

*Leave of Absence*

*Friday, February 19, 1993*

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

*Friday, February 19, 1993*

The House met at 1.45 p.m.

**PRAYERS**

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

**LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Members, I have granted leave of absence to the Member for St. Ann's East (Hon. Wendell Mottley), the Member for Couva South (Mr. Ramesh Maharaj), and the Member for Tobago East (Mr. A. N. R. Robinson), from today's sitting; and to the Member for Siparia (Mr. Sahid Hosein), for the next two sittings.

**PAPER LAID**

The Supreme Court of Judicature (Amendment) Rules, 1993. [*The Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs (Hon. Keith Sobion)*]

**SELECT COMMITTEE REPORT**

**Ahamad Trust (Inc'n) Bill**

**Presentation**

**Mr. Desmond Allum** (*Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West*): Madam Speaker, I wish to present 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 Ahamad Trust.

**ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS**

*The following questions stood on the Order Paper in the name of Mr. Sahid Hosein (Siparia):*

**Municipal Corporations Act (Sec. 109)  
(Proclamation of)**

**126.** Will the Attorney General indicate to this House how soon does Government intend to have section 109 of Act No. 21 of 1990 proclaimed?

**Local Government Bodies  
(Co-ordinating Committees)**

**127.** Could the Minister of Local Government and Minister in the Ministry of Finance state:

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- (a) If he is aware that co-ordinating committees are not being convened in all of the local government bodies?
- (b) Can he indicate why this is so?
- (c) Can he say what steps his Ministry is taking to ensure that the co-ordinating committees, as constituted under the Act, begin to function?

**Association of Local Government  
(Removal of Secretary)**

**128.** Could the Minister of Local Government and Minister in the Ministry of Finance state:

- (a) If the Secretary of the Association of Local Government has been removed?
- (b) If the answer to (a) is in the affirmative, can he say on what grounds was she removed?
- (c) If the answer to (a) is in the affirmative, can the Minister also indicate if the position is being advertised, and if so, by what method?
- (d) Can the Minister indicate if interviews are to be conducted, by whom will they be, or are being carried out?

**Madam Speaker:** I have granted leave of absence to the Member for Siparia.

*Questions, by leave, deferred.*

**Firearms Licences**

**151. Mr. Krish Jurai** (*Nariva*) asked the Minister of National Security:

Would the Minister state:

- (a) Whether he intends to put into effect appeal procedures for the review of applications for firearms licences which have been rejected by the Commissioner of Police?
- (b) If the answer is in the affirmative, would the Minister state how soon will this come into effect and what would be the method of appeal?

**The Minister of National Security (Hon. Russell Huggins):** Madam Speaker, the grant of a firearm user's licence falls within the provisions of the Firearms Act Chap. 16:01 of the laws of Trinidad and Tobago. The Ministry of National Security is at present reviewing the policy with respect to the grant of

firearms users' licences. Involved in such an exercise would be consideration of appeal to a higher authority for the review of applications for the firearm user's licence which has been rejected by the Commissioner of Police.

In drafting this legislation due regard will be given to any similar legislation in other comparative states such as Barbados and Jamaica.

**WASA & T&TEC  
(Divestment of)**

**152. Mr. Krish Jurai** (*Nariva*) asked the Minister of Public Utilities:

Would the Minister state:

- (a) Whether the Government has any intention of divesting its full interest or any part thereof in WASA and T&TEC?
- (b) If the answer is in the affirmative, would the Minister state to whom would those shares be divested and in what manner would such divestment take place?

**The Minister of Public Utilities (Hon. Morris Marshall):** Madam Speaker, I wish to advise this honourable House, that at present the Government has taken no decision to divest its full interest or any part thereof in the Water and Sewerage Authority or in the Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission.

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

**Unemployment  
(Reduction of)**

**153.** With respect to a recent statement made by the Prime Minister in Parliament that he would take steps to reduce unemployment in Trinidad and Tobago, would the Prime Minister state:

- (a) What specific projects will come on stream to relieve the chronic unemployment plaguing the Sangre Grande, Biche and Rio Claro areas?
- (b) What is the anticipated number of persons to benefit from such programmes?
- (c) How soon will these programmes come on stream?

**The Minister of Local Government and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley):** Madam Speaker, you will recall that on the last occasion this question was deferred for two weeks.

*Question, by leave, deferred.*

### Assistance to Orphanages

**117. Miss Hulsie Bhaggan** (*Chaguanas*) asked the Minister of Consumer Affairs and Social Services:

Would the Minister indicate:

- (a) What financial and technical assistance were given to orphanages in Trinidad and Tobago in 1992?
- (b) The number and capacity of orphanages in Trinidad and Tobago?
- (c) Would the Minister provide details of support (if any) given to orphans who have to leave the orphanage after having attained the required age?

**The Minister of Consumer Affairs and Social Services (Dr. The Hon. Linda Baboolal):** Madam Speaker, in 1992, financial assistance was given to facilitate the operations of the following Children's Homes:

Home		Financial Assistance
St. Dominic's Children's Home	—	\$4,325,735.00
St. Michael's School for Boys	—	2,375,860.00
St. Mary's Children's Home	—	3,500,000.00
St. Jude's Home for Girls	—	1,286,605.00
Islamic Home for Children	—	40,000.00
Sai-Krishna Children's Home	—	40,000.00
Trinidad Christian Centre	—	100,000.00
Ferndean's Place Children's Home	—	30,000.00
Christ Child Convalescent Home	—	255,500.00

Through the Family Services Division, the Ministry of Consumer Affairs and Social Services provided the following technical assistance to the above mentioned organizations:

- (i) Advisory services — Meetings with managers at Homes for the purpose of problem solving.
- (ii) Counselling Services — Counselling of staff

- (iii) Record Keeping — Standardized record keeping was introduced which now includes a social and medical history, as well as a picture of every child admitted.

In addition, the Family Services Division held a series of seminars on child care and has also negotiated with the Ministry of Education to designate special schools for pertinent training of teachers. Such efforts will continue in the current year.

At present there are four established orphanages and seven established homes for children in Trinidad and Tobago. The capacity of each institution is as follows:

Home	Capacity
St. Dominic's Children's Home	— 291
St. Michael's School for Boys	— 102
St. Mary's Children's Home	— 169
St. Jude's Home for Girls	— 115
Islamic Home for Children	— 50
Sai-Krishna Children's Home	— 37
Trinidad Christian Centre	— 50
Ferndean's Place Children's Home	— 12
Christ Child Convalescent Home	— 74
Living Water Community Halfway House	— 18
Emmanuel Community	— 20

At this time, arrangements for orphans who have to leave the orphanage after having attained the required age are as follows:

- (i) Some children are reunited with their families;
- (ii) Others are placed in jobs, where available;

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- (iii) Some children who cannot be placed are kept in these institutions until alternative accommodation is found.

However, resulting from the study entitled "A Situational Analysis of Children in Particularly Difficult Circumstances" which the Ministry is conducting this year, would be the development of specific programmes to address this particular need.

### **National Service Programme**

*The following question stood on the Order Paper in the name of Miss Hulsie Bhaggan (Chaguanas):*

- 120** (a) Would the Minister of Community Development, Culture and Women's Affairs indicate the procedure for recruitment to the National Service Programme?
- (b) Would the Minister provide the nature, cost, location and number of personnel of each project for 1992 and similar details on the planned programme for 1993?

**The Minister of Local Government and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley):** Madam Speaker, on behalf of the Minister, I have to ask for a deferral of this question.

**Madam Speaker:** For what period?

**Mr. Valley:** One week.

*Question, by leave, deferred.*

### **Caroni River Basin Study**

*The following question stood on the Order Paper in the name of Miss Hulsie Bhaggan (Chaguanas):*

- 121.** (a) Would the Minister of Works and Transport indicate whether the Caroni River Basin study is completed?
- (b) If the answer is in the affirmative, when are the proposals expected to be implemented?
- (c) If not, when is the study expected to be completed?

**The Minister of Works and Transport (Hon. Colm Imbert):** Could I have a deferral of one week for this question, please?

*Question, by leave, deferred.*

**Muslimeen Appeal Case  
(Estimated Expenses)**

**123. Mr. John Humphrey** (*St. Augustine*) asked the Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs:

- (a) Would the Attorney General state to this honourable House what sum of moneys, giving all particulars of fees and expenses, it anticipates the State would spend in legal fees and related expenses in the appeal by it to the Court of Appeal against the decision of Justice Clebert Brooks in the constitutional proceedings brought against the State by the members of the Jamaat Al Muslimeen in respect of the amnesty granted to them by the State?
- (b) Would the Attorney General indicate whether the Government intends to retain the services of both Mr. George Newman, Q.C. and Mr. Ewart Thorne, S. C. to argue the appeal?
- (c) If the answer to (b) is in the affirmative, would he explain why it is necessary to retain two senior counsel to put the arguments before the Court of Appeal on behalf of the State?
- (d) Would the Attorney General tell this honourable House how much money he estimates the Government can save if it retains the services of one senior attorney instead of retaining two?

**1.55 p.m.**

**The Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs (Hon. Keith Sobion):** Madam Speaker, in the appeal by the state to the Court of Appeal in the matter of the *Attorney General of Trinidad and Tobago and the Director of Public Prosecutions v. Lennox Phillips and the Others*, the state has retained the services of Mr. George Newman Q.C. to represent the Attorney General, and Mr. Ewart Thorne S.C. to represent the Director of Public Prosecutions.

The following are the terms and conditions under which Mr. Newman is retained:

A fee on brief of £65,000

A daily refresher of £2,500

First-class hotel and travel expenses

The following are particulars of legal fees in respect of Mr. Ewart Thorne, S. C.

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|---|---|------------------|
| (1) Brief and application to settle records;<br>settling skeleton arguments on behalf<br>of the Director of Public Prosecutions;<br>Brief on Appeal | — | \$175,000        |
| (2) Value Added Tax   | — | \$25,250         |
| (3) Refreshers  | — | \$5,000 per day. |

As it is not possible at this stage to say how many days the hearing of the appeal will last, an estimate of the total amount to be paid in respect of refreshers and hotel expenses cannot now be given. The cost of first class airfare to and from the United Kingdom is \$24,587 and the estimated cost of hotel accommodation is \$1,900 per night.

