

*Leave of Absence**Friday, April 16, 1993***HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES***Friday, April 16, 1993*

The House met at 1.45 p.m.

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

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Members, I have granted leave to the Member for St. Augustine (Mr. John Humphrey) to be absent from today's sitting.

**PAPERS LAID**

1. Annual Report of the Integrity Commission for the year 1992. [*The Minister of Local Government and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. K. Valley)*]
  2. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Legal Aid and Advisory Authority for the year ended December 31, 1990. [*Hon. K. Valley*]
  3. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Legal Aid and Advisory Authority for the year ended December 31, 1991. [*Hon. K. Valley*]
  4. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of Overseas Service Aid Scheme for the year ended December 31, 1986. [*Hon. K. Valley*]
  5. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of Overseas Service Aid Scheme for the year ended December 31, 1987. [*Hon. K. Valley*]
  6. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of Overseas Service Aid Scheme for the year ended December 31, 1988. [*Hon. K. Valley*]
  7. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of Overseas Service Aid Scheme for the year ended December 31, 1989. [*Hon. K. Valley*]
- Papers 2 to 7 to be referred to the Public Accounts Committee.*
8. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of Iron and Steel Company of Trinidad and Tobago Limited for the year ended December 31, 1987. [*Hon. K. Valley*]
  9. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of Iron and Steel Company of Trinidad and Tobago Limited for the year ended December 31, 1988. [*Hon. K. Valley*]

*Papers Laid*

*Friday, April 16, 1993*

10. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of Iron and Steel Company of Trinidad and Tobago Limited for the year ended December 31, 1989. [*Hon. K. Valley*]
11. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of Iron and Steel Company of Trinidad and Tobago Limited for the year ended December 31, 1990. [*Hon. K. Valley*]

*Papers 8 to 11 to be referred to the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee.*

**RAMESH LAWRENCE MAHARAJ FOUNDATION (INC'N) BILL**

**Select Committee Report**

**Presentation**

**Mr. Desmond Allum** (*Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West*): Mr. Deputy 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 Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj Foundation.

**Mr. Sahid Hosein** (*Siparia*): Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the record, I wish to say that during the deliberations of this committee, I held a dissentient view. However, I do not see this contrary view reflected in this report.

**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 responsible for Public Administration state to this honourable House:

- (a) The total sum of money which was available at the inception of the Students' Revolving Loan Fund?
- (b) From what source was the fund made available?
- (c) To whom, i.e. 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?

**Dr. Carl Singh (Tabaquite):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, this question has been on the Order Paper for quite a while. The last time there was a two-week deferral, but so far I have not received a written reply.

**The Minister of Local Government and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, while we accede to the fact that this question has been on the Order Paper for some time, we have to admit that we are not ready with the response. The research is continuing. While we are on that, may I inform the House that of the 17 questions which are on the Order Paper, we shall be answering nine of them. Research is continuing on the remainder.

*Question, by leave, deferred.*

#### ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

#### Sale of Natural Gas (NUCOR)

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

- 140.** (a) Could the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries state what price per cubic metre the national Gas Company will be selling natural gas to NUCOR, up and until it embarks upon commercial production of the product steel carbide?
- (b) The amount of natural gas the National Gas Company expects to supply to NUCOR during research and development of the product mentioned in paragraph (a)?
- (c) Will the 'steel carbide' product developed be patented?
- (d) If the answer to (c) is in the affirmative, could the Minister state who will be the holder of such a patent?
- (e) What returns, if any, do the National Gas Company expect to receive from the proceeds of the sale of the 'steel carbide' by NUCOR for the period of one year after it embarks upon commercial production?

**The Minister of Local Government and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, we do have the response to that question, but the Minister is not here at present. I ask that this question be deferred for a few minutes. I know that he is coming to give a response to that question.

### Unemployment Symposium

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

**141.** Would the Minister of Labour and Co-operatives state:

- (a) What was the cost of the symposium on unemployment held in April, 1992, at the Chaguaramas Convention Centre?
- (b) As a consequence of the said symposium, how many permanent jobs were created?
- (c) In what areas were these jobs created?

*Question, by leave, deferred.*

### Judicial Officers

**142. Mr. Subhas Panday (Naparima)** asked the Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs:

Would the Minister state:

- (a) Whether there are any magistrates and/or judicial officers currently on suspension?
- (b) If the answer is in the affirmative, would the Minister state:
  - (i) The names of such officers;
  - (ii) How long has each been on suspension?
  - (iii) The cost to the state resulting from such suspension?
  - (iv) When will these officers' matters be dealt with?

**The Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs (Hon. Keith Sobion):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, yes, there is a senior magistrate who is also a judicial officer currently on suspension by the Judicial and Legal Service Commission. The name of the senior magistrate is Mr. Felix Durity, who was suspended from duty on August 17, 1989. He was suspended on full pay. The amount of salary and allowances paid to him to date, whilst on suspension, is \$372,370.26

Mr. Durity was charged with a disciplinary offence in 1992 and a tribunal was subsequently appointed by the Judicial and Legal Service Commission to determine the matter.

**Unemployment  
(Reduction of)**

**153. Mr. Krish Jurai** (*Nariva*) asked the hon. Prime Minister:

With respect to a 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 Labour and Co-operatives (Hon. Kenneth Collis):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Government are relentless in our endeavours to reduce unemployment in Trinidad and Tobago. Our approach is essentially a two-pronged one which seeks to reduce the critical nature of the unemployment problem in the short and medium term while at the same time equipping our citizens to generate permanent employment in the long term.

There are several projects and programmes, proposed and on stream, which it is expected will have a positive impact on the country as a whole and in the north-eastern region of Trinidad in particular. This includes:

The Unemployment Relief Programme:

In Region 5, which is essentially the eastern sector of Trinidad, there are 21 projects employing approximately 300 persons per fortnight.

The Supplementary Primary School Programme:

Construction has already begun on the Sangre Grande and the Matura Government Schools. It is expected that these two projects will employ 200 persons at peak levels of construction.

The Ministry of Health's initiatives in upgrading health care facilities throughout the country. This includes:

- (a) the refurbishment of the Sangre Grande Hospital;
- (b) the renovation of the Health Centre and Nurses' Quarters at Biche;
- (c) the refurbishment of the Rio Claro Health Centre.

**The Rural Access Roads and Bridges Programme:**

Construction is expected to commence in the second quarter of 1993 on five bridges and four kilometres of agricultural access roads in the north eastern region of Trinidad. It is expected that these projects will employ several hundred persons at peak levels of construction;

**The Civilian Conservation Corps Programme:**

This is now in the planning stage.

**The National Apprenticeship Programme:**

This is also in its planning stage.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

**Mr. Jurai:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, a supplementary question, please. The Minister said there were 300 URP projects in the area. Could the Minister identify the areas where these projects are?

**Mr. Collis:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I said there were 21 projects employing approximately 300 persons per fortnight, and from my understanding, the projects are allocated by regions. This happens to be in Region 5.

**Caroni River Bank  
(Erosion of)**

**167. Miss Hulsie Bhaggan** (*Chaguanas*): asked the hon. Prime Minister:

Would the Prime Minister indicate the exact nature of his proposal of a union between Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados and Guyana?

**The Minister of Foreign Affairs (Hon. Ralph Maraj):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, in 1989 and 1990, the hon. Prime Minister, in his capacity as the political leader of the People's National Movement, outlined how the regional integration process might be strengthened. He said:

"The PNM remains committed to regional unity, co-operation and solidarity, and when in government we will take active and definitive steps to ensure that, like the rest of the world, we, too, in the Caribbean have the good sense to benefit from the strength of togetherness and co-operation. We have our own very specific idea as to how we should proceed and, if only to initiate the debate, may I suggest that maybe the time now has come to take the incremental approach to political union, proceeding on a gradual basis rather than seeking to make an unrealistic and unwieldy structural imposition on the situation."

In the course of 1992, the hon. Prime Minister had several discussions on this issue with the leaders of Barbados and Guyana, including Dr. Cheddi Jagan, both as Opposition Leader and, subsequently, as President.

In delivering the opening addresses at both the Thirteenth Caricom Summit Meeting in June 1992, and the Special Meeting of Conference in October of last year, the hon. Prime Minister said:

"It is of utmost importance. . . that any accelerated progress be consistent with the overall progress of the movement, is not prejudicial to the group and, furthermore, leaves the door open for any and all of the others. These are the principles which have inspired my suggestion for even further cooperation between Trinidad and Tobago and two of our closest neighbouring Caricom states. . . 'if only to initiate the debate'".

**1.55 p.m.**

The hon. Member for Chaguanas may wish to note that a number of very prominent citizens from all walks of life in both Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago wrote joint letters to the press in support of the Prime Minister's initiative, which by this time had generated widespread debate.

Immediately after the close of the special meeting of the conference in October, the three leaders met to discuss Prime Minister Manning's proposal for closer co-operation between their countries. The communique issued at the conclusion of this meeting read in part:

"Prime Minister Manning indicated in the preliminary discussions that his initiative was intended to accelerate the integration process in Caricom. The closer relationship among the three countries, based particularly on economic and functional co-operation would be a catalyst to that.

Areas identified for early consideration were:

- activation of the Caribbean Assembly of Parliamentarians;
- greater collaboration and co-operation in diplomatic missions, including joint representation abroad,
- increased co-operation in sport,
- double taxation treaties among the three countries, and
- anti-drug activity.

Commenting on their...discussions, the three leaders agreed that the deepening of co-operation among themselves was very necessary at this time."

Mr. Deputy Speaker, a task force of officials has been convened and charged with the responsibility of developing proposals and identifying options, at the technical level, to facilitate closer ties between the three countries. This task force has met and areas identified include:

- Joint security arrangements, with special reference to drug trafficking;
- Co-operation in various areas of education; and
- Agriculture, meteorology and health.

Let me take this opportunity to point out that most countries of the world have become painfully aware that their very survival now depends on their meaningful co-operation and integration with other states. Against this background, and within the context of the Caricom integration movement, the hon. Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago has identified Barbados and Guyana, in the first instance, as two states with which this country can foster such closer ties.

The proposal, as I have indicated, is that our relations will be initially strengthened at the economic and functional co-operation levels and, eventually, when the time is right, that closer co-operation might lead to closer ties. There will be ample time available to all of us to explore all the possibilities and implications for all our countries in such closer relationship, if and when the time comes for that further step.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me make it abundantly clear, however, that the purpose of this initiative is not to usurp or fragment the Caricom integration process, but rather to act as a catalyst for Caricom Member States in more rapidly fulfilling the fundamental purposes of the Treaty of Chaguaramas.

Thank you.

**2.05 p.m.**

### **La Romaine Health Centre**

**178. Mr. Trevor Sudama** (*Oropouche*) asked the Minister of Health:

Is the Minister aware that:

- (a) The La Romaine Health Centre has been closed down a number of weeks ago?
- (b) If he is so aware, could he state what alternative arrangements are made in the short term for patients who normally visit this health centre?



- (c) What plans the Government has for rebuilding or relocating the health centre?

**The Minister of Health (Hon. John Eckstein):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Minister of Health is aware that the La Romaine Health Centre was closed on January 8, 1993. Patients who normally visit the La Romaine Health Centre now attend clinic at the Debe Health Centre as follows:

<b>Days</b>	<b>Service</b>
Mondays	Antenatal and family planning.
Tuesdays	Health Office and dressings.
Fridays	Sick children and chronic disease clinics.

The Minister has included the reconstruction of the La Romaine Health Centre as a priority project in its 1993 joint-initiative programme of works with the National Insurance Property Development Company. The Health Centre will be rebuilt in 1993.

**Mr. Sudama:** Is the Minister aware that as a result of re-directing patients who normally attend the La Romaine Health Centre to the Debe Health Centre, an enormous backlog is created there? In fact, the quality of health care has considerably deteriorated because of the fact that larger numbers now have to be seen by the medical officer. If he is so aware, could he indicate to this House whether any additional resources would be made available at the Debe Health Centre to accommodate the increased number of patients that have to be seen?

**Hon. J. Eckstein:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, as a consequence of this problem some difficulties will arise. The ministry's technical staff will investigate the problems that have been identified, and if the resources are available, we would certainly do everything in our power to alleviate them.

**Dr. Singh:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is an established fact that when patients are transferred from Port of Spain to Mt. Hope some form of alternative arrangements are made for transport. Is the same facility being extended to patients from La Romaine to Debe?

**Hon. J. Eckstein:** I am not aware that any such arrangements are in place to transfer patients between La Romaine and Debe. These are ambulance patients. If patients are transferred from Mt. Hope to Port of Spain and ambulance facilities are provided for such transfer, that would be in respect of acutely ill patients. I do not know that the acutely ill are handled at health centres. I do not think that ambulance assisted transfers would be provided in respect of patients treated at health centres.

**Civilian Conservation Corps  
(Recruitment of)**

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

**180.** Would the Minister of National Security indicate the procedure and the criteria for recruitment of persons who will be or are involved in the Civilian Conservation Corps?

**Hon. K. Valley:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, we seek a deferral of this question.

*Question, by leave, deferred.*

**WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS**

**Unemployment Relief Programme  
(Administrative Positions)**

*The following question was asked by Miss Hulsie Bhaggan (Chaguanas):*

- 181.** (a) Would the Minister of Works and Transport indicate the various positions which exist in the Regional Offices and at all the project location sites to administer the Unemployment Relief Programme?
- (b) Would the Minister indicate the required qualification, experience and the procedure used to select persons to fill these positions?
- (c) Would the Minister provide a listing of all the persons who occupy/occupied these positions in 1992 and 1993?

**Miss Bhaggan:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is for written answer. I have not received the reply in writing.

**The Minister of Works and Transport (Hon. Colm Imbert):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was under the impression that the question was for oral answer. I have the answer with me and I will make it available to the House shortly.

*Vide end of sitting for written answer.*

**Water and Sewerage Rates  
(Indebtedness)**

*The following question was asked by Mr. Trevor Sudama (Oropouche):*

**183.** Could the Minister of Public Utilities provide the names and addresses of customers who are indebted to WASA for water and sewerage rates of amounts in excess of \$20,000.00, and the respective amounts which are owed?

**Mr. Sudama:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, this was for written answer but I would like to ask a supplementary question on the basis of the answer that I have been given by the Minister of Public Utilities. It says that the actual details of customers indebtedness are confidential between the Authority and its customers. I ask the Minister whether this is as a result of legislation or as a result of the policy of his ministry?

**Hon. M. Marshall:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not think it is as a result of any legal provision. But that is a policy that is there. We are still trying to correct the data at WASA, and I do not wish to make this kind of information public without being very certain.

**Mr. Sudama:** When I look at the answer I see that the least amount is owing in areas which suffer acutely from an inadequate water supply, and the largest amounts owing are in areas which get an adequate water supply. In fact, some areas get a 24-hour water supply seven days per week, and yet when you look at this breakdown of indebtedness, you see that it is in those areas we have the largest number of defaulting customers. Could the Minister indicate, therefore, what he intends to do to bring some equity into the system of indebtedness?

**Hon. M. Marshall:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, the matter of arrears is indeed a very serious one and is engaging the attention of the Water and Sewerage Authority. A serious effort is being made to collect those funds, particularly, in the communities identified by the hon. Member for Oropouche.

In addition to that, we are seeking to provide some protection for those customers who are, in fact, in communities where there is an unsatisfactory supply.

*Vide end of sitting for written part of the answer.*

#### ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

#### WASA (Customer/Worker Ratio)

*The following question stood on the Order Paper in the name of Mr. Trevor Sudama (Oropouche):*

- 184.** Could the Minister of Public Utilities state what is the current ratio of worker to customers at WASA and the basis on which this ratio has been arrived at?

*Oral Answer To Question*

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**The Minister of Public Utilities (Hon. Morris Marshall):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do have a response but I am just looking through it again and there is something that I want to ensure. We did make a commitment so I am seeking permission to have this answer given at the next sitting.

