

Leave of Absence

Friday, June 25, 1993

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, June 25, 1993

The House met at 1.48 p.m.

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, I have granted leave of absence from today's sitting of the House to the Member for St. Augustine (Mr. John Humphrey).

PETITION

**Southern Finance Company
Depositors Association**

Mr. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj: Madam Speaker, I have the honour to present the petition on behalf of the Association of Southern Finance Company Depositors.

I now ask that the Clerk be permitted to read the petition and that the promoters be allowed to proceed.

Petition read.

Question put and agreed to, That the promoters be allowed to proceed.

PAPER LAID

Erratum to the Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of Trinidad and Tobago (BWIA International) Airways Corporation for the year ended December 31, 1991. [*The Minister of Finance (Hon. W. Mottley)*]

To be referred to the Public Accounts Committee.

1.55 p.m.

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 the following:-

- (a) The names of persons above the retirement age who are in receipt of pension and who are presently employed with the Central

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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 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?

The Minister of Local Government and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Madam Speaker, the question is for written response and we do have the written response here.

Madam Speaker: Did the Member for Nariva receive the answer?

Mr. Jurai: No, Madam Speaker.

Hon. K. Valley: It is here and I will make it available through the Clerk of the House.

Madam Speaker: The answer will be circulated.

Copy of reply lodged in Parliament Library.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

International Lending Agencies (Money owed to)

217. Mr. Krish Jurai (Nariva) asked the hon. Minister of Finance:

- (a) Would the Minister state the exact amount of money owed to date by Trinidad and Tobago to various international lending agencies?
- (b) Would the Minister also state the following:-
 - (i) Names of the various lending agencies?
 - (ii) The principal amount owed to each lending agency?
 - (iii) The period of repayment?
 - (iv) The interest due on the respective repayments?
 - (v) Does the Government have any intention of increasing its borrowing from any international lending agency?

The Minister of Finance (Hon. Wendell Mottley): Madam Speaker, the question as stated is very broad and vague. The Minister of Finance is unable to "state the amount of money owed by Trinidad and Tobago". This encompasses Government, numerous agencies, an innumerable number of business enterprises and individuals. In addition, "international lending agencies" are very large in number as they involve international multilateral lending agencies as well as commercial banks.

In light of the foregoing, the hon. Member for Nariva was asked to clarify or be more specific in his inquiry. He responded negatively. In the circumstances, therefore, the question as put cannot be answered.

Nevertheless, information in respect of Government borrowing is provided.

The exact amount of money owed by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to various multilateral lending agencies as at March 31, 1993 is as follows:

Outstanding Debt at 31/03/1993
(Amounts in USD ... Exchange Rate dated 03/1993)
11/06/1993

	Outstanding Including Arrears of Principal
European Investment Bank (Lon.)	402,121.50
IBRD (World Bank)	45,045,799.34
IADB Inter-American Development Bank	133,361,555.32
European Investment Bank (Lux.)	33,541,239.47
CDB	18,841,835.97
IMF	257,701,668.22
EEC	415,270.28

The periods of repayment on debt owed to selected international multilateral agencies are as follows:

International Agencies	Central Government	State Enterprises	Central Bank
EIB	1996-2018	1982-2014	-

<u>International Agencies</u>	<u>Central Government</u>	<u>State Enterprises</u>	<u>Central Bank</u>
IBRD	1972-2006	1077-1994	-
IDB	1972-2026	1996-2016	-
CDB	1994-2012	1990-2008	-
IMF	-	-	1992-1996
EEC	1988-2029	-	-

Interest payments projections: 1993-2029 are as follows:

US \$000

<u>Creditor</u>	<u>Amount</u>
EIB (Lon.)	56,000
EIB (Lux.)	30,166
IBRD	39,138
IDB	311,749
CDB	19,358
IMF	29,471
EEC	1,749

Government may further borrow from international lending agencies when necessary as long as there are more attractive terms, e.g. lower interest rates, longer moratorium and repayment periods and the usual accompanying technical assistance.

I will make the paper available, Madam Speaker.

**Local Government Bodies
(Vehicles attached to)**

220. Mr. Mohammed Haniff (*Princes Town*) asked the hon. Minister of Local Government and Minister in the Ministry of Finance:

Would the Minister state:

- (a) How many vehicles and heavy equipment are attached to each of the local government bodies?

- (b) How many of these vehicles/equipment passed inspection for the years 1991, 1992 and 1993 to date?
- (c) How many of these vehicles/equipment were licensed for the years 1991, 1992 and 1993 to date?

The Minister of Local Government and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Madam Speaker, the total number of vehicles and heavy equipment attached to local government bodies as at January 1993 is 616. The number of these vehicles/equipment that passed inspection in 1991 was 247; in 1992, 246; in 1993, 219. The number of vehicles/equipment licensed in 1991 was 263; in 1992, 260; and in 1993, 234.

Mr. Haniff: Madam Speaker, my question under (a) reads as follows:

“How many vehicles and heavy equipment are attached to each of the local government bodies?”

I am therefore asking the Minister that if the information is not presently available would he please provide it for each of the local government bodies? In this case, he presented the total figure. I am asking for each of the local government bodies.

Hon. K. Valley: I do have the figures available. I do not know whether he wants it in writing or if he wants me to read it, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Haniff: No problem.

Hon. K. Valley: I will make the breakdown available.

Vide end of sitting for breakdown.

Special Reserve Police (Outstanding Salaries)

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

- (a) Are there any outstanding salaries and/or allowances due and owing to part-time Special Reserve Police officers?
- (b) If the answer to (a) is in the affirmative, can the Minister state how many officers are so affected and what sums are owed to them?
- (c) When will the said officers be paid the said outstanding sums?

The Minister of National Security (Sen. The Hon. Russel Huggins): Madam Speaker, the Commissioner of Police has advised that as at June 9, 1993,

there were no outstanding salaries and no allowances due and owing to part-time special reserve police officers.

**ADJOURNMENT MOTION
(LEAVE)**

Mr. Shamshuddin Mohammed (*Caroni East*): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

I seek leave to move the adjournment of this honourable House to discuss a definite matter of urgent public importance pursuant to Standing Order 12 of the Standing Orders of this House. The matter relates to the poisoning of the water supply at the Longdenville Government School and the consequent closure of the school until now.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, I have looked at this matter and I commend the Member for the format in which it was presented to this House. I am satisfied that this is a matter that ought to be dealt with. The Motion will stand over until 6.00 p.m.

2.05 p.m.

GLORY CHURCH (INC'N) BILL

Question put and agreed to, That a Bill to incorporate Glory Church and matters incidental thereto, be now read the first time.

Bill accordingly read the first time.

SOCIAL PROBLEMS

[SECOND DAY]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question [May 28, 1993]:

Whereas economic conditions in Trinidad and Tobago over the last ten years or more have been in overall decline in real terms resulting in a situation which in conjunction with declining real income has had a negative impact on the standard of living and quality of life of the various sectors of the population, and has resulted in the emergence of social problems, particularly the escalation of criminal activity among the country's youth over the last ten years, and the increasing evidence of social isolation among large numbers of the elderly; and

Whereas the Government has taken cognizance of these emerging social problems and has sought to introduce remedial measures:

Be it resolved that this honourable House take note of the initiatives taken by the Government to address the social problems in Trinidad and Tobago and the success it has achieved in so doing. [Mr. H. Bereaux]

Question again proposed.

The Minister of External Affairs (Hon. Ralph Maraj): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise in support of the Motion brought to this honourable House by my hon. Colleague the Member for La Brea in which he asks this House to take note of the initiatives taken by the Government to address the social problems in Trinidad and Tobago and, as well, the success that we have achieved in this matter so far.

There is really no country in the world, and there really has never been any country in the world, that has not had social problems. Indeed, as long as one conceives of society, one thinks of social problems. In fact, that perfect state to which intellectuals, leaders, politicians and humanitarians have been aspiring has eluded civilization so far but, of course, we will continue to strive.

What causes social problems? I think it is significant for us to understand that social problems, in my view, are a direct result of under-development. All countries of the world; developing and developed; rich and poor; are, indeed, subject to cases and situations of under-development, where you have a situation of competition for dwindling resources, both at the global level, as we have today, and at the national level. This competition for resources produces those inequalities that lead to things like hunger, illiteracy, poverty, starvation, so that I want us to see it within that context.

I think as well that we ought to accept that it is a condition of life, that there is the weak and there is the strong, the aggressive and the timid, the success and the failure, the secure and the vulnerable. That is a condition of life, again, another aspect of the competition that is inherent in human existence.

In addition, we ought to add the time factor. As we will all accept, old age, in a way, aggravates helplessness. I think the Motion, indeed, does refer to the elderly in our society, who, within a state of under-development, are made more vulnerable by their old age. Indeed, sometimes for the defenceless in the world, or people who have lived lives of pain and deprivation, death alone seems to be the equalizer, the remover of the imbalances that exist in life.

So we ought to see social problems within that context. As I said, man has been striving to achieve the perfect state. Throughout the ages there have been

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attempts to address the imbalances that have been thrown up by life and by society. What readily comes to my own mind are the socialist ideals of economic justice, for example, and the classless society, a significant attempt to refine the civilization of man through a process of caring and humanization.

I feel that these socialist ideals still remain very relevant today, in spite of the fact that as a political and economic ideology, socialism has now been discredited. There is a new orthodoxy, a new economic thinking and we, in Trinidad and Tobago, are a part of that. Especially now that there is a force tending to drive the pendulum to the other extreme, I think that we must hold fast to certain ideals which we need in order to be able to address the imbalances and to attempt to cure the social ills.

One of the economic ideologies, as it were, that were current at one time and to which Trinidad and Tobago adhered to a certain extent—in fact, all developing countries; many of the ex-colonial societies have approached their development in this way—was this whole question of statism. Over the years, whilst it worked and whilst for historical reasons it was important in order to address certain historical imbalances—people who, because of their ancestry, and so on, had been deprived of development—whilst it worked up to a point, as we moved along, statism and stagnation became synonymous.

It is as a result of this stagnation which threatened to become endemic that there arose this dire need in developing countries like ours to unleash the inner energy of the society. In the desire to do this, we have had to apply certain necessary measures which today have been demonized as structural adjustment. But it had to come. It is my view that if it had not come, the productive capacity of the world would have dwindled to death.

2.15 p.m.

You see, it is important that we understand that you cannot just talk about the distribution of wealth. I think we first have to talk about the creation of wealth. The policy of statism that had been adopted as a way out, in my view, tended to place so much emphasis on the one, which is the distributive justice in the system, that it tended to neglect the other, which is the creation of the wealth. It is all well and good when the state is in a position to be the unending giver, but when it is no longer in a position to be that—when the resources dry up; when there is a decline in revenue as happened in Trinidad and Tobago, then—one sees tensions rise. And as the tensions rise, the cracks in the structure begin to appear.

I think this is what happened in Trinidad and Tobago, and it happened in all these other countries where, as I said, for historical reasons—the majority of the people were historically dispossessed—one went in this direction where the governments had to intervene, on behalf of the population, because the playing field in the immediate post-colonial period, for example, was very uneven. The majority of the population of Trinidad and Tobago was not in a position to compete. The Government had to intervene, and I dare say, because of that intervention, hundreds of thousands of young men and women in Trinidad and Tobago benefited.

If that had not been done, what seems to be our social problems today—had that problem of underdevelopment not been addressed at that time—would really be like a tea party when you compare with what would have operated then. As I said, that was one point; now it is another.

Mr. Mohammed: Madam Speaker, is the hon. Member saying that our social problems are less today than they were in the period he is referring to?

Hon. R. Maraj: Madam Speaker, I am not saying that at all! I am saying that there were social problems and that in the post-colonial period, especially the immediate post-colonial period, the problem was very bad. The point I am making is: Had the Government not intervened on behalf of the people to use the resources of Trinidad and Tobago for the liberation of the people, for them to achieve social mobility, what we are experiencing today would seem like a tea party. The situation would have emerged, escalated and created something that we really cannot imagine. That is the point I am making.

Mr. Mohammed: Madam Speaker, is the hon. Member saying therefore that we were in a better position at that time in the history of the country than we are now?

Hon. R. Maraj: Madam Speaker, I do not see it that way at all. That is not true. I am saying that we have had much development course, today we do have social problems. As I have made the point earlier on, social problems have been a condition of society. As I said, that was one time, now is another, and life is never at a standstill. Cracks did appear in our structure, and this Government is dealing with them.

We are not dealing with the matter by plastering them over, but we are dealing with them in a planned, programmed and comprehensive manner. If one looks at what we have done so far: Trade reform, financial restructuring, divestment, creating the export platform, some people say that we are moving too fast, but we

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are not really moving too fast; it is just that we know what we are doing. In addition to that, this house has been so well built that under the expert hand of the present renovators, these structural adjustments can be made without fear of collapse. I dare say, Madam Speaker, that the sturdiness of our foundation is epitomized in a way by the steadiness of our currency at this time.