In addition, it will be necessary for Mr. Newman to come to Trinidad for the period February 14, 1993 to February 28, 1993 for the purpose of preparing and filing the skeleton arguments in this appeal. The said arguments must be filed on or before February 26, 1993. An estimated cost for the period February 14 to February 28, 1993 is as follows:

Return airfare (first class)	—	\$24,587
Hotel accommodation for 11 nights	—	\$24,783
Meals for 11 days	—	\$2,365
Travel expenses for 11 days	—	\$1,100
Refreshers	—	\$175,175

Yes, the Government has retained the services of both Mr. George Newman Q.C. and Mr. Ewart Thorne S.C. to argue the appeal on behalf of the Attorney General and the Director of Public Prosecutions, respectively.

It is necessary to retain two senior counsel in this matter—one Senior Counsel to argue the appeal for the Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs, and another to argue the appeal for the Director of Public Prosecutions.

In view of the foregoing, the answer to part (d) does not apply.

### **Indian Walk Government School**

**124. Mr. Haniff Mohammed** (*Princes Town*) asked the Minister of Education:

- (a) Could the Minister state whether he is aware that a serious landslip is threatening the Indian Walk Government School?

- (b) Is the Minister aware that certain classrooms had to be abandoned resulting in a shift system being introduced?
- (c) If the answers to (a) and (b) are in the affirmative, would the Minister state what steps are being taken to rectify the situation?

**The Minister of Education (Hon. Augustus Ramrekersingh):** Madam Speaker, I am aware that a landslip is threatening the Indian Walk Government School and that the situation is being monitored. The areas affected are the toilet block, and the library room.

I am aware that the school is operating on a shift basis in order to accommodate the classes which were formerly held in the classrooms beneath the toilet block and the library.

The Highways Division of the Ministry of Works and Transport has been requested to carry out geological and soil tests on the school site in order to determine the nature and scope of the work to be done.

**Bus Service  
(Sisters and Brothers Roads)**

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

- (a) Could the Minister state whether the Public Transport Service Corporation intends to reintroduce a bus service along the Sisters Road and the Brothers Road area in the constituency of Princes Town?
- (b) If the answer is in the affirmative, could the Minister state when is the service likely to begin?
- (c) If, however, the answer is in the negative, could the Minister say why?

**The Minister of Public Utilities (Hon. Morris Marshall):** Madam Speaker, the bus service to Sisters Road was discontinued in the late 1970s, and to Brothers Road in August, 1988.

I wish to advise hon. Members that the Public Transport Service Corporation is unable to reintroduce a bus service along the Sisters Road and the Brothers Road areas in Princes Town at this time.

As a result of the foregoing, part (b) of the question is not applicable.

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The reintroduction of a bus service on this route is dependent on the ability of the corporation to achieve efficiency in its operations, thereby enabling it to increase the size of its fleet.

#### WRITTEN ANSWER TO QUESTION

##### **Students Revolving Loan Fund**

*The following question stood on the Order Paper in the name of Dr. Carl Singh (Tabaquite):*

**133.** Can the Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister responsible for Public Administration state to this honourable House:

- (a) The total sum of money which was available at the inception of the Student Revolving Loan Fund?
- (b) From what source was the fund made available?
- (c) To whom, that is, names of students and areas of study and also sums which were made available to each student?
- (d) The conditions under which these loans were granted?
- (e) What measures are in place to recover outstanding debts?
- (f) How many of these students completed their areas of indicated studies and are employed by the national community?

*Question, by leave, deferred.*

#### ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

##### **Environmental Pollution**

*The following question stood on the Order Paper in the name of Dr. Carl Singh (Tabaquite):*

**134.** Could the Minister of Planning and Development state to this honourable House what mechanism is in place to monitor and manage environmental pollution with respect to:

- (i) Leaded water lines in the water distribution system of WASA;
- (ii) Lead in ceramics and paints;
- (iii) Lead in petrol; and
- (iv) Discarded lubricating oil at service stations nationwide?

**Mr. Valley:** Madam Speaker, I should like to ask for a deferral of this question for one week.

*Question, by leave, deferred.*

**Government & Gran Couva RC Schools  
(Rebuilding of)**

**135. Dr. Carl Singh** (*Tabaquite*) asked the Minister of Education:

- (a) Could the Minister indicate to this honourable House what is the present status of the rebuilding of the Gasparillo Government School which project was slated to have commenced in June/July, 1992?
- (b) Could the Minister state what plans are in place for the rebuilding of the Gran Couva Roman Catholic School?

**The Minister of Education (Hon. Augustus Ramrekersingh):** Madam Speaker, all tender documents on the Gasparillo Government School, designs, working drawings and bills of quantities are now completed. Tenders are soon to be invited. The evaluation exercise should take between four and six weeks, following which a contract will be awarded.

Gran Couva R.C.: Plans for the replacement of the school have been completed by the Roman Catholic Board and forwarded to the appropriate Government agencies for approval. The plan proposes the construction of a two-storeyed building with nine classrooms and additional separate rooms for music, library and science, as well as a principal's office and toilet blocks as required. This project is included in the 1993 Development Programme and will be implemented subject to the availability of funds.

**AIDS  
(Infected Students)**

*The following question stood on the Order Paper in the name of Mr. Raymond Palackdharrysingh (Caroni Central):*

- 147.** (a) Is the Minister of Education aware that some of our students in the primary, secondary and tertiary levels of the education system have AIDS?
- (b) If the answer is in the affirmative, would the Minister state:
    - (i) the number of students infected with the disease?
    - (ii) what is the government's policy with respect to H.I.V. cases?

**The Minister of Education (Hon. Augustus Ramrekersingh):** Madam Speaker, I had hoped to speak to the hon. Member before the sitting but he was not available. I would like this question deferred for two weeks because most of the information has to be gathered from another Ministry.

*Question, by leave, deferred.*

**Caparo Valley Road  
(Erosion of)**

**148. Mr. Raymond Palackdharrysingh** (*Caroni Central*) asked the Minister of Works and Transport:

- (a) Is the Minister aware that the Caparo Valley Road opposite Kelly's Poultry Depot in Palmiste is being eroded?
- (b) Is the Minister also aware that this roadway has become very dangerous to unsuspecting motorists because of one-lane traffic and no safety lights at night?
- (c) If the Minister is aware of (a) and (b), would the Minister state what he intends to do about it and how soon?
- (d) If the Minister is not aware, would the Minister state whether he intends to investigate the matter?

**The Minister of Works and Transport (Hon. Colm Imbert):** Madam Speaker, the Minister is aware of a depression on the Caparo Valley Road in the vicinity of Kelly's Poultry Depot. The Minister is also aware that officers of the Ministry of Works and Transport in the area have been monitoring the state of the depression on a daily basis and have installed warning signs and reflective barriers to block off the affected area in order to improve safety. As a result of these measures, traffic flow has been reduced to one lane.

The Ministry of Works and Transport is seeking funding to purchase material to commence remedial work.

**2.05 p.m.**

**Mr. Palackdharrysingh:** Would the Minister state how long from now would that job be completed?

**Mr. Imbert:** Madam Speaker, I am not in a position to give that information at this time, but I will make it available for the Member.

**Squatters  
(Tenancy Regularization)**

*The following question stood on the Order Paper in the name of Mr. Raymond Palackdharysingh (Caroni Central):*

- 149.** (a) Would the Minister of Housing and Settlements state whether any progress has been made in regularizing the tenancy of squatters on state lands at Arena Road, Freeport and at Carlsen Field?
- (b) If there has been no progress, would the Minister state why?
- (c) If there has been progress, would the Minister state the extent of the progress and what actions have been taken?
- (d) Would the Minister indicate the expected completion date of the tenancy regularization exercise in the above-mentioned areas?

**The Minister of Housing and Settlement (Dr. The Hon. Vincent Lasse):** Madam Speaker, I wish to request that question No. 149 be deferred for a period of one week.

*Question, by leave, deferred.*

**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 under "Private Business" at No. 11, on page 15, be taken before "Government Business".

Madam Speaker, I should like to request, also, that we deal with Bills on the Order Paper, Nos. 1 and 3 before Bill No. 2.

*Leave granted.*

**SELECT COMMITTEE REPORT**

**Ahamad Trust (Inc'n) Bill  
Adoption**

**Mr. Desmond Allum (Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West):** 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 Ahamad Trust.

*Question proposed.*

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*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 beg to move that the House now consider Bill No. 1 on the Order Paper at this point.

**Mr. Sudama:** Madam Speaker, before we move to consider the motion by the Leader of Government Business. When we get Order Papers, we are entitled to expect that the matters on them will be taken in the sequence in which they are put.

In this particular case, prior to "Bills Second Reading", we have "Motions", and it is our expectation that these motions will take some precedence over the Bills for second reading. Now, by agreement, we have arranged that the first motion:

"That this honourable House take note of the Statement made by the Hon. Prime Minister at a sitting of the House of Representatives held on Monday, January 4, 1993",

be debated on Private Member's Day, which will be next Friday. Therefore, we have come here entitled to expect that the motion:

"That this honourable House take note of the Fourteenth Annual Report of the Ombudsman of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago".

should be the first item of debate today.

We believe it is unfair to the Opposition to have to come here week after week and at the whim and fancy of the Government take up things for debate in this House.

Therefore, I believe that the Leader of Government Business, the hon. Member for Diego Martin Central, ought to indicate to this House why he is not debating in terms of sequence, firstly, the motion with respect to the Fourteenth Report of the Ombudsman.

Madam Speaker, in the past, motions like this have appeared on the Order Paper and have never been debated. I want to know whether that is going to be the practice of this present Government.

**Mr. Valley:** I take the point the Member is making, but, Madam Speaker, you would know that every Friday when the House adjourns, I mention the business of the following week. We could not do that last week, because there was no Opposition in the House. When I attempted to get the Chief Whip, he was out of the country. The House, by agreement, can alter business and this is what we are attempting to do.

**Mr. B. Panday:** That means by your will, because you have the majority.

**Mr. Valley:** By agreement, Madam Speaker.

I can assure the Member for Oropouche that it is this Government's intention to debate the motion relating to the Ombudsman's report. As a matter of fact, it is the first time, as far as I know, that the report is subject to a motion on the Order Paper. It is here because this Government considers it extremely important that we debate these matters. I can assure the hon. Member that it will be debated by agreement.

I beg to move, Madam Speaker, that we take Bill No. 1 on the Order Paper.

**Mr. Sudama:** Madam Speaker, just to make a comment. The Member said that he was unable to contact the Chief Whip, who was out of the country, as if apart from the Chief Whip there is nobody else in the Opposition whom he could have contacted to indicate the order of priority for today. So to come here and say that we were not here last week Friday and he could not contact the Chief Whip is merely looking for excuses. It is a rather lame excuse, Madam Speaker.

Could he give us the assurance of the date when this Ombudsman's motion will be debated in this House? Could he indicate that to us now? We are here now, so he would not have to look for us.