*Question, by leave, deferred.*

**Caparo River  
(Abuse of)**

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

Would the Minister state whether he is aware:

- (a) That there has been massive tampering with the Caparo River Course in the Montrose/Longdenville area?
- (b) That huge quantities of earth-fill have been removed creating very large ponds?
- (c) That the area is now extremely unsafe to human and animal life?
- (d) That unprecedented flooding now takes place during the rainy season?
- (e) That the homes of many of the residents in the area are affected during the rainy season?
- (f) If the Minister is aware of the tampering with the Caparo River course, would he state whether those who are responsible had his permission?
- (g) If the answer to (f) is in the negative, would he state what action he intends to take in this matter?
- (h) What measures he intends to put in place to rectify this serious problem and when?

**The Minister of Works and Transport (Hon. Colm Imbert):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Minister is aware that unauthorized activity has taken place in the Caparo River. The party responsible for the works, Penco Lands Limited, has been advised by letter dated September 14, 1992 that the action is in contravention of the Water Works and Water Conservation Act. Since the issue of this notice, the unauthorized activity referred to has ceased.

The Minister is also aware that hazardous large holes have been excavated on lands adjacent to the Caparo River. This aspect of activity in the area has not impacted on the watercourse, however. It appears to be unauthorized engineering

works on privately owned lands, and hence it has been brought to the attention of the Town and Country Planning Division.

While there has been no record of complaints or reports regarding unprecedented flooding, the Minister is aware that residents of the Longdenville/Montrose areas are affected during the rainy season. The Caparo River Basin Flood Abatement Project is being pursued to effect solutions to these problems.

**Mr. Mohammed:** The hon. Minister jointly with my colleague the Member for Caroni Central and me visited the Caparo area and we were promised certain improvement works with regard to that river to relieve the perennial flooding that exists in that area. Could we get from the hon. Minister an indication as to what is the status of work on the Caparo River? A study was promised and I do not know whether it is finished.

**Hon. C. Imbert:** Mr. Deputy speaker, as I stated previously in this honourable House, it is necessary for a comprehensive study to be carried out before actual engineering work is undertaken. As I have also pointed out in this House on a previous occasion, this study will take approximately nine months to complete. It will therefore not be completed before the end of 1993.

#### **Corn Production (Ministry's Incentives)**

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

- 192.** Would the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources state:
- (a) What has been the success rate of his ministry's incentives to boost corn production in Trinidad and Tobago?
  - (b) How much subsidy has been paid to date with respect to the production of corn in Trinidad and Tobago?

**Hon. K. Valley:** We seek a deferral, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

*Question, by leave, deferred.*

#### **WRITTEN ANSWER TO QUESTION**

#### **Central Government (Employment of Pensioners)**

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

- 194.** Would the Prime Minister state:

*Oral Answer To Question*

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- (a) The names of persons above retirement age or who are in receipt of pension and who are presently employed with the Central Government, the public service, state enterprises and State Agencies in Trinidad and Tobago?
- (b) The position each such person holds and the remuneration paid to each person?
- (c) The contractual period for which they hold office?
- (d) Would the Prime Minister also give reasons as to why each of these positions in question cannot be filled by persons who are under retirement age or by persons who are not in receipt of a pension?

**Hon. K. Valley:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, we seek a deferral of this question.

*Question, by leave, deferred.*

**2.15 p.m.**

#### ORAL ANSWER TO QUESTION

#### **Retired Workers (Severance Payments)**

**198. Mr. Mohammed Haniff** (*Princes Town*) asked the Minister of Works and Transport:

Would the Minister state:

- (a) How many retired daily-paid workers are presently awaiting severance payments?
- (b) The dates when these workers retired?
- (c) Why these workers have not received their severance pay to date?
- (d) When will these workers receive their outstanding payments?

**The Minister of Works and Transport (Hon. Colm Imbert):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, before responding to the specific questions asked, I should like to put the question of terminal benefits of government daily-rated workers in proper perspective.

Terminal benefits to daily rated workers comprise the following:

- (1) Gratuity which is paid in accordance with section 14 (1) of the Pensions Act Chap. 73:52.
- (2) Retirement benefit which is paid in accordance with Article 16 (c) of the collective agreements for Government daily-rated employees.

*Oral Answer To Question*

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The Pensions Division of the Ministry of Finance is responsible for the payment of gratuity, while the Ministry of Works and Transport pays the retirement benefits, or the appropriate ministry as the case may be.

Specifically, in respect of the question, the answer is as follows:

- (a) Ninety-seven workers are awaiting part, or all of their terminal benefits at present.
- (b) The retirement dates of the workers range from November 14, 1990 to March 17, 1993.
- (c) The workers have not been paid to date for several administrative reasons. In particular, these include the finalization of the outstanding indebtedness of the workers to the state, such as the Inland Revenue Department, and also updating of the records of service.
- (d) All efforts will be made to have the outstanding payments made as soon as possible.

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

**WRITTEN ANSWER TO QUESTION**

**Retired Local Government Workers  
(Severance Payments)**

**199.** Would the Minister of Local Government and Minister in the Ministry of Finance state:

- (a) How many retired daily-paid workers are presently awaiting severance payments in the respective local government bodies?
- (b) The dates when these workers retired?
- (c) Why these workers have not received their severance pay to date?
- (d) When will these workers receive their outstanding payments?

**ORAL ANSWER TO QUESTION**

**Ministry of Works, Victoria East Division  
(Vehicles)**

**200.** Would the Minister of Works and Transport state:

- (a) How many vehicles are attached to the Ministry of Works, Victoria East Division?

*Oral Answer To Question*

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- (b) How many of these vehicles passed inspection for the years 1992 and 1993?
- (c) How many of these vehicles were licensed for the years 1992 and 1993?
- (d) Will the Minister provide similar information concerning each of the other Divisions of the Ministry of Works and Transport?

**Hon. K. Valley:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, we seek a deferral of these questions.

*Questions, by leave, deferred.*

**ADJOURNMENT LEAVE  
(REQUEST)**

**Cedros Fishermen**

**Mr. Chandresh Sharma (Fyzabad):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, some of us take longer than others to come to this House with definite matters of urgent, public importance. If I may borrow a line from the Member for San Fernando East, it has to do with foreplay. Over the last few days, I have been engaged in foreplay in the Cedros area where I have been meeting the entire Cedros community, largely the fishermen, in my capacity as shadow Foreign Affairs Minister.

This matter is of urgent public importance because it concerns male nationals of Trinidad and Tobago, some of whom at this particular time are still imprisoned in Venezuela; some boats and engines are still down there. Our fishermen have been beaten up; some have been hospitalized and received medical attention at the Point Fortin Area Hospital.

At the present time, the fishermen are very scared to go back to sea. One must take into consideration why this is so important. Cedros depends on two things, one of which is copra. With the efforts of the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, that industry is dead. Today, the fishing community is very scared to go out to fish. With the floating of the dollar and the higher cost of living, our fishermen are unable to feed their families, and schools are re-opening in two days' time. The entire community is without any kind of protection whatsoever from this Government.

When we began today's proceedings, we prayed to Almighty God for guidance and approval, so that today's work would be done. I now seek your guidance and approval in raising this as a definite matter, of urgent public importance.

Thank you.



**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** I examined the letter you submitted to me. I am not satisfied that this matter falls under the Standing Order—"Definite Matter of Urgent, Public Importance."

I therefore advise that it be submitted under Standing Order 11.

**ST. JOSEPH'S CONVENT PORT OF SPAIN  
PAST PUPILS ASSOCIATION (INC'N) (AMDT.) BILL**

*Question put and agreed to,* That a Bill to amend the St. Joseph's Convent Port of Spain Past Pupils Association (Inc'n) Act, be now read the first time.

*Bill accordingly read the first time.*

**ORDER OF BUSINESS**

**The Minister of Local Government and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move that the House now consider under "Bills, Second Reading," Bill No. 3 on the Order Paper, rather than the Motion.

**Mr. Sudama:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, before we move to the consideration of that Bill, I am seeing two Motions on this Order Paper to be approved by this House. Week after week, we come here and these Motions are on the Order Paper and the Government is taking no action to bring these Motions before the House for the purposes of debate, approval or otherwise.

I am merely requesting an answer from the Government as to whether or not they intend to proceed with these Motions. If they intend to proceed, when will these Motions come before us? If they do not intend to proceed, then take them off the Order Paper!

**Hon. K. Valley:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, the custom is that the Leader of Government Business consults with the Chief Whip on these matters. We consulted on Wednesday evening and we agreed that we would do Bill No. 3 on the Order Paper. There is a very good reason for that: The Minister of Planning and Development is out of the country. He was out of the country on the last occasion also. I can assure the hon. Member that every matter we put on the Order Paper we intend to debate, in accordance with consultation between the Leader of Government Business and the Chief Whip.

**Mr. Maharaj:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of clarification, when he says consultation, what it really means is that the Government informs us as to what Bill it intends to debate, and we try to be prepared in respect of that.

*Order of Business*  
[MR. MAHARAJ]

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I just do not want the impression to be given that we consult in such a way, that we, in effect, agree after the consultation. We are merely informed what Bill is coming up and we try to be prepared. In respect of the Motion that the Member for Oropouche has spoken about, there was no consultation, but we agreed that we would not debate those Motions.

**Hon. K. Valley:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, just for the avoidance of doubt. If I inform the Chief Whip that we are doing Bill No. 3 and he says, 'okay,' I take that as agreement.

**Mr. Sudama:** The reason for these Motions not being debated is that the Minister of Planning and Development is out of the country, they say. But the Minister of Works and Transport is here—I do not know if he is here in spirit, or whether he is just here physically—and, therefore, the Traffic Control Regulations which are before us should be debated in the sequence in which they appear on this Order Paper.

**Hon. K. Valley:** The point I am making is that there has been consultation with the Chief Whip. I think that the Member for Oropouche rarely talks with the Member for Couva South.

**Mr. Robinson:** No information was conveyed to me about any change in the order of proceedings.

*Leave granted.*

**2.25 p.m.**

**YOUNG OFFENDERS DETENTION (AMDT.) BILL**

*Order for second reading read.*

**The Minister of National Security (Sen. The Hon. Russell Huggins):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move,

That the Young Offenders Detention (Amdt.) Bill, be now read a second time.

What this Bill seeks to do is simply to amend the Young Offenders Detention Act, Chap 13:05, to empower the Commissioner of Prisons to grant leave, by way of a permit, to an offender to attend an educational or vocational institute and to extend the Minister's regulation-making power to facilitate this.

The Young Offenders Detention Act establishes in section 1, industrial institutions as detention centres for young offenders who, whilst detained, may be given such industrial training and other instruction and be subject to such disciplinary and moral influences as will conduce to their reformation and prevention of crime.

The Youth Training Centre is deemed an industrial institution under the Act and, since 1967 efforts have been made to afford persons detained at this institution the opportunity of attending institutions outside the Youth Training Centre for the purpose of furthering their education. Unfortunately, legislation was never enacted to give effect to this.

It is important to understand the philosophy underlying the establishment of the Youth Training Centre. Essentially, it is an industrial institution at which young offenders may be subjected to such training, instruction and counselling as will contribute to the reformation of their character and enable them to function more beneficially in society.

However, one has to bear in mind that these are youngsters we are dealing with who, despite the seriousness of their deviant and criminal behaviour, are undergoing a rapid physical, emotional and psychological change. Hence, it is of paramount concern that they should be properly prepared for their re-integration into society and that they should be able to use their freedom, when released, in a constructive way. One method of achieving this is to provide these young offenders with ample opportunities for training and education.

The policy and objectives of the Youth Training Centre are wide ranging and recognize the fact that most of the youths detained there are school drop-outs who experience a preponderant need for remedial education and industrial training.

In fact, what has been revealed is that the educational level of these youngsters is generally quite low, as the majority of them are not even in possession of school leaving certificates. It is felt, therefore, that the initial focus should be on the strengthening of the basic skills of reading, writing and mathematics.

Of course, individuals who show a desire to continue academic studies should be permitted to do so and have access to adequate facilities outside where these are not available at the source, that is, at the institution at which they are detained. Naturally, the vocational training offered is meant to and should complement the academic training available.

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At present, section 52 of the Young Offenders Detention Act provides a limited number of trades that these youths may pursue which are available at the industrial institution and they include: cabinetmaking, carpentry, tailoring, shoemaking and gardening.

I will reiterate here that the amendment contemplated in this Bill will permit these youngsters to avail themselves of a wider choice of vocational training as it is necessary that they keep apace of the rapid progress of society, and properly prepare for re-entry upon being discharged from the institution.

I shall now deal with the amendments contemplated by the proposed legislation. Clause 2 of the Bill simply extends the regulation-making power of the Minister to include the power to prescribe the academic or vocational training that may be received by young offenders by amending section 5(a) of the Act.

Clause 3 seeks to insert a new section after section 12 of the Act, which empowers the Commissioner of Prisons to issue permits to an offender, granting him leave to be absent from the institution where he is detained, to attend educational or vocational institutions. Of course, these permits shall be subject to specified conditions and be valid until the end of the course of training being undertaken. Further, while in possession of such a permit, the offender will still be under the charge of the Commissioner of Prisons who may at any time revoke such a permit.

It should also be observed, that subsections (3), (5) and (6) of section 12 of the Act are intended to apply to the issue of permits in a like manner as to the issue of licences under the Act. Therefore, under section 12(4), if the offender escapes from the temporary supervision of these persons in whose charge he is placed at these institutions, or commits a breach of any condition stipulated in the permit, he will be taken to have forfeited his permit and be liable to the judicial process outlined in subsections (5) and (6) of section 12.

I should point out here that regulations to give effect to the amendments contemplated in this Bill have already been drafted and will come into effect as soon as this Bill becomes operational. These regulations contemplate, *inter alia*, the type or class of offender who would be entitled to leave to attend an educational or vocational institute and in what circumstances he will be allowed to do so.

It is clear that all systems have been put in place in order to make the Bill effective, having regard to the obvious urgency involved in ensuring that the reformation and rehabilitation of these youths are attended to with due diligence

in order to prepare them for re-integration into the society where crime is rampant. This is in keeping with the Government's present thrust of placing very high on the list of priorities the whole question of reform and rehabilitation in the prison system.

On that positive note, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move.

**Mr. Maharaj:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, before the hon. Minister takes his seat, would he answer a question? When he says they would be granted leave, would these persons under the new clause 12A. have to come back to the prison every day or are they granted leave for the period?

**Sen. Huggins:** No. It depends on the institution, but they will have to return to the institution on a daily basis.

*Question proposed.*

**Mr. Ramesh L. Maharaj (Couva South):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Bill attempts to effect a fundamental change in policy in respect of the detention and punishment of young offenders. Under the Young Offenders Detention Act, Chap. 13:05, the legislation permits industrial training or instruction at the institution.

We are now seeing a situation where the Government has embarked on a course and has introduced legislation to permit the offender to receive some sort of education outside the prison. This is a very important measure and it would have effects on the school population of Trinidad and Tobago. Several questions would have to be asked. The questions involved would be: What criteria would the Commissioner of Prisons use in order to determine whether a young offender should be chosen to be given this permit? The Bill is completely silent on any criteria. If I may read the proposed section 12A.:

- “(1) Subject to regulations, the Commissioner of Prisons may grant leave, by permit to an offender to be absent from the Institution for such periods and subject to such conditions as are specified in the permit for the purpose of attending any educational or vocational institute.
- (2) A permit under this section shall be in force until the end of the course of training or the examinations connected with such course, as the case may be, at an educational or vocational institute or unless sooner revoked or forfeited.”

Then it goes on to the next section.

It is very significant that when one looks at section 12 of the Act, one sees that it reads:

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“Subject to regulations by the Minister, the Commissioner of Prisons may at any time after the expiration of six months from the commencement of the term of detention, if satisfied that there is a reasonable probability that the offender will abstain from crime and lead a useful and industrious life, by licence permit him to be discharged from the Institution on condition that he be placed under the supervision or authority of any society or person named in the licence who may be willing to take charge of the case.”

