately after the first word of the motion, “*whereas*”, and ask to delete all the rest.

My amendment, Madam Speaker, would read, having conceded the “*whereas*” to him:

Whereas recent responses by the Government have demonstrated that it is fully prepared to implement its 1991 general election pledge to the country that if it forms the Government it would ensure accountability at all levels:

And whereas governmental actions including but not limited to its action in the handling of the Pegasus issue, the Port Authority Insurance issue, the issue involving the allegation of the existence of a Drug Cartel in the Police Service and allegations of public funds being used by the Directors of the Airports Authority for their private purpose have confirmed that commitment;

Be it resolved that this honourable House express its confidence in and support for the Government in its attempt to deal responsibly with the whole issue of corruption and accountability.”

Seconded by Mr. P. Manning.

Question proposed.

The Prime Minister (Hon. Patrick Manning): Madam Speaker, the Government readily agreed to debate a motion that was moved by the hon. Member for Couva North which deals with the question of corruption and integrity because the Government believes that these matters are important and these matters at this time and for some time have been attracting the attention of the national community.

Madam Speaker, I want to reaffirm what the PNM said in our manifesto; in our manifesto for the 1991 elections, at page 45. Under “Integrity”. It goes as follows:

“The PNM reaffirms its commitment to integrity in public life and to this end proposes a review of the integrity legislation to strengthen the Integrity Commission and to empower it to better discharge its functions.”

I want to assure you, Madam Speaker, I want to assure Members opposite and I want to assure the national community that the PNM in fact, is pursuing this particular matter. As my colleague, the Member for Diego Martin West has said, because of the importance of these matters and the pitfalls that obviously lie in the path of those who go a certain route, extreme caution is necessary in dealing with matters of this nature, lest we create a situation that is worse than the one that we are trying to rectify.

Mr. Sudama: Outline that situation.

Hon. P. Manning: Madam Speaker, I want to also assure my colleague, the hon. Member for Couva North—because I agreed with something he said in his last five minutes, the only part of his contribution that was relevant to this motion before the House—that we are as concerned about integrity in public life, as they are; that the systems that are in place are not perfect, they are imperfect—and that is why we made this commitment in the manifesto—and that it is the Government’s responsibility to review these systems with a view to tightening up on the arrangements that guarantee the integrity in public life of citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. We guarantee it as far as possible, because we just cannot completely guarantee it.

Madam Speaker, the Opposition has consistently been coming to the Parliament and recommending that a parliamentary committee be set up. In seeking to advance their cause, unfortunately, they have been attacking institution after institution in this society. It matters not to them whether, in their legitimate quest to advance a particular argument, they destroy some or all of the country’s institutions.

They started off, Madam Speaker, with the Chairman of the Integrity Commission. Today, it is the DPP. They stop short of the Fraud Squad. But Madam Speaker, if it is that we have mechanisms in place at this time, imperfect as these mechanisms might be, what is the course of action that the Government is expected to take? Are we not expected to use the mechanisms available to the state, imperfect as these mechanisms may be, to deal with any allegations that may

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come up in circumstances in which a *prima facie* case for investigation has been made out.

You see, Madam Speaker, they talk about setting up a parliamentary mechanism, a parliamentary committee, and my colleague, the Member for Diego Martin West, made the point: “Who is going to investigate: The Member for Couva North?” Madam Speaker, who is going to sit on this parliamentary committee?

Mr. Sudama: Will the Member give way to a question? Is the Member implying that no such committees are in existence in our form of parliamentary democracy? Is that what he is implying?

Hon. P. Manning: I am afraid my honourable friend, the Member for Oropouche, misunderstood what I am saying.

But I ask the question: Who sits on this committee? Who guarantees the integrity of those who sit on the committee? I ask the question. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Sudama: Who guarantees your integrity?

Hon. P. Manning: The electorate.

Madam Speaker, the hon. Leader of the Opposition, in making his contribution here this afternoon, said that one of the reasons why he brought this matter to the Parliament at this time—*[Interruption]* was to provide an opportunity for, he said, the Prime Minister and other Members of the Parliament to clear their names to the extent that that is necessary. That was the contribution made by the hon. Member for Couva North. I ask the question: Who will sit on this committee, Madam Speaker? Because it is quite relevant to any consideration of the proposal that the hon. Member for Couva North has made.

Madam Speaker, I want to quote from a document. It is not an anonymous letter. In fact, I do not deal in anonymous letters. It is a document that was laid in this Parliament. It is a document, laid in the Parliament on Friday, February 6, 1987. It is “The Report of the Commission of Enquiry into the Extent of the Problem of Drug Abuse in Trinidad and Tobago.”

4.20 p.m.

I direct hon. Members' attention to page 42 of this report. I will be very responsible in the way I quote it; I am not going to quote the names of individuals who could be identified and who are not in the Parliament to protect themselves.

It is a public document. It is a report of a Commission set up by a previous Government and a matter that had been debated in this Parliament at a time when the hon. Member for Couva South was not here. This is what it says at 7.36:

"The Commission was informed that Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj made contact with the criminal element in the first part of last year when he was seeking to have revenge taken on one Spencer . . ."

I call Spencer because he cannot be identified.

". . . who had kicked and beaten him in a restaurant."

This is a Commission of Enquiry report, not an anonymous letter, and, incidentally, I quoted the authority before.

"Maharaj was deeply humiliated and said that he would pay any amount of money to deal with Spencer."

The Commissioners repeated this:

"The man who was to act on behalf of Maharaj was to obtain a car and a driver from . . ."

another gentleman whose name I will not call because he is not here to defend himself but who was the subject of considerable deliberation in this report prior to our arriving at this stage.

". . . to carry out his mission.

Subsequently, . . ."

another name which I shall not call because he is not here to defend himself

". . . who was described as a big man in the ONR party and Chairman from Siparia, was said to be insisting that the man be killed."

It is a Commission of Enquiry report, not an anonymous letter.

Mr. Maharaj: Madam Speaker, I think if the Member is quoting it he should be fair. The PNM government instituted a prosecution based on that information; the prosecution was dismissed and the matter is before the court for damages for what the prosecution did. The information that came out in court was the PNM Government paid a bank robber and criminal \$500 per week, put him up in a hotel to 'lie' because I accused the PNM Government of corruption. Mr. Desmond Allum was appointed special prosecutor.

Hon. P. Manning: Madam Speaker, precisely what the Member for Couva North says. This is an opportunity for individuals to clear their names and I am sure that when the hon. Member for Couva South gets up to make his contribution before this Parliament he would have something to say on the matter; with which I have absolutely no quarrel. I continue:

"The evidence also disclosed that Ramesh Maharaj had offered the "hit man" a .38 revolver. . ."

Mr. Robinson: Madam Speaker, may I ask what is the purpose of this? There is a rule of Parliament that Members must not impute improper motives to other Members even by adopting the statements of others. That is why I asked what is the purpose of this. Lots of accusations and imputations on a personal basis can fly and what will happen is that the level of this House will be reduced much lower than it is at the present time.

Hon. P. Manning: Madam Speaker, I merely want to remind you and hon. Members that I objected when the Government, headed by the hon. Member for Tobago East, sought to make this report public—I did not do it—he did.

Mr. Robinson: Madam Speaker, may I also say that it was the hon. Member who insisted that names of Cabinet Members be called.

Madam Speaker: Can we get back to the purpose of the motion? Just proceed.

Hon. P. Manning: I continue:

"The evidence also disclosed that Ramesh Maharaj had offered the "hit man" a .38 revolver and that he had given him sums of money from time to time and a tour of the area where Spencer lived but it is not known that the "hit man" eventually received the sum of \$35,000 which he wanted."

The Enquiry goes on to say:

"It would appear that the "hit man" did not complete the job he was offered, resulting in the classic case of the biter being severely bitten."

That was the view of the Commission of Enquiry. I raise the matter to deal with two issues.

Mr. B. Panday: To show that there is no corruption in the PNM.

Hon. P. Manning: The first is that if a Commission of Enquiry could make allegations of this nature—and I assure you allegations have properly been made

against other Members sitting on the Benches opposite—that there is a responsibility for the names to be cleared. In fact, I wondered what was the position of the hon. Member for Couva North seeing himself as leader of an alternative Government under the parliamentary system and, no doubt, seeking to appoint the hon. Member for Couva South, if such an eventuality should occur, into some sensitive position, not excluding Attorney General, his name has to be cleared.

I raise it to make a second point, that is, that there are serious dangers associated with proceeding on information of this nature.

Mr. Maharaj: You are relying on it.

Hon. P. Manning: No, I am not relying on it.

Mr. Maharaj: Your Government is relying on it.

Hon. P. Manning: I want to make it clear to the hon. Member for Couva South that I do not accept the allegation. I think that the hon. Member for Tobago East did the hon. Member for Couva South a great disservice when he made public this report. I argued that commissions of enquiry be held in secret and that the authorities were there, long in quantity—they have access to much information—but short in quality. We have to be careful. If you set up a parliamentary committee, who is to sit on it?

Mr. Sudama: —about a Senate investigation committee.

Hon. P. Manning: How do we guarantee the integrity of those who are Members of Parliament and who may not be Members of the Government sitting on a committee of this nature? Are we to put on it the Member for Tobago East in respect of whom the Member for Tobago West and the Chairman of the Tobago House of Assembly had a point of view with respect to stability?

Miss Nicholson: Madam Speaker, on a point of order. I have never made any statement about anybody's stability, much more so my colleague, the Member for Tobago East. Therefore, I would like the hon. Member for San Fernando East to withdraw that statement which he just made, please. I have never made any statement about the Member for Tobago East re stability.

Hon. P. Manning: Madam Speaker, perhaps the hon. Member for Tobago West would like to let us know the statement she made.

Miss Nicholson: Madam Speaker, I drew something to your attention. I am saying that the Member for San Fernando East made a statement a while ago that I said that the Member for Tobago East had a problem with stability. I am calling upon you as Speaker and Chairman of the House to call upon the Member for San Fernando East, who is supposed to be the responsible Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, to withdraw that statement because he cannot justify that.

Hon. P. Manning: Madam Speaker, the statement was reported in the press and there was no disclaimer. But against the possibility—

Miss Nicholson: I am appealing to the Speaker. He has not withdrawn the statement.

Mr. Robinson: Madam Speaker,—

Dr. Rowley: He is doing that.

Miss Nicholson: You leave me alone, I shall deal with you later. You will never hold up your head in Trinidad.

Mr. Robinson: I was allaying his fears and saying that I have no problem with what he is saying in view of his own unstable position at the current time.

4.30 p.m.

Hon. P. Manning: Madam Speaker, against the possibility that the hon. Member for Tobago West was misquoted, I withdraw the statement. Because it is now clear that the hon. Member for Tobago West believes that any deficiency such as may have existed in the past, is now rectified.

Miss Nicholson: Madam Speaker, the Government of the day speaks a lot about responsibility. I am calling upon you, again, as Speaker of the House, to have him withdraw that statement. Also, the Member should not refer to anything at all about instability with respect to my colleague. He has referred to it again, and as Prime Minister he must withdraw because he is supposed to be responsible. That is the argument he was just making.

Hon. P. Manning: It is clear, Madam Speaker, that the hon. Member for Tobago West did not hear me too well. I just want to reassure her, I withdraw the statement, against the possibility that you were misquoted in the media. You see how generous I am? But I will continue my contribution, Madam Speaker, after the tea interval.

Madam Speaker: The sitting of this House is suspended until 5.00 p.m.

4.32 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.05 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Hon. P. Manning: Madam Speaker, when we took the tea adjournment, I was making reference to the basis on which you will have Members of Parliament sit on the committee, as recommended by the hon. Members opposite, and indicating that even in respect of some Members of the Parliament, there may be reasons why great caution is necessary.

Madam Speaker, permit me to refer for a brief moment again, to the report of the Commission of Enquiry into the extent of the problem of drug abuse in Trinidad and Tobago. I want to do so, because I want to make the point that even in circumstances where you have a report, the report itself could be defective. It is far worse if you go for the transcripts of evidence, in which, no doubt, you would have seen a lot of allegations being made, allegations which would have been sifted by the Commissioners themselves, who would have judged, on the basis of the evidence before them, whether information was accurate or not, to the best of their ability, and they accept or discard, based on their own judgment. But to the extent that they consider information not to be substantiated, it does not find its way into the report itself. It is a very dangerous procedure to make transcripts public. The report itself has the potential of tarnishing the images of innocent persons.

Mr. Maharaj: Madam Speaker, could the Member tell this honourable House whether his name was mentioned in the transcripts of the proceedings of the commission of Enquiry into the Port Authority?

Hon. P. Manning: Madam Speaker, I am sorry I have not looked at the transcripts of the proceedings. The Member for Couva South will have his chance to make his contribution.

It is dangerous to make transcripts public, and this is a point that I would like hon. Members to be seized of. But what somebody says about somebody else, is one thing in a commission of inquiry. There is always doubt as to whether it is correct or not. But what one says oneself, constitutes incontrovertible facts.

You see, Madam Speaker, we are debating today, a motion on corruption, not for the first time in this Parliament. I was in Parliament on Friday, March 20, 1987, when a debate was taking place on the Prevention of Corruption Bill. I will be

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quoting from the official report of the Parliament, the *Hansard* records. I am at page 1086 of the debate on the Prevention of Corruption Bill, Friday, March 20, 1987. The person speaking at the time was the then Prime Minister, Mr. Robinson. This is what he had to say. I want to make it clear from the start that I do not agree with Mr. Robinson's line of argument—the hon. Member for Tobago East. I do not agree with the line of argument that he pursued at that time, but this is the line, and I quote:

"I want to say to this House and to the country, that I myself, since I have occupied this office, I have kept a register of gifts in the office and a note is taken of every gift I receive. I would be happy at some time to display those gifts in Whitehall and to invite the press to see how many have been received in the time that I have occupied the office of Prime Minister. These are serious matters.

Mr. Speaker, I think I should mention this, because when I went into the office at Whitehall I looked around to see whether there was any evidence of this country having been independent for 25 years, with all the gifts and donations that had been received from foreign countries, visiting ambassadors, visiting Heads of State, received abroad from foreign countries, no evidence. I went to the Prime Minister's residence, St. Ann's, the position was the same, no evidence to show that it is the residence of the Prime Minister of a country that has been proudly independent for 25 years and has been in contact with, had inter-relationship with the other members of the international community. I felt ashamed and I think it is necessary that the population should know these things."

The implication is quite clear, not on one Prime Minister, but two. I do not know if the hon. Member for Tobago East thought that he would have been Prime Minister in perpetuity, I do not know. But for better or for worse, it was the view of the people of Trinidad and Tobago that the Government should change and a new Prime Minister was elected to office, and I, too, went into the Prime Minister's office and I, too, went into the Prime Minister's residence at St. Ann's. Where are the gifts?

I hasten to point out that I do not accept the line of argument, but you see, it was the view of the hon. Member for Tobago East. You talk about double standards:

"I felt ashamed and I think it is necessary that the population should know these things."

Would you like an inquiry into this one?

Mr. Robinson: I would like an inquiry into that? Whatever substantial gifts I received, were received on the occasion of the State visit to Nigeria when I was accorded the status of a Chief. Cabinet agreed that I should keep those gifts which are attached to the status of a Chief. They were exhibited to the population at the Central Bank, so there is no secret about it.

Hon. P. Manning: I agree, Madam Speaker, that the Cabinet took a decision that the gifts received by the then hon. Prime Minister, as a result of his visit to Nigeria, should be kept by him, and that is quite in order. What about the other gifts? Perhaps I should re-read what I said just now. This is the Member for Tobago East speaking on March 20, 1987. The Government was in power only for three months. This is what he had to say:

"I want to say to this House and to the country, that I, myself, since I have occupied this office, I have kept a register of gifts in the office and a note is taken of every gift I receive. I would be happy at some time to display those gifts in Whitehall and to invite the press to see how many have been received in the time that I have occupied the office of Prime Minister."

Plenty, then. All of a sudden they are inconsequential.

Mr. Robinson: There is a register. It is available to the Prime Minister. There is a register of all the gifts in the Prime Minister's office. I kept a register and there is a register. You could make it available to the public.

Hon. P. Manning: I accept that, Madam Speaker. It is not the register I am interested in, it is the gifts. There are four things that come not back. One is the spoken word, and today we would have to modify that to make it five. One might be the gifts.

5.15 p.m.

I hasten to point out, Madam Speaker, that I do not accept the line of argument. But, you see, it was the hon. Member for Tobago East himself who said it. What did I meet? I am not seeing any of those. What is worse, and what I have said nothing about so far, is not what I did not meet when I went into the Prime Minister's residence, it is what I met. So far, I have said nothing about it, and I do not propose to say anything about it now. All I would say is that the hon. Member for Tobago East believes in too much hocus-pocus and superstition.

Mr. Robinson: Madam Speaker, this is a direct imputation on my character. Say what you have to say. I have an opportunity to reply. Will you say what you have to say?

Hon. P. Manning: Madam Speaker, I did not mean—

Mr. Robinson: I have a document from 1990 that shows your implication.

Mr. Maharaj: I have one from 1993.

Hon. P. Manning: Madam Speaker, I want to make it clear that I cast no aspersion on the character of the hon. Member for Tobago East. I do no such thing. If it is that the hon. Member for Tobago East considers my statement an attack on his character, I withdraw it. But, you see, it was the hon. Gentleman who said that these are serious matters.

Mr. B. Panday: What is this hocus-pocus, we want to know that?

Hon. P. Manning: In other words, call the names? *[Interruption]* Not me, the effect of it. *[Interruption]* Talk with me privately, you are the Leader of the Opposition.

Madam Speaker, it is not that the Government has not taken steps to improve the level of integrity of those in public life. The established parliamentary mechanisms of this time are two-fold. Firstly, the Public Accounts Committee—a committee headed by a Member of the Opposition—and the second, the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee, also headed by a Member of the Opposition. I do not know why my friend from St. Augustine is so amused.

Mr. Sudama: What do they do?

Hon. P. Manning: Madam Speaker, it is not by accident, as I have pointed out, that both of these oversight committees are headed, not by Members of the Government, but by Members of the Opposition. What is made of it, Madam Speaker to a very large extent, is dictated by the Opposition. It is a check and balance.

I am not saying it is perfect. In fact, I know that it suffers from a number of defects. But, for the time being, those are the constitutional mechanisms that we have in place and it is to those mechanisms that we should turn our attention. There was a time when public servants coming before the Public Accounts Committee would come shaking. The Public Accounts Committee can work well.

Mr. Valley: It all depends on the Chairman.

Mr. Sudama: Would the Member give way? Is the Member aware that an official of a state enterprise, on legal advice, refused to provide documents to the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee on the ground that it had no constitutional authority to require such documents to be produced?

Hon. P. Manning: Madam Speaker, I am aware. They are impinging on a very important matter. The involvement of the state in business activity, most important, and what is confidential and what is not. *[Interruption]* The point is that it is a problem. It is a problem and these are issues that we have to consider. We are all looking for greater transparency. I am not accusing Members opposite of wanting something else. All of us want greater transparency, but we may have different views as to how it should be achieved.

One of the things that the PNM has done, since we have come into office, is to authorize the state enterprises to have private auditors. Do you know what the arrangement used to be? The official audit of a state enterprise must be done by the Auditor General. What we have done within the last year, is to remove the constriction that has, as one of its defects, accounts coming to the Parliament very late in the day. As somebody opposite said just now, years after the close of the financial year. What it really meant was that by the time those accounts get before the Public Accounts Committee, in many instances, they are no longer relevant and really of little value.

Because we recognize that, one of the things we did as part of our commitment to strengthen the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee was to authorize state enterprises to utilize the services of private auditors, and they were given deadlines as to when the accounts should be made available. We are considering one other move, in the context of accountability of the state enterprises, that is, to place a small shareholding of each state enterprise on a re-organized stock exchange. The implication is that the state enterprises will then have to adhere to the rules of the stock exchange; they must publish the accounts by a certain time and so on. Of course, Madam Speaker, in the context of all that is being done the re-organization of the stock exchange is yet to come before this honourable House.

Miss Nicholson: Madam Speaker, may I ask a question, please? Is the hon. Member for San Fernando East, aware that some of those same companies you are talking about have been used before by previous People's National Movement

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Governments and, perhaps, while we were in office? And I can tell you that they were some of the worst performers. For example, NHA. Are you aware that two of the outstanding companies went there and just could not handle the task at NHA? How would you come to terms with that, with what you are saying?

Hon. P. Manning: Madam Speaker, the National Housing Authority is not a state enterprise, therefore it comes under the Public Accounts Committee as opposed to the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee, please. I understand the difficulties in some of these government agencies. It is not that I do not understand, I understand them, Madam Speaker. What the hon. Member for Tobago West has said may very well be right.

Our responsibility is not to cast blame. Our responsibility, Madam Speaker, is to try to rectify it. Therefore, our search for solutions will continue, but the one thing we are very careful about is that we are not going to be running willy-nilly and putting things in place because there is pressure from the Opposition, we will, in our own deliberate judgment and time, when we are satisfied, and only when we are satisfied, that we have workable solutions, will this Government make the appropriate adjustments.

I want to assure you, Madam Speaker, and all Members of this honourable House and the national community that these are matters that are being studied at this time. I propose very shortly, to approach the institute of Chartered Accountants. It is an agency with which we have been talking, while we were in Opposition. We have been talking with them, we have raised and we have been discussing these questions of accountability, and I wish, very shortly, to formally raise with them, as I intend to formally raise with the Auditor General, the questions on accountability that arise after some research that we are now undertaking is completed.

Madam Speaker, we met an IADB arrangement in place; energy sector loan, US \$260 million, and we were not happy with some of the projects in that and we sought to have the IADB make appropriate adjustments to it.

5.25 p.m.

One of the agreed positions that arose out of that review was the establishment of an energy council for a specific purpose. It has occurred to us that such a body of people, being paid as the agreement calls for, industry rates, and persons with competence in certain areas—you are looking at accountants, process engineers, engineers on the whole, people whose disciplines impact and are relevant to the

petroleum sector. Bringing such a council together, it occurred to us that such a council can play a very useful role in the annual general meetings of energy sector companies where the committee itself could be appointed as a proxy to the Minister of Finance. Such a committee can go in on the occasion of the annual general meeting of a state enterprise and question the management of the particular enterprise. It is a new idea and it will take the whole question of accountability a major step further. We are now finalizing those arrangements ensuring that we do things constitutionally right. We want to be sure that there are no pitfalls associated with it. And that such a committee—

Mr. Humphrey: The Prime Minister has expressed concern for doing things that are constitutionally right. Would he explain to this House what is meant in the Constitution of the Executive collectively being responsible to Parliament?

Hon. P. Manning: I will leave my friend from St. Augustine to the hon. Attorney General, the Member for Ortoire/Mayaro [*Interruption*]

I have an opinion but I will not allow him to lead me in the direction in which he wants me to go. Sometimes he himself is not sure about that.

Madam Speaker, the hon. Member for St. Augustine reminds me of a cross-eyed gentleman whom I ran into at the Library corner sometime ago, when I was very young and impetuous. He ran into me and said to me 'why don't you watch where you are going?' It was by a stroke of genius I said, to him 'why don't you go where you are watching?' So you will understand my reluctance to follow the hon. Member for St. Augustine.

You set up this team of people and they can go at an annual general meeting and they can question the management of the firm. Because it will close a major loophole that now exists in the accountability of companies in the state sector. In addition to that, such a team can have the responsibility, not just on the occasion of the annual general meeting, but to continuously monitor and to do audits on the companies in the state sector so that the state itself can have an independent view of the performance of some of these companies long before the company comes up to an annual general meeting, and a mechanism is identified for questioning the management of the companies at that time. It is not to say that we are twiddling our thumbs. It is not to say that we are not committed and that we have not been proceeding—I just want to reiterate to hon. Members that it is a task that needs very careful thought and that any government will be well advised to proceed with great caution.

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In seconding the amendment to the motion so ably moved by my colleague for Diego Martin West, merely highlights what the hon. Member for Diego Martin West sought to have excised from the original motion. I could spend much time this afternoon talking about what happened at the Airport, and at the Port. I want to deal with one issue. The investigation into the arrangements at the Port. It is the hon. Member for Tobago East who said that the investigation was not conducted by the Prime Minister but by someone else. It is a fundamental—

Mr. Robinson: Madam Speaker, may I correct that? What I said was, there was nothing that the Prime Minister had said to show that any investigation had been conducted by him. The evidence that he produced was evidence which suggested that the investigation was conducted by the Minister himself. That is what I said. I am very careful.

Hon. P. Manning: It is an important principle in law that the other side should be heard. We are in the highest law-making body in the land [*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: Which one?

Hon. P. Manning: This one, the only one. Yes. When the document came into my possession I was minded to ignore it because it was anonymous in nature, but there were some attachments in it that suggested that the attachments themselves may have been authentic, even if they did not substantiate the allegations that were being made. The first course of action, as part of the investigation, was to ask the relevant Minister who was accused in the document to comment on it. Which is what I did. In fact, the letter which the hon. Minister transmitted to the Prime Minister has not been made public. But the Minister of Works also took the course of action to forward the document to the public servants who stood accused by way of the particular letter, asking them for their comments. Those comments went to the Minister and he used them as part of his missive to the Prime Minister.

When I read the letter and the attachments to the document I felt that there was no need to take the matter any further, especially as the allegations came in an anonymous letter which had attachments that did not substantiate the allegations that were made. Quite responsible. That is the only way you could deal with it. I do not know if it is that the hon. Member opposite would have preferred a course of action that prevented the person who was accused from saying anything in his own defence. I do not know if that is what the hon. Member for Tobago East was

saying. The hon. Member for Tobago East is a lawyer and he knows, I am sure that it is an important principle in law that the other side be heard.

I have no doubt that in the course of this debate they are going to raise again, the Tesoro affair. It has been discussed *ad nauseam* in the Parliament. I listened to the Member for Couva North about the DC-9, trying diligently to resurrect a ghost of the past. I have no doubt that in the talk of the Tesoro affair—I want to just put it in context—1969 when certain documents were being signed I was in school. I was not a Member of Parliament at all, Madam Speaker. The Tesoro Corporation could not have come here without an Aliens (Landholding) Licence. I have a copy of the licence that was issued in June of 1969, when I was writing final exams in Mona. I want to read for you one of the licences.

"In exercise of the powers conferred on the Governor General by the Aliens (Landholding) Ordinance, Chapter 21 No. 3, licence is hereby granted to TESORO PETROLEUM CORPORATION,

to hold 99,999 "B" Ordinary Shares of \$1.00 each in Trinidad Tesoro Petroleum Company Limited, a company registered in the island under the Companies Ordinance,

subject to the following conditions:-

- (a) that the said share is not held on behalf of, or for the benefit of any other alien who does not for the time being hold a licence granted under this Aliens (Landholding) Ordinance;
- (b) that payment for the said share, or of any dividend thereon, must be made in compliance with the Defence (Finance) Regulations, 1942 and any rules, directions or instructions made or given thereunder, or under any other laws for the time being in force relating to Exchange Control; and
- (c) that payment for the share is made with funds from an External Account.

Dated this 30th day of June 1969.

Signed: Arthur N. R. Robinson, Ag. Prime Minister."

5.35 p.m.

Do you understand the point, Madam Speaker? The Tesoro Corporation could not have come here had this licence not been signed by the hon. Member for Tobago East. *[Interruption]* On whose recommendation? I am in no position to

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say. I was not here. If anybody owes an explanation to this House on the Tesoro affair, it is the hon. Member for Tobago East who signed a licence to allow the Tesoro Corporation to come here. That is not the only licence he signed.

"In exercise of the powers conferred on the Governor General by the Aliens (Landholding) Ordinance, Chapter 21 No. 3, licence is hereby granted to Dr. Robert Van Osdell West JR. citizen of the United States of America...

Dated this 30th day of June 1969.

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Ag. Prime Minister."

Now, I can only assume that the hon. Member for Tobago East, responsible as he is, will not sign documents that relate to matters with which he is not familiar, otherwise he would have the public servants in and ask them what it was all about. I do not know if he is in a position to say that when he signed this document there was not a consideration that was not reflected in the document. I do not know.

You see they have had a lot to say. The Member for Tobago East and others cast all kinds of aspersions. I merely asked a question. I cast no aspersion on anybody. I am saying that if there were corruption in the Tesoro matter, I wonder if the hon. Member for Tobago East was associated with it by virtue of the fact that he signed the Aliens (Landholding) Act. Looking at that by itself is one thing, but when you consider what happened in 1990 under a government headed by the Member for Tobago East, then, you begin to wonder. That is all I would say. I begin to wonder, because it was an Attorney General of the government headed by the Member for Tobago East that came to the Parliament and announced a major breakthrough in investigations and *cote ce cote la*, but indicated that they were able to settle a particular matter—it was settled out of court—for \$12 million. The Tesoro Corporation paid the Government of Trinidad and Tobago \$12 million as a consequence of the efforts of the government of which the hon. Member for Tobago East was the head.

What we did not know at the time was that as part of that arrangement was a payment to the Government of Trinidad and Tobago of US \$960,000 or TT \$4 million, absolving the Tesoro Corporation of any liability it would otherwise have incurred, in respect of a dispute between Federation Chemicals Limited and Trinidad Tesoro Petroleum Company Limited, a joint venture company in which the Tesoro Corporation held a 49.1 per cent participating interest.

We came into office and it fell to us to settle that matter. Do you know what the liability was? What was the figure? It was \$80 million. What cast aspersions on it is the fact that an attempt was made to settle the matter at \$40 million, and Federation Chemicals Limited refused. So that, when they bought out the Tesoro liability at \$960,000 they did so against the background of the knowledge that already, there was a liability of about \$40 million involved in it.

When you put that together with the signing of the two licences that I have just drawn to the attention of the Parliament, I ask the question: To what conclusion do you come? I cast no aspersions. I merely ask the question.

Mr. Maharaj: Madam Speaker, on a point of order. This is a motion against the Government. It is not right for Members to impute improper motives on other Members. As a matter of fact, what the other side is doing in answering this debate is merely attacking persons who have made allegations. This is not permitted by the Standing Orders.

In effect, that is what the Prime Minister is doing and it is totally irrelevant.

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Hon. P. Manning: Madam Speaker, I assure you and hon. Members that I will use only a small fraction of that time.

What I am saying is that Members opposite are pursuing a course of action and casting aspersions and just sully the names of individuals. All I am saying and I was very careful to point out is that I cast no aspersions on the hon. Member for Tobago East, but that when these facts present themselves to me, they lend themselves to interpretations in a particular way. That is the point that I am making. What they have been doing is precisely that. They are putting things over to the national community in a way to paint a picture that is entirely incorrect.

In closing my contribution, I just want to reassure you and the hon. Members, that the Government of which I am a part and which I head remains committed to its manifesto pledge, that we will upgrade the levels of accountability to the country. I further wish to assure you that steps to achieve that are underway.

Mr. Maharaj: Madam Speaker, I understand that the Member for Tobago East would like to speak and if I am permitted, he just went to the rear. I will give way to the Member for Tobago East.

5.45 p.m.

Mr. A.N.R. Robinson (*Tobago East*): Madam Speaker, I must thank the hon. Member for Couva South for his graciousness in yielding the floor to his elder. I hope that nothing that I say will offend the high and mighty, whoever he may be, during the course of this debate, to warrant his disenthraling me. At the bar, we would say, disrobing me. I wish to say that when I speak in this House, I speak under the obligation of my oath of office, and as representative of the people of this country in a particular constituency. I consider that I have very serious responsibilities to discharge. It is in that spirit that I seek to make my contributions in this House. I do not seek to go at any particular individual. That is not my concern. That has never been my practice in this House.

I have been a representative of the people, Madam Speaker, for a period extending over 35 years, which is longer than any other person in the history of Trinidad and Tobago. On March 18, it will be 35 years since I first became a representative when I entered the Federal Parliament of the West Indies and after serving at the federal level, I served in this House in various capacities, then I resigned from the party to which I belonged over 20 years ago. Some people seem to forget that.

Over 20 years ago, I foreshadowed all the events that have happened since in that particular party. The Member for Diego Martin West joined long after I left and condemned what had been happening, not in relation to particular people, but in relation to a particular culture that I saw developing in that party.

I also resigned from the Government and became a private citizen for five years, but my constituents still regarded me as their representative. I was, if not *de jure*, I was their *de facto* representative.

I was re-elected from 1976 to 1980, when I was elected in another capacity in the Tobago House of Assembly and, in 1996, I was once more elected to this House and had the honour of leading the Government and the country.

So I have served for long and in various capacities. I have seen many come and go. I have been attacked and assaulted viciously and vigorously on many occasions. I have been arrested and imprisoned. I have had a gun pointed at my

head, a bullet in my leg, but I am back in the service of the people of Trinidad and Tobago without fear or favour. When I go to my constituents I can say my hands are as clean today as the first day that I entered politics and they know that is so.

I want to offer some very friendly and paternal advice to the youthful Member for Diego Martin West, whose origins are somewhat similar and to tell him, it is his first year. If he is going to make 35, he will have to conserve some of that energy.

Mr. Valley: Madam Speaker, just on a small point. It is incorrect for the Member for Tobago East to state that he has been representing the people for 35 years.

Madam Speaker: That is not a point of order. Continue, please.

Mr. A.N.R. Robinson: My friendly advice to the hon. Member for Diego Martin West is to be careful how enthusiastically he lends himself to be used. Let him remember that, though a deputy, he never acts. The goal may be tantalizingly close, but it may still remain, for all time, out of his reach.