**Mr. Valley:** Madam Speaker, every Friday evening when I adjourn the House, I mention the business for the next week because I know it is important that the Opposition ought to know.

**Madam Speaker:** What the hon. Member is complaining of is that not having been here on the last occasion, it was the duty of the Leader of Government Business to contact them, to indicate.

**Mr. Valley:** Madam Speaker, I did attempt to contact the Chief Whip.  
*[Interruption]*

**Mr. Sudama:** There is an Opposition office paid for by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

**Mr. Valley:** For the last 14 months—

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**Madam Speaker:** Perhaps you can indicate the date on which you wish to debate the matter. Could we have an indication?

**Mr. Valley:** Madam Speaker, it is going to be debated on the first Friday in March.

**Madam Speaker:** Proceed, please.

**CUSTOMS (AMDT.) BILL**

*Order for second reading read.*

**The Minister of Trade, Industry and Tourism (Sen. The Hon. Brian Kuei Tung):** Madam Speaker, I am quite pleased to be in this House this afternoon and to beg to move,

That a Bill to amend the Customs Act, Chap. 78:01, be now read a second time.

This Bill seeks to amend the Customs Act, Chap. 78:01 in order to permit the importation of left-hand drive motor vehicles for purposes other than those enunciated by section 45(2) of the said Act.

Section 45(2) allows for motor vehicles to be imported where such vehicles are intended for use by—and I would list them all, Madam Speaker:

- (a) funeral agencies, that is like hearses;
- (b) approved staff of foreign embassies and other accredited representatives of foreign governments;
- (c) the staff of organizations in respect of which there exists reciprocal agreements with the Government of Trinidad and Tobago;
- (d) officials, advisors and experts assigned to the Government of Trinidad and Tobago by other governments under external aid or co-operative programmes;
- (e) approved staff of international agencies such as, for example, the United Nations and the Organization of American States, of which Trinidad and Tobago is a member;
- (f) the Government of Trinidad and Tobago;
- (g) a foreign service officer who owns such a vehicle and who is recalled to duty at headquarters, save that such an officer may not sell or transfer the vehicle during his period of service at headquarters or within a period of two years, whichever is shorter; and

- (h) a returning national of Trinidad and Tobago who:
  - (i) resided abroad for a continuous period of not less than five years and owned a vehicle for not less than three months immediately preceding the date of the application for permission to import, provided that such returning national may not sell or transfer the vehicle within a period of two years after its importation;
  - (ii) a returning national who intends to reside in Trinidad and Tobago permanently; and
  - (iii) a returning national who requires that the vehicle be for his own personal use.

Madam Speaker, the importation of left-hand drive vehicles in respect of the above categories, until February 1992, required the issue of an import licence by the Minister responsible for Industry. With the deletion from the import negative list of the above categories of vehicles, import licences are no longer a requirement. Although previously, licences were only issued for the importation of vehicles in accordance with the law, the Ministry of Trade, Industry and has noted that within recent years there have been legitimate requests for licences to import left-hand drive vehicles in circumstances at present which are not allowed or described in the Customs Act.

It has therefore been found necessary to seek an amendment to the Act to allow consideration to be given to such genuine requests. The ministry notes that prior to June of 1992, most of these left-hand drive vehicles which were imported under licence and in accordance with the law have been mainly for personal use.

Within recent times, however, there has been an upsurge in industrial activities which has resulted in an increase in applications to import left-hand drive vehicles which do not qualify under the existing law, and the vehicles requested are varied in terms of their use as well as their weight. Most of these are vehicles built for a specific use only and are not generally manufactured in the right-hand mode.

This Bill before this honourable House seeks to permit the importation of left-hand drive vehicles for purposes other than those which have been enunciated by section 45(2) of the Customs Act, but which the Minister responsible for Trade and Industry, after consultation with the Minister responsible for transportation, considers appropriate.

It is proposed to permit the importation of such vehicles by persons or organizations under the following circumstances:

- (a) vehicles which are being imported by persons who:
  - (i) were formerly citizens of Trinidad and Tobago and are returning to this country to take up permanent residence, after an absence abroad of at least five years;
  - (ii) such persons who have applied for restoration of citizenship;
  - (ii) such persons who would have owned the vehicles for not less than three months immediately preceding the date of application to import;
  - (iii) such persons who intend to reside in Trinidad and Tobago permanently; and
  - (iv) they require the vehicles for their own personal use, save that such persons may not sell or transfer the vehicles within a period of two years after their importation.

Once citizenship is restored, then the other criteria which I have just enunciated for (1), (iii) and (iv) to be met by the applicant, are the same requirements which are already under section 45(2) of the Customs Act.

In addition, it is intended to allow vehicles received as gifts by charitable, non-profit organizations or by institutions for the handicapped and which are to be used in the operation of these organizations or institutions. Madam Speaker, consideration will only be given to those organizations which the ministry is satisfied are bona fide non-profitable institutions for the handicapped, duly registered as such.

Another category, would be vehicles especially constructed for use in the petroleum, manufacturing, service or other industries approved by the Minister. Consultation will take place with the relevant ministry, for example, the Ministry of Energy in the case of the petroleum industry.

Other vehicles to be considered would be vehicles imported for use as taxis and sight-seeing buses for use in the tourism tour trade as part of the effort to develop the tourism industry.

Finally, Madam Speaker, it will include vehicles which are being imported temporarily for such purposes and subject to such conditions as the Minister may

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approve. Those conditions will be outlined for the benefit of the Comptroller of Customs and Excise, who will be responsible for monitoring them to ensure compliance.

These amendments are being proposed with the full understanding that the final approval for the importation of left-hand drive vehicles will rest with the Minister responsible for industry. It is envisaged that passage of this Bill will greatly relieve the hardships and inconvenience of several individuals and organizations that have been affected by the absence of legislative provisions in meeting their particular circumstances, relative to the importation of left-hand drive vehicles.

There are a number of industries which have been hard-pressed because of the absence of this amendment. This amendment is going to facilitate many businesses which have had great difficulty in sourcing specialized equipment for their use and which are made only in the left-hand drive mode.

I am, therefore, recommending that this amendment be considered by this honourable House. I trust that it will receive the support of this honourable House because there are a number of businesses which have been crying out very loudly for it.

Madam Speaker, I beg to move.

*Question proposed.*

**Mr. Krish Jurai** (*Nariva*): Madam Speaker, this Bill is intended to amend the Customs Act, Chap. 78:01, to permit the importation of left-hand drive vehicles other than those enumerated in section 45(2) of the Customs Act. The Bill, therefore, seeks to give the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism, after consultation with the Ministry of Transport, the authority for such importation. The Bill goes on to indicate who are allowed to import such vehicles.

The question I ask is: What is the haste to allow the importation of left-hand drive vehicles at this time? I am certainly not saying that we should not allow left-hand drive vehicles, but why the haste now when there is need for other pressing legislation in the country, particularly dealing with solving unemployment, crime, destitution, poverty and so forth? It is not a laughing matter, it is very serious and I am very surprised that the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West is laughing at this. It just goes to show how serious the PNM is about unemployment, destitution and poverty in this country today. That is why last week Friday there were so many people marching around the Red House.

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Madam Speaker, although, as I said, there is some justification for the importation of left-hand drive vehicles, particularly for the tourism industry, under subclause (4)(a)(i) to (v) this seems to be adequately covered at the moment. So I do not see the need, the necessity at this point to have this legislation passed in order to allow the importation of left-hand drive vehicles.

What I want to ask, is. If this is adequately covered at the moment, why is this included in the Bill? Is it that the Minister of National Security is inefficient and takes inordinately long to process applications for people who want to return to this country and regain their citizenship.

It seems as though this matter under consideration would give people the permission to bring these left-hand drive vehicles into the country prior to obtaining citizenship. This is something that we need to look at very carefully.

As far as the importation of vehicles for returning residents is concerned, this seems to be adequately covered by the existing legislation. Madam Speaker, when we look at subclause (4) (c) we see:

“vehicles specially constructed for use in the petroleum, manufacturing, service or other industries...”

There may be some justification for this and the country is likely to benefit in the long run. But what we need to look at, Madam Speaker, is the emphasis on the importing of left-hand drive vehicles and why similar emphasis is not placed on exports, so that this country would be able to export more to earn foreign exchange.

What we see is that the country today is in a very critical situation with respect to foreign exchange and here we are going to allow the importation of left-hand drive vehicles from countries that we would have to pay with hard currency. This is mainly from the United States of America.

What I am saying is that the Government should look towards giving incentives to the manufacturing sector. But what have they done so far? If we look at the Food and Drugs Division or the Bureau of Standards, these two important organizations are starved of funds. They cannot perform their functions effectively and hence we cannot take advantage of our export markets as we want to.

As you know, Madam Speaker, in the United States of America, the FDA is a very strong organization and they are very meticulous about what is allowed to be imported into their country. If we are looking to extend that market, we must be

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prepared to meet international standards. But if the organizations in Trinidad and Tobago that are supposed to provide these services are not geared towards that, how can we penetrate those markets? How can we earn foreign exchange? Yet, today they want to import left-hand drive American cars. I ask the question: How are we going to pay for this? The emphasis must be, if we want to import, we must be equally prepared to export. In addition to the Food and Drugs Division and the Bureau of Standards, we have an export agency in this country, the Export Development Corporation. What has been the function of that organization? Is that organization prepared so that manufacturers of Trinidad and Tobago can really enter those foreign markets?

My understanding is that this organization is also seriously short of funds to source markets abroad, to promote sales, to hold trade fairs as a form of boosting our exports to foreign countries. I am happy the prime Minister is here today. I am hoping that he will take note of this and will ensure that these organizations are geared to create the conditions that will facilitate the export of products from Trinidad and Tobago.

If we have nationals of Trinidad and Tobago who are returning to reside here and are allowed to bring left-hand drive vehicles—and I am referring particularly to those officers who are in overseas missions—the question I want to ask is: What has been the success rate? What is the purpose of these foreign missions and embassies?

I have in my hand a reply to a question which was given recently, and I see we have missions in London, Washington, New York. We have a mission to the United Nations; in New York we have the Consulate General; in Toronto, Ottawa, Caracas, Kingston, Geneva, another mission to the United Nations, Brasilia, New Delhi, Bridgetown, Brussels and Lagos.

When we look at the expenditure on these missions, the Trinidad and Tobago Government is paying over \$33 million per year to maintain them. These missions should not only serve nationals of Trinidad and Tobago who are residing in those countries. These missions should be made to perform the functions for Trinidad and Tobago in those countries of sourcing markets, seeing the type of goods and perhaps services that they need.