That is how we have sought to deal with our social problems, which have been aggravated by the decline in revenues over the last 10 years or so. We go to the core to find the cure—if you will forgive the little rhyme. We believe in integrated development, and we feel that the social problems are really the result of a deeper malaise—that malaise that I spoke to you about, that malaise has arisen as a result of an economic thinking that is no longer relevant and, indeed, counter-productive. That is the malaise that I am talking about.

We are of the view that we have to do more and that more will indeed be done to get the economy of this country moving. And this is an important point I am going to make. To move the economy, especially at the middle and lower levels, is the next step for this Government of Trinidad and Tobago. It is, to my mind, the key to unlocking the talent and the energy of this country. Because, as you will realize, it is at the middle and at the lower level where the bulk of this population resides—the social strata. It is where the talent resides; it is where, to my mind, the dynamism of Trinidad and Tobago is seated.

We are of the view, that this dynamism needs to be stirred. We are convinced that it will be, specifically by engineering the growth and proliferation of small business in our country.

A plan is coming very soon! Very soon you will see that plan revealed because it is the only way to go. Small business must be the engine room of the economy of Trinidad and Tobago. Economic giants like Japan, for example, have been built on small business with thousands upon thousands of firms using streamlined management and employing no more than 25 to 30 persons; some of them largely family concerns. This is the kind of economy that the mighty Japan has been built upon; providing goods and services.

When one thinks of Japan, essentially one thinks about large plants like Toyota, Sunny and so forth; but the truth of the matter is that the Toyota plant is a designer assembly plant. What happens in the Japanese economy is that there are hundreds of small firms manufacturing all the components that are needed for the products and providing them for the plants.

2.25 p.m.

I am just giving you an idea of how it is possible to develop. When we talk about small business in Trinidad and Tobago. We have to move away from the pepper sauce mentality. We have to move away from the minor exotic items.

Mr. Sudama: Is the hon. Member aware that a senior Member of his party is promoting the manufacture of pepper sauce as a cure for the unemployment situation in Trinidad and Tobago? Is the Member aware of this?

Hon. R. Maraj: Madam Speaker, I made that point today when I was addressing a YTEPP graduation ceremony in San Fernando, and it was pointed out to them that they must begin to reorganize their thinking. Since they have embarked upon this career of self-employment they are the people who will be the future business people—of the small business—operating at that kind of level. I was making the point to them, that we in Trinidad and Tobago envisage a role for the small business producing, not only for the domestic market, but also for export as well. As you know, the Government has already provided the financial infrastructure and the administrative infrastructure to ensure that the export platform is indeed established. The idea is to reduce employment, which is the key to eliminating the social problems that bedevil Trinidad and Tobago.

There are other things that are being done to tackle the social problems. There is a new education plan, the Green Paper, which will make our young people more employable. In the health sector, for example, in addition to refurbishing the health plan, we are moving to fundamental administrative restructuring which will ensure that there is top class health care available and affordable to all. These are the ways in which we are dealing with the social problems. Every ministry in this Government is at work in an integrated whole, tackling the problems at the core.

If I may be allowed, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is a ministry that is not normally associated in the traditional sense with curing social ills, but there is a direct link with what we are doing at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the problems of Trinidad and Tobago. For example, we have given a clear mandate to all our Heads of Missions that now more than ever must they emphasize the commercial component of our foreign policy. I must say that has been working very well, so that whether they are in Brussels, Washington or Caracas, they are working in this regard.

I expect, for example, that soon the High Commissioner to Ottawa will be in Trinidad and Tobago with a group of businessmen from Canada. That in itself is

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significant. Canada as you know has been rather conservative in its approach towards business in this part of the world. Had it not been for the recent problems we had in Venezuela, we would have had two significant missions of which our ambassadors—

Mr. Maharaj: Madam Speaker, on a point of order. It is not "we had problems". Did the Government of Trinidad and Tobago have problems? Was the Government part of that problem?

Hon. R. Maraj: That does not really deserve a reply.

Mr. Maharaj: You said "we had problems."

Hon. R. Maraj: Madam Speaker, when I said "we," you know what I was referring to. I did not mean the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. I can say, the problems we have in Bosnia today. I can say that. That does not mean to say we in Trinidad and Tobago have a problem with Bosnia. It is a manner of speaking. I just thought I would clear that up. I did not mean that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago had any direct association with what is taking place in our neighbouring Latin American country.

I was saying that had it not been for those problems in Venezuela, our ambassador would have been part of two significant missions to this country: one in energy, and another one, a very significant project indeed, very exciting, the Orinoco Aprue project which seeks to link Trinidad and Tobago and the hinterlands of Venezuela, where there is much productive capacity, linking Trinidad and Tobago, not only with Venezuela, but with Latin America in a more meaningful way.

Our ambassador to Brasilia only recently facilitated the visit of a group of about 12 to 13 businessmen from Trinidad and Tobago to Loutrina, an international fair. I am just pointing out to you how there is an integrated vision. I have already had word from one of the businessmen; he was very excited about the possibilities that he had discovered there. What does it all mean? It means simply, as I was talking about in terms of our action at the level of the foreign ministry, business; it means trade, generation of wealth, creation of employment, and consequently, the curing of the social ills.

As the Foreign Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, I would seek to ensure that we achieve a number of things in the course of the time ahead. For example, we intend to revive the Brazil/Trinidad and Tobago mixed commission. The tentative date is October, 1993. We are exploring a similar possibility with Argentina. The agreement is already there. We are looking to do the same with Chile.

We are also seeking to continue the work we started in San Pedro Sula in Honduras last year where we are seeking to break down the traditional barriers that exist between the countries of Central America and Caricom. Here we have been living together for a number of years but we have not been trading; our people have not been moving back and forth. That process is on. We are looking at accreditation to Colombia, possibly from Venezuela. The Government of Mexico have already indicated to me their intention to re-open a mission in Trinidad and Tobago. At the level of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs we are thinking of having some kind of accreditation to Mexico, possibly from Jamaica.

When we on this side of the House talk about Trinidad and Tobago as the gateway to Latin America, we know exactly what we are talking about. I have not even talked about what we have planned for the Far East. I will do that at another time. As I said, we are facing our problems very squarely and we do intend to deliver the solutions.

So far, I have spoken about restructuring and some long-term goals of the Government. I assure you that the Government is aware that social problems are of such a nature that they do need direct, immediate and short-term attention as well.

I am sure, for example, when the Minister of Consumer Affairs and Social Services makes her contribution she will let us know what has been happening in terms of her own ministry. There are some other areas I think I need to point out. For example, in housing, in the able hands of my amiable Friend the Member for Point Fortin, we have significant development in housing: A new housing policy has been put in train for squatter regularization and construction which has already started for low income housing. That is happening.

We have for our young people both the apprenticeship scheme and the Conservation Corps, which really are designed to absorb thousands of young people into training and productive activity whilst at the same time earning them some measure of income. Of course, we have the Unemployment Relief Programme which, in spite of its critics, continues to do two things. It continues to provide unemployment relief and to do developmental works; it continues to improve and create infrastructure in its many forms throughout Trinidad and Tobago.

2.35 p.m.

Mr. Sudama: Would the Member give way to a question? In his definition of critics of the Unemployment Relief Programme does he also include the Member for Laventille West?

Hon. R. Maraj: Madam Speaker, as I was saying, it is my view that should the Ministry of Works and Transport publicize the achievements of this Unemployment Relief Programme since we assumed office, the population would be very surprised indeed.

I want to make it clear that I do not intend to paint a rosy picture here. I am dealing with the long-term plans that we have. I have pointed out some of the things that we are doing in the short-term. My feet are planted firmly on the ground, and I am fully aware that there is a very significant increase in poverty in Trinidad and Tobago. This has happened over the last 10 years.

One of my regular criticisms of the last administration—especially during the election campaign—was that during the five-year period, we witnessed in Trinidad and Tobago, for the first time since Independence, in my view, the emergence of the underclass in this country, the growing band of people who were marginalized out of the mainstream of national life. That is what we had inherited. I assure this honourable House that this Government will not rest until all are housed, clothed and fed.

I am saying that the policies that we have adopted and some of which I have discussed today will ensure that we create the wealth for that grand purpose. This is what our critics must not forget. We will never abdicate our responsibility to the less fortunate in our society. This party was born out of a desire to emancipate them and we will never abdicate that responsibility. We are fully committed to economic justice; democracy in the economy and the democratization of opportunity for all in Trinidad and Tobago.

We have embarked on reform. We have moved towards the market-oriented economy, but I assure you, Madam Speaker and the honourable House, that we will never let the soullessness of the marketplace overcome us. We are fully aware that there are countries which have adopted reforms similar to ours, and which, even though they experienced growth, did face, and continue to face, social problems that threaten to upset the balance of the society.

We are not prepared to let that happen here, because whilst our present position is essentially as a facilitator for the creation of wealth, we also consider it our responsibility to be appropriately interventionist. I want to make that point.

Mr. S. Panday: You are changing position.

Hon. R. Maraj: We are not changing position. Our position has been very clear.

We consider it our responsibility to be appropriately interventionist to eradicate the social ills in our society. That intervention can come in various forms. I have already pointed out some of them to you. There can be a wide range of measures, whether it is fiscal reform, tax reform, more support for NGOs or whatever it is. The Government is prepared to ensure that a calm and caring hand is always there. I assure this House as long as this Government is in office we are going to have that calm and caring hand. I assure you that I have it from very good sources that that is going to be for a very long time.

I simply want to end as I began, and to congratulate my colleague the Member for La Brea on bringing this Motion to this House. I thank you, Madam Speaker, and hon. Members for their attention.

Thank you.

Miss Hulsie Bhaggan (*Chaguanas*): Madam Speaker, I rise to support the Motion with the proposed amendments of my colleague, the Member for St. Augustine, so that the Motion now reads as follows:

Whereas economic conditions in Trinidad and Tobago over the last ten years or more have been in overall decline in real terms resulting in a situation which, in conjunction with declining real income, has had a negative impact on the standard of living and quality of life of the majority of the population, and has resulted in the emergence of social problems, particularly growing unemployment, the escalation in the cost of living causing impoverishment and alienation and the escalation of criminal activity among the country's youth and other age groups and the increasing evidence of social isolation among large numbers of the population;

Whereas the Government has taken cognizance of these emerging social problems and has sought to introduce remedial measures which have all failed;

Be it resolved that this honourable House take note of the initiative taken by the Government to address the social problems in Trinidad and Tobago and the failure it has achieved in so doing.

It seems to me that the Members on the other side continue to live in a fool's paradise. I would reply to the Member for San Fernando West a little later on. I begin by saying that the lowering of real incomes, rising unemployment and cost of living, escalation of criminal activity, deterioration of the social fabric of the society at the level of the family and community, are all as a result of the failure

of the economic policies of PNM Governments of the past and this one of the present.

The present PNM Government is a continuation of the old PNM. As a result of the failure of the PNM, our history is checkered with social unrest, attempted overthrow of the Government and industrial unrest. In fact ours has always been a society in rebellion, an alienated society; one where everybody felt that they were second-class citizens. There is one simple explanation for that. This PNM has never pursued policies in function of sustainable development. It has never pursued policies in function of real democracy, social justice and racial equality. What this Government has done is that it has always pursued policies in function of the consolidation of political office and power.

2.45 p.m.

I am, therefore, not surprised that in the face of social deterioration, the collapse of our social services, the collapse of our society, that today the Member for La Brea has the audacity and the gall to bring a motion of this nature before the House and, not only that, to commend the Government on the initiatives it has taken.

I believe that the time has come when we ought to examine our social reality and I am going to pose some questions to this Government, which I hope the Member for La Brea or Members on the other side, could reply to.

Let us look at health. Can the sick and elderly afford vital drugs from the pittance they receive as old age pension? Is it not a fact that the sick and the elderly today have to do without vital drugs because they have to buy food instead? Is it not a fact that the population cannot receive proper health care at the hospitals, clinics and health centres?

With respect to labour, how many citizens are unemployed? How many citizens are underemployed? How many citizens are today receiving slave wages? How many women have to give sex for "10-days" work? How many citizens are being retrenched and how many more are to be retrenched?

Let us look at the status of children. How many children have to work for a living? How many children cannot attend school because their parents cannot afford food, clothing, transportation and books for them to go to school? How many abandoned, homeless and abused children are living on our streets? How many children are selling and taking drugs and alcohol? How many children are being used as sex slaves and in the production of pornographic material in this country?

What about housing? The Minister made some big boast about housing. Is this Government aware that there are five, six, seven, eight, nine and 10 persons living in one room in a house in this country? How many citizens have had to give up their homes because they could no longer afford mortgage payments or rent? How many citizens are living under sub-human conditions? How many can pay water and electricity bills? How many people today can afford to live in this society?

The Member mentioned some cases of deprivation where people wished for death. Maybe he was speaking about Trinidad and Tobago, because today there are people who are so deprived that they are now looking to die. They can no longer survive in this society.