So under section 12, there is the discretion under the jurisdiction of the Commissioner of Prisons, after six months, depending on certain conditions being satisfied in his view, for persons to be placed under supervision or authority under a licence.

Now, we have a situation where the Government is amending the legislation whereby the Commissioner of Prisons has the additional power to grant a permit to an offender to be absent from the institution for such periods and subject to such conditions as are specified for the purpose of attending any educational or vocational institute. What would the Commissioner of Prisons use in order to determine whether such an offender should be given this permit?

If it is that we are going to be asked to approve this legislation, we ought to be told what criteria and guidelines must be established. It is important because this is an important piece of legislation. This is where you are taking an offender from a prison population and putting the offender into the school population. Many other issues arise. But I should have thought that legislation like this would not be introduced unless there was widespread discussion and consultation with the community, with the groups in the country and with relevant organizations. By “consultation”, I do not mean merely information or informing. I mean actually talking to people and interested groups, finding out what their views are before a policy is determined.

What is happening throughout the legislative plan of this Government, is that it introduces legislation on an *ad hoc* basis. It does not approach in a comprehensive manner the particular problem. We are attempting to have penal reform on a very *ad hoc* basis, as if I got up in the morning and I felt I should do this, therefore, I do this without considering whether there is any structure, any institutions or the personnel in order to be able to achieve my objective.

I am glad that the hon. Minister of National Security said that the policy which is going to be implemented by this legislation is to transport these offenders to and from school. He said the necessary matters have been put in

place to achieve this. But the present position in Trinidad and Tobago is that prisoners cannot be transported to court to attend cases. As a matter of fact, it is a matter of record that several prisoners have filed constitutional motions alleging that they are not being transported to court, and the Government has put in an affidavit saying that it does not have the resources to do that. So where is the machinery? Are they going to get a new squad and put them on bicycles? What are they going to do?

I want to make it clear, the concept is good, it is progressive, but have we thought it out and related it to our situation in Trinidad and Tobago? What is the sense of passing legislation when you cannot implement it?

When I became a Member of this Parliament, I asked a question on September 18, 1992 of the Attorney General—well, the question was answered on October 2, 1992. The question had to do with what legislation we have in Trinidad and Tobago which was passed by the Parliament, but has not been implemented.

The point I am making is that what we are going to do is just waste time trying to pass this when we know very well it will not be implemented for a long time.

Just to give you an idea of what happens with legislation when there is no machinery in place to implement it. Perhaps the Government should tell us, if it is some international convention, whether it is the rights of the child, whether it is the UN Convention, which dictates that they must do this, and whether it is that they are trying to comply with that convention; there are pressures on them to comply with it and, therefore, they are rushing this piece of legislation in order to say that it is passed?

Is it that what they want to do, is to get up at some international forum to say they have introduced this legislation? But in truth and in fact the legislation would not be enforced? Because, Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me tell you and this House the shocking state of affairs with legislation which has been passed but is not being implemented.

The question posed was:

- “(a) Would the hon. Attorney General give a list of legislative measures (giving all necessary particulars) which have been passed by the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago but have not yet become effective as law?
- (b) Would the hon. Attorney General indicate to this House whether the Government of Trinidad and Tobago intends to implement as law any or

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all of such legislative measures and, if so, give particulars of the measures it intends to implement and the proposed dates, if any, of such implementation?"

Some 21 pieces of legislation were, in effect, given. In fairness to the Government, there was an Ordinance in 1934 which had nothing to do with them. There was one in 1950, but then we started with the Investment Disputes Awards (Enforcement) Act of 1968 and it goes right down. I do not want to read all those pieces of legislation, but there were 21 at that time. In respect of the second aspect of the question, it is important to see what happens when we rush legislation in order to satisfy some international covenant or measure, or because we feel it might make it appear that we are doing some penal reform in the country, without having the necessary infrastructure.

The Investment Disputes Awards (Enforcement) Act was passed in 1968. According to the explanation given by the hon. Attorney General, this Act was enacted to give legal effect in Trinidad and Tobago to the Convention on the Settlement of Investment Disputes between states and nationals of other states.

That Convention established an International Centre for the Settlement of Investment Disputes which provides facilities for conciliation or arbitration of investment disputes between contracting states and foreign firms or corporations, their subsidiaries, branches, et cetera, residents in those states. Trinidad and Tobago became a contracting party to this Convention in 1967, having signed it on October 5, 1966, and ratified same on January 3, 1967. One sees that they signed the Convention, they ratified it in 1967 and they passed the law in 1968. The Convention came into effect on February 2, 1967.

A technical inter-ministerial committee was subsequently appointed by the Minister of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Affairs in 1984. So after the Act was passed in 1968, in 1984—some 17 years later, if my mathematics is correct—a committee was set up for the purpose of making a detailed examination of this Convention and the implications of its implementation in Trinidad and Tobago and to submit recommendations thereon to Government. So the Act was passed, it was not put into force, and then 17 years later...

**Mr. Bereaux:** Sixteen.

**Mr. Manning:** Mr. Deputy Speaker. I should be very much obliged if the hon. Member would direct his contribution to the Young Offenders Detention (Amdt.) Bill. Just relate it as he goes along.



**Mr. R. Maharaj:** That committee reported in late 1986, and while it recommended the proclamation of the legislation, it was also of the opinion that prior to taking such action, further study needed to be done to determine whether in accordance with Article 25 of the Convention, Trinidad and Tobago should notify the Centre of the class or classes of disputes, which it would or would not consider submitting to the jurisdiction of the Centre.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, one sees that in 1968, the time of this Parliament was wasted by a PNM Government—I am not too sure if the hon. Member for San Fernando East was there. Perhaps that is why he wants to find out—

**Mr. Manning:** For the benefit of the hon. Member, I was at school then.

**Mr. R. Maharaj:** Well, I think, if I may say so, the hon. Member for San Fernando East is still at school.

**Mr. Robinson:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, the hon. Member for San Fernando East is not still at school, he is at sea.

**Mr. R. Maharaj:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I hope we float and we do not sink.

The point I am making is that the Parliament's time was wasted—an Act was debated and passed, but there was no machinery to implement it. There was no study done and, in effect, the Act was passed obviously without a proper policy, and 16 years later, an attempt was made to try to study the effect of it in order to try to implement it, but it still has not been implemented.

One sees that what they are doing here really is just show, just theatre, they are just acting. They are just trying to give the impression to the country that they are working; that serious work is being done, that they are thinking of penal reform; they are going ahead; they want to take offenders out of the prison and give them schooling; mix them with the population; they are working and thinking. But in truth and in fact, they are not working. This is just "gallerying". The Government is gallerying to the population.

It is known that if any government is considering penal reform, it considers penal reform with the whole question of crime, of prison, of the causes of crime.

But I want the Members on that side, anyone on that side, to tell this country what criteria has been adopted or will be adopted as to which schools will be targeted for this project, and what systems are being put in place to ensure that the school population would not be prejudiced by the presence of offenders in these schools. What mechanism or institution, consultative or otherwise, has been set up under this Bill to ensure that the school population of Trinidad and Tobago would

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not be exposed to grave risks? *[Interruption]* Human rights and enjoyment of human rights involve human rights in all aspects.

Let us consider a situation: A young person has been convicted of an offence, whether it is a sexual or violent offence. There are no criteria in the Act. Power is put in the hands of one man—the Commissioner of Prisons. He decides that he is going to pick out this or that person and put him in any school. It so happens that he makes a wrong decision or wrong decisions: he puts one or several of these persons in schools and these persons are not really adjusted, or they do not have the necessary psychological evaluation, do not have the necessary psychological training, treatment or whatever it is in order to face the school population. One merely has to consider what rampant damage can be done to the innocent school population outside.

I talk about sexual offences and acts of violence. I can also contemplate a young person having been convicted for drugs. Several young persons outside have been convicted for drugs; and there is no machinery here to ensure that it would be safe for those persons to leave the institution and go outside to mingle with the school population.

This Bill is really shocking at this time in Trinidad and Tobago! There are so many matters which have to be done before one could consider making such a decision.

I would, therefore, say that the Bill does not provide the mechanisms or the structure or support systems in order to give it effect. I would say that, having regard to the present institutions that we have and having regard to the fact that the Minister of National Security has publicly stated that there are not available resources or money to provide injection of capital in these institutions—as a matter of fact, the Minister is on record as saying that the police stations are in a total mess. There are no resources! Police stations cannot even be opened; one had to be closed.

**Sen. Huggins:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me just correct that mischief. I never made any such statement.

**Mr. R. Maharaj:** Is the hon. Minister of National Security saying that he did not make statements to the effect that the police stations cannot be given the resources they need because of the lack of adequate money?

**Mr. Manning:** That is a different matter.

**Mr. R. Maharaj:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, that side of the House is always—whether there is a difference between “depreciation” and “devaluation”, “divestment” or “privatisation”—I am not here on semantics; I am here on the substance of the matter. The substance of the matter is, and the Government has published and said throughout this country, that there is the absence of the requisite material in order to provide the resources to make these institutions function.

**2.55 p.m.**

Mr. Deputy Speaker, how is it that the Government cannot finance these measures to provide the resources to the police stations, cannot provide effective transport for prisoners to go to court? When this offender is at the institution and school starts at eight or nine and there is no transport, it would be counter-productive and make it difficult for this thing to work. I find it not only shocking, but also amazing, that the Government could have the brass-face to come to this house to introduce legislation like this.

Another aspect of this measure: they are, in effect, asking us—as we use the expression in Trinidad and Tobago—“to buy cat in bag”. If the Parliament does not know, and we do not have a copy of the regulations now, what criteria would be used for these choices to be made; what criteria would be used for the selection of the schools; what systems would be put in place to ensure protection of the school population? If you have an offender in school, and you decide to revoke that permit, what criteria are you going to use to do so? Because the child, an offender, would start a school and the Commissioner of Prisons after a year can revoke that permit; but there are no criteria, no basis on which he can do that.

What we are creating is a constitutional dictatorship in the hand of an officer who can virtually do anything. In one breath you are saying you want to remove the Police Service Commission, that it is a constitutional dictatorship, it has too much power, but, in the other breath you want to create another constitutional dictatorship. An officer would be able to exercise these powers but there would be no guidelines to circumscribe the exercise of the powers. You have a Commissioner of Prisons who will be given all these powers and there will be no checks and balances put on the exercise of his power and, more importantly, there is no machinery in place to ensure that the public interest is protected in the exercise of these powers.

It would seem to me that unless the Government can convince us that the school population of Trinidad and Tobago would be protected, would not be exposed to grave risks—I do not want to spend too much time on this Bill,

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because, in my view, it is clear when one comes with legislation like this. There is one other point: one could see how this Bill has not been well thought out at all. Whenever an offender goes into the school population and his identity is known, what is the likely reaction of the school population to his presence? How would the offender react? What effect would the reaction of the school population have on the offender's education?

Have they thought or done anything? In legislation like this, when one attempts to introduce a change of policy and create measures, there would be, within the Act, the institutions which are to be created, the structures to be put in place, so that when the people, through their parliamentarians, approve legislation, the country would be satisfied that the institutions which are put in place, can, in effect, serve the public good.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am not convinced that this Bill, in the absence of the structures and necessary consultation among the population, will work. As a matter of fact, I am of the view that if this Bill is implemented without certain measures put in place, and without the necessary consultation and steps taken in order to protect the school population, it would be detrimental to the public good.

**The Minister of Consumer Affairs and Social Services (Dr. The Hon. Linda Baboolal)** Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Bill entitled an Act to Amend the Young Offenders Detention Act, Chap. 13:05, seeks to fill a vacuum which now exists and which in fact is acting as an obstruction to prison reform and rehabilitation. I am surprised to hear the Member for Couva South object so vehemently to a measure which we are trying to put in place to help the youths in our country, since they on that side always espouse the view that young people are being more and more involved in crime. I want to assure him that we have considered this matter very carefully, and we felt it important enough to move it up on the list and have it debated here today.

We have thought out the matter, and I can assure you that the Minister of National Security, who, as we all know is a man of action, is sure to put these provisions in place at the earliest opportunity. He is personally concerned and very anxious that this Bill should work. It is obvious that the Member for Couva South had nothing constructive to say, and as usual, has tried to ascribe ulterior motives to the efforts of this Government.

I will leave the Minister of National Security to answer some of the questions which the Member posed, because I have no doubt that he will be able to do so very effectively.

Young offenders, especially those who are first time offenders, often get involved in crime and drugs for many reasons: peer pressure, idleness and frustration, lack of parental guidance, lack of family life. And what very often happens is that these young people have their education interrupted.

There have been many instances, where young people who are attending junior or senior secondary schools have been known to become involved in crimes and other times they may have dropped out from as early as primary school. Therefore, these young people are unemployable and indisciplined. Whenever they become involved in crime it is necessary that they be put back on the right track. Because if they are properly channelled, Mr. Deputy Speaker, these young people, very often are quite intelligent and have the ability to learn something and to become useful members of society.

Therefore, it is not the Bill that is shocking; it is really the contribution of the Member for Couva South, in that he raises very weak objections [*Interruption*] I should like to assure the Member for Oropouche that, like the Member for St. Augustine, I may be a little bit idealistic.

### **3.05 p.m.**

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago has espoused as the ultimate goal of its social programmes the rehabilitation of the beneficiaries of these programmes. Consistent with that goal, the mission of my Ministry of Consumer Affairs and Social services is to protect the vulnerable and disadvantaged and to promote a better quality of life for all citizens through the provision of an integrated social service delivery system. It is in this context, therefore, that my ministry is particularly interested in the protection of the young offenders and their rehabilitation and full integration into the mainstream of society. If something is not done to help these young people to return to society and become useful members of it, what we would end up getting is recidivism, and these young people becoming hardened and chronic criminals.

Official statistics of the Central Statistical Office reveal that 10.4 per cent of the persons imprisoned or sentenced to death in 1990 were persons between the ages of 16 and 21, and 30 per cent were persons between the ages of 16 and 25. A recent newspaper headline put the crimes committed by teenagers at 80 per cent. Within the purview of my own Ministry, the Probation Department has indicated that for the years 1989, 1990 and 1991, there were 314, 273 and 290 junior offenders respectively, that is, persons under the age of 16, arrested. Similarly, this trend is evident with regard to the types of offences committed by the 16-plus category.

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The Legal Aid and Advisory Authority is increasingly called upon to grant aid in a number of criminal matters which involve young people between the ages of 16 and 25, and even younger; and this can range from robbery to murder.

These young offenders need to be protected from the possibility of sinking into a life of criminal activity. The statistics on recidivism for young offenders, unfortunately, are not available. However, the Central Statistical Office provided statistics on recidivism in general which revealed that in 1990 and 1991 respectively, 52.86 per cent and 57 per cent of the persons between the ages of 16 years and adulthood who were imprisoned or sentenced to death were not first time offenders. This reflects quite a high rate of recidivism and makes it incumbent upon the Government to strengthen existing systems to rehabilitate convicted persons, especially the young offenders, so that they will not end up in this chronic life of crime.

It is not, however, the expectation of this Government that the provisions of this Bill be the primary focus of its efforts to rehabilitate young offenders. At present in my ministry, there is a Cabinet-appointed committee, which has been established to investigate the factors which contribute to youth crime, to review the existing programmes for young offenders as well as to devise programmes to ameliorate the situation regarding them. It is intended that the measures originating from this committee would, in fact, complement the provisions of this amendment to the Young Offenders Act.

Those of us who read the newspapers would know that very often in other countries you read of young people who go on to be leading athletes, business people or professionals in their country. And these people would have once been young offenders. But because of rehabilitation programmes and opportunities for education, these young people were able to turn their lives around, using those opportunities which were available to them.