This is where the emphasis should be in our overseas mission. The sum of \$33 million a year is a lot of money. I do not know how old or new these figures are. If they are recent, that is fine; if they are old, they may need updating. So we need to upgrade the embassies if we do not have the funds to give to the EDC here.

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**2.35 p.m.**

We need to provide the funds to those missions and embassies so that they can source the markets and determine what those countries need. Perhaps they are doing so, but I want to emphasize here today that they ought to be doing much more for the benefit of Trinidad and Tobago. Madam Speaker, as I said earlier, if we wish to import left-hand drive vehicles, once we can pay for them, once we earn the foreign exchange, why can we not have an open market for left-hand drive vehicles, as for other vehicles?

Those of us who have travelled to North America: Canada, the United States and so on, have seen school buses in those countries painted in bright yellow—left-hand drive vehicles with flashing lights at the top and sides, designed to prevent accidents. Why does the Government not give consideration to the importation of those left-hand drive buses for our school children? We are in short supply of school buses in this country.

For the last year I have been pleading with the Government for two or three school buses for my constituency, Nariva, but to date, I have received none whatsoever. I am asking: What does the Government intend to do about the school buses for my constituency? If it cannot find the right type of buses in Trinidad, or Japan, then, it may consider bringing those left-hand drive buses, which will serve the needs of the school children, not only in my constituency, but throughout the country. We need more school buses. I am asking the Minister of Trade, Industry and Tourism to give some consideration to this—the importation of left-hand drive school buses and he will have our support. Tell us how many you wish to bring. Certainly we will support you.

Madam Speaker, in this Bill, when I looked immediately above section 45 (1)(u), something caught my eye. I think I ought to mention it because it has very detrimental consequences in the country today. It says, under the marginal note, "Goods prohibited to be imported":

"any toy gun which so closely resembles a firearm within the meaning of the Firearms Act, that it is capable of being mistaken therefor."

Madam Speaker, we have seen, within recent times during the Christmas season, the importation of a large number of toy guns, and even experts in firearms have difficulty in determining whether those are real guns or toy guns. Today I presume that many of these toy guns—I know we have real ones too—are being used in hold-ups, and particularly where tourists are concerned.

I presume the bandits can immediately determine who the tourists are, because once the tourists come here they hire a taxi at the airport, and those are left-hand drive vehicles. So if you see a left-hand drive vehicle coming from the airport, that is an easy target. I am not saying that they should not ride in left-hand drive vehicles, but I am saying the bandits can pinpoint exactly who the tourists are, and this is something that we need to examine very closely. The Government ought to be protecting those foreigners who are coming here in their large numbers, particularly at this time of the year. If they come here and are confronted with the kind of problems that exist now—they are being held up at gun point and robbed of everything they have—they would not have a good impression of Trinidad and Tobago and we would therefore be in the bad books of those countries. This would not be a good thing, especially for the tourist industry, for which the Minister said he wants to import vehicles.

While I am on the point of crime, Madam Speaker, I just want to read a small article from the *Guardian* of November 29, 1991 under the headline "MANNING ALARMED AT HIGH RATE OF CRIME". Madam Speaker, it says:

"The People's National Movement is convinced that economic growth and the resulting reduction in employment will in no small measure assist in reducing the high crime rate in the nation.' So said the PNM leader, Patrick Manning, while addressing the South Trinidad Chamber of Industry and Commerce, on Monday night, on a wide range of topics, one of which dealt with crime. The meeting took place at the Chamber's conference room, Cross-Crossing shopping centre, San Fernando. Manning said, 'In the last five years we have witnessed an alarming escalation in the incidence of violent crimes against the person. One of the most serious problems facing us today is the drug menace and many criminal offences are drug-related.' He told the Chamber that, together with the relief which will come when people are more gainfully employed, we will also have to pay immediate attention to upgrading our security forces and facilities. He said the police service has been completely demoralized and no longer has the means to fight crime effectively in the face of an increasingly daring criminal element."

This was in November 1991, when he was Patrick Manning, Madam Speaker, and I was surprised in 1993 when he is Prime Minister, he has come to this House and said he would use flexible motorbikes to fight crime. I still have not seen those flexible motorbikes yet.

So I say this in the context of what is taking place in the country today, especially to those people who are coming from abroad, not forgetting the locals.

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It is a serious situation. I say this because we are talking about the left-hand drive vehicles. I have here also, a number of articles dealing with airport bandits, and so forth, so I mention that in the context of the crime rate. We need to look very seriously at that.

I should have thought that the Government would have taken some emergency measures to handle this situation. It is escalating. Every day in the newspapers there is something on crime at the airport. What is the Government doing about it? Where is our National Security Minister? What is he doing about it? Is he too busy trying to pin some policeman because he walked around the Red House?

We need to consider how we are going to safeguard people who bring in left-hand drive vehicles to this country and are not allowed to sell them within two years. We have seen that the rate of stolen vehicles in this country has been increasing daily and even the experts have difficulty in determining which vehicles are stolen and which are not. Does it mean that someone cannot bring a vehicle and sell it to someone else within that period? A legal transfer need not take place, but it can be sold. What are we going to do to safeguard those illegal sales, if I may call them that? But it happens, Madam Speaker. I say this because a little later on, I shall come to another area where this is mentioned again. Subclause (4)(a) of the amendment, which is covered by section 45(2)(h) of the Customs Act 78:01 states, persons who:

"were formerly citizens of Trinidad and Tobago and are returning to the country to take up permanent residence after an absence of at least five years;"

**2.45 p.m.**

Madam Speaker, the only difference in this Bill, at subclause (4)(a) is:

"(ii) have applied for the restoration of citizenship;"

Furthermore, that the amendment is in the plural:

"...that such persons may not sell or transfer the vehicles within a period of two years after their importation."

Am I to assume, therefore, that a returning resident, once he has lived abroad and qualifies within the time limit, is allowed to bring more than one vehicle? It states "vehicles" here. So, I assume that this means that a person who has been abroad for a number of years, and has bought several vehicles and kept them in that country for more than three months is allowed to bring more than one vehicle. Perhaps, the Minister would enlighten me on that.

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The other point that follows logically, Madam Speaker, is the one on citizenship. Do people really change their citizenship after five years? Or do they change it every five years? I am at a loss to know what this means. I am at a loss to know why this measure about people changing their citizenship after five years is included here. I am beginning to wonder whether this Bill is not designed to suit certain persons.

One may recall, that in December 1986, when the PNM lost the general election, a number of PNM supporters, party-hacks and so on, who had raped and plundered the country over the previous 30 years, fled the country. They left the country and went to live in foreign lands. Lo and behold, in 1992, when the PNM is back in power, one sees them coming back home to roost. When these people fled to foreign countries, I wonder whether one of the conditionalities was that they had to take up foreign citizenship. And now that they want to come back, they are asking to be restored to Trinidad and Tobago citizenship. We need to look into that.

I am not saying that persons are not entitled to Trinidad and Tobago citizenship, far from it, but I am wondering what is taking place, because, suddenly, this piece of legislation is put in here. It is a well-known fact that the ex-PNM party chairman, Boysie Prevatt, had a flair for driving luxury, left-hand drive, American cars. Maybe he wants to come back and bring more than one left-hand drive vehicle. Who knows, maybe he will bring one for the Prime Minister.

Madam Speaker, based on what I have just said, it seems that this is why this piece of legislation is brought to this House today, and the motion on the Ombudsman's Report that we asked to be debated today, is not.

Madam Speaker, subclause (4)(a)(iii) states that the person must have

"owned the vehicles for not less than three months immediately preceding the date of application for import;"

and as I said earlier, perhaps, the person can import more than one vehicle. I am still at a loss to know, and I hope, as I said, that the Minister would throw some light on this.

Subclause (4)(a)(iv) states that the person must:

"intend to reside in Trinidad and Tobago permanently;"

This is in the old Act. I see it is put in here again, and I do not know whether the PNM insists that people must reside here. How are they going to determine

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whether someone is going to reside here permanently? They may apply, they may want to come back, but there is no way one can force them to live here permanently. So, I do not see the point of this being included here.

Madam Speaker, subclause (4)(b) states:

"vehicles received as gifts ..."

I know that the Trinidad and Tobago Government has been receiving a large number of vehicles as gifts over the years. What I would therefore like to know is whether a register of those vehicles received as gifts is kept. How many vehicles do we have which were received as gifts?

I have been told that some years ago, the Trinidad and Tobago Government received a fleet of cars from a foreign government. I understand that these vehicles were for the Police Service, but I was also told that some private citizens are driving these vehicles. I do not know how true it is. Maybe the Minister of National Security, the Prime Minister, the Minister of Trade, Industry and Tourism or the Minister of Works and Transport can throw some light on this matter.

Madam Speaker, if these vehicles are given to us as gifts by a foreign government for specific purposes, those vehicles ought to be used for those purposes; they cannot be passed on. We saw recently what happened in Guyana. When the new government came into power, they could not find vehicles. This is why I asked whether the Government has a register of such vehicles; who owned them and who are allowed to drive them.

Madam Speaker, subclause (4)(d) states:

"vehicles imported for use as taxis and, sightseeing buses for use in the Tourism Tour Trade;"

I should like to suggest that this be rephrased to read:

vehicles imported for use as sightseeing buses and taxis for use in the tourism tour trade.

I think this may prevent some ambiguity.

If one is talking about sightseeing buses, Madam Speaker, for use in the tourism tour trade, I congratulate the Minister of Trade, Industry and Tourism on his foresight; he is expecting that there will be a sudden gush of tourists coming into Trinidad and Tobago. The question I ask is: Where are the tourists going to

come from? What incentives are we giving to the tourists to come to this country? It seems that they anticipate that foreign tourists, be it foreigners or local people abroad—and I am thinking mainly of the foreign tourists—are going to come here in large numbers, a foresight which many Members and I on this side of the House do not share, that is why they are trying to push the Pride Project forward.

I think that the Government ought to look very seriously to determine whether the tourists are going to come here as they expect, bearing in mind what is happening every day at the airport. This is something that the Government needs to take into consideration very seriously before plunging into such an expensive project at this time, when money is a very scarce commodity in Trinidad and Tobago.

When the tourists come to this country, they want to feel safe to go to the beaches, tour the city and go out into the countryside. But how can tourists feel comfortable when the unemployment rate is so high; when there is crime and there is rape? The tourist would not want to come to this country. When we look at the condition of the roads, Madam Speaker, in my constituency, let me tell you— *[Interruption]* The Member for San Juan/Barataria has suffered herself, so why is she grumbling?