I speak, Madam Speaker, in the context of a situation where a substantial section of the population of Trinidad and Tobago is uneasy at the present time for two principal reasons. One is the threat of even harsher burdens having to be borne—never forget that—the threat of even harsher burdens having to be borne when perhaps they had every expectation that their burdens, far from being intensified, would have been eased. Those burdens have not been eased and the prospect is of harsher and more onerous burdens to come. That is one of the causes of disquiet and concern in this population.

The other cause for disquiet—and the Government must never forget this—arises from a number of incidents which have occurred which raise serious questions of the integrity of the governmental process. This is not a matter which has been fabricated by Members of this House. It is not a matter that arises from anonymous letters at all. The matter of the anonymous nature of letters at this stage is merely incidental. That is not a primary concern, whatever. Too much water has flowed under the bridge. There is sufficient evidence that has appeared to make substantial sections of this population uneasy and concerned. This is what the Government should be concerned about.

There is double reason why any government should seek to lay these fears to rest at present time. It is crucial. The country, as many people say, is in a crisis, as

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indeed it is. If indeed the sword of Damocles hangs over workers' heads, it is crucial that where there are allegations which seem to have some substance in relation to wrongdoing and lack of integrity, that something should be done about it to allay those fears.

This is my concern in this House this afternoon. I had expected that what the Government would come here and say is: "Look, we are prepared to lay bare everything, as they have said outside this House" but not a single word of that has been said within this House. The Government and Opposition would then get together and work out machinery, not the Prime Minister picking somebody to have an inquiry. That is the first error, in my view, that was made, especially a person who has been appointed by the President.

The reason why the Chairman of the Integrity Commission is appointed by the President is to prevent any suspicion of political influence on the Chairman of the Integrity Commission. It is essential that persons who are appointed in that manner, with the exception that they do not have any taint whatever of political influence, that everything be done to keep them in that kind of light.

This is paternal advice to the Prime Minister. It is a pity he has not spoken to me for the last year.

Mr. Manning: If you would permit me to say in Latin: "*Timeo Danaos et dona ferentis*". I fear the Greeks, especially when they bear gifts.

Mr. B. Panday: I think you are "furious Danaos".

Mr. A.N.R. Robinson: I am pleased and honoured, I have even made the Prime Minister speak Latin. Would he speak another sentence of Latin for us.

It is a pity. I would have advised him, as I do now, that in any such case, either leave the matter entirely to the discretion of the President: Let the Cabinet take a decision authorizing the President to make the appointment in his discretion, or after consultation with the Leader of the Opposition, make a recommendation to the President. That is the way to go about it.

The mere fact of the Prime Minister himself selecting and then dealing with and then questions arising about one report or the contents of the previous report must give rise to public unease. I mean, let us be fair to the public: We are not dealing with Members opposite and so and so. You bandy words and you attack one another and you say "all ah we tief", and you think the country is satisfied. The country is not satisfied that "all ah we tief". They are not satisfied. They want

to know that the Government is doing something about the very serious situation and is allaying the fears that exist, the concerns, in a serious manner.

It is very unfortunate that the position of the Chairman of the Integrity Commission has been compromised and I do not see how he can, in all conscience remain Chairman of the Integrity Commission and the Prime Minister is responsible for that. He has to accept the responsibility. The Members of the Opposition have no confidence in your Chairman of the Integrity Commission. He is being questioned and queried in the media in this fashion. This is what the Prime Minister is doing. He may "*Timeo Danaos*";, but he should consult Robinson.

Listen to the terms of reference:

"Reports to the Prime Minister on the circumstances surrounding the decision of the Airports Authority to award to the Pegasus Group a contract for the financing development and operation on a joint venture basis of phase 1 of the Piarco Rainbow International Development Project..."

Listen to this part now:

"...in order to satisfy the Government."

No, totally unacceptable. It is the Government that is under scrutiny. So you do not produce a report to satisfy the very people who are under scrutiny. This is the same point that I have been making in respect of the so-called investigation of the Prime Minister into the matter involving the Member for Diego Martin East. He rises today in this House and says he wrote the Member for Diego Martin East. The Member for Diego Martin East, unsolicited, gratuitously and voluntarily, then contacts the very people who are making the complaint in order to obtain letters from them. That disqualifies that procedure totally.

Madam Speaker, when I was in a similar position of a complaint being made against a Minister, I called in the head of the public service and I told the head of the public service to go to the public servant and make it clear—I made it clear to him and I was prepared to make it clear to everybody—that I was going to make my influence available to enable the public servant to speak freely and to be protected.

So it was the head of the public service who went and got whatever statements and whatever information was necessary and I gave all the assurances to the head of the public service. You do not send a Minister to deal, or allow a Minister at

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all—the Prime Minister should have admonished that Minister and not accepted those letters at all.

It is not only hear the other side—you must hear the other side—you should also make sure that the other side is in no position even to appear to be influencing the complainant in the matter. The Minister had no business whatever in these investigations, except to answer to the Prime Minister. He had no business dealing with any employee. When you do that, you shut the mouths of all the employees in the public service because you know what they say “oh, I make a complaint about the Minister and the next day it is the Minister coming to me. So what am I to do?”

That is why I said on the last occasion that these matters are fundamentally important for the public service and for the country. In matters of corruption, people must be free to speak. Unless they feel sure, unless they have that sense of security that they will not be victimized, they are not going to speak.

See what happened in this House today, not the first time. I moved a motion and I was the first person who moved a motion for the strengthening of the Presentation of Corruption Ordinance since 1977. I was in the Opposition and the whole Front Bench of the Government took off after me. I am somewhat apprehensive about speaking about corruption these days, last time I spoke, I was shot.

I told the Prime Minister I have a document in my possession. Was the Prime Minister communicating in writing with the members of the NAR on the opposite Benches during that debate? Did he have his hand in the NAR?

Mr. B. Panday: Rise, rise, Sir Galahad.

Mr. A.N.R. Robinson: You see, Madam Speaker, I can stand with a gun before my head and say I am not guilty of corruption or anything like that. I did it. When I was brought out of this building, the people who brought me out or got me to sign a letter of resignation were calling me, “Mr. Prime Minister” as they were taking me out. They had learnt to respect me.

All the propaganda that was spread when they met me face to face and had to deal with me, they realized the vicious nature of the false propaganda that was bruited about all over the country. So I can stand. I am not afraid of any enquiry.

The talk about the Tesoro matter: It is incredible that this Government has shown no interest in the voluminous evidence that was obtained after some of the

most extensive enquiry and investigations internationally ever to take place in the Third World. It is incredible that they have shown no interest in that evidence whatever: Over 20 volumes of evidence in the library which discloses how you launder money, how some may be doing it now, the number of countries involved, money to Caracas, secret accounts, secret funds, secret companies, secret names, to New York, Toronto, London, Switzerland, banking accounts. They will find the evidence there, tracing Trinidad and Tobago's money. But they want to shoot me, they want to kill me.

It is this former Prime Minister who instituted or encouraged, at any rate, that investigation. Now I am being accused of signing an Aliens (Landholding) Licence. You see the trivial element to which they have reduced Government. They have trivialized government in this country.

Mr. Maharaj: We shall remove them.

Mr. A.N.R. Robinson: Last week we saw documents which everybody now knows showed the billions of dollars that have been involved in this country. The Racing Complex alone, \$120 million that we know of, thrown away and nothing, no conscience about that. It is Robinson they are going at, they are taking off their gloves. I do not want AIDS from them, you know. I am an elder statesman; whatever they may say or do, I remain that and I am respected as that, certainly by some of their Cabinet, if not by all. Certainly by many people in the country who do their duties and certainly abroad. They would be surprised the respect that I receive abroad as an elder statesman. The Prime Minister does not have to instruct his protocol officers, they know what protocol is. I think he can take a few lessons in protocol.

Madam Speaker, this Tesoro matter; what is involved here is not only the \$50 million as against the billions otherwise involved and the possible hundreds of millions that may be going out of this country in the future if steps are not taken now. It is very important that these matters be raised, so that steps be taken now to prevent a recurrence of what has happened in the past. That is the importance of the Tesoro matter.

Extensive investigations by forensic accountants and lawyers, Trinidad and Tobago, United States, Canada and the United Kingdom. Members of the legal profession in all these countries were involved as well as very skilled and experienced forensic experts. The Alexander Commission, our information was that people were just not coming forward to give evidence in Trinidad and

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Tobago. You heard what was said: Had the SEC in the United States not disclosed information we would never have known in Trinidad and Tobago. But we were getting the information outside. That is why we were able to accumulate an enormous amount of information.

The hon. Prime Minister—at the time, Leader of the Opposition, I think it was, I am not sure if that was his status—he gave evidence. Why did he not accuse the Member for Tobago East? Why in all these years, there has been not a scintilla of evidence, no suspicion, no imputation whatever against the Member for Tobago East? Why now? Their response to serious concerns is “all ah we tief”, trying to smear everybody, trying to reduce the level of this Parliament to one common denomination so that people say that all politicians are the same. That is what is happening in this country today: Lies, lies, lies!

I hope Members would understand and just have a look at the evidence in the library, over 20 volumes, see the names called, see the techniques used by these multinational corporations. I think it was the Member for San Fernando East who told this Parliament how Ministers were sent right and left all over the world to complain against these wicked multinational corporations who were admitting that they had given bribes in Trinidad and Tobago. It is incredible. When I read the document, I could not believe it.

What I am saying is, this is a pattern. They had better be careful. The new ones had better be careful, because if they get into the culture they will not be able to get out of it and it is going to have serious consequences for this country. I saw it very early, that is why I walked out in the rain and they sought to persecute me and prosecute me and whatnot, but I am still here.

I held the highest office in this country and I have come back on the backbench and I am happy here, because I served the people. I am not afraid to do it. I am the first person who was Prime Minister in this country to come back into this Parliament and not only that to sit in the Back Benches and I am happy. I did not think that Adam left in his will, the right for me to occupy any position. Where I am, I work, I do my best. I think that should be the attitude of the Member for Diego Martin West. Do not be too ambitious, do not be too over-anxious, too early, or overstep the mark, you will shoot your boat. Take your time. Thirty-five years is a long time to go.

Now the Tobago House of Assembly. Let me make it clear: My attitude to the Tobago House of Assembly is the same as any other government department. If

there is corruption, deal with it. I have a tape of a speech made by the Member for Diego Martin West at Mt. St. George during the election in the presence of the Prime Minister and from what he said, I would have thought that the Prime Minister would have acted immediately. He should have acted before the Tobago House of Assembly election. If you have corrupt people in the Tobago House of Assembly, why do you allow them to get back into the House of Assembly, if they are? Why come in and talk now? He is a Minister, that is what I said, they are not impotent, does he mind my using that word? Surely he showed very early that he is not. *[Interruption]*

So I wish he would take my paternal advice, Madam Speaker. You see, the Prime Minister is playing games with the people of Tobago. That is what he is doing. You notice I have said nothing on Tobago. I have left him to play his games, let him play his games. He will find out who the people of Tobago are, if he has not already from the last election. You see him hugging and dancing and kissing up with the Chairman of the Tobago House of Assembly. Did he whisper in his ear about his concerns of corruption in the Assembly? If not, why not? The truth will appear. He cannot cover it up all of the time.

Madam Speaker, let me just emphasize that we had provision for an Integrity Commission in the Constitution which had no teeth whatever. But in order to give the Integrity Commission teeth, we were told that we had to amend the Constitution. So the question of amending the Constitution got caught up in the whole exercise which went before the Hyatali Commission. While we were about to deal with the report of the Hyatali Commission, the population thought we should be elsewhere and I have no quarrel with that. I am happy to be here and I am still here.

6.15 p.m.

When I was a Member of the Opposition, I had the Prevention of Corruption Ordinance strengthened. I forced the Government to do it even though they cussed me out, they had to do it. Then I had these investigations—I encouraged the then Attorney General with his investigations—international investigations which produced a fantastic amount of evidence on money laundering and the way in which pilfering occurs in Government and the techniques employed by multinational corporations and the inducements to which Ministers are subjected and the way some of them succumb to these inducements. I could assist the hon. Prime Minister with that. Why did he not ask my advice? Was it that he was not interested?

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You see, it is not only airports, it is port. Then, for the first time the Prime Minister's house comes into controversy. With all that has gone on, the Prime Minister's residence has never before come into controversy. Now there appears to be a tie-up—Prime Minister's residence, Port Authority, Airport, and one individual occurring in all these cases, and then other individuals well-known for their allegiance are also involved. The public must be concerned.

Forget Ramesh Maharaj! I am not talking about the Member, I am talking about the one in the Commission of Enquiry. That is not the concern now. The concern is the unease of the public as reflected in all the media. It is not Robinson, Maharaj, Panday, Nicholson; this is all in the media, and I am sure some Members of the Government, I am sure some Members of the party and the Members opposite are concerned. I am still concerned. I have heard nothing today to ease my concern about this—nothing whatever! I am hoping that before the end of the debate, at least, the Leader of the House would say something about these matters. Do not make promises only for the future. This is not a matter of promises only for the future. If a Minister has to resign, let him resign.

Hon. Member: Do not prop him up, he should resign.

Mr. A.N.R. Robinson: I am sure if the Prime Minister is involved, if at all he has been drafted into it with his eyes closed, let him say so. Let him say, 'well, I was not aware of what was happening but now that I have seen, I assure this House and this country that I am taking action.' If he has to fire right and left, fire right and left and we would say, 'hurrah, we support the Prime Minister.' This is how you do it. If there is wrong-doing in the Tobago House of Assembly, what is holding you up? Why did you not take action before the Tobago House of Assembly election?

I know something about the Tenders Board. Tobago you know is a peculiar case and if you do not recognize the special position of Tobago you are not beginning to understand the country at all. If you do not understand the problems of a small island community separated by sea from the mainland where at night time there is no communication, there is no physical movement between the two islands, there is no plane, no boat; if you get ill you have to stay there and die, if you do not have the medical attention—sometimes people are invited for interviews for jobs and they receive the letter of invitation after the interviews have taken place in Trinidad. You have to understand all of these things.

Mr. Sudama: This happens in Trinidad, too?

Mr. A.N.R. Robinson: In one particular case, when I happened to be Chairman of the Tobago House of Assembly, we ordered a crushing plant—and this is where I deal now with the question of the Tenders Board. The Tenders Board is not an answer to everything. It is what happens. You have to scrutinize in all of these cases what happens. It is not a matter of if you do not use the Tenders Board, you have to say why you do not use the Tenders Board and what happens then.

I will tell you about when I was Chairman of the Tobago House of Assembly.

We ordered a crushing plant and that crushing plant—I am not sure my figures are accurate to the dollar—at the time was to cost \$8 million. It was a special kind of crushing plant which was to produce fine sand as well as the other mettle that is produced by crushing plants, because Tobago's beaches were being destroyed by the construction industry. Anyone who has seen or heard of the case of St. Lucia will know what I mean. So many countries have had their finest beaches destroyed because the sand is extracted for construction purposes.

We were advised that we could obtain a crushing plant which could produce fine sand, so we ordered a crushing plant through the Tenders Board. Do you know what happened? We got a crushing plant that did not meet the specifications. We said we could not take that crushing plant because it was not what we wanted, it was not what would suit our purpose, but the Government of the day insisted that we should take the crushing plant and, being the stubborn person that I am, I said, 'no way, we will fight on that'. When they kept insisting, I showed them a way out: I said, "All right, let us have an impartial enquiry; let us get that body called CARIRI, that is doing a lot of engineering work and so on to investigate and see whether the crushing plant comes up to specifications." CARIRI investigated and supported our point of view. We still did not get the crushing plant that we ordered, and the crushing plant that was bought for delivery to us remained on the docks for years. They still tried to get us to take it by all sorts of means and I said, 'no'.

When I was Prime Minister, they came up with a proposal—Tobago House of Assembly—for the crushing plant and I had to call in the Tenders Board, Attorney General, Solicitor General, Tobago House of Assembly and everybody and sort the thing out. That is how they got their crushing plant, but it had cost a lot more. Prices had gone up because it took 11 years for them to get it.

Do you know what we discovered? The plant that was rejected was one which was supplied by a firm with direct connection with a PNM Member of this House

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of Representatives. That is what we discovered. These little things take much time to get processed. We had many problems with that, and many other types of problems which one could talk about.

The point I am making is Tobago is a special case. I am not defending anything which suggests appointment of relatives or corrupt use of funds, if there is. I am not defending that. I disassociate myself totally from that sort of thing. What I am talking about is this question of the Tenders Board. I am saying that Tobago is a special case and if you do not take the circumstances of Tobago properly into account you would always have problems with Tobago, because people who have to live there encounter those serious problems all of the time. Tobago has had a history—of these sorts of attitudes; attitudes which have had very adverse consequences on that island. So, please do not bring the Member for Tobago East, do not try to smear the Member for Tobago East, do not try to associate him with any corrupt practices. I am not an angel and I never pretended I was, but at least, I try; and I think I have a reputation, I have a certain level of respect and I have been able to weather the storm and stand up against the assaults, attacks and threats all these years.

6.25 p.m.

I hope the Prime Minister will be gracious enough to join with me this year, after March, in celebrating 35 years of service as a representative of the people.

Mr. Bereaux: By the grace of God.

Mr. A.N.R. Robinson: I hope he will do that. If he is still Prime Minister. *[Interruption]* I am sure he will be. I wanted to clear up these matters, Madam Speaker.

I would like to congratulate the Member for Diego Martin West on his fire, on his—

Miss Nicholson: Enthusiasm.

Mr. A.N.R. Robinson: No, on his oratory. I want to congratulate him. He has possibilities if he is in the right company. I want to tell the Prime Minister, as I have said, I have written to him. He has not taken up my offer, but I will repeat it publicly, even though it is spurned, that I am available for advice to him. *[Interruption]* I do not want to get too close to him. I am available for advice only.

Mr. Manning: Madam Speaker, there is a process called "osmosis of propinquity". I do not want anything to rub off on me.

Mr. A.N.R. Robinson: I am sure many "things" have rubbed off on you. So, Madam Speaker, I emphasize, and may I just conclude by reading certain recommendations, which are to be found in this volume on *Corruption*, which I commend—"Causes, Consequences and Control".

When the United Nations sought advice on these matters, I humbly, happened to be one of the people who they invited. I attended several expert group meetings on this subject of abuse of power in public office. I have volumes, lots of documents, on the subject, but I will just read this—

"(1) that where cultural traditions accepting of corruption exist they are hard to eliminate and conduce to corruption, but where bureaucracies are well founded and established, a service ethos can develop that forms a cultural barrier against corruption;"

Part of developing that service ethos is to let people feel they are free; they are free to speak; and that they can obtain redress; they know where to go to lay complaints and those complaints will be seriously dealt with.

"(2) that the efforts of skilled and determined entrepreneurs of corruption are often an important factor where circumstances are at all permissive of corruption;"

If you are permissive of corruption, you will have entrepreneurs of corruption.

"and all societies will contain some quarters which invite corruption;"

So do not be a part of the quarters which invite corruption.

"(3) that the political capacity...."

and now this deals with the population—

"...of the excluded population to protest vigorously against corruption is a vital preventive force;"

So, you know, excuse the Opposition for protesting vigorously. That is a preventive force as well. It may be painful, it may be embarrassing, but it is their function, and I do not go with any kind of personal attacks on Members of the House.

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"(4) that the state may be more or less willing to process such complaints effectively,..."

And I want the Member for Diego Martin West to hear this—

"the state may be more or less willing to process such complaints effectively, but is unlikely to act with enthusiasm;"

The enthusiasm that you use against us, please, use it against corruption. That is the point I am making.

"(5) the media, and the press in particular, are vitally important as channels of protest."

That is why the first attack is on the media. If you are able to intimidate the media, then you can cover up. So the Government must never appear to be using their power to intimidate the media. Let the media be free.

Finally, let me refer to the case of Hong Kong. Some time ago I gathered these documents. I was not prepared to speak in this debate, I did not come to speak, but seeing that certain things were said, I thought I should speak. The Government of Hong Kong had a very serious problem of corruption and they set up very special machinery which involved, firstly, education of the population regarding the evils of corruption and the serious consequences that can ensue from corruption, some of which I referred to last week.

Secondly, they set up machinery to receive complaints and people were encouraged to make complaints. The complaints were sifted and those that were found to appear to have substance were then sent to an investigating body which investigated. If there appeared to be evidence of any criminal act, then it was referred to the prosecuting arm and they would prosecute. It is not only criminal behaviour, it is also questions which involve, as has been said, very serious moral delinquency, you know, moral turpitude: influence peddling, making use, by one means or other, of public resources for private ends, and so on; and enrichment from public office. That sort of thing. All sorts of ways and means in which corruption could express itself.

So I would like to see that there should be a serious approach to removing this taint, this cloud, this stain, in view of the hardships hanging over the heads of the population; and that the Government get down seriously to deal with this issue of corruption as something which is really dangerous, has very, very potentially damaging consequences, and seek to have the population at large support this

effort in order to get rid of, or contain, because the authorities will tell you are not going to get rid of it completely, but you can contain it. Very significant, but during the five years of the NAR, corruption was not an issue.

Madam Speaker: Would the hon. Member wind up? One minute more.

Mr. A.N.R. Robinson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Am I into my half hour? *[Interruption]* It was not an issue.

Madam Speaker: I apologize to the hon. Member. I had the impression that it was the end of his contribution. It is not normally done. I am sorry about that.

Mr. A.N.R. Robinson: I am winding up. Thank you very much; I appreciate very much your graciousness.

I would like to see some action taken to allay the fears at the present time and what I propose is that the Leader of the House, the Prime Minister, the Attorney General, as the case may be, get together with the Leader of the Opposition, the Chief Whip, listen to what is said and then, if possible, agree on the setting up of some machinery. It need not be involving Members of the House. I myself do not subscribe to that. I think it would be better if persons outside the House, who can command the respect of Members of the House—admittedly, persons of integrity today apparently are an endangered species. But we should be able to find some acceptable persons, and let them carry out a thorough and proper investigation with the powers of a commission of enquiry and clear the air. Let the chips fall where they may, and let there be prior agreement to abide by the results of the commission of enquiry. Those are my recommendations—my humble and respectful recommendations. I thank you.

6.35 p.m.

The Minister of Local Government and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Madam Speaker, it seems to me that there are two fundamental principles which are relevant to the debate before the House; two fundamental principles having to do with our system of parliamentary democracy. The first is the concept of integrity in public life and the second is the concept of parliamentary privilege, or the abuse of parliamentary privilege.

The fact that the Government readily agreed to this debate today, is really an indication of the importance this Government attaches to the principle of integrity in public life.

Madam Speaker: Members of the public gallery, if you are leaving, please do so quietly and do not interrupt the proceedings of the House. The Member may continue.

Hon. K. Valley: We are aware that unless the population has that confidence in the persons in public life, we will, in fact, be undermining the democracy of which we are proud. We know that. So that to us, integrity in public life is really of national importance. It is really above party politics. We object and we take offence when we believe that one wants to use the concept of integrity and label corruption as a political matter.

The second concept, and one which the Prime Minister made earlier, is the fact that it is very easy for one to use a bit of fact and quite a bit of luff to put one in a particular light. That is all the Prime Minister attempted to do when he quoted from the drug report, to show how easy it is to do that; to show a connection, and that is if, as politicians, we are not careful, if we do not act responsibly—which is another concept having to do with integrity—that if we do not see that parliamentary privilege is, in fact, a privilege to be used judiciously, then we would aid in the undermining of the parliamentary democratic system.

That is what is fundamental, because history is replete with nations which were destroyed because of corruption. When the population places its confidence in a government, they want to know that their confidence is well placed. Therefore, as politicians, from either side, we have every obligation to ensure that when we make allegations, that it is, in fact, supported by information. That is the point we have been making this evening.

I can tell you, from time to time, we have spoken in this House, or it may be across the floor, about the little book that I co-authored with my colleague, Minister Marshall. Members would know that the first article in that book deals with the whole concept of integrity in public life.

I remember that as a youth in 1969/1970, I was one of the followers of the Member for Tobago East, perhaps, closest follower. I am sure he did not know me. As a young person at that time—the idealism of youth—corruption was really anathema to me. So that when he quit the PNM, I remember following him up and down to hear about this evidence that he had about wrongdoing within the PNM. I remember that he was speaking about some firm, Agip Deminex. That was the story at that time.

I left Trinidad in 1971. I spent seven years in Canada and when I returned in 1978, the hon. Member for Tobago East was still there on the scene, and I followed him then. I remember the 1981 election when there was an alliance, the story was the same—Agip Deminex. Throughout the period, one was still waiting for that evidence.

Mr. Robinson: I am sorry to interrupt. May I say that the story could not be the same, because a writ was filed and the matter was never litigated. It was one of those gagging writs. It was never litigated. The writ of slander was filed, but it was never litigated, so it could not be.

Hon. K. Valley: Madam Speaker, I am saying that perhaps that was the period 1971 to 1980, but I remember in the 1981 general election, I listened to the Member for Tobago East, out in Tunapuna and again he was speaking about Agip Deminex. That was the extent of the corruption that one heard from that Member.

I listened to the Member in this House a while ago, and again, there we saw the same thing, a vagueness, that there are 20 volumes somewhere in the library. I do not know whether the hon. Member read those documents. We got a set of those documents. I do not think any of us read the 20 volumes. I am willing to take a bet that if one were to go through those documents, there are no set of names being called, because the question, obviously, is: If, in fact, all of these names were called, how then did he find himself in a situation where he compromised the interest of the nation? We ended up paying \$80 million and allowing Tesoro to go scot-free. How then did he get himself in that situation, given that he had all that evidence available?

The hon. Member for Tobago East is a person—in spite of everything—I think we all respect, because of his years; not 35 years, as he likes to claim, 35 years from the time he entered politics. But it is those simple sleight-of-hands that suggest to us the mental make-up of the individual. Why would an individual, who has not spent—and this might be a simple thing, but I am saying it is an indicator of the thinking of the individual, that he can pass it off, so that one can see him as an elder statesman with 35 years service. Where? Not in this Parliament. Nobody wants to rob him of anything. He has served long; he has served well; he has been a campaigner. But let us face the facts.

I have no intention of being long, Madam Speaker. I want to make the simple point that if parliamentarians, because of a political agenda, would compromise the integrity of other parliamentarians, they are, in fact, really cutting the ground

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under their own feet. One can see that quite clearly. On July, 27, 1990, when the people came into the Parliament, they did not make distinctions with respect to politicians.

6.45 p.m.

If we do things so that the public out there would lose confidence in our system of parliamentary democracy simply because we believe that that is a good political strategy to follow, we must be aware that when we do that, we are, in fact, setting the stage for chaos and anarchy. I want to counsel Members, that corruption is too much of a serious issue; more than that, integrity in public affairs is too much of a serious issue with which to play politics.

As a fact, we came in and made it clear that accountability must permeate the organization and the Government. We said further, that "Yes, we are going to look at the integrity legislation, and we are going to do what is necessary to give that legislation teeth". One has to ask, Madam Speaker, again, the hon. Member for Tobago East tells us now, that the Constitution limited his ability to have proper legislation with respect to integrity. That point was made before.

Madam Speaker, why then did he go ahead with that legislation?

Mr. Robinson: Madam Speaker, may I make it clear. What I said was that the "Integrity Commission"...We did strengthen the Prevention of Corruption Ordinance and increased the penalties, but I talked about the Integrity Commission, which is a provision in the Constitution itself. So, please represent me accurately.

Hon. K. Valley: Madam Speaker, that is the point I am making. I am saying that he is making the point that the Integrity Commission which is established by legislation passed in this House during the period 1987 to 1991—we made the point, in that debate, that that legislation had no teeth. We had a Government with a 33—3 majority. I think the legislation was passed in March of 1987. So, that they did not even have their breakaway faction to contemplate with as yet. They had 33 Members in the House, and I want to ask, quite simply: How is it that the Member for Tobago East, who was then Prime Minister, did not give that integrity legislation the teeth that he now knows that it needs.

Mr. Robinson: Madam Speaker, since the Member has asked the question, I pointed out that the matter was referred to the Hyatali Commission because it involved constitutional changes.

Hon. K. Valley: Madam Speaker, let the record show that this legislation was passed before the establishment of the Hyatali Commission. The point was made, that it was merely for show. It was for show also that the Alexander Commission was established to investigate certain projects. What has happened to that committee? It is so nice to come in January, 1993 and talk about corruption, when you just left Government for five years. The Alexander Commission was supposed to do all of these things. What has happened?

In 1987 to 1991 they could not agree. Thirty-three of them formed the Government; before the end of the first year they were fighting, but if one looks at them today, they are bosom friends once more. They are sleeping with the devil once more, Madam Speaker. A political stance. Simply following a strategy now. The Achilles feet of the PNM, they say, is the corruption ghost.

The leader, in presenting the motion today, found difficulty in bringing one case. Throughout the whole motion he talked about the new Government, but he goes back to 1980. If he had done finance, he would know that in finance there is a basic principle, that information discounted by the market is of no value. The market has discounted all of that information, and you must remember that. What is of significance is the fact that he had extreme difficulty. It was only in the 70th minute of his 75 minutes that he said "Let me get to the motion before the House".
[*Interruption*]

Madam Speaker, let me just tell them that we have 14 speakers on this side. We say that the concept is really one of integrity, rather than simply corruption. Corruption is a subset, but accountability is another subset. Importantly also, is the concept of responsibility. One expects that the Opposition would act—not only the Opposition, but all parliamentarians—responsibly. And that one ought not to play politics with this issue of integrity. They know that there is no truth in what they are saying. They know it, and they are merely pelting, but the population out there start asking "I wonder if. . .?" That is what happens.

Yesterday morning, Madam Speaker, somebody from the press called to tell me that BWIA is supposed to be entering into a contract with a new firm and the talk is that Ken Valley has shares in it. They are putting things in the system. Let me just say, quite clearly, that I have no shares in any company. As a matter of fact, I was a director of one small company before I came into politics—a friend of mine. When I came into Government on December 20, I was appointed a Minister and I wrote my friend, Mr. Mendez, who is the managing director of

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Interchange Engineering Limited—I got a copy of the letter dated January 15, 1992, from him today:

"Consequent upon my Election to the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago, and my subsequent selection by the Prime Minister to serve in his Cabinet as a Minister of Government, I think that it is proper, and I hereby give notice to you accordingly, that I resign my position as Director of the Company pursuant to Clause 81(d) of the Article of Association.

It has been a pleasure serving on your Board of Directors, and I wish to express my thanks to you for having given me the opportunity so to do."

You see, Madam Speaker, I do not think I need anyone to tell me how I ought to act in public life. Quite simply, there is a code of behaviour that one is socialized into. That responsibility goes with respect to our dealing with the different ministries.

6.55 p.m.

Madam Speaker, when I enquired, this company that was supposed to be the ground handling crew at BWIA, the former Caricargo in Trinidad—when we decided to close down Caricargo the employees came and said they wanted to buy the ground handling. When I spoke with my colleague in Barbados he had no objections; I had no objections, so that we wrote the Airports Authority, which had levied on the goods, informing them that we had no objection to their selling the ground handling equipment to the former employees at the valuation which they had. I think that is where that thing came from. I will tell you that this is a Government that says, we care.

When we were selling Printing and Packaging we gave the unions, the OWTU, the first right of refusal. When we were divesting Farrell House, the union was given the first right of refusal. We are at present putting the National Fruit Processors on the block, and it is the same thing. The union is the NUGFW and they would have a first right of refusal. Quite simply, to us that is part of the overall concept of integrity. That is caring. If there are employees and you are taking a decision, you want to get them involved.

I go on. This whole concept of responsibility which to me is a subset of that overall concept of integrity, goes further than the Parliament. It goes further to what we really like to call our fourth estate, the media. On the *Express* of January 28, 1993 there was a headline—which honestly, I considered extremely

unfortunate having regard to the information. The headline talked of some 1,000 in South facing layoff. When one reads the story—I know reporters spoke with me and I said quite clearly that we were not about layoffs. But even without my intervention, if one were to read what the persons interviewed said—a councillor at the Rio Claro Corporation and a union officer—you would see that he outlined a number of measures, none of them dealing with layoffs.

On page 10 the report talks about redeployment of staff, attrition, and change in gas. Those are all of the things that we put on the table. Yet, the headline gives the impression that we are in fact, talking about layoffs. Quite simply, in local government yes, we have had a reduction in our allocations. I have been meeting since December, because I think that is my responsibility to meet with the CEOs, the chairmen and the mayors and to meet with the unions to look for a way to deal with the situation; to live within our allocation. At our first meeting we made it clear that we wanted to do everything other than sending home the permanent and regular staff or cutting their wages.

Working with the CEOs, the union and the chairmen and mayors, we have come up with 18 ideas, none of which [*Interruption*] that is not one of the 18—look at the document. I have the document here also. There are 18 items and not one talks about retrenchment or cutting of wages. The relevance is that there must be certain responsibility, especially given the current environment. Given the economic situation one expects responsibility in all the major players: responsibility in Parliament, responsibility with respect to the unions, with respect to big business. That is what it is.

And, obviously, let us talk a bit about what the Government has done with respect to this whole concept of accountability. That is what it is. The motion talks about accountability. I am talking about more than that. I am talking about the system with respect to the divestment of state enterprises, the system of transparency which we have attempted to put in place.

Madam Speaker, on Monday, February 1, 1993, the technical divestment team would be leaving here to go to Chicago to have second round negotiations with respect to the sale of Urea and Fertrin. I can say here that there are six firms, I do not know the names of the firms, which put in a bid for Urea and Fertrin. That divestment secretariat is authorized to join with Amoco, with our financial advisers and the US-based law firm that we have hired to make a decision on the preferred purchaser of that plant. Because we want to ensure that there is transparency with respect to divestment.