It is very, very important that while they are in prison during these very young and tender years of their life, that they should be given those opportunities to improve their education and training and get counselling. We should not consider a young person of 16 who has committed a crime for the first time as being beyond help, or being such a hardened criminal, that we should completely back away and allow him to be lost. If that is the view that is being taken by Members on the other side, then I am really surprised.

**Mr. Maharaj:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, if the hon. Member for Barataria is representing our views—our contributions on this side—I think we should be

represented accurately. Our contribution is that the concept is good, but the necessary mechanisms are not there in order to make it work.

**Dr. The Hon. L. Baboolal:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I should like to assure the Member for Couva South that the Minister of National Security and this Government would put those mechanisms in place.

One problem which we face with probationers is that very often these young people come from dysfunctional homes. They have been abused, ill-treated, beaten, sexually abused and neglected. Because of this they often turn to crime. Now when they are put on probation, they have to go back to this environment and, once more to the abuse, to the lack of love, to the fights, the quarrels, to the alcoholism within the family, and they become more bitter, frustrated, and, very easily, return to crime. That is why in the Ministry we are now looking at probation hostels in which a controlled environment would be put in place for these young offenders, where they will be given that opportunity to develop mentally, physically and emotionally; where they will be given the opportunity to learn, to educate themselves, to acquire the skills and trades necessary to make them useful and productive members of society. At present, the Probation Department and the Family Services Division are at various stages of implementing rehabilitative programmes in relation to the restoration of young offenders to proper social functioning.

Additionally, it should be pointed out that this amendment is not proposed on the assumption that all young offenders can benefit from such arrangements; rather, it presupposes and provides for the assessment and screening of offenders to determine how many of them are capable of maximizing the opportunities which would be made available for the proposed integration into the education system. Also, checks and balances are being put in place, as we have heard the Minister of National Security say today, to make this Bill effective and to prevent young people from escaping, or running away, when they are out of the detention walls.

I heard the Member for Couva South query that if these young people are allowed to go to school, what effect it may have on the children who are attending those schools. It is surprising, Mr. Deputy Speaker, how resilient children are and, in fact, how quickly they would adapt to the fact that they have someone in their midst who may need special attention, or who is a special person in some way. It is just as easily they accept the handicapped child within their ranks.

### **3.15 p.m.**

It is very sad when we call a child—I consider a person of 16 to be a child—who has committed an offence for the first time, a criminal. It is the first harm that

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we are doing to that child—by putting a stigma on him or her. Maybe these are some of the things that we, as people in the society, need to look at: how we relate, how we refer to and how we deal with young people in our own lives and in our own surroundings.

It is also felt that this integration into the education programme is a critical stage in the move towards the full integration of the young offender into the mainstream of society, and an effort at avoiding the loss of a life to crime. The measure seeks to provide timely intervention and to ensure that the youth becomes one who can contribute to society and to the economic life of the country rather than to destabilization of the society. I have no doubt that the benefits to society will far outweigh any cost that would be incurred in putting this Bill into effect.

In fact, this Bill is an advancement on rehabilitation, generally. We really need to congratulate the Minister on taking this step and bringing this amendment to this House. As I said earlier on, what we need to do, most probably, is to change the attitudes and expectations of the society. Maybe we should ask ourselves some questions. It is important that not only the teacher and the school child change their attitudes towards the possibility of having young offenders in their midst, but also employers out there. When these young people get out of detention and they have achieved certain skills and training, they have achieved their O's and their A's while in detention, that when they go out there and they are looking for a job and they say, "I got my O's or I got my A's", or "I became a welder while I was in prison," employers must not hold their past indiscretions against them. If that happens, then all that we are trying to do would be lost.

In fact, if a young offender while in detention is able to show the determination and the ability to overcome all the obstacles ahead of him and gains training in a trade, or gets his O's or his A's with an aim maybe to continuing his education when he comes out of that detention, then I think that what employers should see here are characteristics which we look for in a good employee.

**Mr. Mohammed:** Would the hon. Minister give way to a question, please? I take the point that the hon. Minister is making about such a child going to an institution and getting O's and A's. I wonder whether the Minister has in mind, or the Government will consider a situation where, if, for example, that child has to apply for a police certificate of good character, whether it is five or 10 years after, that a conviction would nevertheless be recorded against him? Is the Government contemplating taking corresponding action to deal with that sort of situation?



**Dr. The Hon. L. Baboolal:** I thank the Member for Caroni East for his question. It is obviously a very good point which he has raised. We will examine it. I am sure that the Minister of National Security will take note of that, and maybe in his reply he will say something. If there is nothing yet in place, I am sure that he will consider it, because I think it is something important. I think that the stigma of the one-time offender should not stay with that child as he tries to advance himself through life.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I said, all our efforts here will be lost if that change in attitude out there does not occur. But knowing Trinidadians and Tobagonians as we all do—in fact, we are very soft-hearted and kind people, and I have no doubt that once this is put in place and people begin to see the beneficial results, begin to see young people who had turned to crime making a change in their life, they would be given the opportunity.

Additionally, it should be pointed out that integration into the education programme is critical, as I said earlier on, to ensure that these young people become useful members of society rather than remain as people who would always try to destabilize the country, who would always make a negative impact, who would, in fact, cost the country a great deal of money because of the crimes that they would go on to commit in their adult life. For much money would have to be spent to keep them in gaol as they go in and out constantly. There is no doubt that this measure, if put in place, is going to be, in the long run, a benefit to the entire country.

Juvenile delinquency has reared its head to an astonishing extent in the country over the last several years. There are several minors under the age of 18 who go to the Legal Aid Authority for representation in all kinds of things, in the matters of wounding, assault, robbery, breaking and entering, burglary, possession of drugs, weapons and so on. Sometimes parents are so distraught that they just do not know what to do.

There was one father who went to Legal Aid for assistance. His child was attending secondary school. He had been so unsuccessful in trying to get this young man to follow a different way of life that he was actually begging the Legal Aid Authority to put that child into detention, because he felt that maybe if the young man learnt a lesson from what he had done, it would be to his benefit. When you get a young person like this being actually sent into detention—here is a young man who is able to attend high school, but somewhere along the line has become sidetracked. While in detention, if he can be channeled back into resuming his high school studies, if he can be given counselling, he would return

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to his family where he would be accepted, and become a useful member of that family and of society.

There are quite a number of young people who end up in jail or in detention while they are actually attending high school. It is a sad state of affairs that this should occur and that there should be nothing in place to help these young people. This Government considers it a matter of priority that young people should be given the opportunity to learn and to develop and to be able to become useful and productive members of society as they become adults.

**3.25 p.m.**

It is a sorry state of affairs when so many of our young people are more and more becoming involved in crime. It is a fact; we know that. And it certainly shows that there is a breakdown in family life and discipline. We need in this country people who are disciplined; people with the work ethic; people who show independence and trustworthiness. I would agree with anyone that these are qualities which should be learnt from very young. But sometimes the family surroundings and the ability of parents to guide their children are not always there. These young people grow up into teenagers without having acquired discipline, trustworthiness, etc.

It is not too late to awaken these qualities; it is never too late. Especially in teenagers and young adults, these qualities are lying dormant, and they are simply asking for the right way and method of bringing them forward, making these young people useful and aware that they have these qualities within them.

Certainly, even more, those who end up in the hands of the law need more direction and help, and this should be available. Today, more and more young people will tell you that they feel they have been deserted by the adults in the population. They feel betrayed by those in authority: parents, teachers, police officers, etc. They find themselves floundering in a sea; some of them may swim out of it and pursue useful lives as adults, while others sink. It is the ones that sink that we need to help.

As a Government, we are committed to providing that help and to devising systems and programmes which would help young persons, particularly, to assume once more, their rightful place in society, to be able to make full use of that potential which lies within every young person; to make full use of their ability to learn and acquire education, trades and skills which would make them useful members of the society.

We are a young country and we need all our human resources. We cannot allow our young people who are, in fact, a large pool of human resource, to be lost to us because of lack of putting in place measures which can help them. We cannot, as a Government, or as a people, sit back and make callous remarks about this sort of thing and expect that these young people would just fend for themselves. As a Government, we do not intend to sit back and allow that to happen.

I, similarly, do not intend to speak any longer on this topic. I think it is something that any person or adult would realize that it is more than time we put in place systems to help the young people who are getting into trouble. We need to put the systems in place as early as possible, to help those who get away from the system in schools or whatever, and end up in the hands of the law or detention. They should not be considered as lost; they should not be considered as hardened criminals; they should not be considered as being unable to learn discipline or whatever is needed to make them useful members of society.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is with great expectation and hope, in fact, that I look forward to this Bill being passed. I support these amendments. Thank you.

**Miss Pamela Nicholson** (*Tobago West*): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I support some of the statements made by the representative for Couva South. I believe that the concept is a good one; that is, to do something to help young offenders. But I do not believe that the House can accept this. This is totally too piecemeal, and it is something that would be going into a vacuous kind of situation, in that you really do not know how the Government is going to implement what is said in the Bill. Nothing is wrong with the idea. The idea is good, but much more work needs to be done.

For example, we already have institutions in the country where young people who are first offenders reside, namely, St. Michael's and St. Mary's for orphans. When I look at what is taking place in those institutions, I cannot see the Government coming here with this, unless they address those institutions. It was only one or two weeks ago in a Sunday newspaper that [*Interruption*].

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am sent here by the people of Tobago West, and I will not continue to be obstructed by people in the public gallery from certain areas. I feel that the time has come that these people should be put out of this House if representatives cannot function peacefully, without people interfering by steupsing, mouthing obscenities and so on.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Members of the public gallery, you are to remain extremely silent during the course of the debate. If you violate that order, I would have no choice but to ask the officers to have you removed.

**Miss P. Nicholson:** Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The point I am making is that it was only about two weeks ago there was an article in the newspapers—I am sorry I do not have it here. I did not know that we were debating this today, for this is a debate to which I really wanted to make a very serious contribution. When one read that report—or it could have been a statement that someone was making on St. Mary's—it was very, very sad what was taking place. The young children could not get anything to eat; there was nobody to guide them; there was no psychiatric attention; nowhere to go if they left the institution. When one gets a job—if one managed to get a job—one would probably go back on weekends and pass on something for the others inside

I believe, if we are going to amend the Young Offenders Detention Act, that there is need for the Ministry of Education, the Ministry Consumer Affairs and Social Services, the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs and the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and Women's Affairs to come together and do some serious research and come up with the approach, the regulations and everything, then come to the House where the document would show us how it will be addressed.

I feel that the amendment should be withdrawn right now because one cannot just come and say, "Let us amend the Young Offenders Detention Act by using these methods" and just tell us by words. When I listened to the Minister, he really did not say how he is going to do the job. Is the Minister just going to take the people from YTC and dump them in the schools? We should be told how he is going to do this. The Minister should tell us how he intends to improve St. Michael's: whether in the institutions themselves more trades will be introduced; whether more counsellors will be available; whether a psychologist will be functioning there.

I agree, very strongly, with the Member for Couva South that we should not go further with this Bill unless a team is put together within these ministries to sit and address the whole situation. Then, we should be shown how this will be addressed. You cannot dump them in the schools.

**3.35 p.m.**

You have a situation—as I have argued only about two weeks ago—that obtains in the secondary schools today that is alarming. The school bags—knives,

guns and drugs—the same schools where you want to place the perpetrators of some serious crimes, whether it is first or second offenders. I am very sympathetic to and appreciate the argument. As far as I am concerned to take those people and dump them into an area which is already in crisis is an absurdity. As representatives of the people, I cannot see us imposing that kind of situation on the population. The Government does not have money to give the basics to the secondary schools.

Principals live in police stations. There is no money in the schools to buy materials for the same trades that they can do and which the representative for Barataria/San Juan spoke of; and also what the Minister of National Security is thinking about opening up for them—the same schools where you want to put the young people who are showing the ability, who are showing some improvement in their behavioural styles and it is felt that if they are given the opportunity they can make a go of it, those same schools are not getting materials so that the children can learn welding and joinery—everything that you are talking about.

There is no money in those schools. I argued and pointed out that the principals are saying that the schools are just holding bays. The children are just going and sitting down and, therefore, the frustration comes out in the gangs that are organized and are fighting each other. At present they are fighting teachers. Teachers cannot cope with the problems.

If we are to address this in a serious form, it is my view that a proper analysis of the situation must be done. You must have a pilot programme, for example, at St. Michael's, and the St. Mary's Children's Home, and from there you move to the next step that we are talking about.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I feel that while the idea is good we must know how we are going to address or implement it. And it should be shown in the document how we are going to do it. I suggest that this document be withdrawn and some months be given to the ministries to address it and see how it can be implemented, so that everything can be for the welfare of the same young people that we are taking about and for the country as a whole.

Thank you, very much.

**The Parliamentary Secretary in the Minister of Education (Mr. Edward Hart):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I understand it, the Bill before this honourable House seeks to widen the scope of the power of the Minister to make regulations for the provision of academic or vocational training for young offenders detained in industrial institutions, for example, the Youth Training Centre situated at Golden Grove, Arouca.

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It also seeks to authorize the Commissioner of Prisons to grant leave to young offenders to attend educational or vocational schools outside the walls of the industrial institutions.

In my humble view, these two provisions are intended to enhance the rehabilitation programmes already in place and offer to young offenders incarcerated in industrial institutions an opportunity to improve their skills for easier re-absorption into the general society after their period of detention is completed.

To my mind, these are two straightforward proposals which deserve the unanimous support of this honourable House. As someone who has spent the last three decades of my life dealing with youths, in general, and underprivileged ones in particular, in the areas of sports and culture, and also as someone who has lived all my adult life in close physical proximity to an institution catering for the needs of deprived and underprivileged youths—it might interest you to note that my loving mother and also my aunt grew up in that said institution—I can speak with a small measure of authority about the issue of juvenile delinquency and the measures which a caring government must put in place as a matter of urgency if we are to rescue that small, deviant segment of our most precious resource—the youth of the nation—from the negative influences to which they are peculiarly vulnerable.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, permit me to step back figuratively into the corridors of history. I do so in order to put to rest a pernicious fallacy propagated by certain elements in the society that juvenile delinquency had its genesis in 1956. You only need to listen to the electronic media to hear history being re-interpreted to suggest that all the ills which now beset us are a direct result of the accession of the PNM to political power and to governmental office. I should like to invite the purveyors of such a falsehood to peruse the legislative records of the colony of Trinidad and Tobago, and they would discover that the Young Offenders Detention Act, Chap. 13:05, was first promulgated as Act 19 of 1926, some 30 years—three decades—before the PNM saw the light of day. What this means is that legislative notice was taken of juvenile delinquency some 67 years ago.

Let me return to the specific issue of young offenders. Over the years society has tended to treat young offenders as outcasts, despite the efforts, such as the amendment before us, of governments to rehabilitate them. What is even worse is that some young persons who have been deprived of their natural parents and have had to be brought up in orphanages and children's homes have been lumped together with young offenders and are also treated as social outcasts.

Just as recently as two weeks ago, a youngster was discharged from the St. Mary's Children's Home and when he went to his mother, in his very presence there was a heated argument between the mother and grandmother as to who should take this youngster. It is sad to note that not one of them took responsibility for him. A nurse has taken this youth into her custody at present. His family has bluntly refused to take him.

This has been happening to many others. I got a call from as far as Pointe-a-Pierre where a young trumpeter from the said Home—I tried to get him into the police band—was not accepted by his stepfather. I called on the representative for Pointe-a-Pierre and told him about the incident and we are trying to see what we can do for this youngster.

I merely made this point to let Members know of some of the odds these people are up against. This societal attitude has become so entrenched that the youths of the nation who fall into this grouping are deprived of a fair start in life, which is very important, and remain for years in a kind of occupational and social twilight zone and, in many cases, unfortunately, end up as a regular group in our prison population.