**2.55 p.m.**

Madam Speaker, I am sure you have heard about Stonehenge in England, as you were in England. Stonehenge is of relatively recent history. In my constituency there is a stone in the shape of an elephant, and the PNM Government determined by tests and samples that that stone is over 60 million years old. There is a plaque from the PNM stuck on it. I am disappointed they had to desecrate that stone. It is about that high, massive, in the shape of an elephant. They destroyed it. That is what the tourists want to see. But the Minister of Works and Transport would never provide the roads, so how can the tourist go there? I keep appealing to him to develop the road.

Next to that elephant-stone is a place called Coalmine. Do you know why they call it that? Perhaps the Prime Minister may not know, but there is actually coal that is mined as in foreign countries. There is coal in Coalmine Village near to the elephant stone. This is what the tourists want to see, even the local tourists. Trinidadians do not know about it. So if we develop the road, we can save a lot of money. Trinidadians can go there and see for themselves and we would earn foreign exchange from the foreign tourists who come here. But you want to bring

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left-hand drive vehicles and you do not want to repair the roads. You need wider roads. So if we want to attract tourism—

**Madam Speaker:** Can you give way to the Member? What point is he rising on?

**Mr. Casimire:** On a point of clarification. Madam Speaker, the Member for Nariva must not mislead this House. Coalmine has nothing to do with coal mining. I was born next to that village. He was not born there. He knows nothing about that. It is because of the burning coals from the forest why they probably called it Coalmine, not mining coal.

**Mr. Manning:** In the same way, Madam Speaker—I did not want to interrupt my friend—but a 60 million-year old stone is commonplace in Trinidad and Tobago. It is geological time. Clearly, the hon. Member needs a little more education on matters of this kind.

**Mr. K. Jurai:** Apparently that is why he has neglected Nariva so much.

But more seriously, the Prime Minister does not know the stone I am talking about and I will invite him to come and have a look at it so he can see for himself. If the PNM were not serious about that, they would never have placed a plaque on it. But I shall move on. I shall not quibble with the Prime Minister on what he has to say about stones.

As I was saying, when you bring left-hand drive vehicles into this country, you might possibly be assisting the bandits, because the driver is on the left-hand side of the road where the bandit will stand, so that is something we have to look at. I say this in the context of what is taking place in the country with the number of hold-ups. Even in one of today's newspapers, we see that a foreign tourist was robbed at one of the carnival fetes. So nobody is safe in Trinidad and Tobago any more. The Member for San Juan/Barataria is grumbling and mumbling and saying, that is not true.

**Mr. Haniff:** No, she is saying that she, too, is affected.

**Mr. K. Jurai:** Oh, she, too, is affected by the crime wave. Was it a left-hand drive vehicle she lost?

Madam Speaker, I do not want to go into details, but let me just read from the *Trinidad Guardian*, February 8, 1993, the headline says:

"Cops Devising New Moves to Combat Airport Robberies"

There is another headline on Friday, February 12. This is fairly recent:

"Three Airport Robbery Suspects Held."

There is another one here, February 15:

"Police in Shoot-out with Airport Bandit."

Madam Speaker, this speaks for itself. It says much about the seriousness of the crime situation in the country, more particularly as it affects the foreign tourist, because this is going to give Trinidad and Tobago a very bad image in foreign countries.

The question I want to ask is: If we allow the importation of left-hand drive vehicles in this country, when it is approved by the Minister of Trade, Industry and Tourism and the Minister of Works, who is going to monitor that situation to determine what should and should not be allowed? I think unless we, as parliamentarians in this country, cannot have some control over that, in the form of a report, in the form of it being published in the *Gazette* as to who has applied to bring in left-hand drive vehicles, who is returning from abroad—we must have a say in controlling the influx of left-hand drive vehicles into this country.

I think Parliament is the right place to monitor that. I hope that the Minister of Trade, Industry and Tourism will enlighten us on that today and tell us what machinery he has in place so that we can monitor the situation with respect to the importation of left-hand drive vehicles into this country. I thank you.

**The Minister of Works and Transport (Hon. Colm Imbert):** Madam Speaker, I rise to support this Bill and just to give some information, particularly with regard to subclause (4)(c) and (d). In many instances, there are vehicles specifically manufactured for the service sector which are not readily available in right-hand drive, and there is no legitimate reason to restrict their importation. This Bill specifically seeks to address that. That is all I wish to say. Thank you.

**Miss Pamela Nicholson (Tobago West):** Madam Speaker, I want to be brief here. In this Bill to amend the Customs Act, Chap. 78:01" clause 3(4)(d) says:

"vehicles imported for use as taxis and sightseeing buses for use in the Tourism Tour Trade;"

I do not know if I am very clear that that is an area that will be addressed. For example, I believe that people probably might have been lobbying in the country to have buses which are left-hand drive vehicles—taxi drivers and these people. But I should like to address the Tobago perspective, because if one is dealing with tourism in Trinidad and Tobago, the centre-piece must be Tobago. If the centre-

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piece is Tobago, when you bring in buses and you destroy air transport in Tobago, what are you doing?

**3.05 p.m.**

Madam Speaker, I come here all the time addressing the whole question of sea and air transport in respect of Tobago and how it affects the economy and how it will impact on the economy of Trinidad and Tobago. It is stated that in March, four of the five largest aircraft will not be coming to Tobago. In other words, you had a number of flights that came straight from Europe to Tobago which is what the tourists want. The European tourists are in the majority who come—I am talking about foreign tourists. I am not talking about our local tourists.

If tourism is something that we want to use to bring in foreign exchange and to diversify the economy, you cannot look at it piecemeal. You have to look at it in totality. So that if you want to give people left-hand drive buses to transport tourists; buses to do this and that, the question I am asking the hon. Minister is: What is being done with regard to the whole development of tourism? You could bring all kinds of buses you want to bring—

**Mr. Manning:** Madam Speaker, with the greatest deference, I really wonder how the hon. Member has arrived at aircraft, when we are dealing with left-hand drive vehicles. I fail to see the relevance.

**Miss P. Nicholson:** All I am trying to say is, if you are dealing with tourism you cannot deal with one area. *[Interruption]* The left-hand vehicles are for what? They are imported for use as taxis and sight seeing buses for use in the tourism tour trade. Very relevant and sound! You cannot appreciate this. I am very sorry, Mr. Prime Minister, because all kinds of things are around you. You are not on solid ground. The ground is slipping so you cannot appreciate the level of the discourse this afternoon.

The point I am making is that what happens in Tobago is very important for the economy of Trinidad and Tobago. From around 1987/1988, one saw a strong development of tourism in Tobago, especially from 1989, when you had more airlines entering Tobago as well as an introductory service direct from London to Tobago. Madam Speaker, when I hear certain statements made by hon. Members, I expect that the Government Members would come and behave themselves very properly to prevent certain kinds of things emerging in the House. When you read the newspapers, it looks as if it is the Opposition taking all kinds of action.

Madam Speaker, it is people who are not associated with tourism, people who do not understand what is happening in the island who cannot appreciate this argument. That is why you have a Prime Minister who cannot address the monetary situation of the country; it is only seen piecemeal fashion instead of a holistic perspective, how it affects the whole country.

I am saying, if you do not have tourists on the island, for whom are you buying the buses to take on tours? That is my question. I am not making any big argument. I am just asking the Minister to tell me if there is a breakdown in the air transport service in Tobago with respect to BWIA— *[Interruption]* I saw you crying last night. Why do you not keep quiet? Madam Speaker, could you ask the hon. Minister to keep quiet? I do not want to hurt him this afternoon. I know he is in pain. They cannot appreciate the point.

I believe what the Minister is trying to do is to help our people who might be asking for the left-hand drive buses which would be used to take the tourists on tours. If you have a 25-seater bus you can take a group of 15, 25 or 30 or whatever it is. I am saying that if the other area breaks down there would not be any tourists to transport.

In Tobago, even the hoteliers are already saying that they expect in six months' time to see a big breakdown of what they have been struggling to build up. BWIA has informed the Tobagonian who is working at Crown Point Airport and the Tobago hoteliers what they are going to do. Everyone is telling you from the time the tourists know that they have to go through all the islands to get to Tobago, they are not coming. What would happen to the development of tourism to make it the industry that you want for Tobago, so that Tobago can play a role in the economy of Trinidad and Tobago? That is the question. I am saying you must address the whole question—do not just come and talk about "customs and bus". You should be here this afternoon telling us how you are going to correct this new weakness that is coming up with BWIA and also the problem of the non-availability of the other airlines that should do the airbridge work.

If the people would have to return to Trinidad to pick up all their flights, it would deteriorate. It is a pitiful, painful system to travel for a day, a day and a half or for two days, come to Piarco Airport and then to struggle for hours at Piarco wondering whether you would get a plane to get to Tobago. We are saying that your airline system should be such that it must land in Tobago and let the tourists disembark there. From a Tobago perspective, it is only when you do something like that I could see your buses for your tourism tour trade transport being put to

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use. Any time you are dealing with transport you must deal with it in totality—what is happening on the ground, what is happening in the air, what is happening on the sea.

I am worried because we have to face this. We have a whole economic downfall in Trinidad and Tobago today and your intelligence and vision must be used to the greatest extent in order that you may be able to cope with the problems that confront us. When you have a situation as in an island such as Tobago, which is an equal part of Trinidad and Tobago, where, for example, besides tourism, the only other employment agency in the island is the Government—when the Government used to give \$20 million and \$30 million to the Works Department and they could only now give \$9 million—it means that more than half of those people will be going home. So you have to diversify the economy.

You can strengthen the tourist industry. And if you strengthen the tourist industry, what could happen is that you can take care of them in other areas. It is against that background I am making my point.

All I am asking, from a tourism perspective, is: Are you going to give buses to end up in a year or two carrying nobody? Or, are you going to give buses because you are addressing the problems all around so that there will be people for the drivers to transport? Are they going to take their moneys to buy a big bus and then transport nobody? That is the question I am asking.

I should just like the hon. Minister, who I think is also the Minister of Tourism, to clarify these points. I am just posing the question for the Tobagonians, for the hoteliers and the taxi drivers.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**3.15 p.m.**

**Mr. Chandresh Sharma** (*Fyzabad*): Madam Speaker, the Member for Diego Martin East, I suspect, in keeping with his height and short presentation, indicated that in subclause (4) (c) some vehicles are not available in the right-hand drive for the petroleum industry. That is not so at all.

**Mr. Imbert:** Madam Speaker, would the Member just give way? I said that some vehicles are not readily available.

**Mr. C. Sharma:** Given so, the point is that vehicles are available in right-hand drive from England and Japan as well. Recently we saw the coming of a

British gas company to Trinidad and Tobago and they are dealing with only right-hand drive vehicles. I thought I would educate him on that aspect. In his presentation, the Minister indicated that the Bill is to do a number of things, but mainly, it is for the importation of left-hand drive vehicles which will contribute to some economic recovery as well.