What about the escalation in crime? Is this Government aware that there has been an increase in robbery with violence? Over the last 10 years, how many women in this country have been raped—reported and unreported? Can this Government tell us? Can the Government tell us how many homes have been broken into? How many citizens have been held up? I want answers to these questions.

Is this Government aware, for instance, that the possibility exists that in the very near future leaders at all levels in our society will be recovering drug addicts? As a matter of fact, where do the Members for San Fernando West and La Brea really live? I get the feeling that they live on Mars. I do not believe that they live in Trinidad and Tobago. If they do, they are therefore living in a fool's paradise. They seem to be totally unaware of the problems facing the people of this country.

All that propaganda and public relations that this Government comes in here and gives is fine for PNM supporters when they hold their little conferences in the schools throughout this country and they speak to the converted. But this Parliament is not of PNM supporters. This is a Parliament. We want facts. We do not want propaganda. That basically has been the contribution of the Members on the other side—sheer propaganda.

If a Motion is being introduced into this House and you are commending the Government on the initiatives taken to address social problems, at least give us a snapshot of the social problems existing today. To what extent do these problems exist? As a matter of fact, when you hear the Member for San Fernando West, it is as if the PNM has been able to bring about many changes in this country and is making such a vast contribution. I wonder whether he is an ostrich. He seems to

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be burying his head in the sand somewhere. It is clear that he is not aware of what is going on.

Let us look at the crime situation in this country. Based on last year's statistics, a robbery was being committed every three hours; a wounding was being committed every 20 hours; four rapes or sexual offences were being committed every 1 1/2 days and three murders were being committed every week. That was last year.

So far, about six months in this year has gone and I am sure, if you were to look at the statistics, they would be worse today compared with last year. The question is: What is this Government doing about crime? As a matter of fact, this Motion has to do with the escalation of criminal activity among the youths and other age groups. Let us talk about crime.

Today, I want to talk about crime in Central Trinidad. I was speaking about crime outside this House but the time has come for me to lay the cards on the table and make a contribution on crime in Central Trinidad, for posterity, to demonstrate what is happening out there while this Government stands here and talks as if nothing is happening, as if everybody is happy and we are in some kind of paradise in this country.

I held a press conference on Wednesday, June 9, 1993 at 10.30 a.m. at the Chaguanas Borough Corporation hall. Because of the furore that was caused by some statements I made, I felt it important to put on record what I had done to be able to draw the attention of the country to crime in my constituency and in Central Trinidad.

At that time, I made a statement from which I want to quote:

"I wish to place on record, that both the Mayor of Chaguanas and I began to make public statements and to call for the upgrading of all police stations in Central since mid-January, 1993. Our pleas came in the wake of a series of drug-related killings in the Chaguanas constituency and its environs.

When I made the call a senior cop at the Chaguanas Police Station was quoted as having dismissed as 'nonsense', allegations made by me that there was an upsurge in drug killings and drug-related crimes in Chaguanas and environs.

My call for additional resources for the police was viewed by this officer 'as seeking political mileage'. In fact, the Acting Superintendent refused to meet the Mayor of Chaguanas to discuss the matter. I had to issue a public call to the then Acting Superintendent to meet with the Mayor of Chaguanas.

Crime had been escalating. Car thieves, for example, armed to the teeth, were openly attacking homes. I am not referring to the thefts of cars from car parks. Gun-toting bandits and thieves were breaking open locks and openly stealing cars from people's homes. Break-ins and flourishing drug pushers were becoming part of the landscape.

Reports of bandit rapes began coming into my office. The mayor's office was besieged with complaints. My office was besieged with all forms of complaints of criminal activities, suspicious characters, cruising vehicles. I was feeling as though there was an incoming tidal wave of crime...

2.55 p.m.

I posed a question in Parliament regarding 1992 statistics of crime in Central Trinidad. The hon. Minister of National Security replied in the Parliament, that for the year 1992, 3,838 crimes were committed with a detection rate of 37 per cent. With respect to serious crimes, there were 1,537 crimes with a detection rate of 43 per cent. This clearly shows the ineffectiveness of the central police to deal with the crime situation. The relatively low detection rate, in my view, had largely to do with the lack of resources by the police.

The attitude of the most senior officer attached to the Chaguanas Police Station has been one of arrogance, disrespect and intimidation. He underestimated the seriousness of the situation and continued to deny there was a problem. His attitude led to the heightened distrust of the police. May I emphasize, however, that several officers at the lower ranks tried their best in very difficult circumstances.

It is only when the Members of Parliament for Caroni East, Caroni Central, the Mayor, councillors and I announced our intention to stage a 6-mile walk against crime that some reinforcement was sent, of course without adequate vehicles. On the day we staged the walk against crime, the PNM decided to hold a conference in Chaguanas and announced to the press that the Minister of National Security will make a special statement. The Minister arrived very late, I was told by the press, and did not say a word. The PNM effectively distracted large sections of the press from covering the march.

By then, community watch groups were mushrooming throughout the area. I felt the tension. I knew that unfortunate incidents could have taken place. I also felt helpless. My letter to the Minister of National Security was a desperate plea for him to listen. I could not preside over an eruption in my

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constituency and in my country. July 27 is a sad memory. As an elected Member of Parliament, what am I supposed to do when the senior cop in the police station treats your constituents with contempt and when the Minister of National Security ignores you?"

But what was interesting is, despite all these reports, the police kept denying there was a problem and the press, especially the *Express*, started to print articles about paranoia, innocent bandits, focused on those crime watch groups calling them vigilante groups; the *Guardian* joined the fray. So what in effect the media did—apart from the *Express*, *Guardian*, also the electronic media—was to create a scenario where the Minister of National Security was able to come to that constituency without informing or giving prior notice to the constituents and he was supposed to have held an inquiry.

He was accompanied by the Police Commissioner, and by a battalion of police, I would say. Messages were sent out; in some cases half an hour in advance, in other cases four hours in advance, and people waited for hours before the team arrived. In several places where they went, you did not have those persons who were involved in the actual crime watches or the actual victims and so the Minister was able to orchestrate a kind of situation where he came out of the constituency and held a press conference.

At that press conference he was able to convince the media, not the population, that my allegations were nonsense. As such, he was forthright and he came across so sincere, that the *Guardian* went on to chide me, and in fact in one of the editorials it mentioned that Sen. Huggins must now respond to Miss Bhaggan by telling her that the most intensive investigations have shown her contacts to be unreliable and her reports to be untrue. Miss Bhaggan must now admit that she was wrong. So as far as this newspaper was concerned, I was a liar. In fact, Madam Speaker, at that press conference, one of the questions asked was whether I should be charged for public mischief. What the media was not told is that out of the five or six meetings which were held, two were held in barns in the constituency of Chaguanas.

One of the things that I have been harassed for by the media and some members of the public, is evidence. Members of the public and the media wanted evidence, they wanted testimonies, they wanted people to produce themselves, to go to the police stations and report. Because of the fact that I refused to do so, somehow I was made out to be a big liar in this situation. Interestingly, therefore, a victim and her family decided to come out and speak to the press.

Today, for posterity, I am going to read that article in this House. I am going to read every single line in this House, and if there are Members on the other side who still disbelieve that, perhaps, they should go into the area and meet some of those victims themselves. Before I made my comments, I had spoken to seven victims. What I am about to read here today is the account of one of the victims. But there were seven I personally met who suffered the fate of this victim whose account I am about to read.

The *TnT Mirror*, of Friday, June 18, 1993, page 1. It is an article written by one Mr. Harold Ramoutar. The headline is "Exclusive interview with Central victim, My baby raped in front of me."

Madam Speaker, it reads as follows:

"My daughter screamed and passed out when the bandit entered her. I began to cry like a child: my wife fainted. When the first bandit finished his sadistic act, there was a lot of blood all over: my daughter's vagina was ripped up. Such was the shocking scene at the Pokhor Road, Longdenville home of a 12 year old rape victim on the night of May 21.

This week the father spoke exclusively to the *TnT Mirror*, in the presence of his pretty daughter and wife, about the cruel one-hour ordeal. The father agreed to the interview and his daughter joined in. But for most of the interview she stared blankly, uttering just a few syllables. There are two other children both boys, age nine and 15. Chaguanas MP, Hulsie Bhaggan, assisted in setting up the interview. The father said, the boys were in their room, huddled in a corner and cowering with fear while the bandits were in the house.

He hesitated for a long while, then added, I am only speaking to you because I know you and we are under similar pressure from bandits. Just keep our identities safe. I hope when people read what heinous things were done to us, in particular my daughter, they will understand what trauma and fear we are going through in Central Trinidad.

The father related, the incident began around 11:30 p.m. I was already in bed and my wife and children were watching the Miss Universe queen show on television. He added, my daughter passed Common Entrance last year. She loves to watch beauty shows and always spoke about entering the Mastana Bahar Pageant queen show when she gets a little older.

Her father continued, we heard a loud bang and before we could ask who was at the front door, it broke under a banging pressure. I rushed into the

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living room. My daughter and sons, in fright, headed into their rooms at the same time. A man, with a thin stocking mask—never mind those, whatever persons, who are saying that victims are not able to identify the bandit's ethnicity—barged in.

One man, was already holding a gun to my wife's head. A second bandit, dressed in the same flimsy stocking mask came through the broken door with a gilpin (cutlass) waving it around and shouting 'Whey the f%#\$% money? Whey the f\$%*&gold?'

3.05 p.m.

I was cuffed and kicked when I stammered out that I don't have any. The one with the gun shouted: 'Allyuh coolie could lie, allyuh always have f%\$#@ gold hiding somewhere, bring it out.' When I hear that, I told them I only had a few pieces of jewellery and about \$40 in the house.

The father added: I went for it, gave it to the chap who was holding the cutlass and told him to take it and go. My wife was trembling and the bandit with the gun was holding her hair and pulling her head towards his private parts saying: 'Yuh like that, yuh like that, yuh ever get one so big yet.'

I began to beg them to leave us and go and we wouldn't tell the police anything. I was sweating with fear and terror; I just wanted them to leave. Then the bandit with the cutlass said: 'Leh we pipe the daughter.'

The man with the gun shouted to me: 'Bring your youngest daughter; we want to—something fresh.' I dropped on my knees and began to beg, my wife fainted, my daughter began to weep loudly in her room.

The father went on: All this time I was hoping the neighbours, who live a little distance away from us, would hear something and bring help.

The bandits told us to shut up or they will shoot me. The cutlass chap went inside and dragged my daughter out; she was kicking and screaming. He hit her on the mouth and she shut up.

At that point in the interview the daughter began to sob silently and spoke for the first time. She said: 'When he hit me I felt limp and I was in a daze. I can't recall what really went on after that except that I felt only pain and more pain. I thought they were going to kill me.'

She stopped talking. The now emotional dad said his daughter was stripped in front of him. 'When I saw the bandit with the gun grab my

daughter's underwear and began pulling it down I turned my head away,' he said. 'He saw my actions and forced me to watch. My wife was still out cold and I kept asking him to let me see about my wife because she might be dead. He hit me again, this time with the gun butt, which looked like one of those revolvers which police carry around.'

The father said: 'The man with the cutlass entered my daughter first and you could see that he was ripping her up with the amount of force he was exerting. He clamped her mouth; you could see she was in terrible pain. I thought he was never going to get up from the top of my poor baby girl.'

When he did get up there was a lot of blood; blood all over her legs, on the floor and on the bandit himself. She had been bleeding throughout the entire time he was raping her. Perhaps the other chap with the gun saw the amount of blood and the way my daughter was looking limp and changed his mind. He then told his partner: 'Leh we move, leh we move, things might get hot in a while.'

They left us like that. I lifted my child, limp and lifeless, and took her to the bathroom. I revived my wife and we 'cleaned my daughter as best as we could,' said the father.' We put some antiseptic medicine on her. We stayed like that for a long while until we finally went in search of a neighbour.' The father, a middle-aged, blue-collar worker said he took his daughter to a family doctor at San Fernando. 'We arrived at his home around 3.30 a.m. and he treated her. Up to this day, she seldom speaks. She has stopped school,' said the father.

The matter was not reported to the police. The family has not sought professional counselling although they were advised by the doctor. The doctor provided the family with names, address and phone numbers of the Rape Crisis Centre. They have not gotten in touch with the Centre up to the time I was talking to the father. They seemed to have given up on life." *[Interruption]*

Hon. Member: Where is Huggins?

Miss H. Bhaggan: Madam Speaker, that particular article was read for posterity. When I spoke out, I was referring to that type of matter. Today, I am being seen as a racist and as a criminal. I wonder, for those of us sitting in this House today, if that was our daughter how we would have reacted.

Hon. Member: If it happened.

Miss H. Bhaggan: How would you have reacted? *[Interruption]* If that were your daughter, how would you have reacted? Madam Speaker, in any civilized

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country the Minister of National Security would have resigned or he would have been sacked for his callousness, his insensitivity and his arrogance. Here you had families suffering; he came to play politics with a crime situation in Central and did not deal with the situation. I am saying that Minister should resign. This is supposed to be a civilized society and the Member for San Fernando West stands in this House and speaks about Japan and those foreign places, and we cannot deal with our own problems.