**3.45 p.m.**

These amendments over which we are deliberating are intended to have the effect of eliminating the twilight zone from the lives of young offenders and giving them an opportunity to find their place in the sun as useful, productive, law-abiding citizens, making their contribution to the further advancement of our beloved country. Standing by themselves, these amended regulations will not achieve the desired goal. For them to prove successful they must be buttressed by a profound change of attitude in the society at large. This is something for which Parliament cannot legislate. It must come from the depths of the collective mind of society; it must stand firm on a bedrock of charity and compassion; it must be nurtured on the milk of human kindness, and it must be driven by a dedicated concern for human welfare.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is not my intention to become philosophical over this issue. If I have, it is because I feel very deeply about the plight of young people in general and young offenders in particular. I feel deeply because I have had first hand experience of young people being abandoned by uncaring parents, bereft of community support, and left to fend for themselves as best they could.

If I could share one or two experiences with you again. A toddler was left at the then, Tacarigua Railway Station. He was taken from there to the then

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Tacarigua Orphanage which is now the St. Mary's Children's Home. He was given a name. In those days, at those institutions almost every child there had a nickname. He was branded "Station Baby", at the institution for the rest of his life.

There was another incident at Five Rivers, where a child was thrown into a cesspit. The mother took a rod and started to probe to ensure that the child was dead. The end result was that youngster lost an eye. He now wears dark spectacles and walks about the streets of Port of Spain. He, too, had a nickname attached. I can go on and on.

There was another case where a youngster stole some sugar. His mother, who was then a prostitute, put him over the fire and burnt off the joints of his fingers. He is called "Gold Finger". These are the experiences that I want to share with you.

I have witnessed the saddening erosion of the influence and authority of the church and the school in our communities. I have given much of my time to dealing with the consequences of these developments in the community where I grew up. At the risk of being considered self-centred, I want to put on record that it was concern for the young people of my district and surrounding areas which prompted me, 26 years ago, to start a small football competition, with the assistance of some of my friends, to provide an avenue for young people to expend their pent-up energies and to engage in activities which deterred them from becoming involved in delinquent behaviour that could have easily made them young offenders.

Today, the league stands as a beacon of community effort and spirit, encouraging hundreds of young people to develop their physical talents in positive ways, and at the same time offering them an escape from boredom and idleness which could so easily influence them to pursue paths that lead to disaster.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Member for Couva South, tended to make heavy weather of the issue of transportation for these inmates going off to school. The Eddie Hart League has catered for the youths of the Youth Training Centre for years to take part in the football competitions. They are being transported to and fro without any problems. As a matter of fact, at the last awards ceremony, it might interest you to hear, the Youth Training Centre won an award for the best disciplined team, and also for the best team on parade. One of the youngsters emerged as one of the seven footballers of the year.



**Mr. Manning:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to congratulate the Member for Tunapuna on the very important point that he was making that seems to be lost on the hon. Member for Caroni East. What in fact he is saying is that the transportation requirements have been attended to by non-governmental organizations. That is the point that he is making. It does not necessarily depend on—

**Mr. Mohammed:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, what we are considering is a Bill before the House, where the residue of powers lies within the bosom of the Commissioner of Prisons. I am creating a distinction between that, coming from and operated by the Government, as opposed to the efficiency of Eddie Hart and the Eddie Hart League which we have heard about for so many years. That is the distinction.

**Mr. E. Hart:** Thank you.

I want to advise my good friend the Member for Tobago West that it is not everything we read we should believe. Coming out of the statement read about the St. Mary's Children's Home, probably there might have been an element of truth in some of the things that have been said. However, at the same time, when we read about the children not getting anything to eat—I am very close to the St. Mary's Children's Home—I could attest to the fact that this is not true.

**Miss Nicholson:** It was a report done by the Ministry—that is what I was reading—and it was an investigative report. We are talking about a total situation this evening, and we have to be very serious.

**Mr. E. Hart:** I want to assure the hon. Member for Tobago West that I am always very serious.

At the same time, as we are speaking about the inmates of the Youth Training Centre, I want to highlight, if you permit me, some of the youngsters who against all odds, apparently, brought some glory to themselves and the nation while some ended up as brilliant citizens in the long run, after being given a first chance.

If we talk about the field of boxing, the pugilistic art, Claude Noel comes to mind. He was at the St. Michael's Home.

**Miss Nicholson:** Do not quote that name.

**Mr. E. Hart:** You might advise me not to quote the name, but I have called it because whether you like it or not, it is on record that he was the Lightweight Champion of the World in boxing. As a result of that, a highway has been named

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in the Sister Isle after him, the Claude Noel Highway, on which I am sure the Member travels very frequently.

We also had Ulric Regis who was the Light Heavyweight Champion of Trinidad and Tobago and the Caribbean, and who was allegedly killed after a fight with Joe Bugner in England, which I have my doubts about.

We also had Johnny De Peiza who was adopted by my foster parents. When I am speaking about adoption, I am talking about serious adoption, not for political mileage and people saying that they will adopt children and that type of thing. Johnny was in the world ratings. There are others too numerous to mention: “Gentle” Daniel, “Easy Boy” Francis and so on.

### **3.55 p.m.**

In netball, where my charming Minister has made a name for herself and whom the Jean Pierre Complex has been named after, we also had girls who grew up in the St. Mary’s Children’s Home, who became ambassadors there.

Bodybuilding: We had Eddie Bates, who was at the St. Michael’s Home. He won the best abdominal short man class three times—the world I am speaking about.

We speak about music. There is an old song that says “Without a song the day will never end”. Some author stated: “When words fail, music speaks.” I can assure you that around 90 per cent of the police bandmen came from these institutions. You know, we have Superintendent Anthony Prospect.

**Miss Nicholson:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are not here talking this evening about a handful of people. We know at a certain stage certain things happen. What we are talking about is what the Minister has brought before us today. The Member should deal with that.

**Mr. E. Hart:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was just highlighting the fact that these people who were given a chance came out into society and made a name for themselves and the country. I do so because there are certain people who feel that people who come through these institutions cannot take their rightful place in society.

I was speaking about superintendent Prospect, Superintendent Scott, Mr. Sel Duncan, Jerry Jemmott and so on—outstanding people.

In the field of academics, I could recall at five o’clock every morning, there was a little East Indian girl who stood by the bus stop awaiting transportation to

go to school. Some people for one reason or another do not like their names to be linked; they do not like people to know that they were in these institutions. However, this young lady went on in academics and she is a doctor today; and we also have one who is a principal of a school. So I just thought I should highlight the achievements of some of these people.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know that my contribution has been charged with strong emotional overtones, but I crave your indulgence on this occasion. I have felt the anguish and the pain experienced by young offenders. I have seen young, deprived and abandoned people reaching out for a helping hand from their more fortunate fellow citizens. I have seen them disappointed when that help was not forthcoming.

For the sake of the youths of this country and for its future well-being, I appeal to the national community and to the hon. Members opposite to set aside prejudices and partisan considerations and give the fullest support to the Government in its determination to provide assistance to the fullest extent possible in the rehabilitation of young offenders who are committed to institutions for corrective training.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in conclusion, permit me to take this opportunity to congratulate the Minister of National Security, the Minister of Education, and the charming Minister of Social Services for the wonderful job they are doing. We at our ministry have been working in close collaboration with them.

At our ministry we have also put forward some programmes like the "Learn to Swim", in which we have 15,456 people involved. At the recently concluded Carifta Games we had Teri-Ann Evelyn copping 10 gold medals, one person alone, and she benefited from this programme. We have a physical recreation programme, a coach developmental programme where coaches are exposed to sports psychology, biomechanics, kinesiology and so on. We have a sports caravan culminating in a sports school. So these are some of the measures we have put in place for our young people.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thank you very much.

**Mr. Raymond Palackdharrysingh** (*Caroni Central*): Mr. Deputy Speaker, this evening as we debate this Bill before the House, I believe that we are touching merely a symptom of an extremely sick and decaying society. We are now attempting to put a plaster on a sore.

One could look at the development of the nation and recall the trauma of slavery. One could recall the trauma of indenture and at the same time as one

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looks at the development from colonialism to independence, one is going to recognize that the society has failed in its undertaking to mold the moral and social fabric into what ought to be considered a society with discipline and orientation.

As we look at this Bill today, we are merely hearing on the other side a lot of rhetoric. I should have imagined at some point in the presentation at least somebody on the Government side would have had the courage to stand up and say today that because of the social Malaise in the society, it is now convulsing.

We can talk as much as we want about family breakdown and indiscipline, but if we do not address the most significant problem of unemployment, we are going to have continued confusion in the society.

I shall quote from the *Guardian* of Thursday, April 1, 1993. I ask the Minister whether he was serious when he said what is reported here:

“Foreign movies partly to blame, says Huggins.

Huggins told the annual general meeting of the Inter-Religious Organization (IRO), at the Raja Yoga Headquarters in San Fernando that the situation had reached frightening proportions and blamed foreign movies for having such an effect on the youths.’

‘Moreover, the spread of the drug culture; the decline in moral standards with the attendant rise in promiscuity; the dismantling of traditional family structures and linkages, the growing apathy for and ridicule of religious teachings, together with the strong disregard for role models, have all led to the tragedy that is engulfing our youth today.’

Huggins pointed out that 417 cases of young offenders between the ages of 13 and 16 reached the courts in 1992.

He revealed that 443 juvenile delinquents, ranging between 16 and 18, were admitted to the Youth Training Centre (YTC) on remand as compared to 300 in 1991.

Out of the 443, Huggins said, 54 were committed to the institution for three years. This figure, according to the Minister, represents an increase of 86 per cent over the 1991 figure.

Huggins pointed out that the crimes attributed to those adolescents included housebreaking and larceny, assault and battery, armed robbery and possession of narcotics.

The Minister told the IRO that in 1992, 17,245 serious crimes were reported to the police. He believed that at least 65 per cent of the offences were committed by young people, predominantly males, under the age of 24."

And it goes on.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe that his statement is quite a courageous one. If he has analysed the problems to be like this, it is heart-rending to understand how, having looked at many of the dynamics in the social malaise today, that he could merely come with a piece of legislation to talk about the improvement of the life of youths.

What we have to understand is that we are all individuals, surely, but we are all part of a community. We are all part, in all instances, of what we call the national community; in some instances, of what we call the ethnic communities. But be that as it may, it points to the fact that we have hardly understood what is happening today in the evolution of our society.

In this regard, the Government is not the initiator. The Government merely reacts as it is spurred on by some other interest group. Today, because growth, rather than development, might be impaired by the number of crimes we are having, now someone is thinking about this meagre piece of legislation.

This Bill seeks to extend the regulation-making power of the Minister to include the power to prescribe the academic or vocational training that may be received by young offenders, and to empower the Commissioner of Prisons to grant leave to young offenders to enable them to attend educational or vocational institutions.

Section 5 of the Act states the following:

"The Minister may make regulations for all or any of the following matters—

- (a) the trades or employments which the persons detained in the Institution are to be taught and employed at;"

And the new amendment would go on to include "or the academic or vocational training they may receive."

Mr. Deputy Speaker, who are the young offenders today? Are we defining young offenders as persons between the ages of 14 and 16, 16 and 18, or 18 and 21 or all inclusive 14 to 21? I think that has to be spelt out and, at the same time, whether or not this legislation is going to make provisions, basically for male juvenile offenders. You see, it is difficult to contemplate what the Government is

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thinking in the absence of the regulations. The regulations are really the subordinate legislation that will put in place or indicate to you some of the mechanisms that would really give effect to the Bill itself when it becomes an Act. Unless those regulations are before you, it is extremely difficult to know really what the Government is contemplating.

The Minister said in his presentation, when he clarified, that this academic and vocational training will be received at the institution or outside, as established probably by section 2(1) of the Act; and 2(1) would think about the Youth Training Centre at Golden Grove. I simply ask at this point: Why is it necessary now to contemplate moving training from inside the YTC and other such places and to integrate it into the national training scheme? I am asking why, not because I have any objections to that, but because the YTC and other institutions like St. Michael's and so on ought to have their own total programmes.

Is it an admission that over the years those programmes have broken down completely, that the institutions are so dilapidated and the personnel so ineffective that they are now considering moving the juvenile delinquents out of the institutions so as to mainstream them with other institutions?

It is important to understand that, because it is not really easy to think of mere mainstreaming juvenile delinquents into the normal school population until there are the resources to deal with that situation.

In the present school system, there is a situation where there are slow learners, and though they are not juvenile delinquents, the present school staffing finds it extremely difficult to handle them—those who might be handicapped mentally and physically. Therefore, I ask the question: How will the Government determine the suitability of those who are in the YTC and other such institutions to take them through to another stage of education? That is fundamental.

Do not come to Parliament to tell us they have some noble ideas about taking our young people, putting them into the society, rehabilitating them and trying to have them find a place in the society without at least working on the readiness of that person or individual so as to give him the opportunity to receive what is offered. That is extremely important. In that respect, one must be told what mechanisms will be used.

Merely to say, "Look, we want to give the Commissioner of Prisons the empowerment to issue a permit for the young offender", says nothing about the offender's development outside. You see, this is one of the basic problems today that we are experiencing in the society; that is, the non-inculcation in children

from a very tender age of proper values, and exposure as to the way they must be socialized.

This becomes crucial because when you look at the socialization process, it shows you the type of family that you are coming from, the type of community that you are going to help to create and, finally, when you take your place in the society, the contribution you are going to make there. The very basic unit for that process to start, is the family unit.

I have no problems with the family unit, be it the common law relationship or what they consider in the eyes of the more sophisticated, the legitimized relationship. But, of course, in that unit, be it common law or established, there must be the corresponding moral obligation to look after the socializing needs of those offspring which were co-created.

In that manner, I am suggesting that if the family unit continues to be troubled by the present socio-economic climate, then you are not going to alleviate the problems in the youth training centres and the juvenile centres. All that you will have is merely a turnover. To the extent that the problems are exacerbated in the community because of social and economic dislocation, there is going to be a corresponding amount of pressure and demand upon the social security system. That has to be taken into account.

So in a situation like this today, I am certain that nothing much is going to happen. What is going to happen in the initial stages, and maybe throughout, is that you are going to try to mix two different social cultures together and rather than find a harmony in that, you are going to find conflict and mistrust.

There are also some reports to consider—and I know the Member for San Fernando East is always very disturbed when I am speaking. I do not know for what reason. He is always disturbed.

**Mr. Manning:** Mr. Deputy speaker, it is always a question of context.

**Mr. P. Palackdharrysingh:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I could understand why the pot always calls the kettle black.

I now make reference to another document. It is called the “Report of Committee to examine the entire family service delivery system in Trinidad and Tobago, Child Abuse, Part I. I want to turn to page 49, because I think it is quite instructive, especially to the Member for San Fernando East. On page 49, this document states:

“There are certain deficiencies in the committal process.”

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That is, that people are sent to these remand homes and so on, without proper diagnosis. I quote from page 49:

“Some of the deficiencies of the committal process:

- (1) It has been observed that magistrates sometimes make committals without reference to probation officers’ reports;
- (2) Some magistrates are insensitive to the special needs of children and, as such, respond to these as they would to adults;
- (3) In some instances, there is evidence that juvenile matters are heard in adult courts. That is contrary to the procedure set out for juvenile matters in the Children’s Ordinance ...;
- (6) Apart from the committal process is the involvement of the trained case worker, whose role would be to rehabilitate the parent family from which the juvenile offender comes in order to facilitate, where possible, the child’s reunion with the family.”

So what this is clearly stating, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that even when youngsters are committed to institutions, the very judicial process by which they are committed is very insensitive to the particular situation as it exists. Therefore, it suggests to me that what is required is not merely the putting by the magistrate of children into homes such as St. Michael’s or confining them to the Youth Training Centre and so on, but looking at the social structure of that family and doing something to help before they are released. There is where one of the fundamental weaknesses in the society lies.