You would recall in an earlier presentation the Member for Couva North spoke about an economic summit or conference. Perhaps, we can see the clear need for that, even more so now. I make this point because if such a conference should take place, there will be a number of local investors and persons who have money abroad who may want to bring those vehicles down here and do business, so that we can save on foreign exchange. It will be one way of getting people to bring their large sums of money from abroad.

Another area of the proposals is that they are to be used in the tourism tour trade as taxis and sightseeing buses. We do not know what constitutes the tourism tour trade. The question is: Can these vehicles be obtained on the local market?

Some time ago, the Member for San Fernando East, at the opening of a car sales outlet in San Fernando, made the point: Why do we not look or explore the possibility of refurbishing used vehicles in Trinidad and Tobago. If on one hand the Member for San Fernando East, in his capacity as Political Leader and Prime Minister says, 'Let us refurbish the old vehicles in the country and give work to many people' and on the other hand, the Minister says to import vehicles, they are not sure what they really want.

It goes further. What prevents an individual from importing a left-hand drive vehicle for use as a taxi for the tourism tour trade, and using it as a regular taxi? There are no safety measures. What disturbs me a great deal is subclause (4) (e) which states "vehicles which are being imported temporarily". How did they arrive at this? This needs clarification.

Another area is the spare parts for these left-hand drive vehicles. Where are they going to come from? What source of income will be used? Will people apply for foreign exchange to buy parts? I am trying to visualize these vehicles being used in the petroleum industry. I come from the constituency of Fyzabad, where a lot of oil is available, but the roads there are not prepared to receive these vehicles.

The Member for Diego Martin East has not done a single thing to date to repair any road there. We are talking about roads which are contributing tremendously to the national treasury. A lot of oil is passing through there. The

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roads are in disrepair. Would an investor want his vehicles on those roads? The answer is certainly, no. On one hand, they cannot bring a number of vehicles, and on the other hand, they do not have the roads for them.

Again, Trinidad and Tobago has a very high incidence of road accidents. A number of factors are responsible for that. The main factor is the condition of the roads. They are going to have left-hand drive vehicles, but have they done any research or groundwork to determine the effects? They are aware that the health facilities cannot take care of accidents. The fire service is without ambulances, for instance.

We will end up with a number of left-hand drive vehicles. The roads are very narrow. Most of the vehicles are coming from the United States and their vehicles are very large. They will take up a large area of the roadway. We will look at some traffic hazards.

Over the years there have been millions of dollars worth of vehicles that have been held up at the wharf, at the port of entry in Port-of-Spain, and lately, at Point Lisas. For some reason, the Customs refused to pass them. There were always queries about the cost of these vehicles. How is the Minister going to make this particular accommodation?

If a particular person says he paid \$5,000 for vehicle X and the Minister decides that he has paid more, how long will this vehicle sit there? We have seen thousands of vehicles just rotting away; some of them the parts have been stolen; some times the people get fed up and just leave them and proceed with their own business.

Those are some of the main areas on which I wanted to touch. I hope that the Minister will be kind enough to indicate the corrective measures.

Thank you.

**Mr. Trevor Sudama** (*Oropouche*): Madam Speaker, I want to endorse what the previous speakers have said about the strange sense of priority of this Government. Here we are in a situation in Trinidad and Tobago, massive retrenchments; increase in utility rates; economy on the downslide; crime on the upsurge as never before; erosion of the standard of living of the vast majority of the population, and in this context what we do have this Government coming with is an amendment to an Act to import left-hand drive vehicles.

It shows the triviality of their thinking, as if there is nothing more this House has to occupy itself with than the urgencies of the Minister of Trade, Industry and

Tourism, as to how many left-hand drive vehicles could be facilitated in Trinidad and Tobago.

I have risen to ask a few questions—*[Interruption]* Madam Speaker, he probably knows about inability. He probably has personal experience, but on the other hand, except he is a medical man, which I do not know he is, he can only speak from experience—and hope that in the process, I will get a few answers.

The first question is of course, and I have already posed it: Why is importing of left-hand drive vehicles so urgent that it cannot await the bringing forward of other legislation? On this matter I want to make the point as to how this Government proceeds.

Here we are being told there is a Cabinet decision to suspend the increases which have been voted by the PNM Members in this House. Does that Cabinet decision apply to all the Members of Parliament and public servants whose pay and perquisites have been increased? Why is this Government afraid to bring that measure back to the House to have the House vote against it, to have it formally put as a matter which this House having agreed upon, the Government had to retract because of the enormous pressure put on it by both the public and the Opposition? Why can it not bring it back to the House and have a retraction of that measure? Why is it a Cabinet decision? To apply to whom? That is the context in which I speak about their priorities for legislation brought to this House.

**Mr. Panday:** Ministers are making different arrangements for importing cars.

**3.25 p.m.**

**Mr. T. Sudama:** I have to raise the question of the importation of \$.5 million motorcars and those who have not taken a vow of poverty. I have to raise that as a question as it relates to left-hand drive motor cars.

I want to let this House know the manner in which this Government treats Parliament. A motion, voted for by them, has been passed in Parliament, which is the supreme legislative body and which is supposed to be superior to the Executive body. They then make a private decision as members of the Executive to overturn that decision; its applicability we do not know.

We have already made our position very clear with respect to the increase in salaries. We voted against it and since November we have been asking for the Government to retract. We are not taking it. We have said so time and time again.

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I should have preferred if the Government had brought this matter to this House and told us why they were forced to retract the decision to increase their salaries and perquisites. I raise it in the context of their priorities in bringing legislation to this House.

Let me now address the hon. Minister and his contribution to this debate. I want to find out whether this measure, which will bring many more left-hand drive cars into the country, is part of the trade liberalization programme that the Government has embarked upon. Of course, it is going to increase our imports; of course, it is going to increase the importation of certain types of vehicles, making it freer. The Minister has been one of the great crusaders—champions of trade liberalization—how it is going to transform the economy of Trinidad and Tobago; how we shall become more efficient; how we shall have growth and how in the next few years Trinidad and Tobago will achieve the status of paradise, through trade liberalization, under the PNM Government.

If they feel that left-hand drive vehicles should be imported freely into the country, why the current restrictions? Why are they permitting importation of only certain left-hand drive vehicles into Trinidad and Tobago for certain purposes? What is the rationale? Why not open the market? If they feel that it is a good thing for the rest of the economy, why is it not a good thing for left-hand drive motor cars? Let us open up, let us free up, let us have efficient allocation of resources; let us have rationalization of the transport and motor car industries, according to your recently acquired philosophy. Why not?

What is the justification for the continuation of the current restrictions imposed with respect to the importation of left-hand drive vehicles into the country? If you have a rationale, if you have a reason, I should like to hear of it. If it is a question of traffic hazards, if it is a question of traffic management in Trinidad and Tobago, then do, for Heaven's sake, say so and give this House some kind of rationale for the uncertainty and contradiction in your policy as it relates to the importation of left-hand drive vehicles. Will it create a traffic problem for this country if we import, let us say, 50 per cent left-hand drive vehicles and 50 per cent right-hand drive vehicles? Will it create hazardous conditions on the road? Will it make it more difficult for the police to carry out their functions in the area of traffic management? What indeed is the problem and why this obscene haste to get through this piece of legislation?

We have been told that there have in the past been legitimate requests to amend the Act. From whom? I should have expected the Minister to come to this

House and give us an explanation and elaborate on sources. This Government comes to this House to pass legislation to pander to special interests and special individuals. If they have information on these legitimate requests why not share it with Members of the House? Who has been battering them to import left-hand drive vehicles in this country? Companies? Individuals? For what purposes? Give us an idea. Give us the names of institutions, companies and individuals who may have special problems. Why not give us an indication? Once they come here and talk about legitimate requests and say nothing further, we are left to wonder where these legitimate requests are coming from. Party supporters of the PNM? Which grouping? *[Interruption]* They cannot afford it? Well he can. It is a \$500,000 BMW motor car he purchased. Was it left hand or right hand drive? He purchased it because he has not taken a vow of poverty, just as the other Members on the other side. They want to keep the rest of the population in poverty and destitution, but they have taken no such vows.

I have to come to the question of what arrangements have been made for the elimination of purchase taxes or import duties or any other taxes on the purchase of imported motor cars by Ministers of Government. It is very important for this country to know the revenue that has been forgone. You may not take an increase in salary—having been forced by the population to retract that decision—but what you may very well end up doing is importing many expensive cars and reselling them and making a killing. So that there are different ways of earning income and supplementing it. This country would like to know how many Ministers of Government are, in fact, inclined to import expensive vehicles, use them for a specified period, sell them over and in the process make a killing.

### **3.35 p.m.**

I want to know, further, what is the differentiation between the taxes which are forgone by Ministers—for which instructions have been given—and those for ordinary Members of Parliament. What is the differentiation with respect to the facilities they get for buying new motor cars as against the ordinary Member of this Parliament?

The Minister goes on to talk about the upsurge in industrial activity. I am looking for this upsurge in industrial activity. Does an upsurge mean that something is happening so much out of the ordinary? Where in Trinidad and Tobago is this industrial activity taking place? In the energy sector? Do you know what is actually happening in the service sector of the energy sector? There is no upsurge in industrial activity there.

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If he is talking about the investment that Amoco is making offshore in order to drill for natural gas, why do we need left-hand drive vehicles? They are making an investment, I understand, to drill for natural gas. Is it that these left-hand drive vehicles will go on to the seas? *[Interruption]* Oh, you need one for oil. Am I correct?

The Minister's contribution in presenting this Bill is amazing, the rationale for bringing this measure here—an upsurge in industrial activity which has led to requests. Therefore, if they have to justify to this House, why not tell us from whom the requests are coming?

They need a specific type of vehicle because of this upsurge in industrial activity. Well, I am not denying that perhaps there may be need for a specific type of vehicle, but why not tell us that and what size is required and by which company? Which company has been making these requests of you? This is merely to hoodwink this population that there is industrial activity in Trinidad and Tobago and to ask them to hope for some kind of economic growth and better times ahead. That is the only context in which I can see this phrase being used, “upsurge in industrial activity”. Where?

The Minister goes on to say that a number of industries are hard-pressed. They are hard-pressed because they cannot get left-hand drive vehicles? Is this holding up the operations? Their operations have been forestalled because they cannot get a left-hand drive vehicle? Are they telling that to this House? They are hard-pressed because of this factor and, therefore, the urgency of this Bill becomes relevant.