We have a Minister of National Security who is not even elected. As a matter of fact, why did I read that article in the first place, when he is not here? The reason crime is so rampant today is that when these matters are raised in this House, a member of the Cabinet and Minister of National Security is not here to listen to our complaints. The question is: Should a Member who is not elected be the Minister of National Security? I saying that that Minister either has to resign or be sacked, because his silence has become part of the conspiracy against citizens of this country.

Madam Speaker, in the world today—in fact, I saw where the Government supported a motion to charge persons who have been committing crimes in Bosnia and see these crimes, rapes in particular, as crimes against humanity, including war crimes. This Minister, by his negligence, should be charged with crimes against humanity, because rape is a crime against humanity. He said I should be charged with public mischief? I am an elected Member of Parliament. If my constituents come to me with a problem, then it is my responsibility and duty to highlight that problem. I did not write one letter.

Since January I have been speaking about the crime problem in Central, but nobody is listening. In fact when you look at that letter, one line, they forgot everything about the rapes. Nobody mentioned the rapes. As far as they are concerned, rape is a normal occurrence. But it is a national problem. Why should we be concerned about rapes in Central? Well, Madam Speaker, if those Members of Parliament on the other side are willing to sit and be quiet about rapes in their constituencies, I am not prepared to do that and we are not prepared to do that. The violation of women is a very serious aspect when one looks at law and order.

What I find very strange is the responses we have been getting from the country and from the media in particular. The media have chosen to focus on race and have forgotten about the violation of women. They have forgotten that women and children are being raped, families are being destroyed. Which of the

media really picked up that? The only saving grace is that reporter who took the time to do investigative reporting, and he was one of the persons who have been able to put some sense into reporting in this country. The daily newspapers have failed terribly. The editors in all the newspapers, including the two dailies and the *Mirror*, are apologies for editors.

As a matter of fact, there is an editor for the *Mirror*, I would not give him the dignity of calling his name; he is a bitter and frustrated political has-been. What does he do? He goes around chastising everyone. The problem is that that particular individual tried to destroy the democracy of this country. He tried to overthrow the Government at the time, and today, he writes and he pontificates about issues and about people. Then there are other editors who day in and day out write nonsense in the newspapers because they have the right to do so. That is called freedom of the press.

The freedom of the press is not to charge me as a criminal. The freedom of the press is to be able to expose the bandits and the criminals and the incompetence of this Government and the Minister of National Security. That is what the press ought to have been doing. What have they done instead? They have been able to make this into a bacchanal, into a drama, into carnival—a serious situation like that. They are diverting the attention of this country from crime to race and ethnicity.

The article attested the things I have said. I was just reporting on what I was told. Nothing is wrong with that. I have never attacked every African in this country. I am making that very clear, and I am putting that into the *Hansard* of this Parliament. When I spoke, I spoke about bandits committing rapes against children. I was referring to those issues, and I want to make it clear in this House that I have attacked no race in this country. I was speaking about the description of bandits.

3.15 p.m.

I want to make that clear to the Member for Diego Martin West. I am not going to stand up any more and take that nonsense from anybody, regardless of the media. People are afraid to intimidate the media. I am not afraid to intimidate the media. I am an elected Member of Parliament. I got nearly 10,000 votes and when I stand, I speak with the backing of my constituents and my party. When I made that statement, I did not do so to consolidate East Indian votes, as some people are saying. I did not do that to seek political mileage.

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I did that to highlight a human problem, a problem of crime against humanity that today is a world topic. And I am not going to back down. I am going to make it very clear that this Government has to do something about crime. If that Minister of National Security cannot perform, he should leave the post and let somebody else take that mantle.

Today the media have turned their attention to the crime watch groups. They are what? Vigilante groups! The Commissioner of Police went to seize cutlasses. I would like to know from this Government how many guns they have seized from the bandits in recent times. How many guns? What you are doing is destroying. The crime watch groups that are being called vigilante groups are people who are concerned about their families. We all know that national security here has broken down. We do not have a police service that is working. Look at the fiasco with Scotland Yard, for instance. Look at the fiasco with the Police Commissioner. He says he is a big, toothless bulldog. Our Police Commissioner tells us that, and somebody wants to give him dentures.

This is outrageous and then the Members of this Government come here and speak and act as if everything is honky-dory, everything is fantastic, there are no problems. We will be the gateway to Latin America. Of course, we will be the gateway but for drugs. We are not dealing with the problems of this country and we are coming here trying to hoodwink people.

Out there, there are real problems, and crime is a real problem, so when the Police Commissioner and the Minister go around and say nothing is happening in Central, they are trying to mislead this nation and the media are falling for it. The media should rethink their role in a plural society. They cannot tell people what to think. If they want to think a particular way, they should look for another job, because journalism is a very serious business and the Media Association of Trinidad and Tobago has to do some serious work with those journalists because they have brought their own prejudices and their own racism into the journalism of this country.

This article I just read, is that racism? You are talking about a 12-year old child, raped in the most brutal manner, a whole family brutalized. And I know of many more than that. Then they tell me to produce witnesses. How could I produce witnesses? The state witness, Goolcharan, who was killed at 3.00 o'clock in the morning, lived one mile from my home in my constituency. And I am supposed to produce these victims to go and identify these perpetrators. Who is going to protect these victims? The witness protection programme is supposed to

be in the pipeline, but who is going to protect these people, before and after? Are we going to protect witnesses after the trials, also? We do not have those kinds of facilities.

The way crime is escalating in this country today, even if you have a witness protection programme, the next programme you will have to introduce is one for the protection of judges and juries, because the criminals are at large. As a matter of fact, when I looked at the response, I was very saddened. I was disgusted for a while but I was more saddened. In fact, I want to let people know that all the personal attacks against me, have not done anything to me because I have a clear conscience. I am just saddened that in this society we could have degenerated to that extent.

Look at the response of the churches. Well, the Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha spoke out and they maintained a principled position and I must commend them. But then there were two other leaders who spoke out and they, too, became entrapped in the ethnic question. They started to talk about race and crime, and not a word about the violation of children. What is the problem with these men of the cloth, Madam Speaker? Is it because these children are the children of pagans? Is that what it is? We have to speak frankly in this Parliament. Why are these men of cloth prepared to talk about race and crime and totally ignore the violence against women and children?

I find there is some kind of double standard here. I think that is hypocrisy and these are the same people who tell the nation and their following to speak the truth. Here now, we have spoken the truth and they have a problem with that. What do you do, speak the truth and colour it up? You play games with the truth. What is the truth now? The truth no longer means the truth. Maybe we should have a redefinition of the truth. I spoke the truth and I want to know whether those church leaders have a problem with the truth. So I would like to know their response to the fact that women, children and families are being violated in this country.

Another comment I got, Madam Speaker. Of course, the Government, I understand, is waiting for a report from the Centre of Ethnic Studies. Is that what it is—the Centre of Ethnic Studies? Has crime anything to do with the Centre of Ethnic Studies? When is this Government going to respond to crime in this country? This is what the Motion is about.

The Member for La Brea comes to commend this Government on initiatives taken. He bemoans the fact that criminal activity has increased among young

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people of all ages. What is he doing about that? What is this Government doing about it? Are they just going to talk? Is this a talk shop?

Well, the United National Congress should be commended today because what the Government failed to do, we have achieved. The Prime Minister, the Minister of National Security, the Police Commissioner have all been trying to get citizens to be involved in the prevention of crime, but because of the strong stance of Members of Parliament on this side, we have today the mobilization of this country against crime. It has reached to the extent where even the Police Commissioner is now telling the bandits to keep away from Central. Of course, I ask them: To go where?

Secondly, may I also tell the Police Commissioner that I agree with him. He should really keep the bandits away from Central because until this Government is prepared to deal with crime, the people of Central will protect themselves. What happened with this family here, has happened to several families but no other family will it happen to again because I can assure you that since the crime-watch groups have been set up, the bandits have left Central. There are the petty thieves, but they are not in Central. I understand they are now in South but the people down there will deal with them, too.

It seems to me that the only people in this country who could move about in this country are the bandits. In fact, I was on a programme where a caller said that he was free to move in this country, nobody could tell him where to go and where not to go. Is that not interesting, Madam Speaker? I do not really believe that in this country anybody is free to go where they want to go. As the Member for Couva North once said, the criminals are in charge of the country today.

In fact, when you look at the Constitution, we are not protected as innocent citizens. You know who are protected? The bandits. The bandits are the ones who enjoy, in fact, the right to property, the right to life and freedom of movement. Today, we are the prisoners and the bandits are free, so today, the Constitution protects the bandits and the criminals and we now have to live like prisoners in our homes. In fact, the maximum security prison should be built for the citizens, because we really need protection. It does not make sense putting prisoners in there. And the Minister of National Security fiddles while Trinidad and Tobago is being turned into a virtual war zone.

Madam Speaker, there has been another curious response. We have so many women's groups in this country, but the only women's group which spoke out against crime, against women in particular, was the Hindu Women's Group. All

the other groups—they attend big conferences, they hold many seminars, they make many speeches, many things about the violation of women. In fact, if I were to do research, I would see all kinds of fancy speeches and statistics being written about the violation of women, raping of women and domestic violence. What is this?

Is crime against women in Central not a violation against women? Who are the women in Central? Why are they not being spoken about? Why are these women's organizations silent? In other words, why have they, too, become part of that conspiracy of silence and cover up? What is wrong with the society? Why the hypocrisy? I do not understand it.

In fact, another point of view that has been raised is, why are you speaking about crime in Central? It is a national problem. In fact, one columnist went on to write, well Stollmeyer was battered and killed and his family was brutalized and nobody made a big deal about it, so why is Hulsie Bhaggan politicising crime?

3.25 p.m.

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Miss H. Bhaggan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am indebted to the Members for having given me an extension of time. In the interest of time I should like to move on, but I just want to restate that point about the silence of the women's groups. I think it is very strange that we have had that silence, especially with what is happening. I know people are intimidated because the question of ethnicity arose. But I believe that persons could still have made comments and they could have focussed on the issue of crime, because my contention is that this is one of crime and not of ethnicity. What I did merely was to repeat what my constituents told me.

The time has however come for us to extend this debate on crime to the source of crime. Why is it today that crime is on the increase? As I mentioned before, it has much to do with the PNM's policies. I suggest to this Government that it has failed to transform this nation and this society. In fact, what this Government did, as I mentioned earlier, has always been to consolidate its power—raw power—get into office and stay in office. For instance, I am sure there are Members in this House—I would not say from which side, but they know whom I am speaking

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about—who will not be able to stand up and deny some of the things I am going to say now.

There are communities today in this country where women have eight to 10 children. When you look at that family system, those children may have been had with different men. Then there are men who may have four to 10 children with different women. There is a situation where children born out of this kind of arrangement, are abandoned on the streets; they are abused; they are being used as sex slaves; they are being used in the drug trade. These children are not going to school; they are not being trained or fed. When a child who is abandoned, unloved, is abused and on the streets of Port of Spain, for example, he becomes invisible to all of us; because when we are walking very busily in the streets, we do not notice children who are there suffering. They are there suffering, and they have to survive somehow. They survive as pimps; by being used, as I said, as sex slaves. That is a reality. I know that for a fact.

What are the options for these children when they grow up? The Member spoke about young people getting into criminal activity. That is the reality. There is a situation now where there are hundreds and maybe thousands of children who fall into that category. Their only choice in life, as far as they know it, is to be involved in criminal activity. How else are they to survive? For them the culture of survival has to do with criminal activity. What are we doing about it? Nothing!

The Members on the other side speak about studies they are doing. In fact, every time we talk about a problem, they are doing studies on it. You do not have to study. It is like Scotland Yard coming here to find out things we already know. What we need now is action. The action will not be in the form of "10-days." That does not help. What it does, is to perpetuate a dependency syndrome. "Ten-days" does not build skills; it does not give you sustainable development and growth. "Ten-days" is about votes, and this Government should understand that it has destroyed the people of this country. They stand there and say it all started in the last five years. They were there 30 years before with the money to do something about it. But what they did was introduce "10-days", and that has destroyed certain parts of this country, in particular.

For example, why should people have to live on the Beetham, have to fight to get into the Beetham so that they could go and dig out garbage in there to sell and to eat? Is that the kind of human existence and survival we want? That is what the PNM has done to our people. But of course, that is part of a constituency. There are so many votes you can get in the Beetham. But what are we doing about

the people in the Beetham? I am not playing politics here. I am sure the Members for Laventille West and Port of Spain North know what I am talking about. We are playing politics with the lives of these people.

We want to be this big, fancy sophisticated country, the manufacturing hub. How could we be the manufacturing hub if our society cannot be given the resources to be able to uplift themselves to be independent and to have self-esteem? As I mentioned self-esteem, that reminds me of a programme on television where I saw some advertisements. It talks about celebrating life and people. A very noble idea.