The Minister of Social Services quoted the rate of recurring crimes as more than 50 per cent. To admit that when you put youngsters in institutions like this it is not really helping, is to say that we are not tackling the problems very seriously. If that is the case, we must look at other instruments and mechanisms that will prevent some of our young people deteriorating into unacceptable social styles.

**4.25 p.m.**

And in this same report, recommendations are made. It is not the first time I am quoting from this report in this House, and I am sure it would not be the last, because of mere rhetoric in this place. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I read as follows: Page 49:

"(e) Recommendations:

This Committee wishes to commend Cabinet for agreeing in principle to the relevant recommendations made by the Committee on Children's Services (6th



July 1981). However, for the purpose of emphasis, this Committee strongly recommends the following:-

1. Magistrates serving in Juvenile Courts should have special orientation to assist them to better dispense justice to Juveniles. Such orientation to be related to psycho-social needs of children and families with problems.
2. In all cases magistrates should have the benefit of social and psychological reports and recommendations of trained personnel to assist them in making decisions with regard to Juveniles.
3. The Probation Officer who processes such reports and upon whom the magistrate relies for making judgements has a very serious responsibility. The importance of professional training for such a worker cannot be over-stated.
4. It is strongly felt that in all cases, the period of committal should not be longer than one year in the first instance, with a mandatory proviso for review at the end of that period. The Homes should collaborate with the probation service which should have the ultimate responsibility for initiating the review. This, it is felt, would provide the opportunity for release in a shorter period when change of child's behaviour or family circumstances so indicate.
5. The Committee forcefully recommends that Section 50 Chapter 4, No. 22 (Children's Act) should be amended to give Magistrates the power to decide the specific period of detention order within the stipulated age limits.
6. It further strongly recommends that the Committal Process include the trained case worker whose role would be to rehabilitate the child and his family in order to facilitate the child's early re-entry into the home and society. It should be noted that adequate funds must be allocated for such activity. Such funds should be made easily and readily accessible to case workers, and should be under the control of the proposed Director of Family Service."

We all know how very disparate and fragmented the social service network is in this country. We know very well of the very lethargic performance by administration after administration with respect to the improvement of the family service in this country.

We cannot claim that by having this Bill accepted by Parliament, we are going to do anything whatsoever. We are dealing with two different kettles of fish: One

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for the Juveniles and the other where you have people who fit into the norms of the society because of a different experience and exposure.

When you look at the schools or the institutions that we have with respect to the quality of the staffing, the trade instructors and the administrative staff in the Homes, you are going to see how the managers of the Homes are overwhelmed by the problems presented.

What is being suggested today is merely a transferring of the problem from one area into another, and I am wondering whether or not the existing educational services for the non-institutionalized population would be able to withstand the additional pressure being put on it, in view of the fact that the already existing burden seems too great for it to bear.

**4.30 p.m.:** *Sitting suspended.*

**5.10 p.m.:** *Sitting resumed.*

**Mr. R. Palackdharrysingh:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, it was quite refreshing to hear the contribution of the Member for Tunapuna and I agree with him that in the sporting arena you have the opportunity for character building and at the same time using the energies of youth to create activity quite often leading to some excellence. I hope that the hon. Member for Tunapuna would use his influence to help to rehabilitate a number of the recreation grounds around the country. That, of course, would lead to some form of rehabilitation. The hon. Member for Port of Spain South has always been held up in this country as a model of excellence in the area of sports—

**Miss Bhaggan:** And a model.

**Mr. R. Palackdharrysingh:**—and she has the golden opportunity as Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs to give active and financial commitment to improving the quality of life of our young people.

**Miss Nicholson:** Jean, Palack is praising you.

**Mr. R. Palackdharrysingh:** I hope that the optimism often expressed by the hon. Member is not frustrated by Members for St. Ann's East and San Fernando East, because in the final analysis, it is not how much you say, but it is how much you deliver—

**Mr. Haniff:** The truth is, nothing is happening right now.

**Mr. R. Palackdharrysingh:** And precious little has been happening. We know very well that sport is an inescapable activity of human growth and

development. Not only does it allow you to grow physically, but it also instils in you a sense of being a member of a team, a sense of community, a sense of responsibility; and beyond the mere physical appearance of physical activity, there is something in it that leads to character building and strengthening the bonds of friendship within our youth and the sporting community.

So let me again remind the Member for Tunapuna and the Member for Port of Spain South that they will have to use all their heart and political skill to make the contribution they can well make if they are to reduce the incidence of juvenile delinquency in Trinidad and Tobago. It is not the only thing needed, but would contribute significantly to holding the social fabric of the society together. Therefore we cannot under-estimate the importance of sport and sporting facilities in the country.

It is well known that the social and emotional traumas suffered by inmates lead to all sorts of physical symptoms, such as bed-wetting and tongue-sucking, withdrawn and aggressive behaviour and so on. It is well known that relatives, rather than develop what is called a close bond with the juvenile delinquents, tend to keep them away. It is also known that they have special learning disabilities; that their language is not of the average child; there is the lack of reading and comprehension skills, which would mean that you must have specialist staff to deal with these young people.

Also you must not forget that many of these delinquents cannot afford to keep themselves healthy; and there are many health needs. I am saying this because you do not take juvenile delinquents and say, look I am sending them for technical, vocational and academic training and that will really rehabilitate them. In the first instance they are abnormal from the point of view that they do not conform to, more or less, the accepted norms of the particular community to which they belong. Unless you can deal with that aspect of their lives, you could put whatever you want before them, it would hardly make the kind of sense that would give us the benefit of any further exposure.

I ask the Minister: How will these juvenile delinquents be assessed or chosen for further training? Since it is being suggested, in part, that already a number of mechanisms are being put in place, I think the Government has a responsibility to inform this House as to some of the schools to which they would be sent. Will these children be sent to the senior comprehensive schools? Will they be sent to the so-called "prestige" schools in the country; or will there be some special provision made for them elsewhere, to integrate them into the mainstream of the educational system? This is indeed important because it has to do with a lot of

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psychological adjustment; it has to do with an attitude and temperament that will be necessary for these young people to meaningfully participate in what they are going to be exposed to.

Apart from what has been said by the hon. Member for Tunapuna with respect to some of the exceptions to the rule, by and large, as has been admitted, a number of young people will go back to a life of crime, for in it a number have found security. Because when you have no acceptance in a society, no one to defend you, when you are lonely in your freedom, it might be considered better, as many a former inmate used to say, and some still say, to be back in jail because you are going to get, at least, three meals. That is a position we have to understand. There has to be moral and spiritual rejuvenation of those people, because we may get back to the situation as in the early days. It is well recorded that when the slaves were freed, some of them felt that the freedom brought increased responsibility which they could not cope with. In other words, they felt that they were ill-prepared to handle their new freedom.

**5.20 p.m.**

Today I am asking: Has there been consultation with a number of non-governmental organizations as to their role in this exercise? You cannot talk about moral and spiritual deterioration without consultation with the religious community. No matter what you say, it is quite clear in our multi-religious and multi-ethnic society that we have been blessed with a sort of inward strength by all these communities, as they inculcate into their membership the values of their teachings with respect to personal responsibility, with respect to responsibility to the community and to the nation. I do not know when we, as parliamentarians, would have our first lesson in comparative religion, but it would seem that somewhere along the line our entire educational system has missed out on one of the most important humanizing and moralizing forces—the understanding and appreciation of our own faith and that of others. Those are some of the things that are important. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would not respond to the Member for San Fernando East, because somehow there is a local saying, "You are playing dead to catch corbeau alive." I know he wants to know about comparative religion. He has merely tasted a little, but he has not really imbibed. Let me say this: in due course I will offer my services to him to help him in his programme. Unless we deal with the problems, we would not be doing very much.

There is nothing new in what has been happening today. If we look to the report of 1980, which is the Abdullah Report, as it is called, it has quite a bit on

education. That report indicates that careers in crime and delinquency tend to go hand in hand with retardation in educational endeavours. In many instances, poor home backgrounds and delinquent parents and poverty may be the relevant factors in underdevelopment of the intellectual potential of the offenders.

I want to restate the case. No matter what structures you are going to put in place, what economic programmes you are going to follow, if that basic unit of the society, the family, is not strong, and not properly bonded, or there is no moral responsibility in those who form families to take care of offspring and give them an opportunity for proper socializing inculcation into the values of their faith, into the norms of the society, into their educational development in the secular world for a living, then we would fail. Today our problem in this country is that while we are tolerant, we are not deeply appreciative of each other.

Secondly, the family is under severe pressure because of lack of employment. Many a home is being broken, many a young life is being affected, and until we can remedy that, nothing positive would happen.

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

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

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Mr. R. Palackdharrysingh:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I find it so strange that this Parliament has been so gracious to me this afternoon.

**Mr. Manning:** We have just come out of two very important religious seasons, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Ramadan and Lent, so be our guest.

**Mr. R. Palackdharrysingh:** I shall be equally gracious. Lest I get the Member for San Fernando East too wise, I shall be just a few more minutes.

I am saying that we have fundamental problems in this society and unless we halt the disintegration of the family, that is, by providing basic sustenance and services and allowing them to be exposed to some of the other important facets of life, these measures would not help very much. I agree that every single human being is equally important as the next and that no life should be allowed to flounder on the rocks of despair and destitution. But we must know that unless we tackle the main issues, these little piecemeal measures would not, at all, do anything to improve the life of our youths in our country and it would not even significantly improve the prison system and the youth institutions. Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

**The Prime Minister (Hon. Patrick Manning):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I did not intend to intervene in this debate, but I have been prompted to do so by the comment of the hon. Member for Caroni Central in closing his contribution just a few seconds ago, when he made reference to a piecemeal approach. That sentiment, in fact, echoed a similar sentiment that had been advanced by the hon. Member for Couva South as he made his contribution.

There is a second reason why I thought that I should make a contribution, brief though I intend it to be, to this debate. I had heard, as hon. Members had, a comment from the Member for Caroni Central on the education system, and I will make reference to that in a minute. There is a third reason—inspired as I am by the contribution of the hon. Member for Tunapuna whom I wish to congratulate—his contribution was the epitome of sincerity. Whatever you may want to say, sincerity is a quality for which the Member for Tunapuna has now become well-known—

**Mr. Maharaj:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, is there any particular reason why he has to congratulate his own Members in Parliament whenever he gets up?

**Hon. P. Manning:** Yes. Because I recognize excellence, even if they do not. It is also because on this side we have a team, and there is a team spirit that exists in the Government which contributes in no small measure to the Government's ability to perform. We have learnt that and the need for it by examining the Government of Trinidad and Tobago between the years 1986 and 1991.

Over the years, a practice has developed within the People's National Movement. The practice is that at annual conventions of the party, the party is exposed to the policy thinking of the Government which is made available for the scrutiny of the party and for endorsement, or otherwise, as the party considers it appropriate, with or without amendment. When the PNM went into Opposition for the first time in 1987, not only did we seek to continue with that practice and that tradition, but an added forum became available to us by way of responses to the annual budget exercise which provided another opportunity for adumbration of policy within the precincts of this honourable House.

### **5.30 p.m.**

Mr. Deputy Speaker, so it is as we sought to continue that practice that had been started many years ago within the party, the People's National Movement, at its 31st Annual Convention in 1992, at the Chaguaramas Convention Centre, the party was exposed, not just to the performance of the newly-elected Government, but as has now become customary in the PNM, but also to some of the visions that

the leaders of the party shared for the country as we sought to take this country forward and to raise the standard of living of our people.

So it was, that the whole question of the reform of the prison system engaged the attention of the People's National Movement meeting in annual convention for the 31st time. I do not know that there is any other political party in the country that can boast of that. The convention was addressed in the following terms. I am quoting from page 35 of the address of the Political Leader to the annual convention, outlining as he did, the vision:

"It is to be proposed that there be a careful re-examination of the prison system to ensure that prisoners who have served their time, upon release, are not socially displaced but can relocate themselves in the Society.

Programmes will be carefully structured to allow prisoners to attain improvement through academic or skills training to achieve success in either or both areas."

The allegation is 'ad hocism in policy adumbration'. That is the allegation, suggesting, of course, that the particular measure that is the subject of the deliberations of this honourable House, at this time, is a measure that has been pulled out from a hat, conforming, as they are seeking to convince us, to no particular principle or set of principles and forming part of no overall policy. That is the view expressed by my good Friend the Member for Caroni Central and his Leader the Member for Couva South. Or, is it his Deputy Leader? One of his leaders.

The document continues:

"To this end, systems will be properly devised to ensure that prisoners receive classes in subject areas which will lead toward the attainment of CXC, GCE O and A Level Certificates and proper skills training which will, in both instances equip them to return to society as an asset. With special regard to skills training, it is proposed that work centres be established in prisons where the goods produced would be so well crafted that they can generate income for the State and for the prisoner part of which he would receive when he returns to Society, thus giving him income to assist in the resumption of life productively."

As you would notice, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what is emerging here is a vision that had been outlined to the People's National Movement, meeting as we did at the 31st Annual Convention.

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"It is often said that the Prison System tends to be a burden on the State but we intend to develop a system that is self-sustaining and income generating.

Rather than the State feeding the prisoners, they, through training in proper agricultural techniques and animal husbandry will to a large extent be able to feed themselves and other citizens of this country."

It goes on:

"We have talked about academic skills training to prepare prisoners for life on their return to society, but we also recognize that without psychological preparation for their return all that training will go to naught."

The accent is on "psychological" here, because it was the very point that had been made by the hon. Member for Caroni Central in making his contribution on this Bill, suggesting that as part of the piecemeal approach to which he had made reference, we had ignored the very important area of the psychological disposition of those to whom we seek to give assistance. What I am seeking to demonstrate is that for yet another time, the hon. Member for Caroni Central is entirely off the mark. Totally wrong! *[Interruption]* We will come to that in a minute.

It goes on:

"In that regard therefore we intend to establish programmes throughout the prison system specifically designed for instilling discipline in those within the system reacquainting them to their return to society, aimed generally at ensuring that the transition would be smooth and successful with a consequent reduction in the number of repeat offenders. We are very aware of the fact that many offenders are young people. Consequently apart from a restructuring of our education system ..."

Another point which was made by the hon. Member for Caroni Central, arguing as he did that it impinges on the entire society and that we could not want to deal with a measure such as we are dealing with this evening, without paying due cognizance to the role of the education system in the shaping of the character and personality of individuals and in determining the kind of individuals that the society produces. I will come to that also in a minute.

"so that it reaches all levels of our society, we recognize that in the challenge of making a better life for all, the social services system must be carefully reexamined and restructured so that it is geared toward alleviating the numerous social problems which now face us, with a view, as we pledged in our 1991 Election Manifesto 'to making these services available to every family and individual identified as being in need of them'."



When that particular aspect of the contribution was made at the annual convention of the PNM, it was met with tremendous enthusiasm. Subsequently, the media singled out that aspect of the comprehensive visions that had been outlined for public comment, again, commenting in such a manner as to suggest that there was an endorsement of the approach that the Government was advancing.

We come to the Parliament this evening with this Bill, confident in the knowledge that the course of action that we are pursuing, having been tested in the national community, is a course of action that has received the approbation of wide sections of the national community.

**Mr. Maharaj:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, could the hon. Member for San Fernando East and Prime Minister, state where the mechanism he has just talked about exists in the Bill.

**Hon. P. Manning:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would come to my hon. Friend's point in a minute. What I am seeking to do this evening is to convince hon. Members that quite apart from the item being an isolated piece of ad hocism, if we are to put a refinement on the contribution of the hon. Member for Caroni Central, what, in fact, the Bill does is to fit very squarely into a comprehensive vision that has not only been articulated publicly, but has also been the subject of scrutiny by the political party, of which we form a part, and has been approved by the party as it met for the 31st time in an annual convention. It is not ad hocism at all.