Well, if that is the case, could they tell us how they were hard-pressed, which companies have been hard-pressed? Could they tell us that in this House so that we would have some justification for their bringing this measure to this House?

The final approval for these imports is going to lie with the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism. Why? If the rules are clear as to the conditions under which left-hand drive vehicles are being imported into this country, if they are transparent, why does the Minister need to give the final approval? Could not a body be set up to which the rules would be known, to administer the rules, and an application can be made to that body and that body approves or rejects according to the rules by which it operates? Why does a Minister have to get involved in this at all to give the final approval for importation? Is it a question of accretion of power to the Minister so that he then will decide who gets approval and who does not?

This has to do with the whole transparency of Government's operations. Because when public servants and Ministers make these decisions, you cannot query their decisions. You do not know on what basis these decisions are made because it is all part of a secret Government. It is all part of the bureaucracy, making decisions which are not open to the public for overview and the Minister making decisions which cannot be questioned.

I want to raise the question again: In the event that the Minister refuses what may be considered a legitimate application for the importation of a left-hand drive vehicle, what recourse does an aggrieved party have? We do not know the basis of his refusal. He and the bureaucracy makes that decision. It is not transparent. We do not know the factors which have been taken into account and someone is aggrieved. What is that person to do? Merely accept the decision of the Minister as final because he has the final decision?

Does the aggrieved person have any other recourse in the matter? Do not tell me that he can take the matter to court. Even if he had that option, the cost of taking a matter to court is rather time-consuming, expensive and beyond the means of the vast majority of citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. It is a non-recourse. So what do we do? We accept the Minister's decision. Could the Minister indicate to this House if someone is aggrieved with his decision what recourse that person has? Because he seems to be the final arbiter in this matter of granting licences and approvals.

Now, granting licences and approvals places enormous power in the hands of a Minister or a Member of the Government. Therefore, we would like to know on this side if that power is exercised in a way that can be questioned, that there can be an overview of those powers, oversight and supervision of ministerial activity.

This is why we have been asking from time to time to let us set up committees of this House—in order to supervise the functions and decisions of Government Ministers and, in fact, their policies. That is a common practice in the mother Parliament in the United Kingdom.

When was the last time the Prime Minister was in the United Kingdom? He should go on a parliamentary course. There are over 20 committees of Parliament in the United Kingdom which oversee the administration and policy decisions of the various ministries and departments of Government. When we try to inject some proposals for parliamentary reform in this country, we face this negative attitude of the Member for San Fernando East, based on a certain inclination he has, a certain kind of conservatism compounded by ignorance and that is why we cannot have any parliamentary reform in Trinidad and Tobago.

**Mr. Valley:** Madam Speaker, I should like the House to note that the committees under the English system really look at the implementation of Government policies rather than the supervision of Government policies. They acknowledge that Government's policies are the right of the Government.

**Mr. B. Panday:** Do you want me to reply to that now? Why not debate it? That is the stupidity that has this House where it is. Why not get up and debate it so I would answer you. Hiding behind skirts, that is what he does.

**Mr. T. Sudama:** Madam Speaker, we have in this Bill before us a facility which is supposed to assist former citizens of Trinidad and Tobago returning to the country to take up residence after an absence of at least five years. Is the objective of this provision to entice former citizens of Trinidad and Tobago back into the country? If that is the objective, why an absence of five years? After an absence of two years they may want to return to this country. Why five years, why the magic figure?

If that is one of the objectives of this Bill, to try to entice citizens of Trinidad and Tobago back into this country for the purpose of permanent residence, they ought to address the question why the citizens left in the first place. Why did the citizens leave Trinidad and Tobago in the first place?

Does the Government think they left Trinidad and Tobago so they could come back with an imported left-hand drive vehicle? They left Trinidad and Tobago because they have no confidence in the Government of this country, because they have no security for their person and their property, because of the escalating crime rate in Trinidad and Tobago for them and the few jobs that are being created are under the control of the PNM and are being dispensed through discriminatory practices. This is why they left Trinidad and Tobago.

Does the Government think these people will come back here because Government makes a law that they can bring back their left-hand drive vehicles to the country? They must be joking as to the reasons why people have left and why they may wish to return. So that, if the Government has that as its aim, of trying to entice and encourage people with left-hand drive vehicles to come back to Trinidad and Tobago, I do not know that it will have much success in that exercise.

I want to raise another issue, and this relates to vehicles being received as gifts by charitable, non-profit organizations or by institutions of the handicapped to be used in the operation of these organizations and institutions. These are left-hand drive vehicles. We have not dealt with the whole question of disposing of left-

hand drive vehicles. Having had them imported into Trinidad and Tobago, what happens with respect to their disposal? This has been partly addressed. Citizens who come back to Trinidad and Tobago have to keep their vehicles for two years before they dispose of them.

When a charitable non-profit organization gets a left-hand drive vehicle and, presumably, it would have been able to bring it into the country without having to pay certain taxes, what happens when that organization decides to dispose of this left-hand drive vehicle? What are the traffic regulations or the regulations by the traffic control department and so on, the Licensing Department with respect to these disposals? Could this provision be abused by these non-profit organizations? We should like to get some idea as to what happens when we come to the general disposal of left-hand drive vehicles in this country.

I should have thought that the Minister of Works and Transport would have made some contribution to this debate, because it touches on his portfolio, bringing in left-hand drive vehicles, and the consequence of traffic management. We are already in an appalling situation with respect to traffic management, the number of accidents—and fatal accidents—the road conditions in this country, which make driving a virtual nightmare. But the Minister got up to say that the vehicles are required for the service sector. This is his great contribution to this debate—that the vehicles are required for service sector. Now, what exactly is the service sector? Does he know the range of the service sector?

For a Minister responsible for transport in this country, he displays a level of ineptitude and ignorance which is amazing. He comes here to get up to say they are required for the service sector and that is all this House needs to know, and he does not have an idea what the service sector constitutes. Is it an economic, industrial or a social term he is using? What is the economic sector? It just betrays the level of the Ministers on that side, to come to this House to make a statement like that—and the only statement he is capable of making. Maybe they have put a ban on him not to say too much because he is under some heavy manners with respect to his other activities outside this House. So he cannot talk too much. He cannot open his mouth.

It is the way they operate government. Here we have a situation where the Minister's name has been called in matters which are of public concern, savouring of irregularities and corruption to the extent that they have to retract their decision on Pegasus and the Pegasus deal, and this Prime Minister comes to this House to mislead the House to tell the House that there was only one report from Justice Collymore.

**Madam Speaker:** I think the Member is straying a little bit at this point. Maybe he can get back to the Bill.

**Mr. T. Sudama:** Madam Speaker, I just want to make the point that that matter ought to be a priority to come before this House. Here is a Prime Minister who has inveigled an ex-judge to change a report, and he still sits there as Prime Minister. It is gross impropriety and irresponsibility on the part of a Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago to interfere with the independence of a commissioner. Yet, they sit there as if nothing has happened. It just shows the standards which they set for themselves.

Then they come here to this House and talk about importing left-hand drive cars, as if this is a matter of utmost urgency and importance and without which the whole system would collapse in Trinidad and Tobago; as if the upsurge in industrial activity would be no more if we cannot import left-hand drive cars. The Minister is inundated with requests for the importation of left-hand drive motor cars and the whole parliamentary agenda seems to hinge on this Bill to amend the Customs Act to allow more importation of left-hand drive motor cars into Trinidad and Tobago. You see the absurdity that we are confronted with as Members of the Opposition when they bring legislation to this House?

How will the greater importation of more left-hand drive vehicles into Trinidad and Tobago affect the role of the police in traffic management, the control of traffic hazards, the control of crime and criminality on the roads and the breaking of traffic rules and so on? How will that impact?

To take this measure in isolation does not help. To take this measure merely as a facility to assist certain people to bring in left-hand drive motor cars does not look at the larger picture of what the consequences are for the travelling public of this country, for Trinidad and Tobago as a whole. When they are overwhelmed by the consequences, then no doubt they will come with further legislation to deal with that problem. That just goes to show you that it is either the Government has no foresight as to what it is doing, or it simply does not care what it is doing, or it is simply pandering to special interests, and that has been the *raison d'être* of the PNM—pandering to special interests for one reason or the other. And I suspect that is the real reason why this Bill is before us today.

Then there is the question of giving approval for left-hand drive vehicles which may come into this country temporarily—left-hand drive vehicles which are not coming here for a specific purpose in the service sector or in the petroleum industry or elsewhere, but are coming here temporarily. Now, what exactly is

contemplated here? What is contemplated in bringing left-hand drive vehicles into Trinidad and Tobago temporarily and then exporting them out of Trinidad and Tobago? What situations are contemplated? I do not know.

Therefore, if they want us to support this measure, surely it is up to them to tell us what those situations are likely to be where there is need to import a vehicle here temporarily as a left-hand drive, whether you cannot get a right-hand drive vehicle, special vehicle for a special purpose and what is going to happen with respect to export.

Now, the other thing I want to find out is, when you import these vehicles temporarily, will they be subject to import duties and other taxes with respect to the registration of vehicles? Will they be subject to tax, and what happens when you export the vehicle out of Trinidad and Tobago? Will there be a rebate on those taxes which have been charged? What does "temporarily" mean? How many months, days or years? What is the definition of "temporary"? I have not seen a definition in the Bill as to what constitutes "temporary".

It is important. If they are contemplating non-payment of customs and import duties and other taxes with respect to vehicles which are imported temporarily, then we should like to know what is the nature of temporary; give some kind of indication to this House and not merely come here and just present a Bill. They are in the habit of doing this and I have complained time and time again about it. They come to this House and they read out the Bill to us, as if Members of the Opposition cannot read. When they come to present a Bill to this House they should justify the passing of the Bill to the House, not to come and read out the measure. They may read it out to the House if they need reading practice, but when they come here to present a measure, it is their duty to give justification why they want this House to pass the particular measure.

They just come here and make very brief and unenlightening statements as to the reason this Opposition should go along with their whims and fancies and, in fact, go along with treating this House with discourtesy and contempt as regards the functions of parliament in a parliamentary democracy.

They have grown so accustomed to executive dominance. They make decisions at their secret Cabinet meetings and they come here to this House so that this House would rubber stamp those decisions, and then they go outside and talk about functioning parliamentary democracy in Trinidad and Tobago. They have not got a clue. When we ask for reform of Parliament, we have absurd statements being made by the Prime Minister. He gives the impression that he is not aware of what is going on in other parliamentary democracies of the world.