Mr. Sudama: Would the Minister be prepared to lay in this House the report of that team of divestment consultants who are going there to determine which is the best bidder for the shares to be divested?

Hon. K. Valley: Madam Speaker, the answer to that is yes. I have with me the report of the technical team on divestment on the status of the sale. This is a report I got last week. I have no objection whatsoever to laying this report on the Table. I have also with me a report of the board of directors which is the divestment team. What happens is that when a Government takes a decision to divest a company, immediately the board of directors of that company is changed and the members of the divestment team are placed as the new directors.

This company, the National Fruit Processors Limited, is a company that the Government has decided to divest. Therefore, the new directors are the members of the divestment team. I can tell it is a three member team. At present steps have been taken to expand that team to have three other members. The Chairman is Mr. Gerry Hospedales and most Members would know that he has been working with the Central Bank for quite some time. There is Mr. William Daniel, an accountant, and Mrs. Jacqui Quamina-Cherrie. They have gone in and have hired the firm of Ernest and Young, the firm of accountants and they have been working with this company for quite some time. They have presented me with a report on their work. They said quite clearly in their report that the union or the workers would be given the first right of refusal. That is the critical difference between the way we do our business and those on the other side. We have made the point time and time again that that caring comes through every time. That if we are, in fact, divesting a company we would consider employees. Some time ago somebody was making the point whether we went with the widest possible participation with Printing and Packaging.

Printing and Packaging has an accumulated loss of some \$49 million. The company has been operating at a loss all the time. A company like that which had not been making a profit, one cannot divest that using the widest possible participation. What one can do is to ask the employees, given that they know the plant, if they are interested in getting involved in buying and trying to run the company. That is what we do.

7.05 p.m.

We have another initiative that we have taken, all with a view to accountability. Last year, we allowed or freed up the state companies, as it were,

and we told them quite simply that they can hire their own auditors. They no longer have to rely on the Auditor General. That is the first move on the way for allowing these companies to place a percentage shareholding on the revised or restructured stock market. What it means now and Members complain from time to time that in PA(E)C they are getting reports five and 10 years late.

We want to allow the accounting reports which come to PA(E)C to be on a current basis. We have said that you must have your accounts audited within three months of the end of the financial year, and those accounts must be published shortly thereafter. You would remember that early last year, when I came to the House, I stated that policy quite clearly. That is working quite well. I noted that some Members had some concern, but I can assure them that was done to aid accountability. The Government understands the importance of transparency in these dealings. More importantly, the Government understands what the perception of corruption can mean for the society, and that it has to do everything to avoid such a perception of the Government. That is what we are doing.

While we are doing that, I simply want to caution Members on the other side that it is not going to serve their interest in the long run—although they may misguidedly believe that there could be a short-term gain; because there might be some ghost. When the population believes that all politicians are corrupt, they will not make a distinction between PNM politician, UNC politician or NAR politician. That is a fact.

I thought I would make that short intervention in this debate. There are two relevant concepts which are important to this debate; the concept of integrity in public life, as against that concept of parliamentary privilege. We must treat it as a privilege. As I say that, I am well aware of Enoch Powell's counsel. He says that a privilege cannot be a privilege unless it could be abused. We have to be careful because the abuse of that freedom of speech in Parliament cannot be to our interest.

I thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj (*Couva South*): Madam Speaker, it is sad that such an important debate has degenerated to what it has from the contributions made by the Members on the other side.

I think it is quite clear that over the last few weeks, in Trinidad and Tobago, we have witnessed a state of affairs in which from almost every section of the community, great fears and mistrust have been expressed in respect of matters

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affecting public accountability. We have seen editorials in the newspaper. One only has to pick up one of the newspapers dated January 29, 1992 and it would be seen that almost half of the newspaper is about corruption, abuse and misuse of public office.

We have a motion before this House. The Government has agreed to debate that motion, and it is in effect, asking and saying that the Government has been guilty of not providing the machinery in order to deal with these matters despite the fact that we have had these matters in existence.

What do we have in response? In response, even before this debate came about, we have the hon. Member for San Fernando East making a statement at one of his party's meetings, talking fight talk to the Member for Tobago East. Strictly speaking, that is a breach of the privileges of the House, but I am not on that this afternoon. I am on the fact that—

Mr. Valley: I wonder whether the Member could inform us how a statement made at a party forum could be a breach of the privilege of the House.

Mr. Sudama: I want to respond to that in this House: The Member for Diego Martin West threatened to cuff me in my mouth.

Is that a breach, or is that not a breach of privilege in this House?

Mr. R. Maharaj: This is a matter of fact, and I do not want to go into conduct like that.

The point about the matter is that we see a response by the Government that you have issues and issues? What do they do? They try to get at the person who has made the accusation. That has been the pattern of the PNM. I will come to deal with an aspect that the Member for San Fernando East has dealt with at the end of my contribution, in order to show that all this talk about responsibility and confidence in the rule of law and anonymous letters—What the Member for San Fernando East had done here today is worse than referring to a report of which the matter has been subject of a prosecution which has been found by the courts to be a corrupt prosecution. He refers to it and we will deal with that.

Mr. Panday: Where is he? He runs and hides.

Mr. R. Maharaj: It is a system that the PNM has; that is a culture that they have: When you make allegations against them, what they have to do is to harass the people—if it means prosecuting them; if it means persecuting them, harass them.

That is the same thing that has happened to Mr. Rodwell Murray. He makes an allegation about corruption in the police service. What happened to him? They harassed him.

Dr. Rowley: Madam Speaker, the Member for Couva South is putting on the record of the Parliament, that the Government harassed Officer Murray on the basis of his allegations.

I would like to ask the Member to substantiate that or withdraw it, please.

Mr. R. Maharaj: I can substantiate that. Any time he wants a committee of this House to meet, I can substantiate it. I am saying that I interviewed Mr. Murray and Mr. Murray so informed me.

7.15 p.m.

Dr. Rowley: Madam Speaker, on a point of order. The oath of this House requires that Members do not impute improper motives to Members on the other side. My colleague from Couva South has imputed that the Government has harassed the police officer who made a public statement which has been the subject of enquiry and I am asking that he substantiate that or have it withdrawn from the records of the Parliament.

I await your ruling, Madam Speaker.

Mr. R. Maharaj: May I continue, Madam Speaker?

Madam Speaker: Please take note and refrain from that.

Mr. B. Panday: You harassed the man. Make me withdraw it, nah!

Mr. R. Maharaj: Madam Speaker, we have on this motion—and I do not want to reduce it to what the Prime Minister has reduced it to. This is a very serious motion. What does this motion say? In the first preamble, it states that the Government promised the population that if it formed the Government, it would be accountable to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. Has this Government, in its response so far demonstrated that since it got into office, in relation to the allegations which have been made, in relation to what has transpired they have done anything to improve the machinery of accountability? The answer to that is no.

Madam Speaker, with the present machinery that was in existence all the time, we have had in this country instances of alleged bobol, corruption, secret

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commissions. I went through the list: Caura Dam project, a project in which an entire village was uprooted and families scattered only to find out that certain people had lined their pockets before the project was abandoned. We had the purchase of the *MV Port-of-Spain*. We had the gas station racket. We had the quiet disappearance of millions of dollars.

Mr. Valley: Madam Speaker, could I ask, quite simply, how many of those events have occurred since the 1991 general election? The motion talks about the manifesto since 1991.

Mr. R. Maharaj: Madam Speaker, I am trying to show—the other side has said that the existing machinery is sufficient. I am saying that the existing machinery is not sufficient because these things happened with the existing machinery.

Disappearance of money from the Public Service Transport Corporation; disappearance of money from the Central Bank; the purchase of the *MV Tobago*; Caroni Racing Complex; DC-9 deal; Caroni Arena projects; the fact that the contract price, of the Caroni Racing Complex jumped from \$120 million to \$240 million; the Tesoro scandal—and we have many more, but now we have, with all the same machinery, a situation where we have the Pegasus scandal, the Port Authority scandal, and we have the cheque scandal that came out from the Port Authority.

Now, what the Government has not answered up to now is that not only has it not created any machinery, but that the machinery which it attempted to use was not proper machinery and the machinery it attempted to use subverted and undermined the Constitution and destroyed the institution of the Integrity Commission.

When the Prime Minister announced that he was going to appoint the Chairman of the Integrity Commission to investigate this matter, having been warned by the Opposition, he did not take heed and what did he do? He went ahead and he made the appointment. The Chairman of the Integrity Commission is appointed by the President and there is no basis upon which the Prime Minister could have appointed the Chairman of the Integrity Commission to conduct an enquiry without the Prime Minister consulting the Leader of the Opposition. There is no basis for that. The whole spirit of the Constitution, the point that the hon. Member for Tobago East is making is that he must appear to be above board.

We then have a situation where the Prime Minister sat down in this House, when the statement was made by his Minister about this report and the records of

this House will reflect that I got up and I asked the Minister, in the presence of the Member for San Fernando East, was it one report or two reports. I got no answer whether it was one report or two reports. The Member for San Fernando East sat down and said nothing.

Is it right, proper or accountability when a government, in dealing with a matter in which there is alleged corruption in the award of contracts, appoints a commission and it turns out that it was a commission in which there was a private commission in effect, and the report is presented. The Prime Minister knows that there was one report and he had a discussion with the Chairman, the man who did that report and the report was changed for him to hide that from the population. That is not right. As a matter of fact, it does not appear to be right.

I am not making any accusations against the Prime Minister in respect of his motive. What I am talking about is that we are dealing with politics, perception and a duty to govern. We have a responsibility to the population. So that when, in the *Sunday Express*, that report, January 17, 1993 written by the journalist who is noted for her ability to investigate, Camini Marajh—no relationship to Ramesh Maharaj, sometimes I wish she were related—wrote that:

“The Collymore Report on the Piarco Airport contract tabled in Parliament on Friday is the second version of a document originally presented to Prime Minister Patrick Manning on December 21, 1992.

Minister for Public Information, Gordon Draper, laying the 16-page report in the House of Representatives on Friday said that ‘the final report was presented to the Honourable Prime Minister on December 30, 1992’.”

So we were not told in this House that there were two reports, or that there was a report and the Government, through the Prime Minister, decided to have it changed. Whatever the changes, the Prime Minister owes a duty to tell this country and if he did not tell them then, he owes a duty to tell them now, what were the changes, what the original report contained and what the amended report has left out or put in. The people of Trinidad and Tobago are entitled to know. It is not the money of the PNM, it is not the resources of the PNM, it is the resources of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

It has been established that when the Government does not take steps to arrest misuse and abuse of public power which has resulted in the destruction of resources of the country, that the people suffer because you have to lay off people,

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it is money which, if you are taking steps to protect, can be used to save the jobs of people, save the gross poverty which has afflicted our people over the last year.

I assume the Prime Minister would have read this, it was on the front page. So there was no doubt about it that he did not read it:

“Collymore’s report to the Prime Minister is dated December 21, 1992—the very day he formally presented the report to Manning at the Twin Towers.

Pressed for details on the changes made, Collymore said, ‘There was an obvious clerical error’.”

Well, how would we know that? Is the population not entitled to know what was this error? Is the clerical error the name of a person which should not be put there? What is the definition of a clerical error?

Mr. B. Panday: Did he spell “Manning” wrong?

Mr. R. Maharaj: Continuing:

“Collymore was appointed as a private one-man investigator by Manning on November 13, 1992 to investigate ‘the apparent public concern and disquiet’ over the Airports Authority decision to award the Pride Phase I project to the Pegasus Group.”

So we have from this report and I will go on to show from another report of the *Express*, a matter of grave concern. But before I pass from this edition of the *Express*, I would like the Government to know—if they have not read it, but I am sure that they have read it—that what we are saying here is what one of the leading newspapers in this country, in its editorial has been saying. And they have adopted a stand which the people of Trinidad and Tobago would obviously adopt.

In the “Sunday Opinion”, *Sunday Express*, January 17, 1993, page 8:

“Integrity Commission Chairman George Collymore’s report on the Airports Authority award to Pegasus Group had a clear, if insufficient rationale: ‘To satisfy the Government that all proper procedures had been followed.’ In appointing Collymore, Prime Minister Manning referred to ‘apparent public concern and disquiet’ over the contract.

Collymore’s appointment gave him none of the powers of a Commissioner of Enquiry to subpoena witnesses and have them testify under oath. And now that his report has been presented to Parliament, the report has not satisfied

Opposition. It has no doubt satisfied the Government, but it appears unlikely to allay public concern and disquiet.”

The hon. Member for San Fernando East, today, has talked about both sides having to be heard. I agree with him. If he were appointing a commission and he wanted it to be a serious commission, would he not have appointed a commission under the Commission of Enquiry Act, so that the rules of natural justice could have been observed? So that when allegations were made—for example, if someone in the Airports Authority management went and said certain things and it was felt that what he was saying was untrue, whether the allegations were against the Prime Minister, against the Minister, against the Member for Couva South, whatever the allegations were, he would have had an opportunity to answer the allegations so that the commissioner could have made a finding after hearing the rules of natural justice. That is a serious report, if the Government were serious about getting a report. But it appears and it gives the impression that what the Government wanted to do was to use this Commission in order to appease public emotions and hoping that this thing would die out.

Madam Speaker, the editorial—I would not read the whole editorial—but it is a very good editorial. As a matter of fact, the editorial is saying almost everything we have been saying. The report exonerates the Minister of Works, Colm Imbert, of impropriety, although finding that he had interfered it would have been preferable if the persons charged with making the assessment had been allowed to carry out their duty without ministerial interference. The really unsatisfactory aspects of the report dealt with the Airports Authority’s substantive decision to award the contract over other bidders. Collymore admits in many respects that the Pegasus proposal fell far short of the requirements of the requests for proposals. Indeed, what Pegasus submitted could not even be considered a proposal at all and was more an expression of interest.

Then at the end of the editorial, after talking about the reason for the submission, it states:

“These arguments need only to be stated for their dubious reasoning to become manifest. The Government is satisfied, but who else?”

So yes, they get a report. What did they really want that report to do? Did they want that report, in effect, to seriously investigate what was happening? But then, again, last week Sunday, very startling revelations and I have not heard the Prime Minister say anything in this House about those revelations. In the same

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newspaper, when he said, “We have no cocoa in the sun”, it seems to me that he is pulling the shed over the cocoa house. He has no cocoa in the sun, but the shed coming over the cocoa house.

There is heavy flak for the Collymore report. After talk about judicial source or whatever it is, I am quoting from Mr. Anthony Smart, a former Attorney General of this country:

“As a former judge, Mr. Collymore will identify well with these words: ‘Justice must not only be done but must be seen to be done,’ said Mr. Smart.”

The former Attorney General, whatever you may feel about him—and the PNM does not like him—the fact is that he was a former Attorney General, stating that as the previous Minister of Justice, he cannot be satisfied with this report.

Then you have former President of the Senate, Michael Williams. What he said, noted in a letter, that:

“The Collymore report was riddled with incongruities which would suggest that Collymore was given an assignment which took him outside his area of competence.

Williams noted that Collymore tells us that Pegasus is, in local parlance, a \$2 company. As such, the company, number one, is a mere shell without resources to undertake the agreement. Several major and reputable corporations have been mentioned in the background, yet none of these seem committed enough to lead the consortium:

“Pegasus may well be just a broker in pursuit of a letter of intent. If successful, it can even broker its shares to any investor in the United States, the Cayman Islands or Trinidad and Tobago.”

Then we go to page 4. Madam Speaker, this is a very serious matter and I would expect that the Government would say something about this before this debate finishes. I know it is the intention of the Government to sit until whatever time; the Government intends to finish the debate tonight, four o’clock, five o’clock in the morning. This is a very serious matter, but we consider that the issue of corruption—and “corruption” is not limited to the definition in law of corruption. When one looks at the dictionary, one sees what political corruption is. When one talks about corruption, one must not talk about corruption limited to if you can prove a case in court or otherwise—judicial review—that is tabulated legalism.

At page 4 of this report, the controversial 16-page report was re-submitted to the Prime Minister on December 30, 1992 and released without public clarification about what precisely had been changed and why. Except for the deletion of many legal discussions which Collymore said he found cumbersome, no one could say with any amount of certainty whether the changes made were in substance or form.

So on the face of it, on the disclosures, we have an inconsistency already. In one breath it was “a mere clerical error” and now it is “a lot of legal arguments”. Which one is correct, or are they correct? Or the judges?

“The former High Court judge could shed no light either as to why the name of the Airports Authority engineer, Winston Wilson, was not cited as a witness in his report on the closed-door Piarco Airport contract.

Contacted last week, Collymore said that all the persons interviewed are named in the report. Wilson, however, said he met with Collymore in late November for about an hour but refused last week to disclose the nature of the talks. ‘My interview with him was confidential’, Wilson said, adding: ‘I do not want to break that confidentiality’. He said he could not understand why his name was not listed among those of the witnesses interviewed.

Not so, says Collymore, who maintains that he never spoke to Wilson.”

So here you have a man, an official of the airport, alleging that he was interviewed by the Chairman, and he is surprised that his name is not mentioned as a person interviewed and we have the Chairman saying, no.

Madam Speaker, would not any government which—

Mr. Valley: Government “who”.

Mr. R. Maharaj: —who is genuinely committed to accountability at all levels be concerned about this and do something in order to allay fears, to satisfy public knowledge? Sometimes I believe that we make a mistake when we refer to Members of the Government as “who”, because they should really be referred to as “which”.

I cannot understand how people in Government who are human beings could be reading this and coming here and beating their chest and saying that all is well, we have been accounting. We are caring for the people.

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Look what happened later on in this story. We have had no publication from the Government whether through the Ministry of Information or press conferences being held by Ministers. We see a new trend now—if they think that will fool the population of Trinidad and Tobago, having press conferences to answer questions, when they should come to Parliament to do that, telling the press to come and see the documents but the documents will not come before the Parliament. If this Government—I challenge this Government: If this Government has nothing to hide in the Pegasus transaction, lay whatever transcript they had in Parliament. Let the people see it.

Mr. Valley: You know that cannot be done, that is dishonesty. You know why that cannot be done.

Mr. Bereaux: Madam Speaker, I spent some considerable time this afternoon indicating why that is an improper course of action and I use as an example the hon. Member for Couva South. I was hoping, Madam Speaker, that the hon. Member would understand that it is an improper course of action. It is dangerous.

Mr. R. Maharaj: Madam Speaker, perhaps having regard to my experiences, probably I am immune—because I think when one is in public life one should be able to take jamming because I have learned to take jamming.

But there is an alternative. If they do not want to do that, or they think that it will be improper to do that, appoint a proper Commission of Enquiry to go into the aspects of it, again, so that the allegation can be tested by cross-examination. There could be a confidential investigation.

A reasonable approach would be if the Prime Minister says that “I cannot lay the transcript, having regard to what has happened”, the people are saying they have been interviewed “I gave information, my name is not there.” There are so many contradictions about the report. When one looks at the report itself, when one looks at the manner in which the report was made, one sees that the purpose for which the enquiry was made was to satisfy the Government, as the hon. Prime Minister compromised the Chairman of the Integrity Commission.

When one looks at all those circumstances, if it is that they want to truly account to the population of Trinidad and Tobago and they have nothing to hide, they are clear, they are clean, appoint a proper enquiry, let everyone go, let there be cross-examination, let their allegations be tested.

I say that despite the fact that they have read into this House something worse than an anonymous letter—but we will come to that. No malice.

Mr. Bereaux: I did not read into the House, Madam Speaker, I quoted from a document that was already in the parliamentary records; it was laid.

Mr. R. Maharaj: No malice to you at all. As a matter of fact, the Prime Minister knows that those facts and circumstances that he talked about and read today, that it attracted international attention and he knows that all the international bodies complained to the Government. He knows that. He knows that it was an attempt to harass. He knows that.

Mr. Manning: The point I was making, Madam Speaker, in reading that is how easy it is for persons who consider themselves innocent to have their images tarnished. That is the point I was making.

Mr. R. Maharaj: Madam Speaker, reading from the report, the report conceded that in many respects, the Pegasus proposal fell far short of the requirements of the requests for proposal but that the Authority, having knowingly gone along with Pegasus, cannot now object.

On the other matter relating to the Piarco, PRIDE Project, there appears to be some confusion as to whether there were, in fact, ministerial instructions as to rankings. Colm Imbert, in evidence to Collymore, said he instructed the Airports Authority not to rank evaluation properties on the PRIDE Project, but Airports Authority Chairman, Chankar Seetaram, at a news conference on November 8, 1992, said there was no ministerial interference. So we see, again, another inconsistency.

Madam Speaker, Seetaram told the media, that it was a total fabrication to say that the Minister in charge of the Airports Authority or any Minister gave such instruction. Seetaram had difficulty, as well, recalling the existence of an evaluation team report dated September 29, 1992, which gave a ranking of the four developers. He told a news briefing: "I do not know about any report of 29th."

You see, Madam Speaker, here we have a report to the population which supports what the Opposition has been saying and that is a fundamental part of our contention that here it is that the whole circumstances surrounding the Pegasus situation—the way the Government has handled it and that is what we are saying.

Whereas governmental action is including, but not limited to, its action in the handling of the Pegasus issue, it continues with the Port Authority insurance issue,

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the issue involving the allegations of the existence of a drug cartel in the Police Service and the issue of public funds being used by directors of the Airports Authority for their private purposes are unsatisfactory and are not in the public interest.

Can anyone sitting down or listening to what we have said objectively, without emotions—because this is not a party matter, this is a national matter. This is a matter which affects the lives of the people of Trinidad and Tobago which affects our democratic principles of Trinidad and Tobago. Can anyone truly committed to the oath they have taken say that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago has handled this matter properly? The answer must be no.

Madam Speaker, when one looks at the Pegasus issue, and one looks and sees the history of that issue and how this company was a nominal company, where it ranked and how it jumped the ranks and how it did not satisfy all the criteria—which one would not go into, it is a matter of fact and record—the fact of the matter is that after ministerial intervention, there was a change of heart. That is an undisputed fact.

I was reading the affidavit filed in the proceedings of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and the estate of John O'Halloran. The circumstances resemble each other. In other words, it shows how persons in office, people who occupy high office, the population may not know what is going on, but there can be ministerial interference.

Madam Speaker, Mr. Robert Lindquist asked—and I would not read all, I just want to refer to parts of it. He said, in December 1988, and this is to show how it is important at the time when these things were happening, and I would have a report from the press to show that the Government was saying, “no evidence, no evidence”, but hear what he said. On December 19, 1988, again:

“At the request of the Attorney General, be it agreed to meet with me and counsel for the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.”

At that meeting, Baird stated that the identity of the then high official of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago referred to in the report 8-K, filed with the SEC, was the then Minister of Finance, Francis Prevatt. This was the first time that any representative of MDC had disclosed that name.

So with the existing machinery we had in Trinidad and Tobago, we could not get the name. As a matter of fact, it would show that even though the police

investigated, we could not get the name. That is to show, Madam Speaker, that the machinery we have is not sufficient. If we are serious about dealing with corruption, we have to improve the machinery.

7.45 p.m.

Unless we come clean with the people and say, "Listen, we thought everything was right, we thought things were going good but we recognize that there are things to be done and we want to make a change, we have to make a change, the machinery has to be improved." We do not like having to get up and say these things, but it is our duty in the interest of the people who are affected. Should we compromise our principles like them and remain quiet about it or close our eyes and do nothing about it? No, we cannot do that. Whatever it costs, whether it be abuse in Parliament, whether it be harassment by being hounded by Special Branch—I want to sound a warning here that nothing would prevent me from discharging my duty to the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Madam Speaker, I want to show you how it was so difficult, and this man said how difficult it was. Look at what happened: the people of Trinidad were robbed. Exhibit C 31 is a true copy of an agreement between the Trinidad and Tobago Racing Authority and Sam P. Wallace Overseas Corporation.

Pursuant to this agreement, Trinidad and Tobago Racing Authority granted a \$72 million contract to Wallace to construct a grand stand and receiving building at the Caroni Racing Complex in Trinidad and Tobago.

My investigations have disclosed that prior to the award of the contract Wallace through its representative, Alphonso A. Rodriguez, agreed to pay a secret commission in the amount of US \$1.39 million to John H. O'Halloran in return for O'Halloran guaranteeing that Wallace would be awarded the contract. At all material times, John O'Halloran was Chairman of the board of the Trinidad and Tobago Racing Authority as well as Chairman of the Trinidad and Tobago Racing Committee responsible for reviewing tenders and awarding contracts.

My investigations have further disclosed that the secret commission was paid in six instalments and he says how they were paid. They were paid through a company set up in order for this commission to be received. As a matter of fact, there were reports to the Police but the Police could not find this out at all.

Hear this—and I want the population to know whether this does not sound—

Mr. B. Panday: That is statute barred.

Mr. R. Maharaj: Award of contract to Wallace. In June, 1976, the Trinidad and Tobago Racing Authority Act was enacted. That Act established Trinidad and Tobago Racing Authority as a body corporate to manage and develop the racing industry in Trinidad and Tobago under the chairmanship of John O'Halloran. As disclosed in the reports, a decision was made in 1978 to construct a new racing facility on approximately 400 acres of land near the Caroni river in the vicinity of Port of Spain.

On October 1979, the Trinidad and Tobago Racing Authority issued formal instructions to prospective bidders for the contract to construct the grand stand and receiving building for the Caroni Race Track.

The significance of events—and what it says here is that on April 12, 1979, the Trinidad and Tobago Government awarded Emile Elias a contract to supply the construction management; and that was done. Then, there was the intervention of the Minister and then the contract was awarded and then we see the difficulties, from this affidavit, of getting the evidence; and when the evidence was found we still have a situation where this gentleman walked in and out of Trinidad and Tobago. We all know that it is a matter of public knowledge that it was both Mr. Prevatt and the deceased, Mr. O'Halloran.

The point I am making, Madam Speaker, is that we are dealing with a situation in which the Government of Trinidad and Tobago is involved in the award of contracts. The Pegasus issue involves contracts. These kinds of things occurred because the machinery was insufficient to detect them, so what we need is a system in which there would be investigative machinery at all times where things can be scrutinized to see whether commissions are paid, to see how the moneys are being dealt with, and if there are complaints, for the commission to deal with them. Unless we are serious about doing that, we are not going to solve any of the problems of corruption in Trinidad and Tobago.

Before I go to the Port Authority matter, I would not read this entire article, but on the *Sunday Guardian* of March 27, 1983, on page 9, Mr. John Babb did an analysis and he documented for future generations the record of corruption under the PNM administration up to 1983 and under the present machinery. When I read this last night, I felt like vomiting, and I am sure that if some of my friends on that side read it they would feel alike. At the end of the article—and it is perhaps very relevant for us today—the journalist was begging for light to be thrown on these matters—do something.

"Some light may also be thrown on the report that somebody somewhere now owns a couple hundred acres of US frontier land . . ."

He was talking because there was one of the deals on that.

"In the meantime, the Prime Minister and the Government remain silent. 'No evidence, no evidence' has become the feeble cry of the Attorney General"

Mr. B. Panday: Even now!

Mr. R. Maharaj: Today—no evidence, but in spite of no evidence some of the acts were detected and the people of Trinidad and Tobago suffer. Why? Because no evidence, no evidence. The only conclusion one can come to is that the present Government is not serious about wanting to get these matters to be dealt with. One has to ask the question: If the Government does not want these matters to be dealt with, what is the reason? Why?

You see, Madam Speaker, unless that machinery is put in place, you are going to have allegations made, not only in this House but in the newspapers because people are not going to sit down; and when they are afraid of victimization and intimidation they would go to people whom they know would be able to fight for them regardless of the consequences. They would not go to the other side because they know if they do that they would be harassed.

Since this issue has been raised, I have accumulated three boxes of complaints—three boxes containing information. Some have photocopies of letters. I do not have the time to read all of that and I am seriously thinking of employing a particular person to read those letters. It is astonishing that even on my way to Parliament today there were many complaints. The point is, unless you have machinery to ventilate those complaints you are going to have distrust in the parliamentary system.

I want to, a little later, look at what some of the other countries have done when they had matters like these. There has been a Commonwealth Secretariat survey and the report shows what other countries have done to deal with matters like these. We certainly cannot just leave it like this. The amendment to the motion is really an attempt to leave it at the present situation. In effect, it is an attempt to praise the Government for not exposing and not creating machinery in order for public misuse of power to be exposed and punished.

Mr. B. Panday: They are congratulating themselves for what is happening.

Mr. R. Maharaj: Yes, as my leader has said, they are congratulating themselves. They are patting themselves on their backs. They are proud of "Pride".

Mr. B. Panday: They are not hypocrites; only me.

Mr. R. Maharaj: Madam Speaker, before I deal with what other countries have done there are two other issues which have to do with the Port Authority and some of the releases that the Minister has made in dealing with that matter.

In this House last week, we were concerned as to a certain machinery or we wanted to know whether the person was given the contract—the amount is of no great significance.

Mr. Valley: Oh Lord!

Mr. R. Maharaj: As a matter of fact, I have the *Hansard* here and the *Hansard* supports me. So this 'Oh Lord', go to the *Hansard* and you would see.

Mr. Valley: Madam Speaker, it is the dishonesty in the parliamentarian that is really annoying. The Member came here—I withdraw the statement, Madam Speaker. The fact that the Member is a stranger to the truth is, to me, extremely annoying.

Mr. R. Maharaj: Madam Speaker, I object. The Member cannot accuse me of being untruthful unless he has evidence to support it.

Madam Speaker: The point he wanted to make was that what is being said now is not what was said in the *Hansard*. You could have said that rather than accuse—

The Member may continue, please.

Mr. R. Maharaj: Madam Speaker, I refer to the *Hansard* of last week. I would like the Government to answer and say whether—

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

7.55 p.m.

Mr. R. Maharaj: Madam Speaker, [*Interruptions*] I want to deal with what I want to deal with. Madam Speaker, the Minister, in talking about the gym

contract...On the *Guardian* of January 26, 1993, there was the question as to whether Mr. Castagne got this contract and whether the contract was for a certain amount of money that he said it was for. The contract exceeded the limit. There were obviously two contracts, or whatever it was, anyhow—

Mr. B. Panday: They fixed up the contract in order to come within the range.

Mr. R. Maharaj: Yes, and that is forbidden by law. As a matter of fact, as I was walking into Parliament, an anonymous source handed me the Central Tenders Board Regulations, which is not anonymous, it is the law of the land. In 1965 Regulation 12 says—

"Permanent Secretaries and officers of statutory bodies (other than County Councils) appointed for that purpose by such statutory bodies may act for the Board where the total value of the articles to be supplied or the works and services to be undertaken does not exceed two thousand dollars, but a Permanent Secretary or an officer nominated as aforesaid shall not for the purpose of giving himself authority to act under this Regulation subdivide the quantity of articles to be supplied or works and services to be undertaken into two or more portions so that the value of the portions will be two thousand dollars or less."

Mr. B. Panday: Exactly what they did in this case.

Mr. R. Maharaj: So that one of the issues which arises, from what the Minister has said, is, was the contract split up? There is another issue. On the *Guardian* of January 26, 1993, page 3—

"Works Minister Colm Imbert yesterday explained that businessman Steve Castagne was awarded the contract to refurbish the gym at the Prime Minister's official residence because he was part-owner of the Iron Ball Gym, reputedly one of the leading gyms in the country."

Well, Madam Speaker, I looked in the directory to see if this leading gym exists.

Mr. B. Panday: No Iron Ball company.

Mr. R. Maharaj: I did not find it. Perhaps the Minister can read it to me. I rang the Telephone Company to see whether there is a telephone number for the Iron Ball Gym; and I sent someone to an address which it was stated that there was such a thing at Boissiere Village. You know what is there that is alleged to be this building, Iron Ball Gym? A room without any air-condition. So I want the

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Minister to tell us in this House, to furnish the evidence that the Iron Ball Gym exists, that it is an entity which is an operating business, because I have not been able to find any business.

Mr. Haniff: It is not in the directory, not in the Yellow Pages.

Mr. R. Maharaj: It is a leading organization, a leading gym, it should be there for everyone to see. Tell this House where it is. I did my investigations and I cannot find a gym, a leading Iron Ball Gym. You see, Madam Speaker, I also want to know who is the director, or who are the owners, of that gym. The people want to know this. Madam Speaker, if there were any doubts that the Government is not serious about really setting up machinery to find out whether there is corruption, this debate has proven it. They are not serious, and I am wondering whether some of the material I am getting is not correct. My confidence is being shaken, but I want them to know that there are ways that these things can come out; and there are ways that, perhaps, people would explore for this information and evidence to come out. So I would like them to level with the population.

Madam Speaker, the other aspect of the Port Authority matter is that the Minister on January 27, 1993 said that the contract was put out for tender and he said that it satisfied the tendering procedures. What confidence the population has that people who are entitled to these contracts on the basis of merit did not get them? Was the contract advertised? Was the information circulated so that people will know, so that other Iron Balls will know about these contracts? You see, in matters like these the Government has to account and one of the ways of accounting is through debate. I want the hon. Minister to tell this House which company got the lighting contract for the Prime Minister's repairs; and in that company is there a relative, a sister, of Mr. Steve Castagne?

Mr. B. Panday: We are asking, just asking.

Mr. R. Maharaj: I would like the Government to say...One sees why it is important to have accountability: Is it true that the Government is contemplating purchasing a computer from the United States Computer Systems for \$1 billion from Cray of the United States? I want you to tell us, while people are losing their jobs, is it true? That is all I am asking: is it true? Madam Speaker, I want the Government to tell us whether, with respect to the Printing and Packaging Company there was—

Dr. Rowley: Allegation time?