The hon. Member for Caroni Central and his leader for the time being the Member for Couva South have, in fact, done the Bill a great disservice to suggest *[Interruption]*. Fitting into a vision. A vision that has been clearly outlined and demonstrates that the Government is not operating on a hit-or-miss basis, but that we have carefully considered the approach and the direction in which we would like to take the country in this aspect of our national development; that we have articulated a vision that has been approved by our political party; and that we are now putting legislation in place that is consistent with the approval that we received from the PNM as we met in annual convention. That is the approach of the People's National Movement.

#### **5.40 p.m.**

I go to point No. 2. The education system and the need to review it: It is as if the hon. Member for Caroni Central was absent from this House in the recent past. Not too long ago Mr. Deputy Speaker, as you, I am sure will be aware, the hon. Minister of Education, the representative for the constituency of St. Joseph,

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speaking and acting on behalf of the Government and with the authority of the Cabinet, laid before this honourable House the report of a task force that had been set up last year on education. In laying that report the hon. Minister of Education made a statement that was authorized by the Cabinet of Trinidad and Tobago.

The fact of the matter is, shortly after we got into Government last year, we took the course of action of putting together a large team of experts designed to comprehensively review the education system because we recognized that as successful as the country has been—and we have been boasting about it—in providing education in quantity to our citizens the time had come to examine the quality of the education that was being imparted to our citizens to ensure that we make the appropriate adjustments guaranteeing, as we hope it would, the production of the kind of citizens to which the society aspires and the kind of citizens of which we would all be proud.

**Mr. Maharaj:** Can the hon. Member for San Fernando East, the hon. Prime Minister, say where in this document any aspect of education dealing with the effects that this Bill will have, is mentioned? I have looked at it and I do not see any.

**Hon. P. Manning:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are none so blind as those who would not see. The team was carefully selected. It was a large team because of the need we recognized for consultation even at the point of putting a document together. The Government had always stated its intention to use that document as a basis for widespread consultation in the national community prior to adopting any policies in respect of reform of the education system. Now the document is available, and it has been made available for public comment; a respectable period of time will be permitted to elapse, after which we will begin the consultations to which we committed ourselves when the team was set up in the first place, and certainly a public commitment when the report of the task force was laid.

In fact, what you are seeing is that the task force report on the one hand, and the vision that we have outlined in respect of the prison system on the other, a vision outlined to the same convention of the party in respect of social services, all form a package of which that task force report is just a part. If one takes the position that one is looking at anything in isolation, one can easily make the error that the hon. Member for Couva South seems to be falling into, as we deliberate on this Bill amend the Young Offenders Detention Act.

When the hon. Minister of National Security winds up the debate he will say a few things about consultation in response to a comment or two made on the other

side. But, permit me for the time being to say to hon. Members opposite that it is not a question of whether we will put appropriate arrangements in place to be able to institute the provisions of this Bill. The idea is an idea that has been around for some considerable time, and in the context of the vision that has been approved by our party, we have decided to put the legislative framework in place that will legitimize, as it were, providing the framework within which we can continue—I use the word 'continue' advisedly—the training of young offenders who find themselves in the penal system of Trinidad and Tobago; and those who show aptitude over and above the average are to be properly taught by the teaching mechanisms in that institution to allow them to go outside to advance their education.

The fact of the matter is that the system has been in place for some time. In other words, the practice of having people exposed to the education system has already been implemented. And that is the point. It is not, therefore, that we are without some knowledge as to what the problems might be; or it is not to say that we are entirely oblivious to the fact that there is a need to make adjustments to the system as you go along; or that we are whistling in the wind as some would want to say—fishing, as the case might be. Far from it.

Already persons who find themselves in the penal system have been taken outside that system and exposed to the formal education system of the country. What we are seeking to do today is to bring a Bill that has taken our experiences into account as we seek to give legislative complexion to a very important aspect of the social development of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. And so, I just thought that I would have made those few points. I will make one more.

The hon. Member for Caroni Central made reference to the family, and he is quite right that many of the social problems we experience in this society today can be traced back to what sociologists describe as the breakdown in family life. Without wanting to get into any sterile argument as to who is responsible or who is not—we live in the world of reality, and whoever may be responsible for it, we are operating on the basis of a situation that faces us now. There seems to be a problem with family life, and as a Government we feel that we have a responsibility to address it.

Next year, 1994, is the United Nations International Year of the Family. *[Interruption]* The United Nations has so designated it. Whether the hon. Member for Oropouche would like to protest against it or not, it has been so designated by the United Nations. We have taken cognizance of that in Trinidad

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and Tobago. Quite recently I met with the Minister of Consumer Affairs and Social Services and members of her staff to discuss precisely this issue.

**Mr. Sudama:** For the first time?

**Hon. P. Manning:** We do it all the time. Our Government is very different from the Government of which you were a part. *[Interruption]* I will do that shortly. Unlike my colleague the Member for Oropouche when he formed part of the Cabinet, the Member for Barataria/San Juan enjoys the confidence of the Prime Minister. We raised the question of the International Year of the Family and what it means to Trinidad and Tobago, and we raised the need for a proper identification and definition of the causes of breakdown in family life.

Arising out of that, the Minister concerned, the hon. Member for Barataria/San Juan, will shortly be approaching the University of the West Indies so that some kind of proper survey can be done as a basis, in the first instance, for properly and definitively identifying the problem which we can use as a base for decision-making. As I make a brief contribution on this Bill to amend the Young Offenders Detention Act Chap. 13:05, I do so with the hope that I can convince hon. Members opposite that far from the particular measures being brought here on an *ad hoc* basis, that in fact they form part of a vision the party has for the country, that vision itself being part of a wider vision of the Government in respect of the social services in Trinidad and Tobago.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

**5.50 p.m.**

#### ADJOURNMENT

**The Minister of Local Government (Hon. Kenneth Valley):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move that the House do now adjourn to Friday, April 25, 1993 at 1.30 p.m. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker, again, I have to protest. We spoke very early. His colleague has a Motion on the Adjournment, and we said that we want to facilitate it. Motions on the Adjournment start at 6.00 p.m. He knows that.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Members, we have a Motion on the Adjournment by the Member for Siparia.

#### Local Government Bodies

**Mr. Sahid Hosein (Siparia):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, the topic on the Motion of the Adjournment reads as follows:

The continued deterioration of the level of services offered by local Government bodies.

As most of us would be aware by now, local government institutions are very important institutions in this country, in that the majority of the population, at some time or the other, depend on the services of these bodies, especially the poor people in this country. I think the time has come when we on this side must alert the country to the fact that the Government is setting the stage for abolishment of the local government bodies.

Act 21 of 1990 was to some measure geared to decentralize local government and bring power back into the hands of the people, via their elected representatives, and so move away from the situation where power really resided in the hands of the Central Government or their agents such as the Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) and technical officers. However, despite Act 21 of 1990, the situation is worse today.

If one were to look objectively at local government, one would see that the institution itself, and even the representatives, are being rendered totally useless, because there are no money and equipment, and very soon there will be no labour, if the Government continues in the present direction.

The severe reduction in allocations has had very adverse effects on the functioning of local government. One has been told in this House that budgets for the local government bodies are arrived at by consultation. It makes one wonder because representatives of the respective local government bodies indeed go up to the Ministry of Finance and indicate to the technocrats what their needs are. Invariably, year after year, a budget is imposed upon you.

The term "consultation", as was indicated earlier this evening by the Member for Couva South, denotes that there is some measure of give and take, and agreement. But there is a situation, despite this so-called consultation, where a budget is imposed upon you. You have no say as to the quantum. So this talk about consultation is merely "ole" talk.

At this point, there is not adequate funding to pay staff. As a consequence there was retrenchment of the casual workers. If one should use the figures and extrapolate them for this year, it would be seen that by August or September, the majority of these local government bodies will not have money to pay wages.

Recently, one would have seen in the *Trinidad Guardian* dated Wednesday March 17, 1993, the headline on page 3: "Showdown looms at Chaguanas council." This article states:

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"All indications point to a shutdown of operations at the Chaguanas Borough Corporation in the near future, since there are not sufficient funds for workers to carry out their duties efficiently, as well as for the payment of wages.

Chaguanas Mayor Mulchan Seuchan told the *Guardian* on Monday that funds were low, which would seriously affect operations at the Corporation and, ultimately, the whole of Chaguanas.

'The Borough will soon be unable to meet payments for fuel for garbage trucks, and cess pool cleaners, which will have to remain parked up at the garage unless funds are forthcoming,' said Seuchan, adding that the situation was basically the same at other regional corporations."

These corporations are operating in an atmosphere of uncertainty, where week after week, fortnight after fortnight, they do not know whether the workers will be paid, or fuel or goods will be available in order for the corporations to operate.

Added to that, at this time there is a situation where there is a shortage of relevant staff in a number of corporations, especially the newly-established corporations, where there are no garage facilities, surveyors, mechanics and electricians. For example, if you want to establish a recreation ground, you have no survey crew to go out and operate. One understands the severe shortage that government departments are faced with, so one cannot access surveying equipment and personnel from other governmental agencies.

We have been told that the workers who were severed will be redeployed under the URP. One has to ask: What mechanism will be put in place? Is it that the regional corporations can access the URP offices and programmes directly, and send the workers there? Or will they have to come in like any member of the public? There is also a situation where the money that was provided for goods and services is being used to meet the payment of wages in order to ensure that workers are paid on time.

Very interestingly, when one raises these matters in Parliament, especially when one speaks about the question of retrenchment, the Minister of Local Government on several occasions says that, the private sector has to get involved in local government.

**6.00 p.m.**

Quoting from Minister Valley's reply to a question on March 12, 1993:

“Madam Speaker, the private sector is already involved in local government activities in several areas, including scavenging of refuse and debris, provision of truck-borne water, beautification programmes, the supply of materials.”

It is a situation where the Minister is saying we want to get these people involved to a greater extent, but if these people are going to be involved, does it not mean that you have to provide more moneys under contract pay services? Because, obviously, if you retrench people who have been providing a certain level of service and you are saying that the private sector is to take up the slack, then they would have to be paid, and you see no corresponding increase in the allocation under “Contracted Services”.

Then the Government speaks of decentralization. Like the rest of what we have been hearing, a lot of public relations and propaganda, because the hard reality that faces those who are involved in local government and even the people outside there, is that the Government have continued where they left off when they demitted office in 1986 to bring power closer and closer to Central Government. So discussion about decentralization is only “ole” talk.

Look at what is taking place: There are increases in the URP programme while you have reduction at the local government level; you have increases at the Self-help Commission—and not that I am averse to the increases, but you are doing it to a large extent at the expense of the local government bodies. When one looks at the functions of the URP programme, when one looks at what the Self-help Commission is doing and what the local government bodies are doing, one is seeing a situation where you are taking away responsibilities from one body and handing them to another.

For example, the School Feeding Programme. If you are talking about decentralization, the School Feeding Programme was supposed to be the responsibility of the local government bodies. That has gone by the wayside to another agency. “Repairs to Secondary Roads, that has gone to another agency. The agricultural access roads used to fall under local government bodies. That has gone by the wayside. No longer do the local government bodies have any input, even in the determination of which agricultural access roads are going to be repaired. Under the law, those are the responsibilities of the local government bodies.

Then we come to the question, finally, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of truck-borne water. Since the Government, which seizes every opportunity to say that it cares, came into power, there has been a situation occurring with truck-borne water where last year, for the first time—we thought it could not have gotten worse—it

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started in late March. This year, we are in a very thorough dry season and water distribution started only last week but not in all areas.

Despite the fact that WASA is unable to supply even those who are connected to their system, you have a serious crisis with regard to truck-borne water, and the excuse which has been bandied about and has been made in this Parliament is that the regional corporations should bear the blame; they sent up the required information late to the ministry.

**Mr. Haniff:** Discrimination against the rural people by this Government.

**Mr. S. Hosein:** There is nothing so basic as water, and if they are a caring Government, that is one thing they should have gone all out of their way to ensure—that the distribution of truck-borne water started on time so that people had truck-borne water. That is at least one of the things that should have been done.

There is a situation today where delivery of truck-borne water has not started as yet, despite the fact—and the Government seems to have forgotten this—that we are in the middle of a cholera alert.

There is also a situation where people who have worked on that water programme, who have 25 and 30 years service, because of the policies of that caring Government, are today on the breadline. Year after year during the dry season these people depended on income from the distribution of truck-borne water and because of the caring policies of that Government on the other side, a number of these people are on the breadline. *[Interruption]*

**Mr. Haniff:** You do not understand, you know; I sympathize with you. These are the criminals here, the hypocrites.

**Mr. S. Hosein:** Mr. Deputy Speaker—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Have some order, please!

**Mr. S. Hosein:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, all is not well at the local government bodies. In fact, at this time the local government bodies, to all intents and purposes, are virtually useless to the public of this country.

I started off by saying that we wanted to alert the country that the Government seems to be deliberately setting the stage for the abolition of the local government bodies. It would be a sad day if that were to come to pass, because local government is the bedrock upon which the democracy of this country is founded.

I thank you very much.



**The Minister of Local Government and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Motion before the House talks about the continued deterioration of the level of services offered by the local government bodies. I listened very attentively to the Member and he seemed to be making a case, basically, that, in fact, local government bodies are getting a lower level of funding, which is a fact.

But to my mind, money is not synonymous with efficiency or with effectiveness. As a matter of fact, *[Interruption]* the whole purpose of management is the allocation of scarce resources.

We have been saying at the level of local government that our function over the next three years is to move the local government bodies to a position of operational autonomy with accountability. *[Interruption]* That is what we are doing in the local government system.

**Mr. Sudama:** Would the Minister give way? I am at a loss to understand what is meant by “autonomy”. What does he conceive of as “autonomy”? Because what is happening in the local government bodies is that if you want a penny, you have to run to the Minister of Local Government. I do not know if that is his concept of autonomy.

**Hon. K. Valley:** Mr. Deputy Spaker, as I was saying, our task over the three-year period is to move the local government bodies to a position of autonomy, meaning that at that time they would no longer have to come to Central Government for, at least, that level of funding; they would be taking decisions at that level. But there is quite a lot of work to do in order to prepare those bodies.

The local government establishment would reveal a number of things. First of all, yes, in 1993, we have to operate with a lower budget. That fact is well known. In an environment of scarce financial resources, all ministries in 1993 have been asked to operate with lower financial resources. But that is only part of it. In the local government system *[Interruption]*

**Mr. Haniff:** Let me leave. You see this set of hypocrites, I cannot take them on!

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Will the Member maintain his decorum, please. The Minister may continue.

**Hon. K. Valley:** Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

**Mr. Haniff:** Hypocrites! Hypocrities! That is what I was saying. *[Interruption]* Apologize to whom? You cannot do me that! That is what hurting you!

**Hon. K. Valley:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was making the point that in addition to the fact that we have to operate with lower financial resources, there is also a shortage of skilled personnel within the local government bodies, and there is also low productivity.

The Member complains about URP, but the fact is that the productivity in URP today is much higher than that in the local government system. That is the reality of the situation. When the local government bodies—

**Mr. Hosein:** On a point of order, please. I never complained about URP. I said they were getting increased allocations while certain things were happening there. I never complained.

**Hon. K. Valley:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Member was making the point that it appears as though it is Government's intention to kill local government because we are taking funds from local government and giving URP and that when one looks at the functions being performed by URP, one will see that they are performing functions which ought to be local government functions. If that is not a complaint, I do not know what is.

**Mr. Palackdharrysingh:** That is emasculation.

**Hon. K. Valley:** URP is much more productive today than the local government bodies.

If three years from today I have to be saying the same thing, I would resign. Because our whole function in local government is to move the whole local government body to a system of efficiency and effectiveness, and that is exactly what we are doing. That is why we saw very early the need for a management audit team in the local government body; that is why we looked at gang sizes. The work that we have done and the work that we are doing is not simply a question of money. Yes, we are short of money, but only last week I was before the Cabinet arguing the case for local government because about two months ago, after we met with the CEOs, with the chairmen and the mayors of the local government system, with the union—

**Mr. Mohammed:** Will the Member give way?

**Hon. K. Valley:** Let me finish the point. I will give way in a moment.

After we met all these people—we have been meeting since December—we came up with an 18-point plan to live within the resources allocated, and that was finished and we agreed on a plan of action. We set up a small team. We asked:

What do we need now? How much are we short? That was in February and the committee reported.