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This Bill is before us, we cannot say yea or nay until we get some real justification for this measure being brought to this House at this particular juncture.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

**The Minister of Trade, Industry and Tourism (Sen. The Hon. Brian Kuei Tung):** Madam Speaker, it is rather surprising that this matter which was presented with a simple statement ended up with contributions to the debate where most of the Members of the other side ended up in areas of total irrelevance and have left me with very little to respond to.

In attempting to understand where we are with this particular amendment, maybe I need to put it in a simpler manner so that hopefully I would be able to get through to Members on the other side.

There has been no change in Government's policy with respect to left-hand drive versus right-hand drive vehicles. As a matter of fact, last year we removed vehicles generally from the negative list and it was because of our concern in the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Tourism for the trade in used vehicles and the threats posed to safety on the roads that we, in turn, banned the importation of used vehicles.

**Mr. Sudama:** Would the member give way to a question? For a returning resident to Trinidad, is the Minister contemplating that he or she would be bringing a new vehicle, not a used vehicle into this country? He just said that he banned the importation of used vehicles.

**Sen. The Hon. B. Kuei Tung:** Madam Speaker, generally this amendment that I am proposing is intended to address both new and used vehicles, depending on the circumstances for which they are brought. The thing is, we do not want to encourage the influx of left-hand drive vehicles.

**Mr. Sudama:** Why?

**Sen. The Hon. B. Kuei Tung:** Because of reasons the Member himself has advanced; reasons of traffic management and safety.

**Mr. Sudama:** On a point of order. I have advanced no reasons whatsoever. I asked questions. I advanced no reasons. If he has reasons, I should like to know them.

**Sen. The Hon. B. Kuei Tung:** Madam Speaker, there is really every intention in this to facilitate people who during the year that I have been in office

have sought to legitimately bring in left-hand drive vehicles and have found that there is no basis in law for them to do so.

When I enquired of the officials in my Ministry as to how the previous administration, of which these gentlemen were a part, were able to bring them in, I was told that they went to Cabinet and, therefore, got Cabinet approval to get these vehicles. When I enquired whether I should go to Cabinet for it, I was told that the Attorney General in the previous administration advised their Cabinet that they have no such authority to allow these vehicles to be brought in because the law was specific under which left-hand driven vehicles could be brought into Trinidad and Tobago. I will do no such thing. I will not go to Cabinet and ask Cabinet to allow us to bring in vehicles when the law does not permit us to do so.

I am here this afternoon asking the House to address a problem which we face and which problem I hope to be able to explain a little further as I go along.

#### **4.05 p.m.**

Madam Speaker, the questions of citizens who have renounced their citizenship and now wish to apply for restoration of citizenship is a situation where the previous law says that a returning national is allowed, under clear conditions, to bring in a left-hand drive vehicle.

This is the old law that exists:

"45(2)(h) a returning national of Trinidad and Tobago who—

- (i) resided abroad for a continuous period of not less than five years;
- (ii) intends to reside in Trinidad and Tobago permanently; and
- (iii) requires the vehicle for his personal use."

But, however, a citizen who has renounced his citizenship and now seeks to have it restore, cannot be described as a returning national. So this amendment merely seeks to redress a situation in which a citizen whose citizenship is now restored is placed on a lesser footing than a national who is restored, but the circumstances remain the same.

So that all it seeks to do is to say that former citizens are being put in the same position, having restored their citizenship that is, as a returning national; and the circumstances remain the same. So that they too are required to have owned the vehicle for not less than three months, to have resided abroad for not more than five years, they must intend to take up permanent residence and they must want the vehicle for their personal use. That is the only purpose of this particular clause

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3(4)(a). It is not intended for purpose other than to allow people who are legitimately seeking to return here, to restore their citizenship and bring their personal belongings into Trinidad and Tobago.

On the question of foreign exchange, it is not the intent of the Government to encourage, as I said earlier on, the importation of left-hand drive vehicles and, therefore, the use of scarce foreign exchange. It is mainly intended to facilitate people who have legitimate claims and who can be allowed to bring in these left-hand drive vehicles under special circumstances. So that in the case of a new left-hand drive vehicle which is given to a charitable organization and which qualifies under the description that has been given, I see no reason why they must not be allowed to receive these gifts; and in such cases there is no remittance of foreign exchange to purchase these vehicles.

The hon. Minister of Works has indicated that there is specialized equipment which is required and generally is not readily available other than in the left-hand drive mode. This is because, in the main, these vehicles have been sourced in countries where they are made or used where left-hand drive vehicles are the order of the day. For the sake of argument, I have been approached by BWIA which wants to import left-hand drive equipment for cargo purposes which, generally, will not be used on the roads of Trinidad and Tobago, but which will be required for airport purposes and which you find are more readily available for specialized purposes in the left-hand drive mode. That is a service vehicle and one for which there is a legitimate application by BWIA which they need in order to do their cargo handling.

Similarly the oil-servicing equipment companies find that they—as a matter of fact, I have had an application from Schlumberger, for some time now, which we have not been able to address because of this kink in the law, and I am hoping to be able to address this because there are problems in the oil-servicing business where equipment brought in is left-hand drive and cannot be used on the roads because it is not allowed to be imported. So that, again, we have a circumstance where service equipment is required for specialized uses and which must, unfortunately, be allowed only in the left-hand drive mode.

I have been approached by a number of taxi drivers. If you will observe, there were a number of left-hand drive vehicles that were brought in by taxi-drivers, particularly in areas that served the hotels and both the taxi drivers and their potential passengers, who are tourists, tend to favour the large American cars which are, again, in the left-hand drive mode. I have had to tell them that,

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unfortunately, we are not allowed to give them the authority to import left-hand drive vehicles; and some of these vehicles have really become old, over the years. People have been pressing me with respect to the importation of left-hand drive taxis. This measure seeks to allow these people to replace their existing taxis by left-hand drive vehicles.

Finally, Madam Speaker, on the question of vehicles which are being imported temporarily, last year I was also approached by a film crew which wanted to make a film in Trinidad and Tobago, but needed to bring in a specialized vehicle which is not available in Trinidad and Tobago and, again, they were not allowed to bring it in for this purpose. Now this is a temporary purpose. Sometimes the filming can take between 6 months and a year and there are circumstances and conditions which are laid down specially for these people to bring it in. This particular clause is going to allow the Minister, in consultation with the Minister of Works, to be able to determine under what conditions this left-hand drive vehicle will be brought in temporarily. The question of duties will be left to the Minister of Finance, and Customs because there are specific circumstances in law under which they are either required to pay a bond or specific duties and apply for rebate upon re-export.

Madam Speaker, I hope, very quickly, I have been able to give some clarification as to the purpose of this amendment.

**Miss Nicholson:** You have not given any.

**Sen. The Hon. B. Kuei Tung:** The amendment merely seeks, as I said, Madam Speaker, to facilitate people who, in my view, have been aggrieved or have been put at great disadvantage because they have not been allowed to bring in—

**Miss Nicholson:** Madam Speaker, I should just like to ask the Minister if he forgot to answer my question. I am speaking about the livelihood of a people. There is a problem and we all know that.

**Sen. The Hon. B. Kuei Tung:** Madam Speaker, I am aware that left-hand drive vehicles are not something that should be encouraged. As a matter of fact, the whole purpose of having an amendment to this is not really to discourage it, but to allow very few circumstances under which it will be allowed. The circumstances themselves are fairly clear-cut, they are known and understood and people have no difficulty in understanding the amendment under which they are able to make an application and have it approved.

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**4.15 p.m.**

Now, Madam Speaker, I am really at a loss to find points to respond to, with respect to this debate. I would like to recommend this Bill to this honourable House. It would certainly allow the officers in the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Tourism an opportunity to do what is required in order to ensure that individuals and organizations have, what we consider to be, a legitimate reason for importing a left-hand drive car into Trinidad and Tobago.

It is, therefore, my pleasure to invite this honourable House to support this bill and I beg to move that it be now read a second time. I thank you, Madam Speaker.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Bill accordingly read a second time.*

*Bill committed to a committee of the whole House.*

*House in committee.*

*Clauses 1 and 2 ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

*Clause 3.*

*Question proposed, That clause 3 stand part of the Bill.*

**Sen. Kuei Tung:** Madam Chairman, I notice that there was an extra comma in clause 3(4)(d):

"...vehicles imported for use as taxis and,..."

There should not have been a comma there. It should be:

"...vehicles imported for use as taxis and sightseeing buses for use in the Tourism Tour Trade."

I beg to propose that the comma be deleted.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Clause 3 ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

*Clauses 4 to 6 ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

*Question put and agreed to, That the bill be reported to the House.*

*House resumed.*

*Bill reported, without amendment; read the third time and passed.*

*Adjournment*

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#### ADJOURNMENT

**The Minister of Local Government and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley):** Madam Speaker, I beg to move that this House do now adjourn to Friday, February 26, 1993, at 1.30 p.m.

I want to take the opportunity to wish every Member a good and enjoyable carnival.

#### Motions on Adjournment (Enquiry of)

**Mr. Shamshuddin Mohammed (Caroni Central):** Madam Speaker, may I respectfully indicate that I filed a motion to be taken on the adjournment?

**Madam Speaker:** I gather from the Clerk that certain instructions were given to Members whose motions on the adjournment of the House were to be heard last Friday. I do not know if you received those.

**Mr. Mohammed:** I had no indication that it was to be heard last Friday. It was filed, and no specific date was given or was asked for.

**Madam Speaker:** It will be heard next Friday then. We will adjourn to next Friday.

**Mr. Sudama:** Madam Speaker, I, myself, have a motion on the adjournment.

**Madam Speaker:** Yes, there were four, actually, and those—

**Mr. Valley:** Those motions lapsed, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** There was certain machinery put in place so that the Members would have been advised accordingly—

**Mr. Mohammed:** Madam Speaker, on the question of the motions having lapsed, I should like to know on what basis they lapsed. I should like to be advised which Standing Orders say that a motion on the adjournment lapses.

**Mr. Valley:** Madam Speaker, the information I got is that those motions were posed for a specific date, and that is last week Friday. One assumes that if those motions were not taken on that day, they lapsed.

**Mr. Mohammed:** Madam Speaker, I had no indication that the motion was approved for last Friday. It was filed since February 8, 1993.

**Madam Speaker:** The hon. Member is correct. There is no indication. This is why the Clerk of the House was advised accordingly, and such advice has been

*Adjournment*  
[MADAM SPEAKER]

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taken and the machinery is now in place that these motions will now be heard next Friday on the adjournment of the House.

**Mr. Mohammed:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*House adjourned accordingly.*

*Adjourned at 4.21 p.m.*