Mr. R. Maharaj: No, no, I am asking you, man.

Mr. B. Panday: They put us here to ask.

Mr. R. Maharaj: I will give you the assurance I will be very fair in asking them. Whether in the Printing and Packaging Company transaction there was an offer by an individual company in Trinidad and Tobago of \$9.6 million, and whether, in spite of that offer, there was negotiation between the Government and the purchasers at the price of about \$16 million.

Dr. Rowley: Even you cannot believe it.

8.05 p.m.

Mr. R. Maharaj: Madam Speaker, whether there was negotiation by the Government with the proposed purchaser and the price which the proposed purchaser got, whether that purchaser got the price higher or lower than the \$9.6 million—

Mr. Valley: Madam Speaker, let me say this one time, the price paid for Printing and Packaging is \$12.5 million. There is the report here. I am prepared to lay it on the Table.

Mr. R. Maharaj: You are now laying it.

Mr. Valley: No, it was laid already.

Mr. R. Maharaj: When?

Mr. Valley: Long ago. Months ago we made a statement in this House.

Mr. R. Maharaj: Not in this House.

Mr. Valley: Yes. Madam Speaker, I know in the other place, I made a complete statement on this, and also in this House. I am prepared to pass this to him now.

Mr. R. Maharaj: All right. So you see how important it is? What has happened, one sees the importance of having machinery. That document was not laid in this House, as far as my records go.

Madam Speaker: I do not know much of the laying of the document but I know the price was mentioned during the course of the question—

Mr. Valley: Madam Speaker, if it were not here, it was in the other place, where I stated clearly, the terms and conditions and everything concerning the transaction.

Madam Speaker: It was, in fact, mentioned. I remember that price.

Mr. R. Maharaj: Since the Government is prepared to lay these contracts and these documents, will the Government agree to lay all the documents relating to NUCOR for us to see what happened with NUCOR?

Mr. Valley: This document is, in fact, a statement by the hon. Ken Valley and it was submitted to the House of Representatives on October 2, 1992. It was laid on October 2, 1992.

Mr. R. Maharaj: That is a statement; that is not the contract. Anyhow, let us go on.

Madam Speaker, the NUCOR transaction, is a question of contracts being entered by the Government with foreign companies. We had a situation here, where US \$100,000 was given to the University of the West Indies, as a donation to the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. Would the Government be prepared to say what that money was given for? Would the Government be prepared to lay all the documents regarding the contract with NUCOR and to say whether any person, either in Trinidad and Tobago or abroad, got a commission? I would like the Government to answer, whether the US \$100,000 is being given to the University of the West Indies by NUCOR for a special research project in which Mr. Ken Julien is interested. Is it being given for a particular project in which Mr. Ken Julien has been interested in, starting and he has not been able to get it? Did Mr. Julien have anything to do with NUCOR?

Madam Speaker, we come to the other aspect, because when one sees Pegasus, the Port Authority, the handling of it must cause a lot of disquiet in the population's mind. Also, how this drug cartel allegation was handled—the record in this country is clear that for years now people have been making allegations about the police. Their allegations have, in effect, destroyed, to a great extent, the police service because the authorities allowed some of the bad police officers to remain in the police service and the Government did nothing about that.

As a matter of fact, if a government wanted to have a serious investigation of police officers who are involved in corruption in the police service, no government would announce publicly what it is going to do, that it is going to bring in Scotland Yard, and it takes weeks or months after for Scotland Yard to come. If you are serious about uprooting corruption, finding out about the drugs, you would do it undercover.

You see, what has happened is that Scotland Yard has not said what a lot of people do not know. There is a group of hard core police officers—and there is evidence, from what they say—that have been involved in corruption, manufacturing evidence, in trampling upon the rights of people and in protecting drug people in Trinidad and Tobago. That has been known.

The Scott Drug Report—when it comes to the allegations about persons and how the commission dealt with those allegations, one can condemn them, but with respect to the findings of the drug report, in respect of what was happening in Trinidad and Tobago, I think that one knows that there were police officers who were involved; there were people who were protecting the police. It seems to me that what has happened here, is that there can be no doubt that the handling of these matters were not properly done and, in effect, it must cause the people of Trinidad and Tobago great concern.

What have other countries done in order to deal with corruption? Corruption, according to the dictionary, is not limited, and it means, "rotten, depraved, wicked; influenced by bribery; vitiated by errors." In the Thesaurus it means, "abuse, misuse of power," and one can go on. But what have these countries done in order to deal with the issue of corruption?

Madam Speaker, I think it cannot be disputed that corruption is a highly infectious disease and if it is allowed to ferment and to continue, it can undermine a democratic society. Therefore, I think that a government must have in the forefront the determination to deal with it.

In Australia, as reported in the *Commonwealth Bulletin* of April, 1992—you know that journal, or whatever you call it—there is a summary of legislation which was passed in different parts of the Commonwealth. In the edition of April, 1992, in Australia, there was the question of Conflicts of Interest and Local Government. What the government decided to do there was to set up an independent commission against corruption, and it published a discussion paper, and it set up a body which would have the power to investigate, report to Parliament, and its aim is to minimize corruption in the public sector. That is with respect to the public sector in Australia.

In Queensland in Australia, we had a situation where there were allegations that people reporting corrupt acts were being victimized and the authorities there decided that something should be done to protect those people, because it is in the public interest to protect people who make complaints about corruption. There is a

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report on the protection of "whistle-blowers." That is how they call them. It has not been implemented as yet, but there is a report that it should be implemented.

"...the Commission discusses the range of activities that are covered by the term, 'whistleblowing' and the purposes which it serves. The core concept which exists in all definitions of the term, refers to the act of an employee who has disclosed details of (or 'blown the whistle on') some wrongdoing by his or her employer. The Commission, however has taken the view that whistleblowing should not be confined to the employer-employee relationship even though the most likely sphere of operation for a whistleblower protection scheme will be in that context. In general, the Commission has adopted the approach that there is no compelling reason why greater protection should be available to persons who report crimes committed by their employer than is available to any person who reports illegal conduct to an appropriate law enforcement or regulatory authority."

8.15 p.m.

Probably, what we need in Trinidad and Tobago is a committee to protect whistle-blowers in the public service. Because, if we have a committee to protect whistle-blowers in the public service or whistle-blowers in the population, we would have no situation of people writing these anonymous letters, and sending all the information but having an anonymous letter with it. The important thing is not the anonymous letter, the important thing is the document which supports it.

Madam Speaker, in respect of Members of Parliament, which includes the Government, there was a Commonwealth study on "Conflict of Interests" done in December 1992. It is interesting to see that some of the concepts we have been talking about have been advocated in this report.

Madam Speaker, page 127, after discussing the Salmon Report on the standards of conduct in public life, says:

"The Fitzgerald Report has recommended for Queensland a Criminal Justice Commission to monitor, investigate and advise on official misconduct of public officials and to provide evidence of same to the Director of Public Prosecutions whose responsibility will be to initiate prosecutions. The report considered the option of an independent commission against corruption (ICAC) such as has been established in Hong Kong and New South Wales, but advised against one in view of the difficulty in making ICAC accountable for its operations."

"Consequently, the Fitzgerald Report recommended a commission which although independent from Government control is not fully autonomous, in that, a standing parliamentary committee will oversee the operations of the commission which will be required to comply with the policies and guidelines formulated by the committee."

So, a report of the Commonwealth Secretariat is supporting our contention that in order to deal with corruption, there should be an effective way to have a parliamentary committee to monitor it.

Mr. Valley: Madam Speaker, again, really, just for the information of the House. At no time did that Opposition suggest that there should be a parliamentary committee to look at corruption. They came here on a debate to look at some joint committee with respect to monitoring the budget.

Mr. R. Maharaj: Madam Speaker, we have asked, and we are asking the Government to set up a parliamentary committee. My leader spoke about that today.

Mr. Valley: Madam Speaker, we have said, on a number of occasions, that we are willing to entertain suggestions from the Opposition at any time. If they come with a joint committee with respect to the budget, we say that is a no-no.

Mr. B. Panday: What about a committee for corruption? Are you with us?

Mr. R. Maharaj: Madam Speaker, after talking about a parliamentary committee to monitor abuse and misuse of power, and monitor corruption, because corruption—the hon. Member for San Fernando East has done a lot of damage as it says such a committee is necessary because there will be—

"a permanent monitoring and investigating role independent of the Government and the police, acting both on its own initiative and upon complaints."

So, here it is, high authority, that that would be a monitoring system independent of the police; independent of Government. And another advantage,

- "(ii) a reminder of the standards expected of public officials;
- (iii) a vehicle by which the public, as well as, public officials are educated in those standards;
- (iv) provision of advice to government departments and agencies of ways to combat or deter corrupt practices within their offices;

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- (v) a permanent body to which all complaints or allegations of corruption can be directed; . . .
- (vi) the capacity to provide protection to complaints witnesses."

So, one sees that we are not talking out of the air. At page 134, in dealing with the New South Wales approach, that is how they also went with respect to that. I would think that if the Government is serious in dealing with these matters, that is how they would deal with it.

Now this response about the Government dealing with the Montano matter. The point is not whether it should be DPP or not, that is a matter for the police. You have an instance where public funds were used for private purposes and that is a political decision the Prime Minister and the Government should have made already. The Airports Authority's board should have been asked to resign. They used public funds for private purposes; they filed private actions. The issue is not whether they committed a criminal offence, that is the police or the DPP to decide. The fact of the matter, on a political basis, is that you cannot have a situation where writs have been filed—not only the ones we have disclosed, other writs were filed—and public moneys were used for private purposes in respect of that. I would have expected that in the evidence that I had given the Prime Minister, he would have acted now and asked the board of the Airports Authority to resign.

Madam Speaker, the final point I want to deal with is that the Member for San Fernando East has referred to the Report which was laid in Parliament—I have no problem with that—but what that illustrates is that the Prime Minister knows that those matters form the subject matter of prosecutions against the Member, instituted by his Government. He knows; it is public knowledge. It came out in evidence, that the Government paid a man \$500 per week; hotel. He knows the prosecutions had been determined and decided in favour; he knows that there are actions pending against the Government for damages, but I tell him today that what he has done here today in this Parliament, I give him notice that his answer is going to be used for punitive damages and the money will be given to the people in Laventille so they will be able to get jobs. That is what I am going to use the money for.

What the Member for San Fernando East has said is "Listen, I am going to harass you all. I am going to harass you again. We know we harassed you, and we are going to harass you again." I tell him that on this side of the House—the PNM Government is responsible. When they harassed me in 1985 and the international

community had to come, my children had to leave this country because they were being harassed. The PNM Government, that Member for San Fernando East knows that, they harassed me. The international community intervened. There have been books written; the human rights organization, the State Department communicated with the Government and told them that they were harassing me because I was fighting for the people of Trinidad and Tobago, and the hon. Member for San Fernando East had the bold face and gumption to get up this afternoon to read something which he knows has no basis. He knows it has been established by the court that it has no basis, but he gets up and talks about irresponsibility in reading anonymous letters.

In effect, he has continued his harassment, and I say that coupled with what he told me in this House two weeks ago, that he has the Special Branch—because I am appearing for the Jamaat—watching me, and what he has said here today, I do not expect now, after being charged for everything else...He knows that the records, when the affidavit could have been established that the police was corrupt, he knows that there was an inquest and they found that the policeman killed the witness. He knows that. It is a matter of record, and he comes to this House to try to browbeat the population of Trinidad and Tobago.

Madam Speaker, the PNM used that in their election campaign but the people rejected it. They used it in Couva South and I tell him, today, that we talked about LIDP.

8.25 p.m.

The PNM candidate who fought the election in Couva South is working in LIDP; the PNM supporters who campaigned in Couva South are working in LIDP. LIDP is being used as a PNM party organ machinery and they are providing employment and using it for improper purposes. That is corruption. I want you to answer that. Do you want the names of the persons who are working there? They are working there and people who cannot afford to get jobs, people who are starving, that is what you should be talking about. You should not come and talk and throw red herrings. You should answer how you are going to deal with corruption. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

The Minister of Works and Transport (Hon. Colm Imbert): Madam Speaker, I rise to support the amendment [*Interruption*]

Madam Speaker. Order please. The Member for Diego Martin East is trying to make his contribution.

Hon. C. Imbert: I rise to support the amended motion, moved by the Member for Diego Martin West which deletes quite a bit of the original motion, and replaces it by,

"*Whereas* recent responses by the Government have demonstrated that it is fully prepared to implement its 1991 general election pledge to the country. And that if it forms the government it will ensure accountability at all levels; and:

Whereas governmental actions including but not limited to its actions in the handling of the Pegasus issue, the Port Authority insurance issue, the issue involving the allegations of the existence of a drug cartel in the Police Service and allegations of public funds being used by directors of the Airports Authority for their private purposes, that have confirmed that commitment;

Be it resolved that this Honourable House express its confidence in and support for the Government in its attempt to deal responsibly with the whole issue of corruption and accountability."

I support that motion.

Madam Speaker, I noted that the Member for Couva South got all hot, bothered and worked up under the collar about what must have been a groundless allegation in a report laid in this House. I wonder why the Member for Couva South was so flustered and upset over what was obviously a groundless allegation. I also heard the Member for Couva South make a lot of cries about no evidence; and where is the evidence. If my memory serves me well, I recall that in this particular instance, which was a charge of conspiracy to murder, the case could not be proceeded with because the evidence disappeared and the only witness was murdered. So that was the end of that. No evidence. Let me deal first with an issue raised by the Member for Couva South in this House, wherein, Madam Speaker, the Member for Couva South made inflated and exaggerated claims about a \$1.1 million contract for equipment to an individual—

Mr. Maharaj: On a point of order. Madam Speaker, I referred to the *Hansard*. I did not make any exaggerated claim. On page three of the *Hansard*, of last Friday, I would like the Government to answer and say whether material expenditure on the Prime Minister's residence, repairs, renovations, construction and maintenance, Ministry of Transport Department, Member for Diego Martin East for the period ending, whether it is correct to say there was privatization for the work, material, gravel, sand, cement and lumber—\$600,000, kitchen

equipment, installation, electrical rewiring—\$800,000, interior decorating, design, labour and material e.g., curtains contract to which I will not call a name—\$400,000. I asked a question.

Hon. C. Imbert: As I said, the Member made claims and referred to inflated figures regarding a \$1.1 million alleged contract. The Member did so, in my view, fully in the knowledge that anything that is said in this House is immune from court action and it appeared on the newspapers next day. That was definitely the intention; to make wild charges and allegations so that it would find its way into the press and, *[Interruption]* This has been the practice. The press has to print what is said in this House. And it is precisely for that reason that the Member uses inflated and exaggerated figures. This has been the practice of the Member for Couva South in this honourable House over the last several weeks and I dare say, since he became a Member of this honourable House.

The Member asked certain questions which, in my view, displayed a certain ignorance of Trinidad and Tobago. He said he went and looked for the iron ball gym and could not find it. He asked where it was. He said he never heard of it. I will refer the Member to the Trinidad and Tobago Body Builders Federation where he will be enlightened to learn that the current Trinidad and Tobago body building Champion, Mr. Ricardo Guy James, who is going to the World championships soon, to represent Trinidad and Tobago, trains at the Iron Ball Gym.

Mr. Maharaj: Could the hon. Minister tell this House where the business of this gym is conducted?

Hon. C. Imbert: As I said, the Member has displayed his lack of knowledge or ignorance, if you will permit me, of gyms generally, and exercise in Trinidad and Tobago. As I stated at a press conference outside this House—I am not afraid to go outside this House, unlike the Member for Couva South and others. The invoice orders for the equipment in question were produced for the scrutiny of the media to their satisfaction. They took pictures of them. It was shown that the equipment did not cost anywhere near \$1.1 million neither did it go to any individual, it went to a company.

Mr. Maharaj: Madam Speaker, on a point of order. The issue was whether Mr. Castagne got that contract. The issue was not the quantum or the amount. Whether he got the contract and how many contracts, that was the issue.

Hon. C. Imbert: Madam Speaker, I do not think the Member understands simple English. The contract did not go to an individual.

Mr. Sudama: Would the Member give way to a question? Could he indicate if Mr. Castagne is in any way associated with this company?

Hon. C. Imbert: If I am going to be interrupted like this—these are matters of public record. I get the impression that the Members on the other side neither listen to the radio, watch the television nor read the newspapers. My press conference was carried live on radio. This is my understanding, or shortly thereafter, and in that press conference it was reported in the daily newspapers and on television that Mr. Castagne was a director of the company. I said it outside. I am not afraid of you. The Member asked questions such as, who is the director of what? And who is employed where? I will refer to the contract for the kitchen equipment in the very said project supplied by Grell Taurel, which as far as I am aware, is a member of the Neal and Massy group with about 2,000 employees. Is the Member suggesting that I must go and check the names of every single employee in the Neal and Massy group and determine whether one of these people is a relative of a supporter of the PNM and thereby debar the entire Neal and Massy group from ever tendering or being awarded a fair contract? Do not be ridiculous! And for the record I have absolutely no idea whose relative is employed where. Let me refer now to some of the other issues raised by the Member for Couva South.

The Member for Couva South spent considerable time on the Piarco Airport development project. I think it is necessary to correct some misconceptions which have found their way into certain sections of the national community.

8.35 p.m.

The Piarco Project was invited on the principle that there would be no recourse to the Government. This is a very salient point. This means that there is no government guarantee. In other words, the investors, whoever they may be are taking the risk. Therefore, if the project fails, the investors fail. It is very important that people understand this. Here you have persons coming from abroad, investing US \$75 million of their own money, at their risk, with no government guarantee I heard a lot of talk that the country will have to be saddled with this debt, and the people of this country will have to pay for it. Not at all. The only pledge on the project is the revenue of the new airport. No assets of the authority; no guarantee from the Treasury whatsoever. If foreign investors believe that the project is viable and they are willing to take the risk and invest US \$75 million of their own money, I say, bully for them.

Mr. Humphrey: Will the hon. Minister indicate whether the people of Trinidad and Tobago, who will use the airport, account for any of those revenues, and whether there is any guarantee that increases in charges to enable the project to be financially viable, would not be put on the backs of the people of Trinidad and Tobago?

Hon. C. Imbert: Madam Speaker, one of the items in the request for proposal, one of the criteria for selection is that it provides the greatest benefit to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. I do not think that I need to say anything more on that.

I have heard many attacks on institutions in this country made by Members on the other side. Members on the other side quoted from newspaper reports and from a former Member of the former government, who had the effrontery and the disgraceful behaviour to state that the Chairman of the Integrity Commission should resign. *[Interruption]* No. That is not the reference I wish to draw. I merely wish to point out that the said individual was defeated by the PNM in Diego Martin East in the last general election.

I really do not want to talk much more on this matter. The Prime Minister took the step of referring the matter to the Head of the Integrity Commission. Now, we are hearing attacks on the Head of the Integrity Commission. Matters are being referred to the police. There are attacks on the police. I am certain if a matter goes to court and the court rules in a manner that does not suit the Members on the other side, they will attack the courts. I am certain if there is a commission of enquiry, and the report does not please the Members on the other side, then it will be said all members of that commission of enquiry are corrupt.

This is the pattern. You can never satisfy them. Whenever it does not suit their purposes, they label institutions and innocent people as corrupt. That is a pattern and a trend that is coming from hon. Members on the other side. I would ask them to desist. Please desist, lest they destroy every single institution in this country. I do not think that I need to say any more on that matter. For my own benefit, I welcome any public enquiry, any investigation, into any matter. As far as I am concerned that matter has been dealt with, if it is necessary to look at it again, I have absolutely no problem, whatsoever.

It is also necessary to clarify certain issues in this matter. In April 1992, the Cabinet appointed a ministerial committee. I believe that a statement has already been made in this House.

Mr. B. Panday: Who was that?

Hon. C. Imbert: It appears as though he does not come to Parliament.

I shall read from the statement made by the Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister.

"Ministerial committee was as follows: Minister of Planning and Development, Minister of Finance, Minister of Works and Transport."

The ministerial committee was charged with the responsibility of recommending to Cabinet, a course of action, for the implementation of the said project on a joint venture basis. There has been some question about ministerial interference.

Mr. Sudama: Would the Minister state whether there was a chairman to that ministerial committee and who was that person?

Hon. C. Imbert: I did not hear you, but it was not important any way. Would you sit down please?

Mr. Sudama: You cannot tell me to sit down in this House. You are a little upstart here. I am doing my third term in this House. I am asking you a question. Your refusal to answer the question shows that you want to cover up something.

Hon. C. Imbert: I tell you. It would appear that they are trying to shorten my speaking time. I may have to claim injury time.

Again, it was stated in this honourable House—I am not sure whether the Member for Oropouche was present, but the Minister of Planning and Development was the convener. I do not think I have to say anything more about this, but the question about ministerial interference arose when the Minister of Works and Transport, who was simply the messenger, acting on behalf of the ministerial committee advised the Airports Authority that the Minister did not wish to get involved in the selection process. That is the extent of ministerial interference. I do not think that I need to say anything more on that matter.

Let me now deal with another matter raised by the Member for Couva South. The Port Insurance Brokerage matter. Perhaps I should go back to what happened in 1987. Let us see what happened in 1987. I have some files here. It would appear that in March 1987, three months after the NAR won the general election, a small company was awarded an insurance contract for BWIA.

8.45 p.m.

The premiums on this contract were \$3 million. The principal officer was—I will not call his name—who was also an executive director of an insurance company. Apparently, at the time this was in contravention of the Insurance act of 1980, section 92(2)(b), that an individual involved in an insurance brokerage company could not be a director also of an insurance company. But it appears that this was so in 1987.

At that time, for the record, Madam Speaker, Mr. Basdeo Panday was deputy political leader of the NAR, acting Prime Minister; Mr. Karl Hudson-Phillips was Chairman of BWIA and Mr. Gerry S. Hadeed was the public relations officer of the NAR and Mr. Sudama was a Minister in the Ministry of Finance with responsibility for insurance.

Mr. Sudama: Madam Speaker, there is a rule in this House that when you refer to Members, you call them by the name of the constituency which they represent.

Madam Speaker: I agree with the hon. Member for Oropouche.

Mr. Sudama: He is new in this House and he is a little upstart.

Hon. C. Imbert: My greatest apologies. The Member for Oropouche was Minister in the Ministry of Finance with responsibility for insurance and the Member for Couva North was the deputy political leader.

Madam Speaker, I heard the Member for Tobago East come into this honourable House and say that during the tenure of the former administration not one word was raised about corruption. I have here newspaper clippings from 1987, “Party’s PRO quits over insurance row”, February 6, 1988; “New BWIA insurance contract seen as political patronage”, by investigative reporter; “IRC the new boy in town”; “Switch gives BWIA best all-round deal”.

Here is an interesting letter from the *Guardian*, May 6, 1987. I think the Member for Tobago East has a very short memory. A letter to the editor: “Confusing scenario with BWIA contract”:

“Dear Editor:

In a recent speech, Minister Dookeran talked about monopoly legislation as well as a code of ethics for businessmen. While agreeing with him wholeheartedly on these issues, I wish the NAR Government would now consider the

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recent award at BWIA to PNH Insurance Brokers, which is headed by one of the party's activists.

It is clear from what has been revealed so far that BWIA did not award its tender to the lowest bidder and no proper explanation has been provided for paying a premium to Mr. Hadeed's company.

The scenario is doubly confusing when it is realized that BWIA's chairman is Karl Hudson-Phillips, one of the deputy political leaders of the NAR.

During the Prime Minister's address recently, he pointed out, 'we have only been in power for four months'. I am in sympathy with him that we cannot expect miracles in this short time.

Equally, four months is far too soon for any kind of hanky-panky dealing to be associated with state companies involving high party officials and prominent financial supporters."

The Member for Tobago East said not a word about corruption. He has a very short memory and I notice that he is not here. He says his piece and leaves; hit and run. Both of them do that.

Madam Speaker: I think, for the benefit of hon. Members, we have ordered some refreshments.

Hon. C. Imbert: We have here an article by an *Express* reporter—I will not call the name: "CIC's bid was half \$1 million US less than PNH's".

Madam Speaker, nothing happened. The Member for Tobago East did nothing, as far as I am concerned. What the PRO of the then ruling party said—let me not misquote him—he is reported in a newspaper clipping and I have it here: "So because I support the NAR, I must starve". This is what he is reported as telling a newspaper. It appears his starvation was worth over \$10 million in five years to the individual in question. Because the company got seven Government contracts in the first six months of its existence. This is not an anonymous letter. Industrial Risks Consultants. Seven Government contracts in six months of its coming into existence. I have the documents here; I will lay them. This is not an anonymous letter, you know! I have plenty to talk about here.

Let us turn now to the case at hand. We have the Port Authority losing \$100 million a year, total accumulated loss, \$2,000 million or \$2 billion.

We have a Port Authority approaching the Ministry of Works and Transport in January 1991, with an urgent request for \$5 million to maintain the operations of the Government's shipping service which, for the benefit of the Members on the other side, who may not be aware, is the ferry service between Trinidad and Tobago. We also have the Port Authority indicating at that time that they could not find the funds and asking the Ministry to accept the liability, \$5 million in January 1991. So there you have it. A utility with a projected loss of \$100 million, asking the Ministry for \$5 million right now.

What did the ministry do, Madam Speaker? We said, "Let us look at your major items of expenditure. Let us examine your major items of expenditure". I think the Member for St. Augustine made a similar point. You know what we found in the ministry? That between insurance coverage and pension, the Port Authority spends \$25 million every year. Further, the pension plans—there are three of them—are in total disarray.

This is not a new scenario, because I have here the *Trinidad Guardian*, page 8, Tuesday, January 26, 1993, where a supporter of the former administration writes a letter referring to the pension plan in the Port Authority:

"I recall that one of the first items on the Agenda of the first meeting of the new Port Authority Board in April 1987 was the parlour state of the solvency of the Monthly Paid Pension Plan.

The problem, I seem to recall, was due to the failure of the central government to transfer... about \$90 million to the Pension Scheme to cover the Authority's pension liability to employees who were transferred from the Port Authority to the now defunct Trinidad and Tobago Contractors...

In fact, as early as January, 1987, the plan was overdrawn by \$9.3 million and funds were being transferred from the Weekly Paid Plan to the Monthly Paid Plan. Even at that stage..."

It is a former Member of the former administration.

"... it was anticipated by the bank 'that retired employees will be deprived of benefits due to them.'"

It goes on to say:

"As far back as 1983, the actuaries have described the plan as insolvent."

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So you have a situation where between insurance and pension, which are usually administered by insurance companies or other similar institutions, you find total disarray and the Authority is spending on pension, \$23 million, \$2 million on insurance.

It was felt that it might be possible to achieve some savings in this area. It was felt so. The Ministry was of the view that some savings might be achieved in this \$25 million expenditure. The Ministry, therefore, requested the Port Authority to seek to extend its insurances for a short period, rather than reviewing the premium for an entire year, so that a proper examination could be done of the market situation, and also to allow an invitation to tender for insurance brokerage services to determine whether savings could be achieved.

I have here, Madam Speaker, advertisements in the *Trinidad Express*, because the Member for Couva South asked the question: Was it advertised? Yes, it was advertised. *Express* Thursday, April 9, 1992. It went through the tender process. According to Cabinet agreed procedures—the former Cabinet, by the way—a Cabinet minute No. 892 of 1989, placement of the insurances of central government, statutory and local government authorities and the business of state enterprises. In this Cabinet minute, this Cabinet decision—certain procedures were given for inviting tenders.

Mr. Jurai: Would the Minister give way to a question, please. Could the Minister state how many applicants were received with respect to the advertisement?

Hon. C. Imbert: You know, Madam Speaker, the Members on the other side are very precipitous. I will come to that. It was advertised in the newspaper, I will tell you how many people responded. In these insurance tender procedures agreed to by the former Government, Madam Speaker, the reasons for tendering are as follows:

- Dissatisfaction with the present broker's quality of service;
- a significant internal change in the nature of an organization's operations;
- a risk management programme that has not been subjected to competition for a considerable period, such as five years; and
- a major shift in the general level of commercial insurance prices.

It is my understanding, Madam Speaker, that when tenders were invited, two of these criteria were satisfied. I wish to state for the record, one of them was not dissatisfaction with the broker's quality of service. It was a change in the market of insurance prices and a review of the organization's portfolio, specifically the pension plans.

These tender procedures were followed to the letter, Madam Speaker. As a result, a committee comprising senior managers of the Port Authority, as required by Cabinet, evaluated the bids—and for the benefit of the Member for Nariva—I see that there were five bids, and a certain company emerged first, using a ten-point scoring system, and it is signed by all four members. I have provided this outside this House, Madam Speaker, to the media. I am quite willing to lay it on the Table for the Members of this House. So that is that.

You will see, Madam Speaker, that the invitation to tender for insurance services is quite a normal situation. It is quite normal. But I have a question for—let me just say the Members on the other side should be fully aware of insurance brokerage contracts and invitation to tenders and so on, because I have in my possession a document which I will lay in the Parliament. It is a letter from the All Trinidad Sugar and General Workers' Trade Union, Rienzi Complex, President General Basdeo Panday, to Comprehensive Insurance Brokers Limited, 23 Cipriani Boulevard:

“Dear Sirs,

We hereby appoint you as our insurance brokers to advise us on all matters concerning insurance and authorizing you to negotiate with insurance companies on our behalf.”

Mr. Manning: Did he tender?

Hon. C. Imbert: I am coming to that:

“This letter cancels any previous arrangement that we may have had with any other broker or agent.”

Signed by Mr. Herbert Andrews, Acting General Secretary.

So here we have an organization of which the Member for Couva North is the head, cancelling a previous brokerage arrangement and appointing Comprehensive Insurance Brokers Limited as brokers. I have here the letterhead of Comprehensive Insurance Brokers Limited, which I will make available to the

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Parliament, as well. I see, as the first named director, Mr. Basdeo Panday. Mr. Basdeo Panday, B.Sc.(Econ.).

Here we have a situation, Mr. Basdeo Panday, in this organization fired the broker, hired Comprehensive Insurance Brokers—did he send it out to tender?

Mr. B. Panday: Yes.

Hon. C. Imbert: Do not try that. He did not. My information is that it was not sent out to tender. He awarded it to himself. Deny it! He cannot deny it. Oh, he has turned red. It is the first time I have ever seen him turn red. That is what I call hypocrisy of the highest order. I will make this available to the media, to the Parliament, to the Member for Couva South. They come here, Madam Speaker, and want to talk about PNM corruption. That is UNC corruption.

Do the Members of the All Trinidad and Sugar and General Workers' Union know that he gave the contract to himself without tenders? He did not tell them.

I wonder who the broker was that they fired just so. Do you have any idea who they fired just so? M&M.

Mr. Maharaj: You see his connection with M&M? He has M&M documents.

Hon. C. Imbert: Madam Speaker, let me move on now to a question asked by the Member for Tobago East. This insurance thing is real controversy. When this Member over here was making allegations about insurance, do you think he was wanting to tell this House he was a director in an insurance brokerage company?

Mr. B. Panday: You have no objection to that, do you?

Hon. C. Imbert: Never do that.

Mr. B. Panday: Several other companies, actually.

Hon. C. Imbert: Let us move on to certain matters in the Ministry of Works and Transport and let me just say that all matters relating to purchase of materials, equipment, services on the contract for the refurbishment of the official residence of the Prime Minister have been checked by the internal audit division of the Ministry of Works and Transport for transmittal to the Auditor General and have been found to be satisfactory. I think I do not need to say anything more on that.

All matters relating to supply of goods, services and equipment for the recent refurbishment in 1992 of the official residence of the Prime Minister have been

checked by the internal audit division of the Ministry of Works and are to be transmitted to the Auditor General. Total cost, as I have said, many times—I mean, why should I keep repeating it is \$1,684,000?

Miss Bhaggan: Did you supply a Jacuzzi, also?

Hon. C. Imbert: Madam Speaker, let me move to one of the first acts that this Minister of Works was involved in upon taking office.

As I came into the Ministry, Madam Speaker, it became apparent to me that certain persons who had bus route passes, like this, who were no longer entitled to travel on the bus route, were using them. So I decided in order to ensure that the police agencies could identify what was an authorized pass and what was not an authorized pass, to change the look, the appearance of the pass. You can clearly identify the passes are different—different colours.

In looking into this matter, Madam Speaker, I came upon some very startling information, and I would simply refer you to the comments of the public servants in this matter—I will not call their names—but I will show you the kind of thing that was happening in the Ministry under the last Prime Minister when I came in. We are talking about when the Member for St. Augustine was Minister of Works. The actual vouchers were indeed located and they tell a very sad story. Firstly, none of the purchases were made in accordance with the tendering procedures. One can only conclude that there was no respect for administrative regulations in the conduct of Government's business. This is what the public servants concluded when they were asked to look into this matter. No tendering, but they come here and talk about the tender process, giving contracts to themselves, no tender.

Madam Speaker, when you evaluate the prices of these passes, we see here passes were given in 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990 and 1991, no tendering. You know the price of the pass? It is \$73 for one.

Mr. Humphrey: Would you give the total amount of the passes that were issued in 1987, when I was Minister for about 10 months?

Hon. C. Imbert: Madam Speaker, let me go to the substantive issue. I will not be distracted.

Madam Speaker, contracts were awarded, it appears, on the telephone, without tenders, without anything. Madam Speaker, when this Minister came in, a public advertisement was placed in the newspaper to the Central Tenders Board, under this Minister. Whereas previously bus passes were purchased by the Ministry for \$74 each, the winning bid was \$12.50.