Let me take the question from my Friend.

**Mr. Mohammed:** Before you leave the point you were making just a minute ago, I want to get clear in my mind whether the hon. Minister, who is in charge of local government, is saying that the URP workers are working better than the workers in the local government system.

**Hon. K. Valley:** I am making a categorical statement that, as of today, the productivity in the URP system is much better than the productivity in the local government system.

**Mr. Maharaj:** Mr. Deputy Speaker—sorry, sorry.

**Mr. Hosein:** Just for clarification, please, Mr. Deputy Speaker. A minute ago, the hon. Minister spoke about striving for improved efficiency. Can he tell this House if this improved efficiency is going to involve further retrenchment of those people employed at local government?

**Hon. K. Valley:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, if he would allow me, he would be educated by the time I am finished. I am making the point.

**Mr. Maharaj:** It is important. The hon. Member for Diego Martin Central has made a serious statement. Can he tell this House what basis, what criteria, what standard was used in order for him to get that?

**Hon. K. Valley:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I left university a long time ago, talking about empirical research. One simply has to look at projects undertaken by URP and look at what is happening in the local government system. The fact is, that is the reality. You ask anybody; it is known that productivity in the URP is much better than in the local government system.

I am making the point that the local government system is not prepared at this time to take over or to handle what URP is doing. The local government system just cannot handle it. More than that, URP is an unemployment relief programme. That is not what we are about in the local government system. As an unemployment relief programme, you would know that the Government last year, or effective from 1993, reduced the wages in that programme. There was a situation in which, here in an unemployment relief programme, one was earning the same level of salary as the unionized employees in the local government system. So there was no incentive for the person to really come off that unemployment relief programme. He was earning the same thing that he would have earned had he been a unionized employee. But that is being sidetracked.

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I am saying that the Minister, the permanent secretary, the officials at head office, we are all well aware of the money problem in local government. This note is dated April. Because after the committee reported, we went to the Cabinet and said this is the situation. I can tell you that things are happening. We will deal with that situation. But one of the things we did in the system for the year, was to release the casual labour.

We could not keep the casual labour. The argument is clear: The casual labour in the local government system is, in fact, another unemployment relief programme. It seems to make little sense that there is a programme of unemployment relief, but one has another unemployment relief programme in local government. But then there is another one—there are unemployment relief programmes all about the place. One has to centralize, and that is what this Government is all about.

One of the agreements we had with the union, with the CEOs, the chairmen and so on, was that with respect to truck-borne water, no longer could we hire these casual persons. We would have to use persons from our regular or permanent staff, and that was agreed to in December and January.

So one is at a loss to understand how, in April or late March, when we are about to start the truck-borne water distribution—and I want to come to that—in some areas it is delayed because there are Members of the Parliament and certain other Members of the Opposition clamouring for the hiring of the same persons, the casual labour that they agreed in December and January we cannot afford. But that is the type of double tongue that you hear from time to time.

**Mr. Hosein:** Is the Minister saying that Members of Parliament on this side agreed to the position taken not to hire these people as checkers in December? Because this is what he seems to be implying at this point. Members of Parliament, as far as I am aware, were never a party to any such decision.

**Hon. K. Valley:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I said we consulted the chairmen, the CEOs and the union. There was agreement in that group that this is our approach, and I am making the separate point that now that we have implemented that, there are MPs and there are the same union, labour and perhaps even chairmen of councils and so on, arguing for the hiring of these people. We just cannot afford it. As a matter of fact, we gave a commitment that we would try as much as possible to hold on to permanent—and I have been saying that now since January—that we would try to hold on to permanent and regular employees in the local government system. That is the commitment.

We are looking at all types of things: the inter-ministerial committee is looking right now at putting in a pension plan for the daily-rated employees from the age of 60. In other words, an early retirement plan so that we can retire some of these older employees so as to maintain the employment of the regular and permanent employees without adding to the unemployment rate. So that we have that problem in the low worker productivity.

Yes, we have some unavailability of equipment and so on, but last year we got funding from Government to repair vehicles and we did that. But the Member for Siparia is not concerned about that; he is simply looking at the fact that we have a lower allocation and assuming that that is synonymous with a reduction in services. The fact is, if he looked carefully, he would have seen that there is at least an improvement in the efficiency and effectiveness of the system over the last year.

I have received just today the *Ministry of Local Government Management Audit Division Draft Comprehensive Report on the Point Fortin Borough Corporation*. This is about the third comprehensive audit that the management audit team has done so far. They worked in Arima. Before the election, they worked on the San Juan Municipality. They have completed the Point Fortin audit now. I have not even had a chance to look at this yet, but this is what we are doing.

We have completed an audit with respect to gang size. We have a situation in local government where there are gangs of 20, 22, 16, without any apparent rationale.

**Mr. Hosein:** Where?

**Hon. K. Valley:** All about the place.

**Mr. Hosein:** That is not true.

**Hon. K. Valley:** So you have to get the audit division to look at it. I will show you the report. I know you want to be the Junior Minister of Local Government. I will share the information with you.

The truck-borne water situation, again, on that issue, I have said here before, answering a question, that it is not the fault of the central office. It is the fault of the corporations; that is a fact.

**Mr. Hosein:** That is not true.

**Hon. K. Valley:** There are certain requirements. Those requirements, as I understand the situation, came in by February 19. As soon as they came in, we

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went out to the Tenders Board. But more than that, the corporations are required to set up their own tenders committee. If that were done before, they would have been able to handle that situation on their own. They are now doing it. In spite of repeated requests—we have been asking, for example, to get outstanding balances of corporations and at times it is extremely difficult. I had to get an officer at head office to go and sit with some of these corporations to have it done. These are some of the difficulties.

As a fact, what I can say is, whether we have to pull them or drag them screaming, they are going to come into the real world because the task is clear. We have a commitment to move to autonomy in the local government system, autonomy with responsibility, autonomy with accountability. Very shortly we will be approaching the Cabinet with the fee structure report. We are talking about allowing these corporations to do more of the things they do on their own and finance them on their own, that they would increase the fees charged for services. In some cases, where no fees are charged, they would charge a fee.

In Princes Town, the Princes Town Corporation, the Council is opposing—here we are charging a shilling for a market stall—they are complaining that the market is broken down but they do not want us to increase the fees. I do not know how else we are going to finance the thing. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, do you know how long we have stopped making shillings? That is the situation.

**Mr. Hosein:** Is the Minister saying that if fees and rates are increased, the markets would be built and other amenities would be provided?

**Hon. K. Valley:** Obviously, if there is a funding stream, then it is so much easier to do things.

Another point which I have been pushing in local government is that these corporations must form alliances with the private sector in the area. The local government body in an area is there to service that area, the business community included. Therefore, it makes sense trying to get them involved in the projects and programmes. In the same way they have their village councils and community groups involved, they have to co-opt the services of the business community. We are doing that in Diego Martin.

Some time ago, Republic Bank in Diego Martin developed a recreation park and they have been maintaining the thing via a community group, residents' association. That is what we are talking about—people doing things for themselves with the assistance of the corporate citizens in the area—and that is the direction in which we are going in local government; it is clear.

**Mr. Maharaj:** What is the answer to truck-borne water?

**Hon. K. Valley:** The answer to truck-borne water—as far as I am aware, it has started. Where it has not started, in one or two areas—I think Princes Town is an area where the council is now making noise for the rehiring of those persons, where we were saying that we would be using persons from the regular and permanent staff to be on the trucks.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, another report I have via *Computerization of daily-rated payroll procedures*, Ministry of Local Government—[*Interruption*]. We have to do these things, we have to work.

We still have a man with a gun going on a pay day to pay people. We are looking at a situation now to have the system computerized to effect savings in the system. That is what we are doing. We are bringing the local government system into the modern world. That is all we are doing.

Rather than a deterioration of services, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the direction of local government is clear. You would know, you were in Arima when there were consultations with village councils, and where we talked clearly about the partnership between local government and the village and community councils. So let me assure my Friend the Member for Siparia—I know he is concerned about the lower allocation, but please bear that in mind that the Minister is also concerned.

There is one plus by his raising this matter this evening: I am sure he would have impressed my colleagues of the need for a higher level of funding in local government. So I thank him most sincerely for that. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*House adjourned accordingly.*

*Adjourned at 6.30 p.m.*

#### WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

#### **Unemployment Relief Programme (Administrative Positions)**

*The following question was asked by Miss Hulsie Bhaggan (Chaguanas):*

- 181.** (a) Would the Minister indicate the various positions which exist in the regional offices and at all the project location sites to administer the Unemployment Relief Programme?

- (b) Would the Minister indicate the required qualification, experience and the procedure used to select persons to fill these positions?
- (c) Would the Minister provide a listing of all the persons who occupy/occupied these positions in 1992 and 1993?

*The following written reply was circulated to Members of the House:*

The Minister of Works and Transport wishes to advise as follows:-

- (a) Positions which exist in the Region Officers are:

Contract Officers

Regional Engineer

Regional Supervisor

Secretary

Project Co-ordinators

Engineering Assistant

Engineering Surveyor

Supplies Officer

Office Supervisor-Public Servants

(Support Staff: office assistant, drivers, stores attendants, cleaners, watchmen etc.—hourly rated staff)

Project Location Positions which exist are:

Hourly-rated staff:

Area Foreman

Site Foreman

Checkers

Unskilled Workers (Male)

Unskilled Workers (Female)

Masons, Carpenters, etc.

- (b) The qualification and experience required for the contract positions are as follows:-
  - (i) Regional Engineer:  
A Bachelor of Science degree in Civil Engineering or equivalent with experience in the field.



- (ii) Regional Supervisor:  
Managerial skills and experience in the construction industry.
- (iii) Secretary:  
Ability to take notes in shorthand, typing at 50 wpm from an approved Institute of Commerce and some experience in clerical work.
- (iv) Project Co-ordinator:  
Evidence of having attained a Secondary Education, experience in the construction field.
- (v) Engineering Surveyor:  
Training as evidenced by a National Certificate in Engineering Surveying or GCE O'Level (five (5) passes including English Language and Mathematics) or considerable experience in surveying work.
- (vii) Supplies Officer:  
Evidence of having attained a Secondary Education, knowledge of and experience in purchasing construction materials on a commercial basis.

The procedures for selection of persons to fill positions are as follows:-

The contract positions are advertised, and interviews conducted by panels comprising qualified and experienced public servants.

Hourly-rated staff are selected from the master registration list of unemployed persons based on their qualifications, experience and economic need.

- (c) The Minister of Works and Transport wishes to advise that it is considered inappropriate to give such information on private citizens in this honourable House.

### **Water and Sewerage Rates (Indebtedness)**

*The following question was asked by Mr. Trevor Sudama (Oropouche):*

**183.** Could the Minister of Public Utilities provide the names and addresses of customers who are indebted to WASA for Water and Sewerage rates of amounts in excess of \$20,000.00, and the respective amounts which are owed?

*The following written reply was circulated to Members of the House:*

The Minister of Public Utilities wishes to reply as follows:

The Water and Sewerage Authority's records indicate that as at March 10, 1993, there were 547 customers who owed in excess of \$20,000.00 and the total amount owed is \$38,697, 093.39, which is disaggregated as follows:

20,000 > 1,000,000 \$	No. of Customers	Total Value \$
20,000 - 40,000	333	8,730,640.50
40,001 - 100,000	146	9,295,944.40
1000,001 - 400,000	52	9,867,622.70
400,001 - 1,000,000	14	8,739,348.03
Over \$1,000,000	2	2,063,537.76
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>547</b>	<b>38,697,093.39</b>

An analysis of the above-mentioned data reveals the following:

- (i) 47 per cent of the total value owed are within the \$20,000.00 to \$100,000.00 categories and owe \$18,026,584.90;
- (ii) 53 per cent of the total value owed falls within the \$100,001.00 to over \$1,000.000 categories and owe \$20,670,508.40;
- (iii) By geographical areas (refer to Appendix 1)
  - (a) Port of Spain and environs and San Fernando represent the greatest number of defaulters - 317 customers owing \$22,149,654.24 or 58 per cent of total customers.

Hon. Members should note that the actual details of customers' indebtedness to the Water and Sewerage Authority are confidential between the Authority and its customers.

I wish to stress, however, that the Water and Sewerage Authority is in the process of cleaning up the data in its Commercial Department and the information given is subject to revision. Every effort is being made to collect the outstanding sums owed to the Authority by its customers.

**NO. OF CUSTOMERS .....> \$20,000 BY GEOGRAPHICAL AREA**

GEOGRAPHICAL AREAS	\$20,000 – 40,000		40,001 - 100,000		100,001 – 400.00		400,001 – 1,000,000		OVER 1,000.000		TOTAL	
	NO.	VALUE \$	NO.	VALUE \$	NO.	VALUE \$	NO.	VALUE \$	NO.	VALUE \$	NO.	VALUE \$
Port of Spain and environs	131	3,321,259.96	47	3,020,435.23	23	4,431,597.69	6	3,711,727.15	2	2,063,537.76	209	16,548,557.79
San Fernando	72	1,965,807.51	24	1,719,438.57	9	1,915,860.37	-	-	-	-	108	5,601,096.45
Arima	12	302,837.71	7	501,193.31	-	-	-	-	-	-	19	804,031.02
Princes Town	3	75,505.55	2	91,689.71	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	167,195.26
Marabella La Romaine	8	236,288.03	8	479,953.66	1	108,159.23	-	-	-	-	17	824,400.92
Siparia – Penal	1	35,104.88	3	229,897.30	2	365,035.13	-	-	-	-	6	630,037.31
Tobago	4	113,329.87	2	139,120.75	2	232,020.27	-	-	-	-	8	484,470.89
St. Ann's	1	21,748.97	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	21,748.97
Matura	-	-	2	111,596.33	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	111,596.33
Valsayn to D'Abadie	19	512,444.79	16	1,015,576.09	3	383,666.37	2	1,411,128.10	-	-	40	3,352,8215.35
Champs Fleurs – Laventille	24	635,295.43	10	635,866.61	3	715,768.07	2	1,325,154.74	-	-	39	3,312,084.85
Diego Martin - Chaguaramas	27	664,799.76	7	415,859.22	6	1,191,538.45	-	-	-	-	40	2,272,197.43

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**NO. OF CUSTOMERS .....> \$20,000 BY GEOGRAPHICAL AREA—CONT'D**

GEOGRAPHICAL AREAS	\$20,000 – 40,000		40,001 - 100,000		100,001 – 400.00		400,001 – 1,000,000		OVER 1,000.000		TOTAL	
	NO.	VALUE \$	NO.	VALUE \$	NO.	VALUE \$	NO.	VALUE \$	NO.	VALUE \$	NO.	VALUE \$
Caroni	1	25,198.70	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	25,189.70
Chaguanas	7	183,410.51	4	218,077.16	-	-	2	1,147,274.73	-	-	13	1,548,762.40
Pt. Lisas/Couva, California	6	178,886.92	2	113,655.83	3	523,987.12	1	703,778.28	-	-	12	1,520,308.15
Rio Claro	1	37,800.94	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	37,800.94
Point Fortin	2	66,447.57	2	135,673.37	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	202,120.94
D'Abadie- Wallerfield	13	330,818.24	7	467,911.26	-	-	1	410,285.03	-	-	21	1,209,014.53
Maraval	1	23,664.16	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	23,664.16
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>333</b>	<b>8,730,640.50</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>9,295,944.40</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>9,867,622.70</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>8,739,348.03</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2,063,537.76</b>	<b>547</b>	<b>38,697,093.39</b>