But if this Government wants to celebrate life and people, what it should do is create jobs for them so that they would have work and money. That is the way to celebrate life and people. You do not celebrate people and life by showing advertisements on television. That is like drawing a cake to satisfy hunger. To celebrate people and life, bring the blueprint for jobs that the PNM boasted about and help those people. Give them the skills to do it, because there are thousands of people out there literally starving.

What about this thing of self-esteem? According to my training in management science, there is the Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Based on that theory, you cannot reach the level of building self-esteem until you have satisfied your basic needs. So people have to have food, clothing and shelter first, before they can build self-esteem. So whom are we trying to fool here? Have you ever seen a beggar with self-esteem? They have no dignity; they have been degraded as human beings. Are they supposed to look at an advertisement on television and attend a workshop and develop self-esteem? Is that how this Government intends to help the people of this country? I simply cannot understand it. Where is the social justice? What is this Government going to do to deal with the social problems in this country? Is it going to just make speeches and pretend everything is okay?

This Government has to decide whether it is going to rule this country or not, because it is like a leaf in the wind. It is today a facilitator. It has been giving up all the powers of Government and saying now that it is a facilitator. In fact, I should go to what the Member for San Fernando West said. He said: "What causes social problems? Under-development." Well I am saying in this country what causes the escalation of social problems is the PNM and its economic policies. We are today underdeveloped because of the PNM, because they have no idea of sustainable development. Its idea of development is "10-days" and making sure that it could get their votes when election day comes.

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The Member also spoke about the weak and the strong, and competition. The liberal policies that the Government is promoting, that basically promotes the laws of the jungle; it talks about survival of the fittest. That is exactly what they are doing. Only the fit will survive here. Here you are talking about big business, the elite and the multinationals, as my colleague said. When he speaks about the strong and the weak, but the weak will become weaker and the strong will become stronger, and the strong will prey upon the weak. That is part of the free market economy.

In fact, the Member spoke about competition and market forces, and all that sort of thing. The fact is, this Government has said that market forces somehow—in fact the whole neo-liberal model—will bring about equilibrium. But here the Member was talking about the fact that market forces create some kind of imbalances. It seems that this Government is really confused about its policy, because each Member stands up and says something different with respect to its economic policy.

The Member spoke about cracks in the structure because of the tension. Then he went on to talk about the sturdiness of the foundation. The fact that there are cracks in the structure, indicates very clearly that the foundation is very weak. And that foundation was built by this Government. So he is contradicting himself in a matter of a few minutes.

Then, too, he spoke about the key to unlocking the talent. They are unlocking talent all right. They are retrenching many people, so they are unlocking this talent out into the streets. These are people no longer working anywhere. That is what he probably meant about the key to unlocking the talent. Then he said that small business is the engine room. Let me tell this Member that the small business engine room cannot pay for water and electricity, so the engine room has no energy. I want to let him know that unless we do something about water rates and electricity rates, small business in this country will not survive.

3.35 p.m.

The Minister spoke about the Japanese culture. We are not Japanese. We always talk about Japan. Of course, Japan is an example, something to look at, but why do we always compare things which are not similar? We are in the Caribbean. We are part of the Caribbean/Latin American context, so why are we always talking about Japan and what it did? In fact, when one looks at the Japanese culture, one sees that it is totally different from our own. The work ethic is not the same; the value system is not the same. When one looks for the parallels, one does not see any.

Of course, the Japanese are a model to look at. It is to see that they started off with nothing and they developed. But, what did they do? What did they have? They had a nation. They had people willing to work. Do we have a government that is willing to provide the leadership? We do not have that. In fact, we have one of the weakest cabinets and governments ever in this country today.

Madam Speaker, the Minister said that we had development. What development? There is economic development, there is social development—

Mr. B. Panday: Human development.

Miss H. Bhaggan: Exactly! Social development is all part of the human development. Do we have that? As I was saying, we have had a breakdown in our society—in family life and family systems. The Member for San Juan/Barataria goes around making speeches about that all the time. They admit that there is a breakdown in the community and family systems and structures, but this Minister comes here to talk about development. What development have we had? We had some concrete buildings put up—the Hall of Justice where we do not have justice; the Twin Towers which is like an ivory tower. They sit there and dream up all kinds of big policies; then they stay up there on the 15th floor and look down. When they look down they see people little, then they treat us like little people. That is the problem. They stay on the highest floor so when they look down they do not see the real size of the people; they look like ants Liliputians—that is why they treat us like little people.

We are not treated with dignity as a people. That is why this Government introduces policies and programmes, makes speeches and feels that we are fools. It feels, somehow, that we are little people; we do not understand anything. So, Madam Speaker, I do not understand what the Member means. In fact, I never really understand much of what he says in this House.

Madam Speaker, he then spoke about "appropriately interventionist". I honestly do not know what he means by that. What does one mean by "appropriately interventionist"? The Government has said that the private sector will be the engine of growth and that market forces will determine everything. What does he mean by "intervening"? I do not understand it. If the Government wanted to intervene, it should have intervened on the question of poverty and unemployment in this country. Is it intervening? It is not. The only time Government intervenes is when it is time to sign a slip to send workers home. That is the intervention that the Minister is talking about; not intervention to improve the life of our people. When he speaks of intervention, it is to send the

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police in Central to seize cutlasses. I have not seen this Government intervening in this economy or in this society to be able to upgrade and uplift our people.

I do not know what the Member for La Brea means when he talks about initiatives. As I have said before, I believe this gentleman really lives on Mars; he does not live in this country; he does not talk to his constituents; he does not talk to people; he does not know what the reality is. How could this Government have the gall to come at this time, when people out there are screaming in pain; when hunger pangs are becoming more and more severe, to commend itself on initiatives taken? Commend itself! It should condemn itself.

We on this side condemn this Government for the fact that it has lacked initiative and even initiatives that it has taken have failed miserably. As a matter of fact, the Member spoke about putting things to rest. Let me tell that Member that the population of Trinidad and Tobago will put the PNM to rest in 1996 or even before, because they deserve a long rest. They had a rest for five years, but it did not help them. They need now to be put into oblivion because the PNM is the source of the problem of this country.

It does not matter that they talk about colonial era; and that we inherited problems. Obviously, we inherited problems.

Mr. B. Panday: Everybody came from colonialism.

Miss H. Bhaggan: Exactly, but the social problems became worse under the PNM; the PNM engendered them; the PNM became part of them. As a matter of fact, as the Member for Couva North says, "if you are part of the problem, you cannot be a part of the solution". That is exactly the case with the PNM Government.

I support the amendment to the Motion proposed by the Member for St. Augustine and instead of commending this Government, we on this side condemn it for its lack, and failure, of initiatives.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources (Dr. The Hon. Keith Rowley): Madam Speaker, I have been listening to this debate, and I rise to support the Motion of my colleague the Member for La Brea. I will have much to say in this debate, even though it was not my intention to intervene today.

I am forced to intervene because since we are concerned about posterity, and speaking for the record, I would be failing in my duty if I permitted the Member for Chaguanas to bring into this House the mischief that she has created outside.

Mr. B. Panday: Oh, shut up! Shame! Shame! Boo!

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, they could shout until the roof comes off, I am going to have my say in this House. *[Interruption]*. I am going to have it.

Let me repeat what I said: I am not going to sit in this Parliament, as a Member elected by the people and permit my Friend the Member for Chaguanas to bring into the Parliament Chamber the mischief she created outside. She said that she got almost 10,000 votes, and that apparently justifies her action. I too got almost 10,000 votes and on that strength, I speak today.

The Member for Chaguanas read extensively into the *Hansard* today, giving details of a disgusting rape and her statements to the media along the line. I want to read into the *Hansard* a letter written by the Member for Chaguanas to the Minister of National Security.

Before I read it, Madam Speaker, let me make my position very clear. Nobody on this side, nobody in this country, not the Minister of National Security, the Commissioner of Police, not the man in the street, is arguing against the fact that Trinidad and Tobago today is facing the serious problem of an upsurge in crime. That is not the issue. It is part of the social landscape today and we are all very concerned about it, and as part of the Government, I speak for the Government, while we are in office. Every person who seeks to address this issue is quite correct in calling on the Government to take action towards dealing with the problem of the escalation of crime. That is not the issue.

I cannot even recall which government was in office at the time, but a few years ago, it must have been six or seven years ago, in my own bedroom, 14 feet off the ground, one o'clock in the morning, I got up to discover a man coming into my bedroom. That experience is still with me; it is a worrisome experience. There is no question about it that there are members of the national community who are exposed to the rigours of crime. That is not an issue.

3.45 p.m.

If there are people in the Parliament, as we have just heard, who will say that every single thing that is wrong with this country is the PNM's fault, I cannot argue with that especially if it sounds good and makes them feel good. Where I take a point of departure on this matter is when persons advance themselves as leaders in the national community, and they take positions that put us at even greater risk than we really are.

I shall read this letter, and leave it to your judgment whether or not what is written in this letter and the attempt to justify the mischief, is justified:

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"25th May, 1993.

Mr. Russell Huggins,
Hon. Minister of National Security,
Knox Street,
Port-of-Spain.
Dear Mr. Huggins,

On behalf of the constituents of Chaguanas, I am issuing a call for the deployment of joint army and police patrols in the Chaguanas constituency. This call is based upon the widespread terrorism of constituents both during the day and at nights. Every night for the past two months, homes are being broken into, constituents are being beaten and robbed, and women are being raped. Constituents are under siege. In every single community there are now neighbourhood watches. Constituents are kept awake all night. Among some of the most sickening rapes so far are:

- (i) A woman who had delivered a baby was brutally raped by several men after her home was robbed and her husband beaten and tied up.
- (ii) Bandits beat and robbed a family and then raped their teenage daughter placing a gun at the father's head and forcing him to look on.
- (iii) A home was broken into and after the family was robbed and beaten, the bandits asked for the youngest daughter. They then raped her. She has since stopped going to secondary school and is having serious problems adjusting.

Every single night, I am awakened by telephone calls from constituents indicating that bandits are in the area. Last night was no exception. I wish to maintain that you are fully aware of this situation. Why the silence and inaction?

Recent deployment of police has been totally inadequate since there are not sufficient vehicles available."

Madam Speaker, I want you to pay particular attention from here on.

"I wish to advise that unless your government is prepared to do something about this situation, constituents will embark on whatever means possible..."

that phrase is underlined.

"...to protect themselves and their families. In case you have not been updated on a very sordid aspect of this siege, the perpetrators are men of African

descent and the victims are of East Indian descent. Are you going to preside over ethnic cleansing and the establishment of a Bosnia in Trinidad and Tobago?

I, therefore, repeat my call for joint army and police patrol in Chaguanas and its environs.

Yours sincerely,

Signed/Hulsie Bhaggan."

Madam Speaker, if there are people in this Chamber today who find nothing is wrong with that statement from the Member for Chaguanas, then may God help us in Trinidad and Tobago.

The Member spoke and she attacked the Archbishop, the Bishop, the editors of the newspapers, and all. It does not occur to the Member that as Sparrow says "maybe 50 million Frenchmen can't be wrong."

Miss Bhaggan: Madam Speaker, on a point of order. I did not say the Archbishop, and the Bishop. I spoke of leaders and men of the cloth.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, she attacked men of the cloth. The extent of the criminal action is not in question; the trauma of the victim is not in question. The problem is, when one begins to identify the perpetrators of crime and persons' actions on the basis of their ethnic origin, one is on extremely slippery slope.

What the Member has said to the Minister of National Security is not quoting what her constituents said to her. She has put a position to the Minister of National Security that there is a conspiracy from one ethnic group against another ethnic group. She spoke in this House today about part of "the conspiracy." I am asking: What conspiracy? I for one was extremely happy that as the days went by there was some silence on this matter and tempers were subsiding. If other persons in the national community had joined this debate in the way in which it was thrown out, today we might not have been sitting here. Because, when a person is identified with crime on the basis of how that person looks—

Mr. Maharaj: What do you mean by that?

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: I will explain what I mean by that—it means that any person who looks like that [*Interruption*]

Madam Speaker, I have just read for you what was in the letter. In case Members on the other side did not hear I will read the last paragraph again.

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"In case you have not been updated on a very sordid aspect of this siege, the perpetrators are men of African descent and the victims are of East Indian descent."

That is a clear unambiguous charge against men of African descent. When we begin to identify developments on that basis, are we going to proceed to identify victims on that basis? Are we going to identify users of services on that basis? The Member started off her contribution by outlining what I believe is true—the difficulty she is experiencing with respect to the response and the understanding of the Central Division Police when she sought, as the Member of Parliament, to raise matters concerning Central Trinidad. She outlined in detail the behaviour of certain senior persons in that division—if as she has reported to the House, that senior persons had that kind of approach in the discharge of their responsibilities, could that not have ended up in a reduction in the quality of service in the community? The answer has to be yes.

3.55 p.m.

And as you sought to take steps to deal with those very problems, out of those efforts it turned out that a few officers were identified as not performing according to expectations. Having been charged, it was in a recent debate, only a week ago, that her colleague the Member for Oropouche, got up in this House and sought to make an issue out of the fact that certain police officers from Central Division have been charged. He repeated their names over and over, saying that he is doing it deliberately, because he is pointing to a fact.