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You know what I will go further to say? A company—I will not call the name—also tendered and submitted this pass as a sample for \$22, same company. So you have the Member for Tobago East, you have the current leader of the NAR, playing sanctimonious, holier than thou, but he was awarding contracts, for no tender, \$74. When we go out to open tender it is \$12. The same company that was getting it for \$74, now bids \$22 for the same thing. That is the relevance. Do you want to know what the relevance is? That is the relevance. Hypocrisy of the Members for Tobago East, Tobago West and the current leader of the NAR, the former Minister of Works.

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, I am advised that the refreshments are here. The sitting of the House will, therefore, be suspended for 20 minutes. We will return at 9.30 p.m.

9.10 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

9.50 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Hon. C. Imbert: Madam Speaker, before we broke, I was referring to certain unusual and apparently irregular contracts involving insurance brokerage and bus route passes. Just to give some idea lest it be called a trivial matter, each one of these contracts was \$15,000; and, of course, we have determined if the price was \$74 then it should have been \$12,000, so really it should not have been \$15,000, it should have been perhaps \$10,000 or \$12,000. This went on for years 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1991—no tendering. In all fairness to the Member for St. Augustine I have not found any evidence to implicate him.

Mr. Humphrey: I wrote a letter.

Hon. C. Imbert: Madam Speaker, we have a situation where the former Minister of Works, now the leader of the NAR, was involved in the award of contracts that were not sent out for tender and which were clearly irregular and exorbitantly priced. That was under the former Prime Minister and Member for Tobago East who said 'not one jot of corruption; he did not hear anything.' I am

wondering, should I hand these over to the Fraud Squad? I think I better do that; these and some other matters to which I shall refer.

Mr. Sudama: What about if you hand over yourself to the Fraud Squad?

Hon. C. Imbert: Madam Speaker, let me come back to this controversial equipment, and in direct contrast to a situation where goods were supplied at five times, six times the market rate. We have here some equipment and I would just call two of them to illustrate how the PNM does business: One Olympic set supplied for \$1,200. An examination of the locally available prices shows that it is priced at \$1,500, so I think the Ministry achieved a saving there. A slant abdominal board purchased for \$450. The market rate in most stores is \$895. So I think that the whole question of equipment and materials at the official residence of the Prime Minister can stand scrutiny—I think so. The prices were fair and reasonable; they were lower than what was available elsewhere in Trinidad and Tobago, and all the proper procedures were followed. So, I do not think we should belabour that any longer.

Let me go now to something which was discovered—just a routine check. This is a morning's work I am going to refer to now. I took a scan through the LID programme, 1991, because there are Members of the former administration who are very loud in the media, very holier than thou, very sanctimonious, accusing the PNM of corruption. I will give you some information and I will ask you, Madam Speaker, to tell me what this sounds like to you and what should be done. I will again give the comments of the public servants but I will not call the names. These examples of LID programme accounts were extracted from the records. They showed a pattern of incurring expenditure with Government funds with no adherence to financial instructions and regulations laid down to control expenditure. This pattern of spending can only be described as reckless. This is what the public servants have reported:

"As these vouchers were queried by the Internal Audit Division, we were treated with contempt; we received no replies."

This was the former administration under the current Member for Tobago East who said there was no corruption. But hear what public servants are saying: that the Internal Audit Division was treated with contempt by the former Minister of Works, now leader of the NAR. There was no adherence to financial regulations.

Let me give you an idea of how ridiculous it became—absolutely ridiculous: Out of pocket expenses relative to the purchase of material, including chicken and chips at \$1,535.00, and there was no reason given.

Dr. Rowley: He bought the whole fowl!

Hon. Member: What size breeder?

Hon. C. Imbert: I do not know.

Mr. Humphrey: What is the date of that?

Hon. C. Imbert: August 5, 1991. The vouchers will be put into the record if you [*Interruption*]. No, no, you were not there at that time.

Mr. Humphrey: My competitor in the election—free chicken and chips.

Hon. C. Imbert: This individual here was the campaign manager—you see they like to talk about campaign managers—I would not call his name—of the current leader of the NAR, the former Minister of Works. The individual involved with these irregular practices is the campaign manager. Out of pocket expenses again inclusive of 22 two-piece dinner, \$677. Voucher given in the name of—I would not call the name—did not give details but merely general electric repairs, \$11,900; and there is a little note: "Job was later completed by the Electrical Division of the Ministry." What does that tell you? No work was done. We go on. Voucher in favour of China Palace: one shrimp chow mein—\$196. Unauthorized spending. This is public funds. The former Minister of Works, his Campaign Manager, this is what he was doing. Voucher in favour of National Helicopter Services—reason given—to survey the eastern corridor on November 7, 1991, one month before the election. For what were they surveying the eastern corridor? Hunting for votes, I guess. The sum of \$900. Voucher in favour of so-and-so—supply of 500 plates of food, pigeon peas—no reason given—\$9,690. Voucher in favour of Kentucky Fried Chicken for 10 dinners—\$254.

Hon. Member: That sounds like the PNM.

Hon. C. Imbert: It goes on and on. They talk about rum and roti, this is chicken and chips. Listen to this: Voucher in favour of—I would not call the name—Hardware for \$12,157, for the supply of two Christmas trees on November 29, 1991.

Hon. Member: What?

Mr. Maharaj: Madam Speaker, having regard to what the Member is saying, would he not agree that there should be some mechanism for accountability?

Hon. C. Imbert: Madam Speaker, the reason why I am reading this is to show what can happen when people do not follow the procedures. As I said, \$12,000 for two Christmas trees, two weeks before the general election—no reason given.

Hon. Member: Let him know the auditors—

Hon. C. Imbert: Voucher in favour of so-and-so for the supply of 21 cases of candles—I wonder if they were having a wake—\$2,282, and there was no reason given. This is the Ministry of Works, you know. Rental of property without approval from authorized government agencies—\$4,500 per month. Hire of band—I would not call the name—for entertainment, \$6,000. Voucher in favour of Miss so-and-so—supply of 200 lunches and 200 fruit punches— \$7,000, and no reason given.

Hon. Member: Who is paying for that? The public is paying for that.

10.00 p.m.

Hon. C. Imbert: Listen to this. Former Minister of Works, Leader of the NAR; holier than thou. Let him come and deny it. I have the vouchers, let him deny it. Invoices for the purchase of 54 knapsack sprayers, 75 respirators at a total cost of \$43,000. Purchases made with no reference to budgetary provisions. These items cannot be accounted for in the stores. They have disappeared. No reason given. Who knows if they were ever bought or delivered. This is the conclusion that the Internal Audit Division is coming to, because there is no record of a receipt. Nothing. I heard the Member for Tobago East say no corruption. Four vouchers for the purchase of tyres and tubes in favour of so-and-so tyre shop at a cost of \$26,000—40 tyres and 40 tubes. Notation: no vehicles mentioned in the invoices. Nobody knows where these tyres went, if they ever reached the Ministry.

Mr. Haniff: Is that practice continuing these days?

Hon. C. Imbert: Certainly not.

Hon. Member: How do we know?

Hon. C. Imbert: Because this was an unauthorized unit within the Ministry of Works, set up by the former Minister of Works, called PMU or something like that, that by-passed all the audit regulations in the public service. Completely by-passed them.

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Here we are again, the former Minister's campaign manager. Voucher in favour of Mr. so-and-so. Items purchased, no reason given: 7 Kentucky Fried; 5 buckets chicken; one case Malta; two chickens; 2 packs Crix. Listen to this. Voucher for the following items, no reason given: 1,200 cakes, 69 cases soft drink, no reason for purchase. These are all in September, November, 1991. What conclusion could the national community draw, Madam Speaker? It has to be electioneering. Using public money for their own private purposes to run their election campaign.

Mr. Maharaj: Using public money for private purposes and you do nothing about it?

Hon. C. Imbert: Madam Speaker, as the hon. Member well knows that matter has been referred to the Fraud Squad and the DPP. I do not have anything more to say on that. So, Madam Speaker, *[Interruption]* I have given you an example. This was just a search for half a day. Imagine if I had put them inside there for a month, what they will find? Who knows what was going on inside there? Madam Speaker, they were entering into verbal agreements with people to rent their properties, \$3,000 per month. When you look, no record. And the people are now coming and saying, "Pay me, these people rented properties from us." And so on, and so on. That is the kind of thing that was going on under the administration of the Member for Tobago East who claims, no corruption, or hint of corruption, in his government.

Madam Speaker, I think I have made quite clear the difference between the approach of the PNM in the particular instance of insurance contracts and the Leader of the Opposition. We went out to tender; they did not.

Mr. Panday: Thanks for the free advertisement.

Hon. C. Imbert: We purchased equipment and materials at reasonable prices. They did not.

Mr. Panday: Go to the police.

Hon. C. Imbert: We followed all the procedures.

Mr. Maharaj: You know why they did not go, because anybody could do the same thing to them.

Hon. C. Imbert: I have no fear of anything. They could go and check anything they want. Madam Speaker, I ask you, after having heard this, is this not a matter for the Fraud Squad? I think so.

Mr. Panday: Yes, we agree.

Hon. C. Imbert: Twenty tyres, cannot be found; 54 knapsack sprayers, no evidence. I think it is a matter for the Fraud Squad.

Mr. Haniff: Why have you waited so long?

Hon. C. Imbert: I tell this honourable House that I shall refer it to the Fraud Squad.

Mr. Haniff: And take steps to prevent the same thing happening again.

Mr. Maharaj: You have to prevent the prosecution [*Interruption*]

Hon. C. Imbert: And you did not do that? Madam Speaker, the Member for Couva South, hear him. Prejudicing trial. He comes in this House making all kinds of wild allegations. No documentary evidence.

Mr. Maharaj: Madam Speaker, is the hon. Minister admitting he has committed a criminal offence? I have not accused him of any criminal offence, so there is no trial that comes into play.

Hon. C. Imbert: Madam Speaker, I am not talking about myself. The hon. Member has tarnished the character of innocent persons using parliamentary privilege, reading concocted and fabricated documents.

Mr. Maharaj: Madam Speaker, I object to that. He is making an accusation that I used concocted and fabricated documents.

Hon. C. Imbert: It was.

Mr. Maharaj: No, no.

Hon. C. Imbert: It was anonymous.

Mr. Maharaj: That is different.

Hon. C. Imbert: That is fabricating.

Mr. Maharaj: No. Madam Speaker, I object. That is imputing—

Madam Speaker: You object to the terminology?

Mr. Maharaj: Madam Speaker, I am objecting.

Madam Speaker: Please take note of what the hon. Member is saying and be guided accordingly.

Hon. C. Imbert: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Haniff: You get away scot-free.

Hon. C. Imbert: Madam Speaker, I have at this point in time, to refer to what might be referred to as petty crime, but when you look into the Ministry and see the kind of things that went on.

Mr. Haniff: And still continuing.

Hon. C. Imbert: I have here a document of a settlement for a construction contract, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Maharaj: How many judgments have been outstanding before they get government jobs?

Hon. C. Imbert: Madam Speaker, I have here one of the files from a settlement of a construction contract. At the outset, I am not saying there was anything wrong with this, but, Madam Speaker, this construction contract which was before the court, was settled out of court, without referring it to the Attorney General's Office. The Ministry of Works in-house counsel did it on their own. They did not seek the advice of the Legal Adviser to the Government. They settled it on their own. Here was a matter, Madam Speaker, when you look through the documentation, you will see the former Minister of Works, the current Leader of the NAR, and his cronies settled a claim without reference to the Legal Adviser to the Government in excess of \$30 million. I do not want to call names. *[Interruption]* There was a claim for a construction contract and it was settled without reference to the Legal Adviser to the Government in excess of \$30 million. And the Member for Tobago East wants to talk about corruption?

Mr. Sudama: What have you done about it?

Hon. C. Imbert: Included in that is a very curious sub-agreement, because there are several sub-agreements; but included in it was a very—

Hon. Member: Why did you not make that allegation when he was here?

Hon. C. Imbert: He got up and ran; how do you mean when he was here? Listen to this. As part of the agreement, there was a rental agreement for certain prime pieces of equipment belonging to the Ministry of Works for a sum of \$5,000 per month, or \$60,000 a year. Here is a list of the equipment, Madam Speaker—

Here is the equipment:

1—10-wheel tractor

1—bitumen spray truck

1—950 Cat wheel loader

1—pneumatic tyre roller

1—tandem vibrating roller

1—Nissan water truck

1 D8 caterpillar tractor with ripper, for \$5,000 a month.

10.10 p.m.

The value of one of those items, the D8 caterpillar with ripper, is \$1,665,000. All toll, it is over \$4 million. But this is a settlement without recourse to the legal adviser to the Government, for \$5,000 per month. As part of the settlement, the equipment had to be in good condition and in good order. When the D8 caterpillar tractor, in particular, was sent, it was returned. It was claimed it was not working and the Ministry had to conduct repairs on that tractor to the tune of \$250,000—four years rent for all seven pieces of equipment.

I do not want to go into this any further, but I just want to give an example of the kind of thing that was going on under the former administration, but they come here with their holier than thou, sanctimonious behaviour, pontificating, saying, "no corruption, no corruption." But something is wrong with this.

Madam Speaker, in my contribution here tonight, I have sought to point out that, in the handling of the airport issue, the Government took steps to look into the matter. I have, as far as I am concerned, cleared the air on the Port Authority insurance contract, both inside and outside this Parliament. Any other questions anyone may wish to ask, I am available. Any documents they may wish to see, I will make them available.

I just want to refer here, in closing, to an advertisement put out by the Airports Authority recently.

"It was recently reported in a Trinidad newspaper, that certain top executives of the Airports Authority wrote an unsigned letter to the President. The Authority's executives wish to assure the public that no such letter was written or issued by any of them."

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This is an advertisement that the executive—it is signed by the General Manager on behalf of all the executive management. That Member over there, for Couva South, that hon. Member, came into this Parliament with this letter and read it to ensure that it was published in the newspaper. That was his intention. But here we have the management refuting the allegation, saying that they wrote no such letter. We do not know who wrote the letter.

There is a point I would like to correct. The Member for Tobago East, the Member for Couva South, Couva North—

Mr. Maharaj: Tell them who own the shops at the Airports Authority. Tell them if anybody sitting down here owns any duty-free shops.

Hon. C. Imbert: I am glad you raise that—

Dr. Rowley: What wrong with you?

Mr. Maharaj: What wrong with you? The Jamaat have information on you with respect to the things you are involved in—the National Fisheries. I could bring it here too.

Hon. C. Imbert: Madam Speaker, a little birdie whispered into my ear before I came here tonight, that the next allegation the Member for Couva South would make, without justification, was who owned the duty-free shops at the airport. I took the precaution of walking with the list, and I will read this into the record, that no Member in this House is owner of any duty-free shop in the airport; no Member of the Airports Authority is an owner of a duty-free shop at the airport. Anyway, if the Member for Couva South is saying that what is registered—these are all reputable businesses, reputable individuals. This is what is registered in black and white. He is trying to tell this honourable House—the Member for Couva South appears to be insinuating that the individuals do not exist?

Mr. Maharaj: Madam Speaker, could the hon. Minister say whether he conducted an investigation to see whether the persons who were registered, either on the business name or companies, are merely fronts, and that whether anybody else really owns those businesses?

Hon. C. Imbert: Madam Speaker, as I said, the names of the individuals and organizations who have duty-free shops at the airport, are all reputable organizations and reputable individuals. If the Member for Couva South wishes to tarnish the reputation of innocent people, well, that is his style. No problem. I just brought this, because I had a mind he would have come with that nonsense.

Madam Speaker, in my contribution tonight I have sought to point out that the way the PNM conducts business is to follow established procedures, follow the law, make themselves available for scrutiny. This Minister of Works and Transport made himself available to the media for one hour. I answered every single question put to me on matters raised in this House by the Member for Couva South. I did it on two separate occasions. I laid everything bare on the table. I gave him all the documents. At the end of the day it was demonstrated that proper procedures were followed and everything was in order.

If the Members on the other side wish to bring correspondence into this House which they cannot substantiate, or make allegations which they cannot substantiate with written evidence, that is their business. If that is the way they wish to conduct the business of this House, good for them. But you will note that this is not an anonymous letter. It is signed. Because this Minister nor this Government does not operate so.

I, therefore, must commend the amendment to the motion which deleted all of the irrelevant flim-flam, and other mischievous matters which the mover of the motion brought, and I commend the Member for Diego Martin West for his amended motion, which resolves that this honourable House expresses its confidence in, and support for, the Government, in its attempt to deal responsibly with the whole issue of corruption and accountability. I thank you, Madam Speaker.

Miss Hulsie Bhaggan (*Chaguanas*): Madam Speaker, the fact that the PNM campaigned under the banner of a new PNM is, in a way, an admission that the old PNM had some things they did not like about it. So in coming to the electorate—

Dr. Rowley: Madam Speaker, on a point of clarification. This is the PNM's manifesto and nowhere in the PNM's manifesto is there any phrase as the 'new PNM.'

Miss H. Bhaggan: Madam Speaker, if one were to go back to the various utterances from the Members on the other side, if they go to readings in the press and the clippings, you will see quite clearly, the differentiation between the new PNM and the old PNM. I am glad that the Member for Diego Martin West admitted that the old PNM and the new PNM are really the same.

I would have thought that now that this Government is back in office, that somehow they would have tried to change their ways. But it seems as if this Government is intent on continuing with the practice of the past—and today in

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this House, on charges of corruption, we got the impression from the other side, "well, is all ah we tief." So, because "all ah we tief", that ought to be something acceptable in this House. That has been the defence on the other side.

10.20 p.m.

Madam Speaker, the matter has become so bad that now this Government is also messing with the dead. I have a letter written by Wayne Monsegue, Director of Monsegue's Funeral Agency which is located in Chaguanas. The Monsegue Agency is claiming, and again, this is subject to clarification on the other side, that for the past 30 years, they have had an oral agreement with the Government, where they have been removing dead bodies in County Caroni, and because there is no public mortuary there, they have been conducting that service. That is the allegation here.

They then went on to say, and I quote from the letter:

"However, it has recently come to the attention of Wayne Monsegue, director of Monsegue's, from a telephone conversation from Mr. Eddie Battoo, President of the Funeral Association, that Clarke and Battoo Funeral Home has been granted the authority, by the Ministry of Finance to apportion the County Caroni cases to funeral agencies as they see fit, and with a cover fee for Clarke and Battoo."

The funeral agency has asked me to raise this matter and to find out from the Government, what is their response in this regard. I am not making a case here for Monsegue's at all. I am merely asking that the Government clarify this position as to how Battoo got this right to decide which funeral agency ought to be dealing with the dead in County Caroni.

Mr. Sudama: Was there a tender among the dead?

Miss H. Bhaggan: It is a dead issue, Madam Speaker.

The Member for Diego Martin East, a while ago, made many pronouncements about his Ministry following established procedures; being available for scrutiny and all sorts of nice fancy words. So, Madam Speaker, I think we ought to discuss the question of the LID Programme which is now called the Unemployment Relief Programme.

Madam Speaker, this programme, for this year, we are supposed to be spending \$140 million. This particular argument is going to be based on the

context that \$140 million of scarce public funds...And based on the evidence of the conduct of this programme last year, there have been many irregularities. When we look at the facts before us, the first thing we saw this year is that an announcement was made by the Minister of Works and Transport, the Member for Diego Martin East, that LIDP or URP is going to begin on January 25.

On January 15, the very day that announcement was being made, we saw an article appearing in the *TNT Mirror* that said "Gun play as LIDP opens". How come the Minister announced on January 15 that a plan is going to begin on the 25th and already there is gun-play as registration started on the same day, somewhere in Piccadilly Street. The year began with charges and counter-charges of irregularities in this programme. And, it started with violence. So, I would like the Minister or somebody on the other side to clarify why there is gun-play if there are so many procedures, in the Ministry of Works?

Madam Speaker, I also have information, for instance, and there is a headline here "Corruption in URP". This has to do with the recruitment of persons who hold official positions. There have been charges of persons who are supposed to be recruited as checkers in these programmes...Instead of there being a public advertisement and published criteria for selection, what one found was that a word-of-mouth message got around, and persons presented themselves at the various offices, and I know for a fact at the Couva Office, to do some test for checkers.

According to this article in the *TNT Mirror* of Friday, January 22, persons had access to the questionnaires, or so-called test papers, before. It was photocopied and circulated and persons prepared themselves for the test. Today, there are checkers on the various LID Programmes who are there because they crammed for a test; who are there because somehow they got word that there was going to be a recruitment for checkers, and this Minister has the gall to stand in this House and say his Ministry follows procedures. I would like him to explain to this House what has been the procedure with respect to recruitment on the Unemployment Relief Programme?

Madam Speaker, last year, I asked a question in this House. The question had to do with the location of the LIDP projects in the country. This was presented to this House on August 4, 1992, and there was a listing. A cursory glance at this listing showed me a project called the Charlieville Footpath which was supposed to be existing, in my constituency. As far as I am aware, that project was closed in

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April of that year and it was still appearing on the list of August, 1992. The amount next to it was \$250,000. I would like the Minister, or somebody on the other side, to explain to this House whether these moneys had gone back to the Ministry, or whether somebody continued to receive payment for this work? What happened to the balance of the funds from this project? Why is a closed project appearing on a listing of projects up to August of that year?

As a matter of fact, the Member for Naparima also pointed out that in his constituency a project closed in April, is reflected on this listing of the LIDP projects. So, I would like the Minister, or somebody on the other side, to explain why a closed project still appears in an official response. This is not an anonymous letter. This is not some unsigned document. This is the response to a question answered in this House, by the hon. Minister of Works and Transport. This is the listing here. He can go and examine the records and can see it.

Madam Speaker, the strangest part about this whole situation is that in the case where the project in my constituency was closed down, it was closed down by a local bully in the village. I complained about that person right here. That person who used to be with the former regime, suddenly converted and became a PNM chairman of a party group in Francis Lalla Road; his name appeared in the *Magnum*. Then, soon after that the same person who closed down this project became the foreman in the Monroe Road LIDP project in my constituency.

I directed a letter to the Minister of Works and Transport indicating the irregularity with respect to that individual, where he was abusing persons; where he was friendly with persons in the area; he was stealing materials; he was doing many things on the project, but this person remained until the very closure of the project. I would like to know: What does the Ministry do about complaints with respect to irregularities on the LIDP and now on the URP projects?

Madam Speaker, there is another response which was made in this House. A question was asked by the Member for Couva South with respect to the LID Programme. The Member for Diego Martin East, stood in this House and replied. The question had to do with the registration of persons on the LIDP. What the Minister said basically, was said in a deliberate attempt, as far as I am concerned, to mislead this House. The Minister said, in his answer that recruitment for the LID Programme, last year, was done as part of a national registration exercise. That is fine. He also said that the Government has a register of unemployed persons, and out of that register, persons' names were being selected. Then, how

can this Government explain that persons who were going to become candidates in the local government elections, and persons who eventually became candidates, were the persons who were submitting the list to the Couva Regional Office.

As a matter of fact, Madam Speaker, while this Government indicated to this House that they had a register which was so highly computerized, and talked about all the various fields in the programme for LIDP, I find it difficult to understand, therefore, how later on in the programme, the Minister of Works and Transport could tell this country that there have been LIDP ghost workers. If you are using a computerized listing, you can introduce certain fields in your computer programme which could allow you to double check certain repetitions and so on. Let us assume, for instance, somebody may have used one name, but several addresses, it is difficult to match that. But if you have fields for identification numbers, I cannot see how you can have a computerized system and still have ghost workers in a particular project.

10.30 p.m.

The Member for Arouca North made a public complaint that there were cases where—I think one case he referred to in particular—where at least 80 persons were paid twice for the particular fortnight. How could you tell this House that you have a register of unemployed persons and all of these things are still happening? Especially when it is not a manual register but a computerized listing. If you are dealing with a computerized system you ought to have some kind of data base. If you have a data base you could actually access information; you could put in certain checks and balances in the computer system.

Apart from that, let us assume, for instance, that your programming is not all that good, you may have some back-up. You are talking about internal audit and control. The point is there has to be some system to audit the list. So if you started off with a faulty list—in the first place you do not even have a list, but you are telling yourself you have a list—there must be irregularities. I would like the Ministry of Works to reply to this. In fact, I would like to ask the Minister whether any arrests were made? On October 24, 1992 there is a big headline in the *Express*; "LID FRAUD, Imbert: Arrest soon." I would like this Minister to tell us how many persons have been arrested for fraud under last year's LID Programme? Those workers collecting LIDP salaries. Again, we want to have an update with respect to those ghost workers. I am not going to go into details to read these articles because I know everyone here is tired.

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The point I would like to make is that when we enquired about the LID programme we expected answers which would reflect the true position of the programme. This is why for instance, the Member for Couva North mentioned earlier that we are no longer going to participate. Do you know why? Because when there were problems last year the Member for Diego Martin East told us "You all wait. I am taking your complaints. I am looking at the situation. We are going to rectify the situation" That is why we went along with him. We gave him the benefit of the doubt. We said okay, you are saying four for Members of Parliament, six for the PNM and four for the public. We do not agree with that system but let us go along with it. We are giving you a chance. You are here for a year. You are going to get a couple of months. Fix it up. The year has started and every single complaint we have had—

Mr. Imbert: Madam Speaker, on a point of order. With the greatest regret, the Member for Chaguanas is misleading the House. I am not aware of any system: four for the Opposition and six for the PNM. I do not know what she is talking about.

Miss H. Bhaggan: Madam Speaker, that reply just goes to show that the hon. Member for Diego Martin East does not know what is going on in his Ministry. Just before the LID programme started a gentleman by the name of Mr. Collins, who is a Labour Recruiting Officer, came to this very Chamber and spoke to the Members for Tabaquite, Caroni Central and myself, and told us, 'look, we are having a meeting'—I think it was the Tuesday before the LID programme started, I do not remember the exact date right now—'and I would like you all to come to my office.' I told him quite clearly, this is not about negotiating anymore. We want a proper system. But I still sent my assistant to find out—probably they do have a new system because there were all kinds of announcements in the press.

My assistant went there. And what was he told? In fact, I think the Member for Tabaquite was also present at that meeting. They were told okay, four for UNC, six for PNM and four for the members of the public. That is the system they told us and I challenge the Members on the other side to deny that that was said. The Member for Arouca North was in the office on that said day. I do not know whether it was said in his presence. But that is the system that was told to us. I ask you today: when did you publish an advertisement telling this country and this nation exactly how you intend to recruit labour for the Unemployment Relief Programme? Did that not go around by word of mouth? Were there not people in the Couva LIDP office, for instance, where a riot almost broke out? Were there

not reports made to the Couva Police with respect to violence in the Couva office? I am telling you it appears to me, that the hon. Member for Diego Martin East is not aware of what is going on in his Ministry. I would also like to find out how is the recruitment of foremen carried out in these projects.

The Member said a while ago because you are a PNM supporter you are not supposed to be discriminated against. Fine. But is it not passing strange that every time a position comes up a PNM supporter gets it? One Cyril Ramlogan, a defeated PNM local Government candidate is the foreman. He was in my constituency; a defeated local government candidate. That person now is the foreman of a project in my constituency. Is that not strange? It is rather strange that suddenly only PNM party chairmen and PNM defeated candidates are the ones who are foremen and checkers on these projects. Is this not strange? If you want to deny that, I would like the Minister to tell this House what procedure he used to ensure foremen in those projects were recruited on an equitable basis. I would like to know that.

Madam Speaker, there was much political interference in the LID programme last year. When I stand in this House, I am not politicizing. I am telling this House I have seen it, I have experienced it and it is happening again, and I am alerting this Government to do something about it. Because if you do not do something about it, we on this side are going to do something about it: I am going to do something about it too. I want to make it quite clear I am not going to come to this House anymore and speak about Unemployment Relief Programme. All year last year we spoke. This is the final time I am going to bring up the irregularities in this programme. It is going to go to the streets this time!

There was another programme within the LIDP called the School Cleaning Programme. I know tapes are not admitted in this House, but I have a tape, and I will send a copy to the Minister, of one Frank Ramcharan, whose voice was authenticated by an expert. He admitted on this tape that the PNM chairman of the Chaguanas constituency has more power than any parliamentarian from the UNC. It sounds good. Then he goes on to say that he, Mr. Ramcharan, will ensure that no UNC supporter gets into the School Cleaning Programme. It is on tape. But it is interesting to know what is the School Cleaning Programme? You have women—and I like the idea of women being employed—who are being employed in a school where there are cleaners already working in many instances. They were sitting down in the school doing nothing. Why could not that money be given to Community Development for instance, to give tuition to these women who can

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learn to do some creative trade with their hands? What they are doing instead, Madam Speaker, they are being paid for a length of time to sit in a school all day just to receive an income. That is abuse of power, and it is totally against the dignity of the human person and the woman in particular. There were also charges of stealing of cheques and the cashing of other people's cheques. I would like the Minister to explain to this House what is being done now to ensure that kind of practice does not continue.

Madam Speaker, last year most of us on this side either staged demonstrations or we mentioned it in the House. In fact, one Member was arrested because of the position he held with this programme. I want to give notice to this Government that moneys expended on this LID Programme is not private moneys. Those are public funds. Secondly, given the financial state of this country, we cannot afford to have \$140 million being misspent and mismanaged in this country. The saddest part is that at the end of this year \$140 million would have literally gone down the drain because you would have still had 100,000 persons unemployed, plus those who will be retrenched from PTSC and the Port and the various state enterprises and those who will be released from the private sector because of trade liberalization.

In fact I saw one reputed economist, Denis Pantin who mentioned recently at a TTMA meeting, I believe, that thousands of jobs will have to go. I believe he quantified it to say that after a couple of years, it will be at least 14,000 people.

10.40 p.m.

What are we doing with public funds? LIDP is not just something to abuse or to give patronage and have corruption with. It is public funds. This Government is saying that productivity will increase this year, but in my constituency, I travel around every day to see what is going on, and persons have been sitting for this whole week because they do not have the materials and equipment to start their projects.

If the Minister does not believe me, I suggest to him that he calls the *Express* in the Central Bureau and the reporter there will tell him about it. Up to this morning I visited there. What they did was take out some grass and they are sitting under a house all day. That is what you call productivity.

You might ask: What is the alternative? I heard the Government say that it has a procedure. In the face of this overwhelming evidence, it is very clear that this Government does not have a procedure for the recruitment of persons in LIDP

and for the management of the LIDP project. What are we saying? We want to ensure that the projects are distributed equitably and equally.

Mr. Sudama: What is the difference between equitable and equal?

Miss H. Bhaggan: There seems to be some difference between equitable and equal.

We are calling for a mass registration of unemployed persons in this country. That registration must be invited by public advertisement. We would like to have published the location of every project in the country; the cost of the project and the labour component. We in this House, as Members of Parliament, would like to get just one copy of the computerized printout of the registration exercise under the Unemployment Relief Programme.

In other words, if the Minister is saying that they are using a computerized listing, I do not think that there should be any objection to giving us a copy of that list, to ensure that the persons who are on that list are the persons who are being employed. We would like a monthly printout of persons employed in the project made available to the Leader of the Opposition. This is \$140 million.

Unemployment is a national problem. We are faced with unemployed people, as well as Members on the other side. If the Government wants to manage that programme properly, we are prepared to be the watchdogs to ensure that the programme is conducted properly.

On July 17, 1992, when I asked for information with respect to persons who are on this project, the hon. Minister of Works, who just said that he was open to public scrutiny, gave a reply to this House that read like this:

"Reply to House of Representatives Question. No. 41 by the Minister of Works and Transport.

The Minister of Works and Transport considers it inappropriate to give personal information on private citizens in this honourable House."

Is this open to scrutiny? Why did he do it? I suspect because he knew that he had a lot of cocoa in the sun.

So, Madam Speaker, I have made our demands. I have said it and I am going to say it again. This is the last time that I personally will stand up in this House and talk about LIDP. This issue will go to the public now. I will tell you that I have already organized for a public meeting in Dass Trace, Enterprise, where I had

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asked for one project to be located and that was not done. Now, we are going to take to the streets, quite clearly, and I am not afraid to say that. If it means that we will have to fight out there, because we cannot get action in here, we will have to do that.

Mr. Bereaux: Madam Speaker, as a matter of clarification. I happen to own a substantial piece of land in Dass Trace. Please do not put it on my land and then say it is the PNM.

Miss H. Bhaggan: It is a public bridge and I am very much aware that the Member does own substantial properties there. In fact, I hope he could start over the road soon, to develop it from the borough.

I would like to refer to another matter which has been in the air within recent times. It has to do with the National Insurance Board. There is a case of the abuse of power. This is a situation where one Mrs. Vilma Findlay made allegations, which were later substantiated, of sexual harassment on the job and subsequent discrimination as a result of public statements she made to that effect.

Then lo and behold, about one or two weeks later, after a public statement was made, there is a big headline in the Trinidad Guardian, "PSA Official, 20 Reports of Sexual Harassment at NIB." Members on the other side might ask why I am bringing up this issue here. It does not seem to be all that important.

As a result of charges made by Mrs. Findlay, an enquiry was conducted. The Members of this investigatory committee were Sen. Diana Mahabir-Wyatt, Mr. Rabathaly and Mrs. Allison Hilton-Clarke. The point I would like to make is that serious comments are being made by this investigation committee about the policies of the NIB.

Mr. Manning: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. Member for giving way. A report of that investigation has been made available to the Prime Minister, and we are now looking at it to see whether any further action needs to be taken.

Miss H. Bhaggan: I am glad the hon. Prime Minister has said so. I hope that when he speaks of action, he would mean action that came out of this report.

One has to do with an independent audit being made of policies and procedures for human resource management, in the National Insurance Board with particular reference to performance appraisal, career planning, management training and development, staff training and development and promotion and

transfer. Based on the findings of this report, this is one area of need and it is a very serious issue.

The second recommendation is that a code of conduct with special attention to a sexual harassment policy should be developed and promoted throughout the organization, with clear and objective procedures set out for dealing with transgression.

The third recommendation is that an investigation be made into the nature and extent of gender discrimination at the National Insurance Board, and all employees be educated on that subject.

I hope that these recommendations are the ones which the hon. Prime Minister is referring to. I want to extend this beyond that, however. The National Insurance Board is, let us say a public institution. It deals with public funds. If there are senior officials of this company, who are treating the employees in this manner, who for some reason are breaching certain moral codes of ethics, the question is: Are these people going to manage the financial affairs of the NIB in the way they ought to be managed?

10.50 p.m.

I have had the experience as a Member of Parliament, Madam Speaker, of persons who have paid NIS contributions for most of their working years and when those persons have retired and they apply for retirement benefits, it becomes a big issue, because then they are told, "Well, there are four people with names like yours," or, "Well, we do not have all the documentation or something is not updated in the office."

In fact, there was a case, and I did write the Member for Barataria/San Juan on it, where a person waited two years for retirement benefits because somebody else had his name. Now, all along contributions were made for 14 years and there was no problem with accepting those contributions. But when it came to collecting his retirement benefits, suddenly there were several people with his name. But the sad part, Madam Speaker, is that person did—after I picked up the matter—the Monday he was supposed to collect his cheque. I have had several instances of that, Madam Speaker, the saddest part of it all is that many of those persons who are now going for retirement benefits, especially in the area where we live, are either illiterate or semi-literate; they come from the agricultural sector or they are daily-paid workers.

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What happened is these people are being made to move from office to office before they can get some kind of service. This is why it takes two years because they are getting the run-around. So apart from all the recommendations made in this report, I hope that the operations of the NIB will also be looked at to ensure that people are treated fairly; that when complaints are made that they are treated properly, so that persons must have some sort of redress.

There are many senior citizens in this country who seek the assistance and help of public institutions, but because there are persons who hold office and have the power of that office, they feel that they are a power unto themselves. They are somehow not servicing these people.

So with the National Insurance Board matter: One, it has to do with the management of that whole scheme, and I want to suggest to this Government to not only look at the question of sexual harassment, but I believe the time has come to look at the whole operation of the National Insurance Board. Here I am not casting any aspersions on anybody.

The next point I want to make has to do with the question of sexual harassment. Again, there are persons in senior offices who hold senior positions who abuse their positions. And what do women do? As a matter of fact, with the NIB situation, apart from those who have made reports and those who refuse to give their names, many of the women have actually resigned from the organization. What do we do about this? It means, therefore, that we have got to set up a system where a person feels she is being discriminated against, that there is some sort of redress for her.

Madam Speaker, I am calling on this Government, not only for a system to deal with sexual harassment, but any other form of discrimination; a system where persons must have equal opportunity. It does not matter what you call it and I do not think that a centre for ethnic studies and so on is going to solve that problem. It has to be something along the lines of an equal opportunities commission and unless we decide, as a country—

Mr. Manning: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. Member for giving way again. I must let her know that the idea of an equal opportunities commission was considered some time ago by the Constitution Commission and it was rejected on certain grounds. In fact, the Commission was of the view that it would have been much safer to go a route other than that, since it could create more problems than it solved: It was dangerous.

Miss H. Bhaggan: Madam Speaker, apart from the matter dealing with the LID Programme, or the URP, I have tried to bring other matters which tend to show that you do not only have corruption at the level of parliamentary people and the Minister and so on, but you have the question of the abuse of power, the abuse of a system. If you do not have a system where you can have redress, then you are going to have problems.

I wrote the Minister of National Security on a matter which I saw emerge in the newspapers about the maxi-taxi drivers who had to pay bullies and thugs to park in Chaguanas and Port of Spain.

When I wrote the Minister of National Security, first he told me I was writing to the wrong person, I should have written to the Police Commissioner. Then he goes on to say that he is only prepared to act, Madam Speaker—this is a letter dated November 3, 1992—he said:

"Be that as it may, I am prepared to see those drivers who have voiced complaints. I will only be prepared to do so, however, if the individuals concerned are prepared to go all the way with their allegations. This includes giving comprehensive statements and positively identifying the police-officers involved."

Now, in the allegation, it was being said that if you did not pay these thugs \$100 per week, somehow you would get many tickets because you would be harassed by the police.

These persons came to me, almost in the night, because they were afraid to be seen speaking to me in case I raised the matter and somehow it became connected. They were scared to death. After I got this letter, I went to them. They said they could not reveal themselves because they did not know what would happen to them afterwards since they were in a high risk business. They are maxi-taxi drivers and anybody can just stab, kill or hold them up. So they are afraid.

Is there not a system which would allow for investigations to be continued incognito? Is there not some system? How could these people feel comfortable to go and positively identify a police officer, especially now as there is some conception and perception as to what the police officers and what the Police Service are like now? I am not making charges against anybody, but the point is that if this complaint came up—

Dr. Rowley: Madam Speaker, on a point of clarification. I am trying to follow the Member's argument. What are the police supposed to be doing? I did not follow.

Miss H. Bhaggan: If they did not pay the fee to park to thugs and touts, the drivers would be harassed and they will be given tickets by policemen, sometimes six or seven tickets in a day. Apparently, part of the money being paid to the thugs, it was alleged, was being paid to the police officers. If they were being paid, they would interfere with those drivers who park badly. But if a driver did not pay, then he would get a couple of tickets until he decides to either follow the system leave the route or sell his maxi-taxi or something. I know who the persons are, but I would not reveal the information here for fear of these persons being placed in danger.

I wrote the Minister of National Security, because I felt if I wrote the Police Commissioner—I know letters do not reach him directly—somebody else will read the letters before they are passed to him. I know that is how an office is run—I felt by writing the Minister directly, he, not being part of the police service, will, therefore, put some sort of investigative machinery in place which will allow the matter to be looked into. All I got is a very terse reply saying I should have written to the Police Commissioner and, secondly, let the people come and identify who those persons are and then he will act. I found that to be totally undesirable. Interestingly, about two weeks ago I saw in a newspaper, that the matter had come up for public scrutiny.

Madam Speaker, I wish to suggest to this House, therefore, that corruption and abuse of power do not only start when we talk about Ministers; it is at all levels. I believe what we are looking for now is a society that is different and based on certain kinds of principles that will somehow reflect the Constitution of this country.

When the Member for Diego Martin East was speaking earlier, he said, he would like to see corruption faded out. That sounded good and we would really like to see the Government do something about it.

Now, with respect to the cheques that were mentioned by the hon. Member for Couva South concerning someone from the Airports Authority, the question is: Are there other cheques that we do not know about? The point I am making here is: if you do not have machinery which will cut down the abuse of a system, if you do not have internal checks and balances, you will always have persons

receiving moneys under false pretenses or through other means. All we are saying here is that systems should be set up which can be subject to public scrutiny so that persons will not have the kind of leeway to make deals in the name of the Government or members of the party.

Now, the Members on the other side continuously tell us: "Well, you all are irresponsible." We are doing our job as an Opposition. Unless the system changes, we will have to continue to be the watchdogs of this country, of this House. That is the role of the Opposition.

Madam Speaker, this Government mentioned in the early days, when I believe the Member for St. Augustine spoke about national government, the hon. Member for San Fernando East said, "Well look, we were elected to rule, the system permitted that". So if the system is that you ought to have a Government and an Opposition, well we are going according to the system. This is the point we want to make. So when we are now doing our job, as is provided under the system, we are being irresponsible.

For instance, the hon. Member for San Fernando East has said he is going to take off his gloves. In other words, this House is going to become a boxing ring. [*Interruption*] He implied it. It means that if I do not behave, too, he is going to take off his gloves. I want to assure the hon. Member that he can take off his gloves or anything else. [*Laughter*] I do not believe that was a very responsible statement. We are supposed to be irresponsible, but a Prime Minister says this and I do not believe that is responsible.

Also, when the Prime Minister spoke about "equitable does not mean equal". We can discuss this at some other time. I want to say to the Prime Minister, I was disappointed in a Prime Minister of a country who could stand in public and say, "equitable does not mean equal. He can also say, "Well, if you riot, you get more resources". That is what the Prime Minister implied. Is that being responsible?

Mr. Manning: Just for the record, Madam Speaker, the hon. Member for Chaguanas is wrong on both counts. The statement was "equitable does not necessarily mean equal?"

Miss H. Bhaggan: Another statement that was made by the hon. Prime Minister just after he was elected, was that he might float the dollar. Is that being responsible? The point I am making here is when we are doing our job on this side, we are being irresponsible, but when the leader of our country, holding one

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of the highest offices, talks about decorum in public life, he now comes and says and does things like this. What are we supposed to do?

Madam Speaker: The speaking time of the Member has expired.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Miss H. Bhaggan: Madam Speaker, I usually enjoy—

Mr. Valley: Madam Speaker—

Madam Speaker: What are you rising on?

Mr. Valley: Simply to clarify a point—

Madam Speaker: Point of clarification.

Mr. Valley: With respect to floating the dollar. I think in this environment we can clear that.

Madam Speaker, last year when the Prime Minister made that statement it was against the background of the manifesto—[*Interruption*]—I would refer the Member to page 8 of the manifesto where, under "foreign exchange" it says that:

"The PNM's ultimate aim is to liberalize exchange control."

And it continues.

Miss H. Bhaggan: It is a bit too late for me to reply to that. Basically, when you look at the various documents being published by the Central Bank, you will see as a result of that statement there was a drain on foreign exchange in this country.

Madam Speaker, I usually enjoy, for what it is worth, the presentations of the Member for Diego Martin West, he livens things up a bit. But I was disappointed that he did not really reply to the charges made by the hon. Member for Couva North. I would like him to tell us what really happened on the O'Halloran issue.

Dr. Rowley: Me? I was in school.

Miss H. Bhaggan: What I would have liked him to tell us is how he got to do what he did. I was hoping that the Member could have told us what loopholes there were in the system which would allow this abomination. Because I feel that

in responding, what the hon. Member should have done is point out the loopholes in the system, because here we are not making allegations, this is something that happened. So tell us what the loopholes are in the system and what they have done so far to ensure that those loopholes no longer exist.

Dr. Rowley: Madam Speaker, I rise to express for the benefit of my colleague on the other side that I, too, have the same questions to ask. I was hoping to ask them of my friend from Caroni East, who seemed to share a lot of time and place with Mr. O'Halloran, but he is not here today so I am in the same position. I am sorry I am not in a position to assist her with that matter.

Miss H. Bhaggan: In replying, I think that is a rather weak argument, basically. The Member for Diego Martin Central said as part of this accountability thing we are now going to have private auditors involved so that after three months, books can be open to public scrutiny. That sounds good. But I was reading an article recently where there is now a big competition among auditors and accounting firms to be able to get the contracts for these various companies. That is good, except that I was told that in the competitive spirit, some of them now are submitting proposals which are not exactly the kind of proposals you would want to get, because they are cutting corners to be able to become competitive.

Now, instead of having these private firms taking on this responsibility or bidding for it why could you not just equip the Auditor General's Department with the facilities, the staffing and all the resources required to ensure that the audit capacity of the Government is properly done?

Mr. Valley: Madam Speaker, private auditors have been auditing firms in the private sector for years now. There has been competition there. If there is competition for firms in the public sector, all that is going to do is to ensure that the firm gets better service.

Obviously, it is a contradiction in terms for one to say there is competition and the other one to say that one is doing that so that one's friends can get work.
[Interruption]

Miss H. Bhaggan: We hold the position that the Auditor General's Department ought to be properly equipped to deal with public affairs, Madam Speaker. Even if the Auditor General's Department decides to sub-contract or to hire a firm, that is great, but they must be subject to the scrutiny of the Auditor General's Department.

Mr. Manning: Madam Speaker, I am sorry, I did not want to intervene, but I want to advise hon. Members, that the firms are still subject to the Auditor General. In fact, the Auditor General reserves the right to go there at the Auditor General's instance to audit any one of the firms of the state sector.

Miss Bhaggan: Madam Speaker, it is not the same thing, because if the Auditor General's Department is under-staffed and ill-equipped to do the job in the first place, how would they then, therefore, select any company to go in there and check back some auditor's reports?

Mr. Valley: Madam Speaker, I would just remind this House that the Opposition has been complaining that PAC gets accounts 10 years late. One has gone this way to ensure that accounts are done on time, are audited on time, so that the PAC can, in fact, function efficiently.

Miss Bhaggan: But why not strengthen the Auditor General's Department? That is our position.

The hon. Member for Diego Martin East a while ago—I am not defending anybody here—mentioned about vouchers and costings and things going to the Fraud Squad. That is great, we want to commend him on that. But, according to the reports of the Auditor General, I have here some figures: Frauds, thefts, losses and other irregularities involving the various years to do with Government activity?

- For 1979, for over \$1,000 each, this is where frauds, thefts and so on were conducted, the value of \$100,056;
- 1980, \$177,662;
- 1981, \$327,998; and
- 1982, \$2,971,000.

When you add that all up, Madam Speaker, for expenses over \$1,000, you have \$3.5 million. With respect to over \$5,000 each, you had \$2,267,000, making a total, therefore, for frauds, thefts, losses and other irregularities of \$5.8 million for these years. In terms of vouchers not submitted for audit—I should mention that these are years under which this Government and, at least, the old PNM was there. In fact, I would say it is the same PNM now.

Madam Speaker, vouchers not submitted for audit, from 1979 to 1986, you had \$170,386,000 worth of vouchers not submitted for audit. The Member for

Diego Martin East is still in this House speaking about tyres for \$26,000; that is great, and bus passes. This is millions, hundreds of millions of dollars. I hope that the hon. Minister will see fit to ensure that the vouchers which were not presented for audit will somehow find themselves into the Auditor General's Department.

Madam Speaker, the point I would like to make, therefore, is that there are various areas that are open to the abuse of power. There are various areas open in terms of having corrupt acts. We are suggesting to this Government, if they say they agree to deal with corruption, that they set up the various systems and procedures and mechanisms which will ensure that the various loopholes which existed in the past are somehow closed up.

Secondly, we on this side have been asking for certain kinds of committees to be set up where we, too, could have a role to ensure that the Government conducts its business under public scrutiny. We want to mention, however, that we are not suggesting that we on this side want to run the Government from the Opposition Benches, as we are charged with from time to time. We are merely saying that this is not like 1980, this is 1992, when, within recent times, the hon. Minister of Finance, himself, has actually gone to this nation and spoken about massive retrenchment.

The Minister of Finance has also been speaking about the heavy debt burden of this country. This country, Madam Speaker, is in deep financial crisis and so the whole issue of the management of public funds becomes a top priority in this country. Because there is a link between unemployment and poverty and the mismanagement and wastage of funds. Whatever funds are being used, must be used in such a way so as to ensure the development of this country and to ensure that the lives of people are updated and improved.

Madam Speaker, we want to, therefore, call on this Government to demonstrate to this country that it believes in running a clean Government, and unless the acts that they carry on henceforth are acts which could be subject to public scrutiny, then we will continue to label them as we have been doing.

Personally, unless I see the Unemployment Relief Programme is conducted properly, that people have an equal chance to get jobs in every constituency in this country, unless we see that happen, I intend for the next year, with my colleagues, to go outside there to mobilize the forces. This is not a threat, because we have spent one year, pleading, talking to this government and nothing has happened. The Government has planned to introduce changes and we have not seen any

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changes. So either they clean up their act or they do something about the situation in this country.

Madam Speaker, in closing, I would like to suggest to this Government that we are not prepared any more to sit back and allow things to happen as in the days of Iscott, the Caroni Racing Complex and the Hall of Justice and those things. It is a different time now.

As I usually tell the Members on the other side, Madam Speaker, while they were out of office, the Berlin Wall came down and there have been many changes in the world. So with those changes, this country, too, expects changes. They are not dealing any more with people whom you can tell anything and they are going to believe you. Right now, you have a more competitive press, there are more media and press houses and it means information is going to get out. They can no longer control the press as much as they would like to and did in the past.

Secondly, there is a more informed and educated electorate. They will no longer be fooled. So, if they want to run a nation and build a society, Madam Speaker, we are suggesting to this Government, to ensure that they introduce the proper mechanisms to ensure that there is proper public accountability.

Thank you.

Mr. Jarette Narine (*Arouca North*): Madam Speaker, I thought that at this time of the afternoon—[*Laughter*]*—*that maybe all the preparation that I have done for this debate, would have served to bring some light into this Parliament, but after the Member for Chaguanas spoke and gave all the wrong information about the LID Programme of last year and the URP of this year, I thought that I would use this opportunity to lecture to her on the performance of LIDP last year and the performance that will take place with the URP in 1993.

Madam Speaker, when you are a Member of Parliament, you get many news carriers coming to you, and we are all aware of that. There is good and bad news. Most of what the hon. Member for Chaguanas has heard are things that are out in the streets. Probably 100,000 persons in Trinidad unemployed, and the LID Programme, at any given time in any fortnight, at its peak last year employed 7,000 people, so 93,000 persons outside there might have been saying different things, and it is convenient to come inside here and say some of the bad things and keep the good things of the programme to themselves in Chaguanas, although they have enjoyed a successful programme in 1992.

11.20 p.m.

The first correction that I would like to make is that in this year's budget, the Minister of Finance saw it fit to increase the budgetary allocations for the Unemployment Relief Programme by \$10 million. So that it is not \$130 million, it is \$140 million.

Miss Bhaggan: Would the Member tell me, therefore, whether the figure as announced in the Prime Minister's statement on January 4, 1993 was incorrect?

Mr. J. Narine: Maybe, you read the newspaper. I would think that the budget debate here would have been more authentic than reading a newspaper.

Miss Bhaggan: Are you saying, therefore, that the Prime Minister did not read the budget for this year? That is stated in the Prime Minister's statement. I can give you the page; I have the document right here.

Mr. J. Narine: Madam Speaker, I would not waste my time. Probably, I would send my documents to her tomorrow morning.

The Unemployment Relief Programme which is a continuation of the LID Programme from last year and, as you have heard from my hon. Minister, the Member for Diego Martin East, a most honourable man whom I would like to congratulate for giving a good account of himself today. I think he is worth an innings like what Lara did a couple of weeks ago. Registration exercises took place nationwide before the start of the LID Programme last year. We had approximately 200 registration areas all over the country. We also had a code system for each area and probably the Member for Chaguanas would like to know what was the code for the Chaguanas area. Eleven was Caroni East and 12 was Chaguanas. It was done on a computerized form at the Public Transport Service Corporation. At that time, we got approximately 35,000 persons registered and reports came in from the Member for Chaguanas and other areas in Central stating that the persons down there—probably they do not read the newspapers or listen to the radio—were not registered. So, we decided in good faith that we would have registration on an ongoing basis. The reason why we did not do that cumbersome exercise again in 1993 is that, apart from the massive exercise it takes to register, it costs the Government 50 cents per person, so going back into that would have wasted \$40,000 again this year, and that would create much employment outside there. We are thinking about that.

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We have persons this year who are now attaining the age of 17 years who were not registered last year because they were 16 years, and the criteria for employment in the programme, according to Government regulations not placed by the PNM but way back, is from 17 to 65 years. So that someone who was 16 years last year and is now becoming 17 is eligible to register at the regional office in his area.

Madam Speaker, there was no test for checkers. In this programme, we do not have checkers, we have time-keepers who go on the field and take an ID card and forge the name of the person and the number of the ID card unto a piece of paper. The computer is well programmed to take in—once you are a mason, the wages are on the computer and everything else is there and it takes about two hours to bring our pay roll out.

Miss Bhaggan: How do you, therefore, account for 300 ghosts workers in Region 1, according to the information of the Member for Diego Martin East? Also, how do you account for 80 persons being paid twice for one fortnight?

Mr. J. Narine: Madam Speaker, I am going through the questions and I will get to that eventually. Please listen and you would learn. We found that last year a number of persons in Central could not simply forge a name and a number from an ID card so when it goes down there—

Miss Bhaggan: What is 'forge'?

Mr. J. Narine: When I say 'forge', I mean copy. The situation was that we had persons even with passes in subjects from the GCE and CXC examinations doing checkers' work down there and when those names came to the computer, persons had to wait for a long period to get pay because incorrect information went into the computer and the computer rejected it. So, we had a training programme and we had a questionnaire, that was circulated with simple questions. So that we train our people on an ongoing basis. To say that we had a checkers' examination is not true.

The location of the projects. The Member for Chaguanas fully knows what happened in the Charlieville footpath job. On the first fortnight on that project the hon. Member for Chaguanas stopped two projects: one in Munroe Road and one in Charlieville. I left home 5.00 a.m. one morning, went down there and regularized it. Probably she was against some of the Members on the other side there, from the names that I saw on the list.

If she remembers quite rightly on the Munroe Road job, I indicated that we are not going to interfere with those people. We chose a foreman from the Charlieville area because they said that the foreman was from outside the four-mile radius. Okay, we regularized that. The Member for Chaguanas reported to me one week after that a NAR person from Charlieville stopped the project. They slapped up the foreman and so on. It was inconvenient to restart the project.

The information which she has there is quite true. Those were our projections for the year 1992. We simply have had letters written and well documented to have that programme removed from that area and I have the records here. The Charlieville footpath, the sum of \$11,000 was spent on labour. Altogether, \$26,000 was spent for the one-and-a-half or two fortnights. The job was transferred. It was documented to head office. So, it is not true to say that there were ghost workers there.

Miss Bhaggan: Madam Speaker, the hon. Member is misleading the House. I did not say there were ghost workers there. I merely asked for the Member to clarify what happened to the funds; which he just did.

Mr. Sobion: Come!

Mr. J. Narine: That was one of the questions which were asked. That job was transferred. The Member for Chaguanas did not know that job was going to start and when she did her registration on the same morning to get people employed on the job—

Miss Bhaggan: Would the hon. Member indicate why I insisted that residents got registered there? I did not do the registration.

Mr. J. Narine: Madam Speaker, I just wanted to find out if it was true that the Member was registering people for employment in the LID Programme.

11.30 p.m.

Miss Bhaggan: Madam Speaker, I know what the intention is, but I want to assure this House that when it comes to the LID Programme, I want to make certain things clear. What the hon. Member is doing is misleading this House. As I mentioned a while ago, when I went to that project, I admit I stopped it. *[Interruptions]* Yes, I did, simply because people from the area were not employed there, and I called upon the LID Programme to register persons in the area and I ensured that it happened, or else that programme was not going to be continued and I admit that in this House.

Mr. J. Narine: Madam Speaker, I was just thinking, as I sat here, that the reason for withdrawing the labour from the programme in Region 6 is exactly to stop the jobs this year, but I promise that they would not interrupt the programme. The productivity that we got last year, if this Government continues to work in Caroni like this for the next five years, we would have outshone every other Ministry, all the Borough Councils that they have out there, and anybody else who will work in Caroni. So have no fear, I am expecting that.

Miss Bhaggan: Expect other things, too. *[Interruptions]*

Mr. J. Narine: We appreciate that.

Mr. Maharaj: She wants you to go down to Chaguanas.

Mr. J. Narine: Madam Speaker, as indicated by the Member for Diego Martin East we met a situation at the Ministry where there was a private audit department there, PMU, or Project Management Unit. Immediately in January of last year, the hon. Minister, seeing that that was a corrupt practice, we put back the entire Audit Department into the Ministry's audit. We have a staff of 47 persons attached to that Audit Department and the Auditor III is from your constituency, I think that you know him, and they have been making regular checks on all projects in Trinidad. So that the auditors are on the projects at all times.

Madam Speaker, statements were made in the press about ghost workers. But somewhere along the line there is a misinterpretation of what was being said. As I said before, our programme has been computerized by the Public Transport Service Corporation. Checks and balances are also programmed into the computer. One of those checks is that if one works on two different job sites and the paysheet comes in for payment, or there are two different numbers attached to the same name, then the computer rejects that.

We had 80 persons who did not receive pay because of the computer rejecting that. Some people feel that they could go ahead with what was the system before, register in one area with their ID card; register in another area with their passport; and register in another area with their driving permit. So you find that the same Jones Tom or whatever his name is, if it appears twice and it goes into the computer—and we had the registration exercise way before with proper ID card numbers—if the computer finds anything wrong, it rejects it. So at one time we had 80 such persons who had to come in to the head office with their ID cards, or

some form of identification on a date set, with the person of the same name of another area, so that the Administrative Officer at head office could interview the two persons and ascertain whether they were, in fact, two different persons.

Mr. Sobion: Good system!

Mr. J. Narine: And that is how they got paid.

Mr. Allum: Accountability.

Mr. J. Narine: So these workers were not paid twice on paysheets, Madam Speaker. Another system that we have in place for that, Madam Speaker, is that there are rosters. Before the fortnight starts, there are rosters with the persons' names, their ID card numbers, and where we are using passport numbers we ask for the date of birth, so that—you know the first part of the ID card number is the date of birth—so that we have proper checks and balances.

Madam Speaker, I am not saying that we have erased all the corrupt practices in the programme, but we are trying very hard and we are getting there. Sooner or later, we will be there. I have no doubt about that. The fraudulent matters have been referred to the police. We know that the police have a lot of those matters that they are dealing with for years now.

Mr. Haniff: That is a reasonable excuse.

Mr. J. Narine: Those that we have referred to last year are still with the Fraud Squad. The Member of Parliament for Chaguanas, if she has her information right, will know that there was an incident in Region 6 and the person was fired immediately. The matter is with the Fraud Squad. They have not arrested anybody yet, but I am hoping that after their investigations this will happen.

What has happened, Madam Speaker, about foremen. One of the standing points in this Programme—and we were able to get productivity on the Programme last year—is that the technical staff looked at the persons who were the core group of workers who were working in the Programme, the foreman, mason, carpenter, and some of the times, the checkers. But those three persons, Madam Speaker, we insist that nobody sends those names to us. Let the engineer, the engineering assistant, the surveyors, the surveyor assistants, the co-ordinators, who are supposed to be technical people, choose that core group of workers. You may well find somebody walking with a trowel but he is not a mason. So we have the technical staff choosing that part of the labour.

Mr. Jurai: Would the hon. Member give way to a question. You are saying that the system is distributed equitably. Could you tell us if this is so, and if it is

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so, why the people of Laventille stormed your office last week and you had to run for cover?

Mr. J. Narine: Madam Speaker, it seems as though someone is getting sleepy inside here. I was not dealing with equitable distribution. I was talking about foremen—core groups. Probably the Member has just got up.

As far as the Schools Programme is concerned, Madam Speaker, we have Government schools in that area where we have persons working. I would say, and I am not afraid to say this, the Schools Programme was started last year as a pilot project. It worked well in certain areas, Madam Speaker, and in some areas it did not work that well. So that is why the programme has not started for 1993. The Minister and a technical team are now looking at the 1993 Programme, and once we have good organization in place, like what we have done with the LID Programme last year, we are going to start the Schools Programme, but I can assure the Member for Chaguanas that the persons who worked in the government schools were also registered in the computer.

Mr. Haniff: That looks like a PNM computer.

Mr. J. Narine: In certain cases religious bodies, the school principal, PTA—I am not saying that happened in Chaguanas, but this is how persons are selected for the Schools Programme. *[Interruptions]*

There is also an incident that the Member for Chaguanas raised about missing cheques. I have one report of a missing cheque in Region 6. The report was in the newspaper where a lady from Carapichaima—I cannot remember the name right now—who claimed that she worked and was not in receipt of her cheque. Madam Speaker, I investigated that matter personally and, in normal circumstances, both the checker and the foremen go in to the regional office at the end of the fortnight and collect those cheques. What happened that fortnight is, the matter was reported to the police in that the foreman collected the lady's cheque, but it was not delivered to her. He is claiming that he lost the cheque on his way to deliver it to her, and somebody is claiming that he went to the bank and cashed it. So the matter was reported to the police. It takes a little time for that cheque to get back to the Ministry of Finance. Until then, the police cannot ascertain whether the cheque was drawn or not; once that cheque was cashed, it must have a signature on the back of it, and they have already contacted the foreman and have him standing by so that when the cheque comes back to the Ministry of Finance, that is going to be checked.

11.40 p.m.

One other thing, Madam Speaker: The Dass Trace project, the Member for Chaguanas did get in touch with our office and faxed in something about that bridge on Dass Trace and I immediately rang her office and spoke to someone there; I do not know if she received the message. But I indicated to them that the engineers were working on the designs, and the project for Dass Trace will be started. Hasrat Road has taken that project for now because it is a continuation of a footpath. I gave her the assurance, because of my technical team informing me, that as soon as they have the designs and everything ready, we are going to do that bridge in Dass Trace. So to come here and say so, I think that probably she did not get the information.

I would just want to deal quickly with one more matter before I close. One of the problems is that recently we had a change of the regional supervisor for Region 6, in particular, which the Member of Parliament is speaking about. I can say at this present time that last year we had some problems with the regional supervisor there and we have chosen one whom the Member for Couva South has spoken about. He has a B.Sc. in Economics, a B.Sc. in Sociology, he is well rounded for the job, and he is now the regional supervisor down there. Maybe he was the Member for Couva South's opponent in the last election. But he is well qualified. He got that job based on his education and his ability to do the job—

Mr. Maharaj: Madam Speaker, I wonder if the hon. Member knows that apart from the individual who contested the general election on the PNM ticket, Mr. Lennox Rattansingh, that Andy Edwards who contested the local election is a roving foreman; Bernadette Nicholas, who contested the local election for the PNM also, is the stores keeper; Indar Parasram, who contested the local election in the Forres Park region, is also a foreman?

Mr. J. Narine: Madam Speaker, I will answer that question, but I will continue what I was saying and I will come to it. The person who was selected here and having those B.Sc. degrees and well qualified for the job, was rejected after passing the interview for Caroni (1975) Limited. On the verge of receiving his employment, ask the Member for Couva North what happened.

Madam Speaker, persons who lost the elections are also unemployed and entitled to work. I would like to ask the Member for Couva South, whether persons who win elections are entitled to work in an unemployment programme? Mr. Rajbal, Mr. Sonnylal Samlal, Mr. Sheriff Ali, all three UNC councillors are

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now working with Caroni (1975) Limited as of this year, because they went through the union to get employment and they are still working with the council. If a person loses the election and he has no employment, then he is free to register in the Unemployment Relief Programme and get work. But when you watch at three councillors from their party who are now given employment with Caroni (1975) Limited as of this year, Madam Speaker, it is very sad.

Miss Bhaggan: Would the Member give way? Is he saying that Caroni (1975) Limited is on the same criteria as LIDP? Secondly, can he verify or give to this House the exact particulars as to when these three persons were employed and from where they were recruited? Does he have any evidence of that?

Mr. J. Narine: Madam Speaker, I would not want to be too long. I would ask the Member of Parliament to go back to the Tripartite Committee Report. We debated that in Parliament, and I had letters and everything, indicating how employment is being done in Caroni (1975) Limited. It is this year they were employed.

Madam Speaker, I would like to thank you very much for giving me this opportunity to clarify matters raised here.

Mr. Cyril Rajaram (*Pointe-a-Pierre*): Madam Speaker, I am very honoured to rise in this House to speak in this debate. Let me first congratulate all the previous speakers for the very fine contribution they have made tonight, on both sides.

I have listened very attentively to all the fine remarks that have been made and I want to say that I am truly impressed by Members on both sides.

Madam Speaker, I want to state, very honestly, that this debate is a very important one, because important points were mentioned. It would be very useful if some agreement can be reached where my Government can organize some sort of committee to consider some of the points.

What I want to say is that in no part of the world you have any system of government that is perfect. What we can do is devise ways and means as we go along, and implement those good things and sooner or later we will have a system of government that is, more or less, suitable for all of us.

It is below my dignity to stand up and read anonymous letters. I do not think this is fitting for a person such as I am. However, I have in my possession, a very authentic letter that was written to me in May, 1992, but for some reason, I never

divulged the contents of this letter to anyone. The opportunity has arisen in this debate where I will divulge the contents of this letter. Let me read the letter, with your permission.

Madam Speaker: You would first have to identify the author.

Mr. C. Rajaram: Ali Hosein Mohammed. He lives at Railway Road, California. I quote:

"Railway Road,
California,

17th May, 1992.

Dear Mr. Rajaram,

I was advised by Rev. Steve Mohammed of the New Testament Church of God to contact you because he feels that you are the only person in Parliament who would not fool me. You see, Mr. Rajaram, my wife and I work for Caroni in the Cultivation Section. A few years ago we were asked to join the sugar workers co-operative at Rienzi Complex. Hundreds of sugar workers bought shares and were told that T.V., Fridge, Washers and other things would be sold to the workers at cost price.

Only about twenty workers got T.V. and Fridges and the co-operative closed down a short time after. Over eight hundred thousand dollars was collected to form the co-operative and only about Sixty thousand dollars was spent.

About 325 workers want to know what happen to the money collected. The only two Directors of the co-operative were Mr. & Mrs. Panday. We would like them to tell the members of the closed co-operative what happened to our money.

Mr. Rajaram, I would like you to tell your friends in Parliament about this scam on the poor sugar workers.

God Bless you Pastor Cyril.

I am,

Yours truly,

Ali Hosein Mohammed."