What the Member for Chaguanas is saying to us today is that the behaviour of officers in the Central Division was sub-standard. On one hand, we have the Member of Parliament for Chaguanas telling us today that she has had tremendous difficulty in getting co-operation from senior police officers in Central Trinidad, but then, we have the Member for Oropouche saying, when an independent—

Mr. Sudama: Madam Speaker, on a point of order. The reason I mentioned the names of these people and the fact that only three have been brought to book by the Scotland Yard investigations, is that it has been recorded all over in the newspapers, that a Mr. "T." Mr. "B." and Mr. "D." and others have been involved in corruption in the police service. And I asked, now is it that only three persons have been brought to book on relatively minor charges? It is in that context that I raised the issue.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: What the Member said is in *Hansard*. He is repeating the particular names so that people can see that only certain persons are targeted.

Mr. Sudama: On a point of order. If he has the *Hansard*, let him produce it. He should not misquote and misinterpret me. I am telling this House the context in which I said it.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: The Member for Oropouche said that certain persons are targeted. I repeat this only in the context of the Member for Chaguanas pointing out to us today—

Mr. Sudama: That is a total misrepresentation. I never said certain races. I said only three persons have been charged and I called their names.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: The *Hansard* is there.

Mr. Sudama: Bring it!

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, I understand his attempt.

The Member for Chaguanas said that she has been under attack by a wide cross-section of the national community including—

Mr. B. Panday: She did not say that. *[Interruption]*

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: I have no difficulty with the truth, but I am not aware that, to date, those whom I have to rely on for the information have been able to demonstrate that there is truth in what the Member for Chaguanas has said—that the sordid aspect of the siege against Central Trinidad is a conspiracy of African men against East Indian women.

Miss Bhaggan: Madam Speaker, the Member is misleading the House. I never said it is a conspiracy of African men against East Indian women. He is misinterpreting my comments.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: I am confining my arguments to the letter she wrote to the Minister of National Security. In the letter she said—let me read it.

"In case you have not been updated on a very sordid aspect of this siege, the perpetrators are men of African descent and the victims are of East Indian descent."

Today, she goes on to say that she was under attack for speaking the truth. Therefore, I am making the link that she is saying that what is written to the Minister of National Security is the truth. I am saying that I am not satisfied that the Member has demonstrated that that is the truth.

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In this country, we have a police service—whatever we might think of the developments around it—that is responsible for certain things. The information made available to the national community from the police service is that this categorical statement is not true. Is the Member for Chaguanas saying, if that is the truth, that in all the crimes committed, victims are of one ethnic group and those on the other side, the criminals, are of another ethnic group? That is what this means.

This Member for Chaguanas, like every other Member, is a Member who has sworn to uphold the Constitution and the law. It did not say in everything else except in crime. When we became Members of Parliament we swore to uphold the Constitution and the law, whether it has to do with business, education, agriculture or crime. Yet, the Member who has sworn so to do is saying to the Minister of National Security that her constituents would embark on whatever means possible, not what is legal, acceptable and moral, but whatever means possible. Can that be a position—

Mr. Maharaj: I stand on a point of order. What this Member is doing is totally improper. He is imputing improper motives to the Member. He is reading from a letter in which it does not say anything else than what is in the letter. He is using this Parliament to promote racism when he is trying to get away from the main issue.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, my concern in this matter is not the 13 persons who are banging their desks in this House. My concern is out in the national community.

I read an article in the *Trinidad Guardian* recently, and it horrified me. The article said that in St. Margaret's Village members of that community have declared a curfew which begins at 8.00 p.m. and after 8.00 p.m. African men would not be allowed in St. Margaret's. *[Interruption]* I said that I read that in the *Trinidad Guardian* recently.

I am saying that when this sort of thing begins to become part of the national landscape, then, we are in trouble. I have also read in the newspapers about a group of persons who went to bathe at Carli Bay, and on the basis of how they looked they were told by members of the community that they should get out of the area—

Mr. B. Panday: We investigated that and it is untrue.

4.05 p.m.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: I am glad to hear that.

Mr. Maharaj: Madam Speaker, I object again. This Member is talking about what he has read. If he was concerned about what he has read, he would have done an investigation and presented it to this House. What he is doing is using this House to promote racism, to divert from the main issue of the Government, having no answer to the problem.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, I am responding, in a debate, to a position taken by a previous Member. I am also recording, for posterity, my concern about what this position can lead to in the national community.

When a leader in one of these communities can take this position to the Minister of National Security and send that kind of signal outside and you see it in the newspapers—I do not know if it is true. I am reading it in the newspapers all the time. I am not taking the position of spokesperson on the other side that members of the media are in conspiracy against certain people. I am not taking that position at all.

Every day I am reading about certain developments where actions are being based on one set of people taking action against another group of people, based on how they look. I am saying that that is a dangerous situation in Trinidad and Tobago. We are a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural society, and when we begin to identify our problems along ethnic lines, even people who should know better would begin to behave in a certain way and these situations only get worse.

A moment ago I was challenged when I said what the Member for Oropouche said. He asked me for the *Hansard*. I have it here and I quote:

"Today, apart from Bhagwandeem, Dyo and Nadir"

—not officer "X", officer "Y"—

"nobody has been brought to book for anything serious."

He goes on to say:

"I call their names for a special reason. It is just to indicate to this House who has been targeted."

Madam Speaker, I began my contribution by saying to you that I raise these matters and leave it to you to come to your own conclusion as to what is being said and to where we are being led.

Crime has been committed elsewhere in this country. All of us have been exposed to the rigours and the treatment from members of our national

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community who have chosen crime as a way of life. I have no doubt whatsoever that the people of Central Trinidad are experiencing an intolerable level of attack from criminals, but it is the responsibility of the Government to address that. To the best of my knowledge the Government is seeking to address that problem, like everywhere else, to the best of its ability.

What we have been experiencing here, and the way it is being put across by those who have made a life of misleading the people of Central Trinidad, is that something special is happening in Central Trinidad by way of a conspiracy along ethnic lines.

I am a cricket fan, and one of the tragedies of this country, one for which we will all be eternally damned as a country, is the fact that one of our finest cricketers, Jeffrey Stollmeyer, was brutally murdered at St. George. I believe that the rest of the country felt the way I felt—scandalized. But, Madam Speaker, I do not recall, on that occasion, a single person in this country taking the position that here was a crime committed against a person of an ethnic background by somebody else of another ethnic background.

I remember another gentleman in Woodbrook who was murdered at his gate. He was held up at his gate, sought to jostle with the criminals, and was shot. The man was killed, not raped, killed brutally in front of his gate and in front of his family. I cannot recall anyone raising that problem in the context of the victim being of one ethnic group as against the criminal being of another ethnic group.

Miss Bhaggan: What does the Member mean when he says that the man was not raped, he was killed? Can he expand on that, please? Is he saying that rape is not a violation?

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, I will cease to give way to Members of the other side.

I said the person was killed. The ultimate crime that can be committed against a person is to take his life. *[Interruption]* Let us agree to differ on that point. I believe that to be killed is a more serious crime. Even as we are applying the punishment, the ultimate price of capital punishment is applied to a murder.

That is not the point, I will not get into that. I have not sought to trivialize rape. I am simply making the point that brutal crimes have been committed. We have addressed the situation from the point of view of those who have committed crimes against those who have been the victims of crimes, and I appeal to all those on the other side to keep it on that track. Let criminals be identified as

criminals and victims as victims. It is a dangerous course when we begin to get down to the level of seeking to identify the unfortunate victims and the criminals along ethnic lines.

There are countries in this world where communities are divided by differences and there is no difference that has brought about more pain and sorrow to human beings all over the world than differences based on ethnic considerations. Just listen to the news, read the newspapers, go back into history and you will see in most of the situations where man has demonstrated his gravest inhumanity to man, it has been based on ethnicity.

In fact, in today's so-called modern world, there is an upsurge of that kind of thing. That is why I am particularly concerned that what we did not have in Trinidad and Tobago before, we must not now seek to introduce. As we do that, it might serve the purpose of a few, but as sure as night follows day, we will end up just where all the others in the world have ended up.

4.15 p.m.

There are persons in Beirut who live with an imaginary green line where, if you were on one side, you belonged to a certain group, and if you were on the other, you belonged to another. I remember seeing television footage, where there was a siege in Beirut and one community in Beirut was being starved to death by another community. They were being starved to death, not on the basis of any crime they had committed; they did not have any PNM Government there; they did what we are discussing here. All they had at that time, Madam Speaker, was a difference. One group was Muslim and one group was Christian. That was the singular basis. Individuals had committed no offence against other persons but there was the green line; there was the siege.

There was a bit of television footage which showed a 14-year old girl trying to run the gauntlet of snipers to get some food and she was shot on the way crossing that line. She was trying to get food, after that community was being starved for weeks.

Madam Speaker, that was a development based on problems being identified on the basis of ethnicity. We have the Cypriote situation where nobody in Cyprus, is a Cypriote. One is either a Turkish Cypriote or a Greek Cypriote. The fact of the matter is, that people from one side see the other side and it is what is visible that determines how you are interpreted. Any time that is the case, you are asking for trouble.

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Madam Speaker, it is my submission here this afternoon that by the Member for Chaguanas introducing into the crime situation of this country the consideration of ethnicity and race, as to who is doing what against whom—she claims that she is doing it on behalf of her constituents and that she was simply reporting what her constituents said to her. The letter I have read to you, Madam Speaker, shows very clearly what her position was on the matter, because even if one accepts what she said before, how does one explain this line:

"Are you going to preside over ethnic cleansing in the establishment of a Bosnia in Trinidad and Tobago?"

Madam Speaker, what is ethnic cleansing?

Miss Bhaggan: Madam Speaker, if persons from my constituency decide to leave this country and seek refugee status abroad because they are not being protected, because they are being brutalized, is that not a form of ethnic cleansing? I should like the Minister to answer that question.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, understand the difficulty now. In 1988, I think it was—I am subject to correction—when the first batch of our fellow citizens went to Canada and sought refugee status, the vast majority of us in this country who became aware that those persons were making allegations against our country on the basis of what she is now calling ethnic cleansing—at that time I did not even realize that is what it was—what was being said, was that these persons were refugees running from something in Trinidad and Tobago.

The vast majority of us in this country saw that for what it is—Trinidadians abroad, trying a thing. Because we did not believe for one moment that there was any truth in their argument that they had to flee this country because they had refugee considerations here and they had to run to Canada. Today, I still maintain that as a member of the national community of Trinidad and Tobago any person who left this country and went abroad and made that charge, did this country a disservice.

When a sitting Member of Parliament, today, gets up in the national community and seeks, as she is seeking to do, to provide the proof of that, I take objection. Since she has undertaken to provide the proof that ethnic cleansing is taking place here, since that time when persons left for Canada to seek refugee status, the onus is on her to provide that proof. I am saying that she has failed to do so.

I do not know what they know, but since the Member has said that she is speaking the truth and she is providing the proof—Madam Speaker, proof

requires evidence. As far as I am concerned this is an argument of a dangerous and devastating opinion, which no serious responsible Member of Parliament should ever have taken to advance to the national community. It is an irresponsible act which could do nobody, any good. *[Interruption]*. I choose to ignore, as I always do, my colleague the Member for Naparima. He does not know better. He has come into the Parliament on his brother's coat-tail. Of no use to anybody!

Mr. S. Panday: Madam Speaker, on a point of order. Apart from his casting aspersions, I want to tell the Minister he has also killed agriculture.

Madam Speaker: Order! Order!

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Representing—Nothing! He stands for nothing. I do not care what he says, I am simply putting it on the record that if they accept the behaviour of the Member for Chaguanas, I do not. It is my right and the right of all others to say so. All I would say to the Member for Chaguanas to do, is to reflect for one moment on the comments of all those persons who did not agree with her; who have no political axe to grind; who have no "cocoa in the sun"; who do not intend to benefit from the outcome of this outrage; reflect on their position and ask herself, why they have not agreed with her.

Madam Speaker, to come here and describe in detail the goings-on—

Mr. Maharaj: Will the hon. Minister give way to a question? Can he say, if what he is saying is correct, that it is his Government's intention to deal with the crime situation why it is the Government—

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: I did not say those words.

Mr. Maharaj: Remember you said that your Government recognizes that there is a crime situation in Trinidad and in Central? If your Government has recognized that, can you explain why your Government, despite a gift by the American Government of some \$4 million in vehicles in order to patrol the country so as to prevent crime, has not given it to the country for this purpose?

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, I do not know what he is talking about. I am a Member of the Cabinet and I am not aware—

4.25 p.m.

Mr. Maharaj: Madam Speaker, since he is not aware and the Prime Minister is sitting there, would he not ask and tell us?

Hon. Member: Four million dollars.