11.50 p.m.

Mr. B. Panday: Never permit them to use you like that again.

Mr. C. Rajaram: No, no. I am not used. I am above that.

Madam Speaker, this co-operative ended like the South Sea Bubble in which thousands of people lost everything they had. Many of you, if you have studied English History, would know what the South Sea Bubble was. It was a massive scam. It was a scam in which people were asked to buy shares with the hope of getting rich somewhere down in the Pacific. After a while *[Interruption]* Well, you do not know about history, you know about National Insurance.

Madam Speaker, I continue please. When I am disturbed I am filled with spiritual indignation.

Madam Speaker: Will hon. Members allow the Member to continue, please.

Mr. C. Rajaram: Madam Speaker, to pull such a scam on poor sugar workers is an unpardonable sin. Because, it is stated over and over in this House that the sugar workers are some of the lowest paid workers in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. B. Panday: Ask the Government about it.

Mr. C. Rajaram: No, this is what is said by Members on this side.

Now, you know when these people lose a little money, what heartache and suffering these people undergo. This is a fact. Because, I know in my constituency, there are hundreds of sugar workers and if one wants to know how my constituency runs, come down. In fact, I have been accused of employing more East Indians on my projects. *[Interruption]* No, not me, the co-ordinators.

Madam Speaker, when Members on that side stand up and talk about the LID Programme with its many problems, it amazes me. I come to the conclusion that these Members of Parliament are not doing their work. They are not doing what they are supposed to be doing. If one has an interest in the people, and is concerned about their welfare, at least you would have some part in seeing that those people receive employment and what not. But, when you come to this honourable House and begin to complain of all sorts of wrongdoings, then you are not doing what you are called to do.

Madam Speaker, the Member for Couva North is here and I have been asked, through the letter, what is the position with the co-operative and what has happened with the money?

Mr. B. Panday: Since May, and you are now asking?

Mr. C. Rajaram: I am now asking.

Mr. B. Panday: Why?

Mr. C. Rajaram: Because the opportunity never presented itself before.

Mr. B. Panday: But you could have asked me?

Mr. C. Rajaram: I would like you to answer now.

Madam Speaker, I have a clipping from a weekly newspaper. The *Bomb* January 22, 1993, "Cane Farmers demand \$80,000".

Mr. B. Panday: Did you pass that letter to the Police?

Mr. C. Rajaram: No. I will pass it later. Madam Speaker, this is a situation that we simply cannot overlook.

Mr. B. Panday: Pass that letter to the Police too, they would lock him up.

Mr. C. Rajaram: We would pass you to the Police just now. I have been speaking to the contractor. He is a very close friend of mine, I would mention his name in this honourable House. His name is Mr. Rajpaul and he lives at Buen Intento. He has disclosed to me and it is stated here that Pigfarm, which is headed by the hon. Member for Naparima and one Samaroo Ramsingh—

Mr. B. Panday: Do you know where the police station is? Do you want me to carry you.

Mr. C. Rajaram: I want to carry you.

Mr S. Panday: Madam Speaker, is the hon. Member aware that Inspector Benn of the Fraud Squad is investigating the matter, and that I have reported the matter to the Police?

12.00 midnight.

Mr. Rajaram: The article states, why it is the Fraud Squad was not called in.

Mr. S. Panday: I am informing the hon. Member, that he can contact the Fraud Squad and the person who is investigating the matter is Inspector Benn of the Fraud Squad.

Mr. C. Rajaram: Readers will recall that the *Bomb* first exposed that the Co-operative got a crane—

Mr. S. Panday: A crane?

Mr. C. Rajaram: Yes, a crane from a contractor at Buen Intento Estate for \$15,000 and sold it back to the same Co-op for \$93,000. The crane was bought in the name of the two officials in the Co-op. The members of the TICFA are asking if this is a skull that was perpetrated upon them. My friend—he knows, that I am a very charitable person—has indicated to us tonight that the matter is in the hands of the police. I was told by a friend who received a letter from Mr. Samaroo Ramsingh only last week—

Mr. B. Panday: Was the letter signed?

Mr. C. Rajaram: It came from overseas. The man is living in Miami. In the letter Mr. Ramsingh stated that he would like *[Interruption]* I am stating what is written here. Mr. Ramsingh is stating in the letter that he wants to come home but he is afraid to return because his life is threatened. Obviously, he would know who it is.

Mr. S. Panday: I want to indicate to this honourable House that that Member is mischievous in that Mr. Samaroo Ramsingh is residing in Trinidad, and you can find him at Rochard Douglas Road, Barrackpore, now.

Mr. C. Rajaram: I am telling you that a gentleman that I know, received a letter from Mr. Ramsingh.

Madam Speaker: This is beginning to be double hearsay now.

Mr. C. Rajaram: Madam Speaker, when Members of the Opposition come in this honourable House and bring up all kinds of spurious excuses and accusations, accusing the Government of all kinds of corrupt practices, it amazes me how some of these people can be dishonest. This is a sacred institution and when you come here, comport yourself as you ought to. Let there be decorum in whatever you do and say. Do not come here and lie.

Madam Speaker: I am afraid that is not parliamentary language.

Mr. C. Rajaram: Madam Speaker, I apologize. Do not come here and make statements. The Member for Couva North had mentioned in his contribution that he is an old warrior. I can excuse him for that. Before I conclude, as you look at the time, it is very late and many of us have to travel long distances.

Let me conclude by saying that I support the motion with the necessary amendments made by the Member for Diego Martin West. Thank you very much.

Mr. Trevor Sudama (*Oropouche*): Madam Speaker, at this stage I really was in two minds whether I should contribute to this debate or not. I sat and listened to the trivialization of what ought to have been a serious issue. I sat and listened to the vacuousness, the emptiness and the bombast coming from that windbag from Diego Martin. I would want to refer to the *Hansard* on what he said about me—but if you want that, you can go back to the *Hansard*. I sat here and I listened to the Member for San Fernando East quoting from dubious sources making accusations against the Members on the opposite side. I sat here and listened to the Member for Arouca North who is the very embodiment of trivia, and other Members who spoke on the other side. The Member for Diego Martin East.

Here we are talking about serious issues of corruption involving large sums of money, but also far deeper issues, and he comes to this House to talk about bus passes and how bus passes were not tendered out for \$12.00. This indicates to you, what the PNM, when it is faced with a serious issue—and there can be no more serious issues in this country than issues such as corruption, unemployment and crime and these are all related—and he comes here and seeks to make these issues a laughing stock, as the PNM has sought to do; something of mirth.

As I said, I was in two minds whether I should really contribute or whether I should lower my standards here. But Madam Speaker, your opinion, you know what it is worth.

12.10 a.m.

Let us return to this issue of corruption and let us start with a definition. What do we mean when we talk about corruption? [*Interruption*] You are going to get it. I want to inform this House, that it is not just an issue of the use and misuse of public office for private gain. The issue of corruption is not confined to that. Furthermore, I want to tell this House it is not merely confined to the issue of monetary or financial gain. The issue of corruption does not limit itself to any benefit which may accrue to the office holder because, as I said, you are dealing with these issues, but in a larger framework.

I say here this morning, that condoning corruption is just as sinful and guilty as in fact, actually engaging in acts of corruption. For example, if the Prime Minister sits there, and condones, and does nothing about corruption and irregularities which ought to be probed, then my contention here is that he is just as guilty as an accessory to the fact of corruption. Others on the other side, where information may have come to them, or where they sit and protect people, are just as guilty of corruption.

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Why corruption is an important issue—the matter has been referred to—and why should we be discussing it today? It has consequences for the development of the country. The matter was raised before, that there is a certain connection between corruption, the lack of savings in a country and the foreign indebtedness of that country. Therefore, if you have high levels of corruption in a society, that society cannot develop and grow. It is not only an issue of economic development because economic development is only one aspect of the development.

There is the non-availability of public resources for the use of the population. Therefore, if today, we did not have those billions of dollars which belong to the public of Trinidad and Tobago, stolen from the Treasury of Trinidad and Tobago, there would not have been a situation where there are so many unemployed persons threatening to march; threatening for their backpay; those who have been retrenched threatening to go to the streets, and that I submit is as a direct consequence of the corruption of 31 years of PNM rule.

The corruption induces a type of political culture which is tolerant of all wrongdoing. I am just trying to give the background of what I am going to say later. They may regard this as something to which they do not want to listen; something which is *passé*, but that is the attitude that has us here today, in Trinidad and Tobago in 1993, on the part of the Members for Diego Martin Central, and Diego Martin East. They ignore the issue; they think they have power. They have a mandate to rule and ignore it. They do not look at the larger consequences for the country. That has never been an objective of the PNM. The short term objective is how to win elections; how to distribute patronage; how to keep themselves in office and how to keep a certain sector of the population happy to put them back into power. That has been their vision in Trinidad and Tobago for this society for 31 years. That is why we have this problem today, because they admit that we are in a crisis.

When there are acts of corruption on the scale in which it is today, the political directorate has to spend a lot of time dealing with torturous acts of covering-up. Instead of looking at solutions to the problems of this country, they have to be engaged in cover-up which takes up a lot of time because of the fact that they condone acts of corruption. This is to the detriment of the proper administration of the country.

There is a bigger problem. It has a debilitating effect on the whole society, because it gives everybody the feeling that qualities such as merit, hard work,

discipline, integrity do not matter. What matters in the society is contact; who you know; underhand dealings; subterfuge, as we have heard allegations made against the Member for Diego Martin West. This is what is important in the society, underhand dealing and manipulation.

Mr. Valley: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, I have heard no allegation against the Member for Diego Martin West.

Mr. T. Sudama: You may not have heard allegations. I will come to that question later as to what is deemed to be the irregularities which surround his actions. *[Interruption]* Sit down. Do you want to prolong this debate? I have no problem with that. What are you on? Is it a point of order?

Mr. Valley: I want to refer the Member to Standing Order No. 36 (10). If he has to make allegations against the Minister it would have to be on a substantive motion.

Mr. T. Sudama: What? Substantive motion? This issue is a question of corruption. Probably, he did not look at the motion. I refer him to the second *Whereas*:

"And whereas governmental actions including but not limited to its actions in the handling of the Pegasus issue, the Port Authority insurance issue, the issue involving the allegations of the existence of a drug cartel....are not in the public interest."

Governmental actions include the actions of Ministers.

Madam Speaker: The Member may continue.

Mr. T. Sudama: I leave that to rest. What I am going to talk about is dealt with in the preamble to the motion.

12.20 a.m.

Madam Speaker, acts of corruption and condoning corruption undermine the rule of the law and regulations. Laws and regulations, in a society which tolerates corruption, are seen to be mere formalities. It is a very serious issue; it erodes the moral fibre of the society. The morale of Trinidad and Tobago citizens are eroded when we have the levels of corruption tolerated and no action taken, no mechanism put in place, which is also what this motion is about: To deal with corruption and deal with it in an effective way.

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So, Madam Speaker, what is involved here is the credibility of the Government itself. No government can rule without credibility and the fact that they are finding it more and more difficult to rule says that their credibility is eroding day by day. The test will come in the next few months particularly if there is a devaluation in the next few months and going through the liberalization programme and their retrenchment and so on and so forth; the test is definitely going to come.

Madam Speaker, in some countries the army intervenes when it is felt that corruption has reached a level which is no longer tolerable in society. That has happened in a number of Third World countries: The army intervenes to remove corrupt government, politicians and officials from office. We hope and trust that it does not happen in Trinidad and Tobago. But their attitude to this whole issue of corruption is one which [*Interruption*]—is inconducive to such a situation occurring.

Madam Speaker, I want to also let the other Members know that corruption is also a matter of perception. It has to do with perception on the basis of what people say and what they do. When you have a Minister of Government who says openly that he can buy a car worth half a million dollars and that he has taken no vow of poverty, then what is the signal being sent out to the average member of the population? That is the conclusion that the average man will come to, because if you have not taken a vow of poverty, you can engage in that kind and level of consumption, then, therefore, public office can be used for self-enrichment.

Madam Speaker, I just want to say a few words about the incidence of corruption. We have had much talk in this House that in order for you to talk about corruption at all, you much come here with hard, justiciable facts and so on, and if you do not have facts, but a picture emerges that is suggestive of irregularity and, in fact, if there are incidents of irregularity, that ought not to be mentioned.

So I want to tell the Government that in all instances in which people have fought and raised the issues of corruption, there has been some evidence which savours of irregularity. It is irresponsibility on the part of the people in power not to investigate. That is what we are asking for in this motion, to set up machinery for investigation.

Madam Speaker, one of the real problems in dealing with this issue of corruption, as we mentioned already, is the fear of victimization. Corruption and

corrupt acts are generally instigated by those who have power and authority and control over information. We hear talk that these matters should be referred to the Police Service for action and so on. That is all in the final part of the process. Before you reach that question of referring something to the police, there must be a process of investigation perhaps by the police. Before it reaches the knowledge of the police you must have some measure of investigation and, therefore, it is important that we aspire to a system of open government, transparency in decision-making through the various systems and mechanisms that have been set up and very importantly, Madam Speaker, parliamentary and constitutional reform.

The Prime Minister said if we have a parliamentary committee, who will investigate? We have been elected here to the highest office in the land, to the highest Chamber in the land. Surely this House has a responsibility to investigate. Has he ever heard about the Senate investigation hearings in the United States, where Senators with appropriate staff, investigate all political issues in which there seem to be questions of corruption, including the impeachment of the President?

They do not want to change the system. This system which encourages the suppression of information, they want to continue with this. This is one of the reasons why we have come up with this debate.

Madam Speaker, I want to come to this point now about how questions of corruption are brought to the fore. Who has the authority to go and investigate, Madam Speaker? You see, if there is a certain scenario which is developing, then I want to warn Government that they should take heed of it and, secondly, I want to say that what is happening with the PNM is re-emergence of a context, a scenario which existed prior to 1986.

When we are talking about corruption, Madam Speaker, you are not talking about an abstraction. People are corrupt. They may have opportunities for corruption, but people are corrupt who avail themselves of those opportunities.

Madam Speaker, this is not the first time that this issue has arisen, the question of corruption. I want to go back a little in the *Hansard* reports. I want to quote what has happened up to 1986 and up to today no action has been taken with respect to reports of corruption and irregularities in which a senior bureaucrat was involved. What is happening today is that that bureaucrat is re-emerging as a czar in this country.

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That person, Madam Speaker, whose name was in the press, who was seen to be a man who controlled and manipulated our companies in the energy sector, a man who was at one time said to be the richest man in Trinidad and Tobago, czar of all Point Lisas, a man who was a close confidant of the late Prime Minister, Dr. Eric Williams; a man who is a confidant, I understand he had a close relationship with the present Prime Minister, and this person is re-emerging in Trinidad and Tobago. I am told, Madam Speaker, that no decision can be taken in the energy and energy related industries without the approval of this person. He looms as a large and towering figure over decision-making in these companies. Nothing can be initiated, no decision can be implemented without his approval. Whether it is oil, gas or a methanol company, energy and energy-related industries, he is re-emerging as a man of enormous power in this country and a man who has in the past been associated with corruption and corrupt activities in Trinidad and Tobago.

Madam Speaker, I would like to quote and in doing this, I want this House to understand what has happened, to understand the circumstances when people wield too much power, when they are not accountable, and that is one of the bases for corruption.

Madam Speaker, I quote from the *Hansard* of Friday, March 18, 1983 and this was a debate on the Sam P. Wallace issue. I want to quote from the former Member for Couva South, who had a great facility for unearthing this kind of information, which, of course, is asking the Government to investigate and which they never did and which turned out to be true. He says, Madam Speaker:

“I want to dwell for a few minutes on the whole question of the institution to deal with the question of corruption, because what is happening today with Sam P. Wallace may very well be a very minute aspect of corruption in this country.”

Now, in that case, you remember, Madam Speaker that a bribe of \$3.6 million was offered to two officials, the two officials were later identified as O’Halloran and Prevatt. That is documented. When you give too much power without having the necessary controls you are encouraging people to be corrupt. Mr. Julian will fix everything, so they put him on ten boards of directors. One man. Therefore, they provide the opportunity of corruption.

Mr. Valley: Madam Speaker, just for my own edification, could the Member kindly indicate who he is quoting?

Madam Speaker: The former Member for Couva South.

Mr. T. Sudama: I am quoting from the *Hansard* of Friday, March 18, 1983, the former Member for Couva South. I am trying to tell this House—and he is correct in what he is talking about—lack of control, lack of accountability and giving people too much power.

Madam Speaker, I want to also tell you how this gentleman who is currently enjoying enormous power under the present PNM—and they say this is the new PNM—how he defied Ministers. I want to make another quotation here from the *Hansard* of Thursday, June 23, 1983 and here again I quote the former Member for Couva South:

“The hon. Minister informed the delegation that last week, in response to similar complaints, he had dispatched a letter to the Chairman of the Pt. Lisas Development Company, Mr. Kenneth Julien, outlining the hazards the fishermen were facing but so far had received no reply.

“Kenneth Julien simply decided to abandon a fishing complex in Trinidad and Tobago provided with taxpayers’ money by the Ministry of Agriculture and he has not got the decency to reply to the Minister of Agriculture, Deputy Prime Minister and longest serving parliamentarian in Trinidad and Tobago. And the Prime Minister and the Minister of State Enterprises will not even render the courtesies to tell Kenneth Julien that he should reply to the Member for Barataria.”

He goes on.

“You see, this Government builds up certain individuals into Frankensteins.”

You have the O’Hallorans over whom they had no control. These people wield more power than Government Ministers. One of them is Ken Julien.

Madam Speaker, it is amazing what this Ken Julien was accused of doing, what the allegations against him were. According to the Member for Couva South:

“You give ESTANE Corporation the contract to build the houses in Couva South, which you are after. ESTANE Corporation was brought into this country under very suspicious terms.”

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ESTANE Corporation, Madam Speaker, we are told, was brought into this country by one Kenneth Julien in order to build houses at Point Lisas. He was at the time the Chairman of Plipdeco. I want to read this out to the House:

“I have filed the question: Who are the members of the board of directors of that company? In what country is that company registered? They have no track record. That is the personal property of a senior Government bureaucrat that brought that company into Trinidad, ESTANE Corporation, so that they can channel money into the pockets of certain individuals. That very company is building a house for Dr. Kenneth Julien, in Toco. The very material used in the house at the Couva housing project, the very system is being used to build Dr. Julien’s Y house which is described as having cost \$250,000.

Dr. Julien was part of the organization that granted the contract to ESTANE Corporation.”

Now, I want to ask the question: Is or is not Kenneth Julien involved with the present PNM Government? We have a background of the man. We have certain allegations made which were never connected by the then Government. This was a man who was involved, his fingers were in every pie in Trinidad and Tobago in the energy sector, involved with the construction of Iscott, involved as chairman of T&TEC with the purchase of turbines, involved with the setting up of the National Energy Corporation and that is a very interesting one.

The National Energy Corporation, Madam Speaker, where he even emasculated the then Minister of Energy, the Member for San Fernando East. Here is what the functions of the National Energy Corporation were in those days. I quote again from the *Hansard*. This is a debate of November 9, 1984. This is Prof. Julien speaking, and you will realize the enormous power of the man. What these functions were can best be described in the words of Prof. Julien in NEC’s annual report for 1980:

“The role of National Energy Corporation is to guide the development and management of oil, gas and other mineral resources of Trinidad and Tobago.”

The hon. Member for San Fernando East has been humiliated. When you give that function to a National Energy Corporation, what is being said about the Minister? Either he is incompetent, he has no capacity to deal with the development and management of oil and gas and other mineral resources in this country.

He has been told, "I have taken away your functions", because the former Minister of Energy will tell you that he himself made those statements in this House some time ago when he was trying to tell the country what the role of the Ministry is. The role of the National Energy Corporation is to guide the development and management of oil, gas and other mineral resources of Trinidad and Tobago. This is the best we can say of the role of the Ministry of Energy in a country like this? Prof. Julien has taken away that role. A lot of corruption and corrupt activities were done under the aegis of the National Energy Corporation.

Today, Madam Speaker, I want to inform this Parliament, the Member for Tobago East spoke about entrepreneurs in the public sector, where you have one in the form of Prof. Kenneth Julien, an entrepreneur in the public sector. Madam Speaker, there must be a connection; it is not accidental. Prof. Julien, under the present PNM Government, who knew his background, from prior to 1986, the member for San Fernando East and a Member of Cabinet, why have they brought back Julien in 1992 and put him to head the National Gas Company? We are told now that the energy of the future is natural gas. That is the energy source for the future. Why have they done that? Except they want to perpetuate the production which was there and which existed prior to 1986 and we are talking about millions and millions of dollars.

Madam Speaker, I want to ask the Government, because the issue of the divestment of Fertrin and the Urea Company has come up. They are telling us that they have set up all sorts of evaluation committees and whatever they have set up, I do not know, to look into the question of divestment. My information is that Kenneth Julien is backing an American company called Transamonia to purchase the shares of Urea and Fertrin.

I think First Boston was hired as consultants in this matter. I understand there is a divestment division in the Ministry of Finance. I want to find out whether all this is a formality and that the arrangement for the purchase of the shares in Fertrin and Urea has already been made and the key figure in that negotiation is none other than the friend and confidant of the Member for San Fernando East, a certain Prof. Ken Julien. I ask this question.

Mr. Valley: Madam Speaker, let me answer the Member for Oropouche an unqualified no, that is untrue. Julien has nothing to do with the divestment unit and I will say that in addition to the technical committee at First Boston and so on,

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that one has to remember that AMOCO, which is a 49 percent shareholder in Fertrin is also sitting at the table.

The only way they go—I do not know if there is a bid on Transamonia. The only way Transamonia would be the preferred purchaser is if Transamonia comes in with the highest bid.

Mr. T. Sudama: Madam Speaker, I have heard this all before. It happened in the Pegasus deal, we heard about how bids are being manipulated.

Madam Speaker, so that getting a response from the Minister does not put the matter to rest. That is why we need to have some sort of overview in this very critical question of divestment of state enterprises and those who are involved.

Mr. Valley: Madam Speaker, I have stated earlier that a report would be laid in this House which would include all the bids that were submitted. That would be done as soon as that information is available, Madam Speaker.

Mr. T. Sudama: Madam Speaker, let me just carry on to make the connection between pre-1986 and what is happening currently in the energy and energy-related industries and how one man's name seems to be coming up with rather unusual regularity.

Madam Speaker, we have a draft energy policy for Trinidad and Tobago. I turn to—I think it is page 18 in volume II, and I want to read. This is merely something in draft form:

“A policy must be enunciated with regard to a new pricing regime whereby the Commission would secure more financing, while at the same time some demand-side conservation would be secured.

This policy must also address possible alternatives for electricity generation, including possible cheaper fuel alternative to natural gas as well as the importation of electricity from cheaper external sources. Possible alternative for electricity generation and possible alternative for arrangement.”

Madam Speaker, it goes on further to say that we want to separate the question of separating the generation function from the distribution function.

Now, this is merely a draft. It is a draft which is in the knowledge of the Prime Minister and so on. It was last year—I think it was earlier than October last year when a report appeared that Prof. Ken Julien was in the United States, putting out an application, inviting people to install an electricity-generating plant. This

appeared in the *Daily Mirror*. Here you have a man who has had a pre-1986 record of being put in a key position, I understand the Prime Minister does very little in the energy sector, without taking his advice, going out there, taking initiatives on policies which are just in a draft state. Who is running this country and what are Prof. Ken Julien's connections?

12.50 a.m.

Madam Speaker, I want to ask the Members opposite if Prof. Julien has gone out there and asked for invitations to install a generating plant in Trinidad and Tobago, and on whose authority has he done so? Has the Government made such a decision, to separate the generating from the transmission and distribution function?

Finally, I want to talk about NUCOR. It is not by accident that NUCOR has entered into an arrangement with the National Gas Company to be sold natural gas at 70 cents per thousand cubic metres when the National Gas Company is buying gas from Amoco at 90 cents. The Chairman of the National Gas Company happens to be Prof. Ken Julien. The sum of \$100,000 has been given to the University of the West Indies for a project with which Prof. Ken Julien is associated.

There are other things I want to ask about the NUCOR investment. Obviously, the Government and the Prime Minister have not been telling us the whole truth. Obviously, it seems that there are implications for corruption in this NUCOR investment. You are subsidizing gas for them at 20 cents; putting them in the EPZ where they have to pay virtually no taxes—neither import taxes nor corporation taxes and whatever—and they are getting your utility services at subsidized rates. In the end, they are going to create 30 or 35 jobs in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Manning: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. Member for giving way. I just want to state for the purposes of the record: The pricing structure for natural gas to be sold to the NUCOR plant is a two-tiered pricing structure where there is a base price, on the one hand, plus an investment by the National Gas Company in the plant itself whereby the National Gas Company will share up to 25 per cent of the profits of the plant—a very favourable arrangement for Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Maharaj: They could never make profits.

Mr. T. Sudama: Madam Speaker, if you want to have credibility, let us look at the agreement with NUCOR, because what is critical as to whether NUCOR

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makes profit or not, is the pricing arrangement, the prices at which they will transfer their products to the parent company. What are their transfer prices? If the transfer prices are going to be made at cost, then the company would show no profit from now until kingdom come. It is only when you look at the transfer pricing arrangement then you would be in a position to find out whether there is a possibility of NUCOR making profits and whether the Government will eventually share in those profits.

We do not know the details of the contract and, given all that has gone on, we cannot take the word of the Government that, in fact, no sweetheart arrangement has not been made, no deal has not been struck from which some people benefit. Given the history of Prof. Ken Julien, I am sure that he is the one, probably, who has been overseeing these arrangements and with the full knowledge and concurrence of the Member for San Fernando East. You see the reason why we need a monitoring mechanism of the Parliament? So that these issues which involve the national patrimony of Trinidad and Tobago will come under its scrutiny and where there are allegations of irregularity these would be investigated. That cannot be done by the police. That is not a question for the police; that is a question for parliamentary scrutiny.

I also want to raise the issue of ENRON. There is much secrecy about ENRON and much talk about ENRON coming here and having access to a very large sector of our natural gas reserves. On what terms, precisely, Madam Speaker? One report is—and I find this very difficult to accept—that ENRON will produce natural gas from one of the fields at \$4.00, or so, per 1000 cubic feet. If that is the case, at what price are they going to sell that gas to the National Gas Company? What is the current arrangement? Why is this being entered into when some people feel it is not a viable proposition? Who has benefited, and in what way? Except we have these things investigated, the matter will remain one in which you would never know the truth—there will be much speculation—and people will come to the conclusion that corruption and corrupt activities are involved. Madam Speaker, you understand the emphasis that we are putting on this matter.

There had been fraud involving, according to a newspaper report, anything like \$20 million at Trintoc's Material Division last year. Up to now, we do not know what is the situation with that; why we have not had a full airing of that matter; whether anybody has been indicted for fraudulence; whether, in fact, Members of the present regime or sympathetic to the present regime are involved.

This is one of the reasons why we are hearing nothing about that massive fraud at Trintoc's Material Division in Pointe-a-Pierre.

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. T. Sudama: Madam Speaker, all I will do is ask a number of questions before I conclude. We have heard much talk here about Mr. Prevatt, former Chairman of the PNM. Mr. Prevatt hurriedly left Trinidad and Tobago in early 1987. He did not return to this country until the PNM got back into power. Now, if Mr. Prevatt who loves this country—he said he longed to be back home among his friends and relations—only returned here in December, 1992 after the PNM regime returned to power, I want to ask the question: Why did he come? What assurances were given that when he came to Trinidad and Tobago—

Mr. Maharaj: That he will not be arrested.

1.00 a.m.

Mr. Sudama: —that he would not be interrogated on his dealings of the past?

I am convinced that those assurances must have been given by members of the present regime, that when he comes back here, there is nothing on him, and that he could come and go as freely as he liked.

There is another person within the legal profession whose name, if I am not mistaken, was Pamela Moore. It appeared in the press. She was said to be involved with funds fraudulently taken as a loan from the National Insurance Board. This person I understand, is sympathetic to the present regime, left the country. She returns to and leaves this country and nobody seems to want to ask her about this issue with respect to fraudulent dealings with the National Insurance Board. Is that condoning corruption, or not? That is what I said earlier on. Anybody who condones corrupt activity is just as guilty as those who are actually carrying out acts of corruption. So that the PNM regime has a few things to answer. [*Interruption*] I will come to that.

I also want to find out, Madam Speaker, about the association of the present chairman of the PNM with Prof. Ken Julien, and their connections with Trintoplan. Now a long statement was made in this House, where the present Chairman said

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that he has no cocoa in the sun, so to speak, he has nothing to hide and so on. But these are not the reports that we get and that is why we would like these matters to be investigated. Madam Speaker, my information is, and it is very curious, that the co-ordinator of the inter-ministerial committee is none other than the present Chairman of the PNM, the inter-ministerial committee that is looking into the airports project. I am told from a newspaper report that the Chairman goes to the United States with the Minister of Finance, ostensibly to an IMF meeting. I do not know what is his role in an IMF meeting, but I understand that from there he made his way to Houston, Texas, from where the originators of the Pegasus project come. Is that accidental, Madam Speaker? I am told, Madam Speaker, that what ought to be investigated was when the present Chairman was the Managing Director of Trintoplan, he was at the same time Chairman of CARIRI. There were certain transactions between Trintoplan and CARIRI involving the sale of surplus Trintoplan materials. What we would like to find out is, at what price were those materials transferred, having been surplus and used materials, and so on. The question of a transaction virtually from "himself to himself", the beneficiary being Trintoplan of which he was the Managing Director and associate of Prof. Ken Julien.

You see, Madam Speaker, it has to do with creating a picture which shows that, perhaps, not all is well in the state of Denmark. You see these characters coming out of the woodwork again under the present PNM. We have heard of their past history, their past actions, and so on, and they are coming out again. What is the population to glean from this? Is the present PNM following in the same steps, the same track, as the former PNM? I believe, Madam Speaker, that many people in this country have come to the conclusion that they are.

If we had proper machinery to investigate, I am convinced—we do not have that because it took the former government a lot of money going and tracing activities in different parts of the world, forensic experts and so on, to come up with some kind of evidence with respect to the O'Halloran affair—that if we had those resources and we traced the doings of some of the people who are sympathetic to the PNM, or who now hold high office in the PNM, we would come up with similar evidence, but we do not have those resources. Madam Speaker, not until, of course, we get into Government, will we have those kinds of resources to investigate the goings-on of certain senior officials and bureaucrats in that PNM regime.

Mr. Bereaux: When is that?

Mr. Jurai: Next election.

Mr. T. Sudama: Madam Speaker, we have been told that we cannot get the transcript of the Pegasus enquiry. We ask the question: Why? If you had public hearings into that, then those transcripts would have been public knowledge. What is it that the Government has to fear?

Dr. Rowley: Ask your lawyer friend.

Mr. T. Sudama: Let me just ask a few questions on this Airports Authority enquiry. We would like to get some direct answers. Were there, or were there not, two reports submitted to the Prime Minister? Was there an original report to which he referred? [*Interruptions*]

Madam Speaker: Would the hon. Member proceed, please.

Mr. T. Sudama: Madam Speaker, very briefly, what was the difference between the first report presented to him and the second one? The first one that he sent back for correction and the second one. What was the difference? Secondly, Madam Speaker, I would like to know why the name of Steve Castagne keeps coming up, and it is associated with the Minister of Works, the Member for Diego Martin East.

Dr. Rowley: In what way?

Mr. T. Sudama: Instructions passing down to the Airports Authority have to go through Steve Castagne. He speaks personally to Steve Castagne to pass instructions to the Airports Authority. Why? Secondly, it is the same Steve Castagne, whom we are told, the allegation is, that the Minister—

Madam Speaker: Hon. Member for Nariva, I do not think reading newspapers is permitted while proceedings of the House are in progress.

Mr. Jurai: I was referring to the article being mentioned.

Madam Speaker: I know we lapse sometimes.

Mr. Sobion: Yes, Madam Speaker, there is an article on the question of corruption which is relevant.

Mr. T. Sudama: Madam Speaker, there is a statement in this report by Justice Collymore which states that "I would point out that the decision in this matter rests solely with the Authority" If that is the case, if the decision with respect to the award of a contract to the developers of the Piarco project rests

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solely with the Airports Authority, what was the point of the Minister giving directions to the Airports Authority? Why did he get involved?

1.10 a.m.

Why was it necessary for him to tell the Airports Authority that Ministers did not want to get involved. He told the Airports Authority that Ministers did not want to get involved in this. Why did he have to say that? This report says that the Airports Authority is the sole body to decide on the bidders for the project. Why did the Minister have to get involved? Furthermore, why did he have to say that he did not want any rankings? Was this for the purpose of manipulating? Why did he have to say this? There was no need to say that he did not want ranking. Or was it the intention to manipulate? So that whatever recommendations were put then, he and his ministerial committee could have made the final determination as to who got the award.

Madam Speaker, when you consider this proposal, the structure of finances, the fact that there really was no proposal, the fact that you have one man with a million shares of one cent each; when you look at the whole background of this, if this is not irregular—and this report of the investigator, leaves so many questions unanswered, that it is amazing that the Government feels that there should be no further investigation in this matter. It is quite amazing.

Not only have they felt so, but on the basis of this report which we consider to be highly inadequate, contradictory and raises so many questions which have not been answered, they move ahead and they put a big newspaper advertisement. The first thing I want to know is, who is paying for this? I presume it is the Airports Authority. They put this advertisement day after day, in three or four newspapers, taking a full page. What is the cost of this?