Mr. B. Panday: The army officers are driving those vehicles.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, I am not aware that \$4 million worth of vehicles has been made available to the police by any foreign government. Not only that—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Manning: Madam Speaker, the answer to the question that has been raised by the hon. Member for Couva South resides in the mind of the Member for Tobago East.

Mr. Robinson: May I demand of the Prime Minister that he produce the evidence to this Parliament; otherwise, he should be placed before the Privileges Committee.

Mr. B. Panday: Four million dollars worth of vehicles was given to the police but they are now being used by army officers.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion made, That the House do now adjourn to Friday, July 2, 1993 at 1.30 p.m. [Hon. K. Valley]

Mr. Robinson: Madam Speaker, may I ask whether the Prime Minister will now give the House the assurance that he will produce that evidence at the earliest opportunity that this House sits?

Mr. Bereaux: Madam Speaker, if the statement is that the evidence is in the mind of the Member— *[Interruption]*

Mr. Robinson: On a point of order. Madam Speaker, this is trifling with the House. It is contempt of this House.

Mr. S. Mohammed: Madam Speaker, what about my Motion?

Madam Speaker: Oh, yes. There is a Motion on the adjournment. Hon. Members, we are going to have the tea break now and the Member will speak on his Motion at 5.00 o'clock.

4.28 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.08 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Longdenville Government School (Poisoned Water Supply)

Mr. Shamshuddin Mohammed (Caroni East): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. The matter I have to raise relates to the poisoning of the water system at the Longdenville Government School.

The school is approximately 100 years old and they still use the pulling of the chain to flush the toilet in the toilet system, demonstrative of the age and the antiquity of the institution and the facilities thereat.

On June 11, which was a Friday, five children:- Andy Soogrim, common entrance class; Shaun Bharat, common entrance class; Kishore Mungroo, Ian Goddard and Ian Fergus had to be rushed to the hospital. But before the Friday, from as early as Monday, there were indications that students, and even one or two of the teachers, were suffering bouts of nausea and headaches. They were rushed to the hospital on the Friday and kept there until the Sunday. One of the five students had to go back to the hospital for observation because of continuing ill-feeling.

My colleague the Member for Caroni Central and I were summoned to a meeting of the Parent Teachers' Association on Tuesday evening. Clearly, that fell out of the time in respect of which a Motion on the Adjournment would have qualified by virtue of the requirement of notice. When we went there, we met hundreds of parents, parents who were bitter, parents who were angry, who said that the security at the school left much to be desired. The whole school was in a dilapidated state and the toilet system in a hopeless condition. They certainly wanted something to be done in respect of the incident that occurred.

The principal of that school wrote the Permanent Secretary on June 21, and with the indulgence of the House, may I be permitted to quote this letter:

"Please be advised as follows regarding the Poisoning of the Water at the above named school which was made known on Friday June 11, 1993 . . ."

And in the letter, he said:

". . . by an anonymous telephone caller.

1. The school has been closed by the Ministry of Education, Couva until the water problem is resolved.
2. The County Medical Officer of Health, Couva, Dr. Harry Singh, has written the Ministry of Education advising that the water supply be made potable before resumption at school. I visited Dr. Singh who said that one of the tanks was contaminated with a poisonous substance and needs to be replaced.
3. Also too, I held discussions with Mr. Mc Millan, District Engineer Central of WASA who said that WASA workers cleaned and sanitized the

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tanks. However, it is not their responsibility to replace the defective tank or to renew the water lines.

4. I contacted Mr. Patrick De Four, Works Supervisor of the Chaguanas Division of the Ministry of Works. He said that his workers are doing a survey to identify what is to be done to rectify the water problem.

However, Sir, I wish to state quite categorically or unreservedly that the entire water system of the school—from the tank to the taps—must be renewed to ensure a safe water supply. Security and tank locks must also be provided.

The first and foremost duty of the principal is the physical safety of the children as mandated by the Education Act. Failure to provide a safe water supply as previously stated, I shall not hold myself responsible for any misdemeanor arising out of the water supply on the re-opening of school."

Those were the sentiments of the principal of that institution communicated to the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Education.

At the meeting we attended it was made quite clear that the issue is not the replacement of one tank, because they were advised by technical people that even though the tanks were cleaned out, there could be residue of poison remaining in the system and therefore the entire system had to be changed.

The Parent-Teacher Association further resolved that not a single child would go to that school unless something was done. They pointed out that on several occasions they had to embark on self-help projects in order to raise funds to correct the deficiencies of the school. They said they cannot do it any more. They said this was a responsibility of the Government, and when they first got in touch with the Minister—I do not know whether he was away or not—he said he wanted an opportunity to assess the situation to know what was taking place.

A message reached back to them that there was something to the effect that one tank would be given by somebody to the school. That has been unequivocally rejected by the parents of that institution. What they did was, to go and get people with the technical knowledge about replacing the system, and they have put up a figure of \$25,000 as being a sufficient amount to cover the expenses to replace the system. I endorse their feelings in this regard.

The Government is now providing, in my respectful view, redundant cleaners at these schools. I happen to be the secretary of a board of management, and in a school where there are three cleaners, there are three more coming from the

Government. Doing what? My people are sitting down so they say one week's pay or one fortnight's pay will be sufficient to take care of the problems at the Longdenville Government School. And there are provisions within the laws that we operate under, where funds can be transferred. It is a small sum. I would make the appeal to the hon. Minister for the Government to respond in a positive way to the problems that are now being encountered at this school.

They tell you clearly, it happened at Trinity; it happened at Mayaro R.C.; it is now Longdenville Government School; tomorrow it might be another school. There are 826 children at that school and they are not going to school, so the children are all being deprived. We are all concerned about the children, about the youths of the nation. They are being denied education at this time because they are hardened and they are resolved. But I think that if the Minister can tell us now that something positive will be done on Monday— we know what the financial constraints are, but this is an emergency situation.

I visited 19 schools in the Caroni East constituency—and I doubt there is another constituency that has so many primary schools—and the story is about leaking roofs, lack of security, broken fences, etc. There is need for us to try to do something about the situation.

So I make that plea today on behalf of the children of the Longdenville Government School. I make the plea on behalf of the parents and, indeed, for all school children and parents of Trinidad and Tobago, that something concrete and positive be done.

Today they demonstrated out there, just before the start of this meeting and talked about killing their children. We are killing the children. What are we going to get? What we call 'bahana'—excuse! That it does not have this money and that money in an emergency situation?

Hon. Member: Banana?

Mr. S. Mohammed: Banana? Bahana! That is a euphemism for excuse. We will build our own vernacular in this Parliament as we go along and have it as a compendium to the other documents that we have.

Madam Speaker, I make this urgent appeal on behalf of the people who live in that area and who send their children to that school; on behalf of the young students, and I trust that the hon. Minister will have some hope for the people of that area and for all school children in Trinidad and Tobago.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

5.20 p.m.

The Minister of Education (Hon. Augustus Ramreakersingh): Madam Speaker, I am grateful to the hon. Member for Caroni East for having raised the issue. I shall deal with it factually and realistically, without any emotionalism.

Before I get into the specific problem of the Longdenville Government School, may I briefly respond to the point made by the hon. Member about his visits to the schools in his constituency. He duly gave me a report. That report has been examined; our officers are checking and we are putting together our vacation repair programme. The funding still has to be sorted out. Last year, you would remember that we used the vacation period to undertake repairs on something between 80 and 90 schools. It is the ideal time to do sustained repairs. We have put a programme together. The extent of that programme will be dependant on available funding. The record, however, is that last year we handled more than 80 schools during the vacation.

The Longdenville Government School, like many primary schools in this country, is considerably older than most of us in this Parliament. It is something we are looking at. The Ministers of Finance, Works and Transport and I have been looking at it and trying to see what are the possible sources of funding for replacement and addition of schools in this country. Because, quite clearly, the money required cannot be met from recurrent revenue.

I think the Member for Caroni East gave a faithful chronology of the events. I, myself, was not here when it happened. First of all, security: There is a certain amount of security in our schools, but not all. I have said on several occasions that it is impossible for us to supply 24-hour security to the 600 schools in this country. It is an important issue, but if we were to supply 24-hour security for 600 schools, I might as well close the doors of the Ministry and the offices because we would have no money for anything else.

What we need to understand is that the question of vandalism in schools is a relatively new phenomenon over the last 10 years or so. It was an isolated phenomenon before. Therefore, security at that time was not a dominant concern. It has, of course, become more important. We have made, within the constraints of our resources, certain kinds of arrangements which, as I said, improve the situation, but do not solve the problem completely.

In the case of the Longdenville Government School, immediately as I returned and I was informed, arrangements were made for 24-hour security, especially in

the situation that existed, because we did not want any further tampering or any interference. That 24-hour guard is being handled by the MTS company.

It is easy to say that we want the problem solved now or action by Monday. It is a regrettable incident, quite clearly. I do not have the evidence to state who did it or why, but I think one can make the general point that persons who do that kind of thing must be certainly depraved. Sometimes I think, not just the society, but the world has become, what was described by Shakespeare as, "where men have lost their reason and turned to brutish beasts." But, the world is not fair. It is not as we would like it to be, but we simply have to make do with the world as it is.

School will not resume until we are certain that the danger is past and proper arrangements have been put in place. I think we need to look at it this way: A few days of school are being lost, but there is something on the other side. Do we take risks? In an incident like this, certain procedures need to be followed. In this case, samples of the water had to be taken and WASA took them; they were passed on to the Food and Drugs Division for testing, and those results took a few days. I see before me the report of the Food and Drugs Division. There are four tanks listed here and in one of them the results show 0.04 ppm malathion. In one of the tanks, evidence of some insecticide was found.

No real work could be done until we had the results of the tests, because you may be doing things and you do not know what you are doing. Subsequent to the test results being made known, WASA has cleaned and sanitized the system twice, and, as the letter from the principal indicates, the Chief Medical Officer has laid down certain conditions, quite correctly in my opinion, before resumption can take place. This week the Ministry of Works and Transport which is the agent of the Ministry of Education for the repair and maintenance of primary schools, started the survey on exactly what has to be done. So far, based on the results that one tank was contaminated, a new tank was purchased. I should say, both in the case of Trinity and this case, the corporate sector responded very quickly to get the materials so that I did not have to go through all kinds of bureaucracy.

The new tank is of the type which has a lock and is more secure. Indeed, in recent times, as we replace tanks in schools, we use the updated versions of tanks with locks. So that as soon as the Ministry of Works and Transport ascertains the extent of what has to be done—I understand from the hon. Member that certain technical persons may have advised the parents. I have no problem with that. In this case, the technical advisors of the Ministry of Education are the Ministry of

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Works and Transport and we must be guided by them. So I would be guided by their recommendations.

5.30 p.m.

As soon as the requirements are made known to us, we shall proceed on the work. Not only what has to be changed will be changed, but more than that, I myself will insist that after the work is completed, we will run the water for some days to make sure, trading off a few days loss of school for the safety of the children. You can always make up a few days loss at school; you cannot make up the other days if something else happens to you.

Madam Speaker, we ourselves have been concerned about the question of water tanks in schools. A few days ago one of my senior officers asked our technical people to design a new kind of security system for tanks; and when that design is done, we shall implement that. I do not think any single kind of tank or design may fit every single school because there are different types of tanks, locations, terrain and so on. It goes beyond the single school that we need to look at as regards the security of these tanks.

Madam Speaker, I am not in a position, and I will not give an exact date for the resumption because I do not know. I would be advised by the Ministry of Works and Transport. They will undertake the work, and when the authorities are satisfied that it is safe, school will resume. I do not want to come here and tell you that on Wednesday or Thursday school will resume. I do not know, it depends on what has to be done by the Ministry of Works and Transport; we will seek to have it done as quickly as possible. That is about the most I can say.

Mr. Mohammed: Madam Speaker, I have drawn to the attention of the House the question of the replacement of the single tank that contains this deadly insecticide malathion. What the parents and the teachers are contending—and it is included in the letter which I read to the honourable House, is that "the entire water system of the school, from the tank to the taps, must be renewed". The Minister has made it clear to this House that whatever the Ministry of Works and Transport advises him to do, he will proceed to so do.

I am not against that, but would he open the door to some form of consultation with representatives of the PTA on this question? Because they are adamant that they are not going to send their children to school until the entire system—not one tank—is changed. They have said, and they have been advised, that residue of that poison could very well remain in some of the pipes that are used there. So, I ask the Minister to take that into account in finalizing his decision to implement the

repairs. He says whatever is to be done will be done. We need the school to be opened, so if it needs the \$25,000 system—one fortnight's pay from those unproductive projects that are going on, with cleaners in the schools—

Hon. A. Ramerkersingh: Madam Speaker, I think I was very careful to say that the Ministry of Works and Transport will make its recommendations. I do not know what the recommendations will be or the extent of the repairs that have to be done, but obviously we would examine it, talk, and try to get the thing done. I do not want to take any *a priori* positions; I prefer to be guided by the evidence and the recommendations.

May I say for the record, Madam Speaker, that the Ministry of Education does not have additional cleaners in any schools. That is part of an unemployment relief programme and the moneys do not come from the Ministry of Education. So, it is not a simple thing of...*[Interruption]*. I am sure the Member for Couva North knows something about Government expenditure.