If there was no irregularity, if he felt he was satisfied with this report, which he says absolves the procedures adopted and people concerned, and so on, if he says this is the truth, what is the reason for this and what credibility can be put to this? I want to quote from this:

"The Developer selected has offered the greatest returns to the Airports Authority of Trinidad and Tobago.

The potential return in terms of net present value to the Airports Authority with Pegasus is best by U.S. \$95.46 million."

Who says so? Could we have a review of this?

"Inherent in the Pegasus proposal is a saving in the buy-out of shares of U.S. \$21.00 million, since their shares revert to Airports Authority for one dollar as opposed to market value at the end of the agreement in fifteen (15) years."

This is a company that could not even put up \$10,000 in share capital, but we are relying on them and whoever is negotiating this, for all these benefits.

"Moreover, the capital cost of the project with Pegasus is lowest by U.S. \$6.50 million."

Madam Speaker, this has little or no credibility among the population. Obviously, somebody is trying a PR job.

Mr. Imbert: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. The Member is misleading the House. I believe I informed this honourable House that the people are investing US \$75 million.

Mr. Sudama: Have you looked at this report?

"Negotiations for a Heads of Agreement with Pegasus Associates Inc. will commence shortly."

By whom? By Donna Prowell? I understand there is a report in one of the newspapers that she has flown to initiate negotiations. The same Donna Prowell who is the recipient of a cheque for \$12,500. What credibility the Members of the Government think they really have in this country, when they act in this way and when they refuse to provide further information; when they refuse to give this House the undertaking that we would set up parliamentary scrutiny to look into these allegations, and so on? They have no credibility in this country.

Madam Speaker, this whole question of how the Mt. Hope Medical Sciences Complex awards contracts is something that needs thorough investigation. Furthermore, the Mt. Hope Medical Sciences Complex, I understand, is purchasing hospital equipment for health institutions other than the Mt. Hope Medical Sciences Complex. Now they are exempt from the procedures of the Central Tenders Board. Any equipment purchased for the Mt. Hope Medical Sciences Complex is exempt, but not the other public institutions in Trinidad and Tobago. What Mt. Hope is doing, is purchasing material on behalf of these other health institutions, contrary to the legal provisions of the Central Tenders Board. Is that an act of condoning corruption? The activities of the Chief Executive

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Officer of the Mt. Hope Medical Sciences Complex and the activities in running that institution, especially with respect to the award of contracts, ought to be investigated.

I understand that a contract for the maintenance of the Mt. Hope Medical Sciences Complex has been awarded to a firm. I further understand that one of the co-owners of that firm—shareholders—has been accused of kidnapping people and has been arrested and so charged. Yet that firm is involved with the maintenance of the Mt. Hope Medical Sciences Complex, which involves questions of security.

Madam Speaker: Would you wind up? You have two minutes.

Mr. T. Sudama: I do not know if the Minister of Health could look into that question. I wanted to ask about the increased allocation to Solid Waste Management, the question of land-fill in the North and the South, and whether such is being done and who is the contractor involved.

Finally, as I said, this whole issue of the published relationship—or referred to in the press—between the Member for Diego Martin East, there seems to be a connection. Let me just lay that connection ground: Award of contract for a gym. Design and supply of equipment to a firm in which Steve Castagne has an interest. That involves the Ministry of Works, of which the Minister of Works is head.

The Port Authority: Award of an insurance contract to the Port Authority under the Ministry of Works to a firm in which Steve Castagne is the Chairman. Steve Castagne, deputy chairman of the Airports Authority, through whom the Minister of Works communicated.

We read a letter here where an insurance brokerage was taken away from M&M and given to another firm. How did he get that letter, if he had no close relationship with M&M, of which Steve Castagne is the director?

Madam Speaker, I have a letter and I want to quote this letter. This is not an anonymous letter.

1.20 a.m.

This has been written by an insurance consultant and was addressed to David Lee Aping, Chairman, Board of Governors, Academy of Insurance c/o Trinidad and Tobago Insurance Limited, Maraval Road. Here what this letter says:

"I refer to the matter . . ."

Dr. Rowley: Who is the author?

Mr. T. Sudama: He is an insurance consultant, and he is, the founding principal of the Academy of Assurance, Bertrand Doyle. Here what he says:

"I hereby tender my resignation as a member of the Board of Governors of the Academy of Insurance with immediate effect."

It further goes on to say:

"I refer to the matters of the unauthorized printing of the Academy's certificates and the distribution of these certificates to the participants in private classes conducted by M&M Insurance Services Limited of which Steve Castagne is Chairman.

Madam Speaker, when one puts all this together, a certain picture emerges and that picture savours of irregularity, and, possibly, corruption. What we are saying in this House is simply, let us in the interest of Trinidad and Tobago set up mechanisms to minimize this and let us give a little more confidence to the people in the streets that we are doing our work in this Parliament and that politicians do have some credibility in seeking the public's interest. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Hedwige Bereaux (*La Brea*): Madam Speaker, I rise to make my contribution in this debate with some trepidation. Not because I follow the Member for Oropouche, and his litany of questions, but moreso because of certain statements which I heard earlier with respect to matters which were read out. I had not been privy to the Drug Report before, but I am very concerned about making comments here when I hear about guns and so on. Because on a previous occasion when I had an altercation here with certain Members, I was warned when I was leaving; then two days later I almost died in a car crash. So, I do not know what the situation is.

Madam Speaker, such are the hazards of the job which I have undertaken to do. Like all Members who have spoken before me, I want to register my serious concern with respect to the question of integrity, honesty in public affairs and the general concern about the manner in which business is carried on; and I realize that this question of corruption does have a debilitating effect on the community and on the country. And that we, as a people, must do something about it.

I recall very clearly in the 1986 elections when a particular employee of the company for which I worked, somebody whom I had assisted, both financially and

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otherwise, looked at me and said "Mr. Béréaux, yuh is a PNM candidate, I ha' to watch yuh, yuh crooked." I was very upset about it because I am an honest man and that person had no reason for telling me that. It is the whole question of this bogey of corruption that has dogged the PNM for years. I have always said that anytime you find anybody corrupt, get rid of them, lock them up, do them anything you want, and I will support you.

One of the reasons why, today, in this Parliament, I will stand to speak on this motion and to support the —*[Interruption]* Shut up—and to support the present Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago is that I recall not so long ago, right after the local government elections, at a legislative group meeting of the PNM, the Prime Minister, and political leader of the PNM, read this integrity statement on page 45:

"The PNM reaffirms its commitment to integrity in public life and to this end proposes a review of the integrity legislation..."

and he went on also to speak generally about integrity in public affairs. He made the one caustic statement which I remember, and which I believe "we are building a large jail in Golden Grove; it cost much money and it has place for all the PNM who intend to be corrupt".

I say this and I say it without any fear of contradiction, that I know that is the step *[Interruption]* Why do you not shut up and think about the NIB and Paramount...Madam Speaker, why am I being obstructed by the Member for Nariva.

Mr. Jurai: What are you accusing me of?

Mr. H. Béréaux: The Member for Nariva is a man who produced a false certificate to get a job at the NIB. I was a director of the NIB. Do you want to answer?

Mr. Jurai: Madam Speaker, I object to that.

Madam Speaker: May I ask hon. Members to take heed of Standing Order 33 and to note when one can interrupt—the question of elucidating a point. But when you intend to keep interrupting Members, this is why you have a lot of bitterness and harsh words being exchanged. Will the Member withdraw what you have said about. . .

Mr. H. Bereaux: No, I will not withdraw it, Madam Speaker, I am speaking the truth.

Madam Speaker: I ask you to withdraw it and carry on with the debate, please.

Mr. H. Bereaux: *[Interruption]* You cannot because it is the truth.

Madam Speaker, as I was saying before I was interrupted—

Mr. Jurai: Madam Speaker, on a point of order. I am asking the Member for La Brea to withdraw that statement. He is casting aspersions on my character.

Madam Speaker: Would the Member withdraw the statement, please, and carry on with the debate?

Mr. H. Bereaux: Madam Speaker, what I am saying is that that is the information which I received.

Madam Speaker: Unless that information is brought here, you will have to withdraw it.

Mr. H. Bereaux: I am explaining it. If it is that the Member for Nariva is saying that it is incorrect, in the interest of going ahead with the debate, I will give him the benefit of the doubt and withdraw it. *[Interruption]*

Madam Speaker: I know if Members take a little time and study the Standing Orders, they will see what Standing Order 35 says, and it will avoid much...There is the cut and thrust of the debate, but when one begins to interrupt Members unnecessarily, there is where the problem comes.

Mr. H. Bereaux: *[Interruption]* No, I am much older than that. I have no problem.

Madam Speaker, in this debate, what has been happening is that the Members of the Opposition know very well of this bogey, these comments about the PNM, some of them are possibly correct and a number of them are incorrect. What we are seeing here is a direct attempt to try to destabilize this Government in two ways. Firstly, by trying to resurrect the old bogey of corruption and the other one, and this is a direct attempt, it is an arrangement, a strategy that they are using; and I have good information that that it, but I strategy has been planned. I do not want to say exactly how I know where they planned know, and that is, that they are trying to remove the base support from the PNM.

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As soon as they see any Member of the PNM moving forward, they try to prevent them from succeeding, either in employment or with a contract, then they point that out and try to distance their support from us. I know of certain enterprises where middle management go around, particularly, victimizing PNM members and then saying "All yuh in Government now, see what they could do for you."

1.30 a.m.

Madam Speaker, this question about corruption is planned. If we look at this motion that they have brought, it says:

"Whereas recent responses by the Government have demonstrated that it is not prepared to implement its 1991 General Elections pledge..."

That was properly answered in respect of accountability. The Pegasus issue has been answered *ad nauseam*. The big thing they are complaining about is that the head of the Integrity Commission was chosen as the person to conduct that investigation. Like the Police Service Commission and several other commissions, the members of the Integrity Commission are appointed by the President, after consultation with the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition. So at least those persons on that commission are persons whom we in the country can be satisfied are respected and in whose integrity the entire country and Parliament have confidence. Who is a better person to chose, to conduct this investigation than one in whose integrity the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition and the President have the utmost confidence. So this question about compromising the head of the Integrity Commission is a red herring, of no value and brought forward just to try to muddle the situation. Then look at what has been done? They have gone ahead and tried their best—a man who has been a judge of the Court of Appeal of this country, an eminent lawyer in his own right who has adjudicated on cases—

Mr. Maharaj: Madam Speaker, I am sorry to disturb the hon. Member at half past one in the morning, but Justice Collymore was not appointed to the Court of Appeal. He was not fortunate enough.

Mr. H. Beraux: He was a judge of the High Court. I am sorry. A man who has sat on a number of cases and what we are talking about, they are querying what he has said. Fine. Judges are not God. They administer law but are not a law unto themselves and therefore there might be—*[Interruption]* He was unlucky not to be appointed.

Madam Speaker, they are bringing his name into disrepute. Let us look further. In each of these matters—the Pegasus, the Port Authority, National Insurance Board—an explanation has been given. Another statement has been made, the question of the drug cartel. What happened? A deputy Commissioner of Police made an allegation. He made the same allegation to another Minister in a previous administration and they did nothing about it. As soon as he said it in a PNM administration a committee was set up to speak with him. As soon as we found out what it was, Scotland Yard came and thereafter matters have been in train. Complaints. You are saying that we are doing nothing.

Then you have the question of the Airports Authority. The point has been raised and I will read it:

"... that the issue of public funds being used by directors of the Airports Authority for their private purposes are unsatisfactory."

The alleged "private purposes" is that a director of the Airports Authority—and I do not know if it is true or not—but a director of the Airports Authority sued somebody for statements that were made, sued for libel, and it is alleged that the Airports Authority paid that bill. I want to point out that the libel allegedly committed is a libel which involved a statement made about the director, *qua* director and it is very simple. The law on the matter is very clear. "Every director, managing director, agent, auditor, secretary or other officer of a company is entitled to be indemnified out of the assets of a company against all losses or liabilities which he or she may sustain or incur in or/about the execution of the duties of the office or otherwise in relation hereto." But, do not misunderstand me. I am not saying that there is any truth in any of the allegations made about kickbacks and I do not know that they are true—if there is any truth in that I say that person must be dealt with to the full extent of the law. The Government has indicated and has behaved in a manner which would give the impression that that is exactly what they proposed to do. They passed it to the DPP who then passed it on to the Fraud Squad. And that is that.

You know, it is unfortunate there is a cardinal principle in law that a person is presumed to be innocent until proven guilty. Here is a situation where, something that might have the flavour of an offence has been brought to the attention of the state and the Government has taken action in a particular way. Action is in train. But those same persons who come into this Parliament and talk about the law, the rights of the individual and human rights and every other kind of right, they only

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talk about that when it is convenient for them. They forget the presumption of innocence when it has to do with anybody else or when it has to do with somebody who is in the PNM or perceived to be in the PNM or a supporter of the PNM. This is what you call abuse and misuse of the processes of the law and the court and the knowledge of the law.

Madam Speaker, my old lady always says, 'those who live in glass houses should not throw stones'. When you have an accuser or accusations are being made you must look at the behaviour of the accuser. I have always said that why corruption appears to be so endemic in this society is that some people do not understand what corruption means. There are corrupt people who do not even know they are corrupt. There are things they are doing time and again in this society and they are not aware that it is corrupt to do them. Take for instance, time and again, more than once in this House—I have heard Members in this House boast of how they have in their possession Cabinet Minutes. Things leaked from the state, contrary to oath of office of public servants. You condone that. You bring it here. But that is corruption. But no, they bring it here. Then there are other instances of people who, because they know a particular officer might behave in a particular manner, they follow him around in order to win certain cases. What is that? Tell me. Mind you, I know *[Interruption]* I have not said that—All I am saying is that there are elements of corruption that we have got to look at. I am not saying nor am I agreeing with any corruption.

1.40 a.m.

I am saying that all of us need to set some standards of behaviour and we must start to conform to those standards of behaviour.

I would like the Member for Couva South to know that I have no great aspirations for anything. The greatest position I have held in my life and the one I want most is right here. That is the point.

Mr. Maharaj: Do you know that it is improper for a barrister to run a restaurant?

Mr. H. Béréaux: Madam Speaker, may I inform the Member for Couva South that I am an attorney-at-law, and unlike other people, I believe that I make my living honestly, and if it is that anybody believes that I am doing anything wrong, do not protect me; let the full force of the law deal with me, because there is no law against that. It is a slight difference between a barrister and an attorney.

I have also looked at the Act, and anytime you are ready or anybody else is ready—and that was the time you told me quite quietly, that was contrary. I said, "go ahead and let them do me what they want, because I am certain, that after they take me to court and make me popular, I will make more money in my business." So you go ahead. You try it. Did I not tell you that?

Unlike other people who hide their businesses, I do not. That is why I made it my business here today to remind the Member for Chaguanas that that bridge she was talking about is adjacent to my property, and I did not want them to say that they were doing something for the PNM. I am always careful about things like that.

We move on. I just want to deal with a few other matters. I keep wondering—early in the term of this Government, the Prime Minister started to talk about moving against drugs and we spoke about this drug cartel, concerns were expressed for his safety. I keep wondering—now after Scotland Yard has found out that these alleged, hard-core police officers are protecting certain drug barons, or persons involved in drugs—just like the Member for Oropouche, I am asking the question: To what extent is this sudden attack upon the PNM as a result of the expected actions with respect to this particular hard core and the persons whom they protect? *[Interruption]* I do not know about that. I know you are competent enough to protect yourself.

I will give you an example of another case of people not knowing corruption and dishonesty when they see it. In this House, in a debate on the motion 'Divestment Policy', which I brought in this House, the Member for Tobago East—I am sorry he is not here—got up in this House and read from a sheet of paper. He said that the accumulated losses of Trintopec in 1987 was \$451 million. I got the audited reports of the Auditor General and I had a look at them, both for 1987 and 1988. It showed that the retained earnings of Trintopec in 1987 was \$485 million, and in 1988, it was \$451 million, and the profit after taxes and subsidiary loss was \$82 million, in 1987, and \$65 million in 1988.

That is the cry, but just in order to make the facts suit each other, he came up to make this statement here. That is when you know people are not speaking the truth, because they are corrupt and they do not know it. I just want to commend the amendment to the motion moved by the Member for Diego Martin West, and to show full support for the Government, and to express my confidence in the Government for the manner in which it is moving to handle corruption, and corrupt practices and the responsible way in which it is doing so. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: The Member for Couva North.

Mr. Basdeo Panday (*Couva North*): Madam Speaker, now that we have come mercifully to the end of this debate, hopefully, and all the talk has subsided on both sides—Madam Speaker, as I was saying, now that we have come mercifully to the end of this debate, and all the talk has subsided on both sides, what do we have left?

The first point is that the fact that this debate is taking place at 1.50 a.m. is an indication, in my view, of a government that wants to debate the whole question of corruption when nobody else is here. They carry on until 2.00 a.m. and nobody is here.

Mr. Sobion: What about the people in the public gallery?

1.50 a.m.

Mr. B. Panday: However, in responding to the charges of corruption that we on this side have made, it seems as though the PNM has thought the best method of defence is attached and from what they have said, it seems as though the PNM has a lot of criminal activity about Members of the past Government and against Members of this side. I trust they will report them all to the Fraud Squad. If they do not, then they will be aiding and abetting in criminal activity; they will be withholding evidence. They must go to the Fraud Squad and report every allegation they have made in this House. If they do not, then they will be exposed for the frauds that they are.

Now, my friend, I like him very much—I understand, he seems to be very upset with the union changing its brokers, but in doing that, he slipped and because he read a letter from the union to M&M, its former brokers—it was not the union?

Mr. Imbert: On a point of clarification, Madam Speaker. It was a letter from the union to Comprehensive Insurance Brokers.

Mr. B. Panday: I see. It proves, therefore that there is an umbilical link that he has. In doing that, he supports—I can imagine finding that M&M is losing business, and saying “I know how you feel”, but it does not matter. I want him to report it to the Fraud Squad so that we will expose him for the fraud that he is.

The strategy of the other side appears to be that they want to create an “all of we tief” syndrome. I do not take on the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre at all, but just for the record in case some historian is doing some work on it, let me say that all

the nonsense he has uttered has got to be the product of the mind of an imbecile. It is obvious that he is an idiot and they have used him.

Mr. K. Valley: Surely, Madam Speaker, on a point of order.

Madam Speaker: The Member should not use insulting language. I ask the Member to withdraw that statement.

Mr. B. Panday: Madam Speaker, call it what you will, I do not know that you want to call it. But they should not use him like that, that is tantamount to child abuse. I just put that on the record so that in case anybody reads it they will know that we did not accept it.

The point about it is they are trying to create an “all of we tief” syndrome. That is exactly what the old PNM did and says, “why are all of you accusing us of that? All of we tief”. In the end, what they are hoping is going to happen is they say that “all of we tief, but all of you tief less, so vote for the PNM. That is the syndrome they are trying to create. They are not defending the allegations that are made against them, they are not trying to do anything about it. So if the former Government tief, they are now the Government, they are in control, take them before the courts and so on. We must expose that syndrome of theirs that they are trying to create, the “all of we tief” syndrome, because they know that they cannot extricate themselves from it.

Be that as it may, the fact that they have sought to amend this motion in the way that they have indicates one thing: That they have no intention whatsoever of doing anything about corruption in this country.

Although they stand up in the House at one time admit that the machinery in place is not proper machinery and there needs to be—no? Oh, I am glad. Please let that go on the record. I am happy for that.

Mr. Manning: Yes. Now, we said that the machinery in place is by no means perfect and, in fact, we are committed to upgrading the machinery by a process of evolution. We have made it clear that upgrading the machinery to guarantee the integrity as far as possible of those in public life is something to which we are committed.

Mr. B. Panday: Well, I am glad. The Member has made it much easier for me, in that it is clear that the PNM does not intend to introduce any kind of machinery in this House to deal with corruption. That is their business. We have done our duty.

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I want, in ending this debate at two o'clock in the morning, just to tell them, that is all right. They will ignore our advice at their peril. You see, people can put up with the corruption of the Government when money is flowing about the place; they could have wasted \$60 billion between 1973 and 1983, because money was flowing and people were put to work. You see, when they have 120,000, 130,000 and 150,000 unemployed and they have no jobs and their families cannot eat and so on, they do not stand corruption any more.

When they see the crimes that are taking place, they revolt against it and they revolt in several ways. Those with a history of sustained guerilla warfare, as in other parts of Latin America, engage in this sustained guerilla warfare. In Trinidad, we do not have that kind of history of guerilla warfare so they explode as they exploded in the 1970s, the 1930s and so on. But they express their dissatisfaction and alienation in the society in another way: By violent crimes.

Have you ever wondered why it is in this country that young children go and rob? They can rob you quite easily and take what you have, they are not satisfied with that. They must rape the women, chop or shoot the men and so on and carry out the most dastardly acts of violence. Surely you must be thinking about that. It is not mere robbery. It is robbery not with violence only, but violence of protest.

So that is how some people react in the society and in order to understand the kind of violence that is associated with crime, you have to understand that it is a form of protest. So I tell you that if they do not wish to listen to us, that is all right by me. We have done our duty. If they want to try to fling mud and so on, it does not matter. They will ignore what we have tried to do in this House at their peril.

They are right in one respect: When they strike, they do not distinguish between those who are responsible for tragedy and those who are not and they spite all in the same way when they commit crimes. They do not care who the victims are, they inflict the kind of violence that we see taking place. They will have that on their hands. The blood of this country will be on their hands if they fail to take heed and to do something to allay fears.

The Member for Oropouche made a point which I had made a little earlier on: When you deal with a thing like political corruption in society at that level, you are dealing with perception and it is said that perception in politics is often the reality.

So I have said, even if you put up these matters, of which I spoke—Pegasus, the Port Authority and what is taking place at WASA—at their highest and say “no,

everything is above board, there is no corruption”, if people continue to perceive their is corruption, the alienation of which I speak and have spoken of so many times in this society continues. People behave as if it were in fact so. Therefore, by setting up the institutions I have asked for is a method of, not only dealing with corruption that is real, but for dealing also with perception, so that people will know that there are avenues.

Does it not bother them that there are so many anonymous letters and so on? Does that not bother them the way information comes, does it not bother them?

Mr. Valley: We know who writes them.

Mr. B. Panday: If that is the attitude they want to take, I have no quarrel with them, not at two o'clock in the morning. They know who writing them and their reaction is, “all you could write, we could write too.” You see, Members have started it here. So that is all right. If that is how they want to react, they bear the responsibility of it. We have done our duty. History would show that we have done our duty. It will also show that when there is the conflagration that results from people feeling while they are suffering their money is going off somewhere—they are feeling that way, they are inviting conflagration in the society. They are inviting all kinds of things. When it does come, they are going to be responsible.

I leave it up to them. I reject their motion totally, I will not even consider it because surely they are actually saying they are pleased with the way the things are. If they are pleased, brother, tell the nation they are pleased. We will tell them we are not pleased and shall leave the final arbitration up to them.

The Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs (Hon. Keith Sobion): Madam Speaker, I do not propose to prolong the agony which has been inflicted by the Member for Couva North. We have been here for close to 13 hours and there are a couple of phrases which have come from the other side which I think I would want to examine, the last being the fact that the Member for Couva North says that we have done our duty.

I want to put that in the context, Madam Speaker, of the motion which is before the House, a motion which, if one leaves out the several “whereases”, seeks to express its lack of confidence in the Government. I think if one is doing one's duty as a parliamentarian in the Parliament, and if one is to move as serious a motion as one which seeks to express a lack of confidence in the Government,

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then one should come here in a serious and responsible way with facts and information which support the resolution which one is asking the House to accept.

For the time that I have spent here and for the time that I was not here, I have not heard anything coming from the other side of any serious import, besides the lessons in history, which merits any question of pinning responsibility from the Members of the Opposition in bringing this motion here today—or yesterday.

At no time in this debate did I hear any mention of the fact that there is an “Act to Provide for the Prevention of Corruption”, which was enacted in May of 1987, at a time when the Member for Couva North was a Member of the Government at that time presented an “Act to Provide for the Prevention of Corruption”. We have heard all kinds of talk about joint select committees and avenues for dealing with corruption, but at no time was mention made of the fact that there is an “Act to Provide for the Prevention of Corruption”.

We have heard over the past few weeks in this House, as unfortunate as it may have been for the dignity of this House, all kinds of talk, all kinds of readings from anonymous letters, *et cetera*. To think that the Opposition could conceive of a motion as serious as this without seeking the avenues which the Member for Couva North, when he was in Government, created for dealing with corruption, it tells me something about the responsibility of the Members of the other side, because in this Act which was presented by the last administration, of which he was a Member, there is power and authority for the investigation of corruption; for the placing in the hands of the Director of Public Prosecutions, evidence whereby corruption could be investigated and whereby charges could be preferred. Let me refer to some of the sections in this Act: The marginal note of section 3 of the Act says:

“Corruption in office an offence”:

“Every person who by himself or by or in conjunction with any other person corruptly solicits or receives or agrees to receive for himself or for any other person any gift, loan, fee, reward or advantage whatsoever, as an inducement to or reward for or otherwise on account of an agent doing or forbearing to do anything in respect of any matter or transaction whatsoever, actual or proposed, in which the state or public body is concerned, is guilty of an offence.”

Enacted in 1987.

Mr. Sudama: How do you go about proving the offence?

Hon. K. Sobion: Enacted in 1987. We have heard talk about who has come and gone back, who has not come and who should be charged with allegations, perceptions and all manner of things that mean nothing in the face of the law of Trinidad and Tobago.

They come here with a motion condemning the Government on the basis that we are doing nothing about corruption. The law provides—the law that was enacted in 1987 provides—that if the judge in chambers is satisfied on an *ex parte* application made by the Director of Public Prosecutions and supported by evidence on affidavit that there is reasonable cause to believe that the person has committed an offence under this Act, the judge may make an order.

Now, we say what one of the offences was: Anybody who corruptly receives any gift, *et cetera*, and the Director of Public Prosecutions can go on affidavit, *ex parte* to a judge, without bringing the man against whom the allegation is made, he can go to a judge and say, “I believe on evidence that that person who is not before the court is possibly guilty of an offence.” The judge may make an order authorizing any police officer to enter and search any premises named in the order with such assistance as may be necessary and to inspect and make copies of all the financial records of such person and of such relevant documents as may be specified in the law.

Instead of doing the route that is possible, we find that Parliament is taken to be a political football field for all kinds of wild, unsubstantiated allegations. There is a route, enacted by the Government of which the Member for Couva North was a Member. The Member for Oropouche, as well—I forgot. Well, everyone seems to forget the Member for Oropouche.

The fact of the matter is, that we have what I consider to be a totally irresponsible motion by someone who is claiming to have done his duty. Right through the contributions of the other side, we heard the Member for Oropouche asking how is corruption exposed or brought to the fore, as though he was not part of the Government which passed this. This is how corruption is exposed and brought to the fore. It is not exposed and brought to the fore by standing in Parliament, where people are supposed to be discussing important matters affecting the population, to deal with wild speculation and allegations, unsubstantiated in any form.

Mr. Sudama: May I ask a question?

Hon. K. Sobion: You may ask a question.

Mr. Sudama: Is the Minister aware that although there is some evidence of corruption done by people like John O'Halloran and so on, that we could not have, under the laws, under our investigative machinery, we could not have gotten the evidence to bring a conviction in court. This is why we need a prior procedure before we get to the end process which is evidence which can be taken to the police or which the police can act upon.

We have been trying to make that point throughout this debate and he does not seem to understand what this thing is all about.

Hon. K. Sobion: I am not sure what the question is, but am I understanding the Member for Oropouche to be saying that there was no evidence and that there is, up to today, no evidence to convict anyone of the persons whose names they have slandered across the floor of this House with questions of corruption?

Madam Speaker, I am making a simple point, that if the Opposition were serious and responsible and if they felt that there was evidence of corruption in this Government, they had machinery whereby they could have done it and to waste the time of this Parliament over a period close to 13 hours on a spurious motion such as this, I do not see how the Member for Couva North can stand here and say that he has done his duty. For 70 of the 75 minutes that he stood here, he said absolutely nothing to warrant any investigation into anything.

Madam Speaker, I am concerned that we are doing a disservice not only to this Parliament, but to the country as a whole. I wonder whether the political objectives, not coming from the Member for Couva North, necessarily, who was at pains to point out that he was at the end of his time, but whether it comes from somewhere else within—[*Interruption*—it was not political? Sorry, I thought he meant politically.

Madam Speaker, I am concerned that there are persons in this Parliament who, to achieve their objectives will do anything to destroy the institutions of this country, the laws of this country and the very Constitution of this country.

Mr. Sudama: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Although that is a general remark, I think it impacts on all Members of this Parliament that we have no scruples—I do not know who it is intended for, but it could be intended for me or anybody else that we are intent on destroying the institutions in this country.

Now, where is the evidence of the Member to make such a remark that questions the integrity of this House? I am amazed that he is a lawyer. I am really amazed.

Hon. K. Sobion: Well, I am glad, Madam Speaker, that for the first time, coming from the Opposition Benches there is the requirement of evidence, that there must be some evidence produced. We are now asking for evidence for the first time in this debate; the Member for Couva North spent 75 minutes without evidence and now the Member for Oropouche wants evidence.

I will give him an inclination of the evidence: Quite simply, the fact that the whole tenor of this debate, in relation to the Member for Couva North, had to do with the Integrity Commission and the Chairman of the Integrity Commission. If that is not an attack on an institution, a constitutionally—

Mr. Sudama: Madam Speaker, on a point of order.

Hon. K. Sobion: Madam Speaker, would the Member for Oropouche please state this time his point of order.

Mr. Sudama: He is misleading this House. When we questioned this report, there was no talk about questioning the Integrity Commission, as such. When the Chairman of the Integrity Commission went to investigate, he did not go to investigate as the Chairman of the Integrity Commission. That is not his function.

His function as Chairman of the Integrity Commission is defined under the Integrity Commission Act. So that when he is chosen to head a commission of enquiry, it is not as Chairman of the Integrity Commission. So what is he talking about?

Hon. K. Sobion: Madam Speaker, as I say, the point had been made by the Member for Couva North and I do not know why the Member for Oropouche is seeking to defend him. There is probably no reason why he should be trying to defend him, but the fact of the matter is that the Member for Couva North did make reference to the Chairman of the Integrity Commission and how can he now be seen in his role as Chairman of the Integrity Commission. That was said earlier on. [*Interruption*]

Madam Speaker, the simple fact is that we are presented here with a motion which has no basis; nothing that has been adduced from the other side has supported the motion. On the other hand, Madam Speaker, we on this side, in relation to the amendment which has been proposed and seconded, we have

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demonstrated that with respect to every matter in this administration, it has been dealt with promptly and effectively and without any prompting from anybody.

To give one classic example, in relation to the Piarco project, a report was commissioned, the report was laid in Parliament immediately thereafter for public scrutiny by all the Members of Parliament. We hear, again, the continuing wild and wilder unsubstantiated allegations.

Madam Speaker, all I can do at this state, is to take note of the irresponsibility which promoted this motion and to commend the Government and to support the amended motion which has been proposed and to reaffirm to Members of this House and to the public at large that we of this PNM administration stand for morality and integrity in public affairs. I do not know that it can be said otherwise.

I would say that by actions we have demonstrated how we are prepared to deal with morality and integrity in public affairs.

Madam Speaker, I move that this House accept the amended motion as presented.

Madam Speaker: We will consider the proposed amendment at this point in time.

Delete all the words appearing after the word “whereas” in the first line of the motion and substitute the following:

“recent responses by the Government have demonstrated that it is fully prepared to implement its 1991 general election pledge to the country that if it forms the Government it would ensure accountability at all levels;

And whereas governmental actions including but not limited to its action in the handling of the Pegasus issue, the Port Authority Insurance issue, the issue involving the allegation of the existence of a Drug Cartel in the Police Service and allegations of the public funds being used by the Directors of the Airports Authority for their private purpose have confirmed that commitment;

Be it resolved that this honourable House express its confidence in and support for the Government in its attempt to deal responsibly with the whole issue of corruption and accountability”.

Question, on amendment, put.

2.20 a.m.

The House divided: Ayes 20 Noes 11

AYES:

Valley, Hon. K.

Manning, Hon. P.

Sobion, Hon. K.

Mottley, Hon. W.

Ramrekersingh, Hon. A.

Rowley, Hon. Dr. K.

Eckstein, Hon. J.

Marshall, Hon. M.

Griffith, Dr. R.

Baboolal, Hon. Dr. L.

Collis, Hon. K.

Imbert, Hon. C.

Lasse, Hon. V.

Pierre, Hon. J.

Casimire, A.

Narine, J.

Hart, E.

Allum, D.

Bereaux, H.

Rajaram, C.

NOES:

Maharaj, R. L.

Panday, B.

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Sudama, T.
 Palackdharrysingh, R.
 Bhaggan, H.
 Singh, C.
 Panday, S.
 Jurai, K.
 Sharma, C.
 Haniff, M.
 Hosein, S.

Amendment agreed to.

Resolved:

That this honourable House express its confidence in and support for the Government in its attempts to deal responsibly with the whole issue of corruption and accountability.

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Local Government and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Madam Speaker, in moving the adjournment of the House, I would like to inform hon. Members that in consultation with the Chief Whip, we have agreed that debate on the Prime Minister's statement would be taken at the next Private Members' Day. At the next sitting of the House we would do motion No. 2 on the Order Paper, that is, Rent Restriction.

I now move that the House do now adjourn to Friday, February 5, 1993 at 1.30 p.m.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 2.25 a.m.