Madam Speaker: Is the Member for Oropouche dealing with his Motion today?

Mr. Sudama: Madam Speaker, I have to request that this Motion be deferred to the following week because of the absence of the Minister of Health.

Scotts Road & Penal Rock Road (Repairs to)

Mr. Sahid Hosein (*Siparia*): Madam Speaker, the matter which I wish to bring to the attention of the House deals with the refusal and/or inability of the Ministry of Works and Transport to effectively repair Scotts Road, Penal Rock Road and the general unacceptable condition of the roadways of this country.

Madam Speaker: That is a matter that was deferred some time ago.

Mr. S. Hosein: Yes, Madam Speaker. This matter was raised in this House previously, by way of a question about one year ago. One would have thought, given the time that has elapsed, that the matter would have been addressed and I would not have had to bring this matter as a Motion on the Adjournment.

We seem to be wittingly, or unwittingly, setting the stage for social unrest in this country. In the case of Scotts Road, this has been in this deplorable condition for the past three years. Approximately three years ago, WASA excavated part of the roadway to lay water mains, and to this day, very little has been done. When I raised the matter initially, I was told that the Ministry of Works and Transport was awaiting funds from WASA to repair Scotts Road.

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I was subsequently informed that WASA had released part of the total sum in order for repairs to be done. But sad to say, most of the funds that were released for the repair of Scotts Road was diverted to repair another road. So we have a situation where for the past three years, as I indicated, people have had to use this road, a travelling service, which is in the most deplorable condition. One seriously has to wonder, when one looks at the condition of that road—and other roads generally—whether the Government is not in league with the spare parts dealers. It sounds far-fetched, but one seriously has to consider that.

Mind you, when WASA excavated the road, they excavated only a part of it. One would have expected that the other part of the road that was the responsibility of the Ministry of Works and Transport would have been repaired. In addition, there were parts of Scotts Road that were not excavated, virtually in the same condition as the part that has been excavated. One wonders if the excuse that the Ministry of Works and Transport is waiting for money from WASA really holds good.

One has the Penal Rock Road which is a very extensive road which takes people into Moruga, Princes Town and is very heavily travelled. Again, there is a situation with that road where there has been no routine maintenance, except for clearing of roadside drains. Virtually no maintenance as to restoring the surface or filling the potholes as the case might be, has been carried out for the longest while.

I have tried at every level one can imagine—at the local office of the Ministry of Works and Transport; I have even spoken to the Minister—all to no avail. One has to look at this in the context of the fact that the Government owns a significant amount of lands on which there are large deposits of road-building materials. We on this side have been saying, over and over, given that fact, it is hard to reconcile oneself with the condition of the roadways in this country.

I pose two questions to the Minister of Works and Transport this afternoon: Given the fact that the state owns so many quarries, and seeing that the Minister claims not to have the resources to adequately mine these materials, has he considered giving out management contracts to the private sector to win these materials? Secondly, has he looked at the concept of production sharing where you give the quarry to somebody and you tell them produce this amount and of that produced, so much for the state? It seems to me, that if you do not have money that is the way to go.

5.40 p.m.

If you take the road by itself, that is no big deal. But when you take all the other pressures that the ordinary citizen has to undergo, the fact that WASA has become so insensitive that it is now charging people for having pumps on their lines in an area where they do not get water, these pressures seem insurmountable, and unbearable by the people. I hope that the Minister would tell me here today that something will be done, after three years, to address the problem.

I thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

The Minister of Works and Transport (Hon. Colm Imbert): Madam Speaker, before I answer the specific question, I think it is necessary to give an overview of the road sector in the country generally. The management of the road sector is shared by several government agencies. The Ministry of Works and Transport is responsible for approximately 2200 kilometres of main and secondary roads and bridges. The Tobago House of Assembly is responsible for 700 kilometres. There are 14 municipal corporations with local roads in their respective areas; approximately 4,000 kilometres. In the cities of Port of Spain, San Fernando, the boroughs of Arima, Point Fortin and Chaguanas, there are approximately 900 kilometres.

During the period of national economic contraction which followed the collapse of oil prices in 1982, the road sector suffered a serious deterioration due to a lack of adequate resources. Many of the primary and secondary roads have also been developed incrementally and without formal designs. As a result, many of these roads suffer from fundamental deficiencies with regard to subsoil drainage, alignment and sub-base. Many roads run along the crests of ridges and are, therefore, subject to frequent landslips, the repair of which consumes a major portion of limited maintenance budgets.

Some roads have an inadequate sub-base or pavement to support existing traffic. Lack of adequate drainage, particularly in low lying areas, is a major cause of pavement failure. Although, most of the main and secondary roads throughout the country have been paved, there has not been an adequate level of periodic maintenance with the result that much of the system is permeable and deteriorating rapidly.

Mr. Sudama: When are we going to reach crossroads?

Hon. C. Imbert: Shortly. It is in this context that the condition of Scotts Road and Penal Rock Road must be fixed. The organizational structure and the

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size of the ministry that existed several years ago in the early 1960s was unable to fulfil the demands placed on it. The then Government recognizing this, employed in 1963 a management consulting firm to undertake a study of the capabilities of the Ministry of Works and Transport. This study was submitted in 1964. At that time, the consultants rejected the idea of reintroducing district engineers to the system of administration because, they felt, it was difficult to get qualified engineers in the country who would have the training and experience in management and industrial relations. For the benefit of the Members on the other side, I am dealing with the part of the Motion which reads:

"The general unacceptable condition of the roadways of this country. " I have to put the whole Motion in perspective. The first part of the Motion deals with the refusal or inability of the ministry to effectively repair Scotts Road, and "the general and acceptable conditions of the roadways in this country." So I have to address the Motion.

The absence of engineers in the district for over a period of 25 years resulted in a gradual deterioration in the performance and output of the Ministry of Works and Transport. The fact that there were no suitably qualified and experienced technical officers in the district meant that desirable levels of planning, monitoring and evaluation were absent. Although the pool of engineers at the head office may have been used to assist in various areas, they were mainly occupied with development projects.

Two or three years ago the use of district engineers was reintroduced to this country and there has been a noticeable improvement in the maintenance of the road system generally. The National Transportation Study in 1984 stated that in terms of surface conditions of the roads in the country only 25 per cent was rated as good, 65 per cent as fair and 10 per cent as poor. In an assessment of the roads in 1990, some six years later, the roads in the country were rated as 25 per cent good, 40 per cent fair, 25 per cent poor, and 10 per cent critical. Therefore, over the six-year period, 1984 to 1990, there was a marked deterioration in the condition of several roads. It is accepted that a significant percentage of the road system is in need of rehabilitation.

Before I go to Scotts Road, I wish to inform this honourable House of the tremendous difficulties that the Ministry of Works and Transport has with regard to the repair of roads, particularly those roads that are damaged by the Water and Sewerage Authority. At the present time the total amount owing to the Ministry of Works and Transport by the Water and Sewerage Authority, for roads damaged or

pipe-laying operations and repairs of leaks is some \$4.4 million. I will give you a description of some of the roads. The Guanapo Southern Road, Toco Road, South Trunk Road, Siparia Road, Dumfries Road, Bon Aventure Road, Lothians Roads, Tabaquite/Rio Claro Road, Tumpuna Road, Caroni North Bank Road. The Water and Sewerage Authority at this point is unable to provide adequate funding.

5.50 p.m.

In 1990, Scotts Road was classified as one of the better roads in St. Patrick having a pavement condition index value of around 60 which is rated as being in good condition. The pavement condition index (pci) is a subjective condition index formulated from an analysis of a combination of pavement distress. A pavement condition index rating of 100 gives an excellent road condition and a pavement condition index rating of 10 indicates the road has failed.

In the middle of 1990 the Water and Sewerage Authority in an effort to improve the water situation in the area laid 800 metres of pipe in the carriageway of Scotts Road, thereby damaging in excess of 1.5 metres of pavement. Since the trenches were not properly compacted, the roadway suffered loss in lateral support, and eventually by 1992 this section of road was rated to be in critical condition, (pci. 20). An estimate for restoration was submitted to the Water and Sewerage Authority early in 1991 in the sum of \$319,000 and around November 1991, the amount of \$190,000 was received.

However, with the consent of the Water and Sewerage Authority, this release was applied to the damaged Siparia Road, which, if my memory does not fail me, is either extremely close to or in the constituency of the Member for Siparia. It is a main road with an average daily traffic of 4,221 or nearly five times as much traffic as Scotts Road. It was therefore considered a greater priority to repair Siparia Road instead of Scotts Road.

In July, 1992 a further release of \$129,000 was received and work commenced on Scotts Road. To date, 80 per cent of WASA excavated area has been repaired with blue limestone metal and the ministry is awaiting the final reimbursement from the Water and Sewerage Authority of approximately \$190,000 to complete the restoration inclusive of paving.

To respond to the particular point raised by the Member for Siparia, while the ministry has access to quarries and granular aggregate material, the major cost in this work is the paving with bituminous asphalt concrete, which is an extremely expensive product. The Ministry of Works and Transport does not produce it; it is

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produced by Petrotrin and we have to pay for it. So, regrettably, until funds are released—

Mr. Hosein: The Minister has indicated that Scotts Road is approximately— if my memory serves me right—5.5 km. long. He said that WASA excavated approximately 1.5 km. or 1 km. thereof. What is the ministry doing about the other 4 km? This is the point I was making. Not only the section that WASA dug up is affected, but the entire roadway is in a terrible condition. The point I also made is that apart from asphaltic bitumen there are materials such as oil, sand and pitch. The response is totally unacceptable.

Hon. C. Imbert: Madam Speaker, I hope I will get injury time.

To deal with that specific point, routine maintenance works were carried out on Scotts Road in 1991, 1992 and will continue in 1993. Although the Member continually says that the Ministry of Works and Transport is not working, it is doing work on Scotts Road. It is doing drainage and patching work. As a matter of fact, in 1992, 1,571 sq. metres of patching work was done on Scotts Road.

The Member for Siparia could come here every Friday and say that nothing is being done on Scotts Road, but these are the records. I have been to Scotts Road and this work has been done.

Hon. Member: Have you ever visited the road?

Hon. C. Imbert: Yes. I have visited the road.

The total amount spent on the road in 1991 and 1992 was \$135,000.00.

Let me move now to Penal Rock Road. This is a secondary road within St. Patrick. It is approximately 13 km. long. For the information of the Member for Naparima, it has a pavement width of 6 metres.

Mr. S. Panday: The Minister is wrong. Penal Rock Road is 17 miles long.

Hon. C. Imbert: As I said, it has a pavement width of 6 metres and is subjected to an average daily traffic of 1,423 of which 20 per cent is trucks and 10 per cent is wheeled tractors with trailers.

The Ministry of Works and Transport has recognized that this road is one of the more important roads in the St. Patrick district. It is used extensively by the oilfields and farmers. Since 1987 the district has carried out extensive maintenance activities between the zero and 5 mile mark. Yet, the Member for Siparia would indicate that nothing has been done.

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To date, as a direct consequence of these activities, the condition of Penal Rock Road up to the 5 mile mark can be deemed as fair, with a pavement condition index rating of 55.

I shall now go to the actual expenditure on Penal Rock Road. Between 1991 and 1992, a sum of \$750,000 was spent on Penal Rock Road. The ministry is continuing with the limited resources available to it—

Mr. Hosein: Would the Minister give way?

Hon. C. Imbert: No! Wait until I am finished.

The ministry is continuing with the limited resources available to it to maintain the roads of this country which I have agreed are not in good condition. We are presently negotiating with the Inter American Development Bank, the European Development Fund and the World Bank for loans totalling TT \$600 million and expect disbursements to begin some time in 1995, when we would do a comprehensive rehabilitation of every road in this country.

Thank you.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 6:00 p.m.

WRITTEN ANSWER TO QUESTION

Local Government Bodies (Vehicles attached to)

220. Mr. Mohammed Haniff (*Princes Town*) asked the Hon. Minister of Local Government and Minister in the Ministry of Finance:

Would the Minister state:

- (a) How many vehicles and heavy equipment are attached to each of the local government bodies?
- (b) How many of these vehicles/equipment passed inspection for the years 1991, 1992 and 1993 to date?
- (c) How many of these vehicles/equipment were licensed for the years, 1991, 1992 and 1993 to date?

Written Answer To Question
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Pursuant to his reply to question No. 220 earlier in the proceedings the Minister of Local Government and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. K. Valley) caused to be circulated to Members of the House the following breakdown:

CORPORATION	No. of Uninspected/Unlicensed Vehicles in Use
Port of Spain	8
San Fernando	20
Point Fortin	1
Arima	21
Chaguanas	13
Diego Martin	0
San Juan/Laventille	2
Tunapuna/Piarco	12
Sangre Grande	4
Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo	19
Mayaro/Rio Claro	19
Penal/Debe	11
Princes Town	9
Siparia	7
TOTAL	146