

*Leave of Absence*

*Friday, February 18, 1994*

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

*Friday, February 18, 1994*

The House met at 1.38 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 to the Member for Toco/Manzanilla (Mr. Andrew Casimire).

**ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS**

**Truck-borne Water Supply  
(Deliveries)**

**50. Mr. Sahid Hosein** (*Siparia*) asked the Minister of Works and Transport and Minister of Local Government:

Will the Minister indicate how soon the truck-borne delivery of water by local government authorities will begin?

**The Minister of Works and Transport and Minister of Local Government (Hon. Colm Imbert):** Madam Speaker, the Ministry of Local Government is at present reviewing the current system of awarding tenders for water distribution with a view to streamlining the system and reducing the time required for the award of tenders.

The Ministry of Local Government has submitted the necessary documentation to the Director of Contracts to commence the tendering process relevant to the delivery of truck-borne water. At present, the time span between the invitation of tenders and the actual award of contracts for distribution of truck-borne water is four to six weeks.

The Ministry of Local Government is aware that the dry season is with us and is liaising with the Director of Contracts to ensure that distribution of truck-borne water begins no later than March 16, 1994.

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

**Local Government Bodies  
(Allocations)**

**51. (a)** Is the Minister of Works and Transport and Local Government aware that most, if not all, local government bodies will begin 1994 with

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significant deficits in their goods and services allocation, such deficits being caused by unpaid debts to suppliers being brought over from the 1993 accounts?

- (b) If the Minister is so aware, will he state what steps he is taking to ensure that these bodies will still be able to provide basic services, especially maintenance of roadways, during 1994 in spite of the severe curtailment?
- (c) Is the Minister and his Government prepared to take steps to "wipe off" the 1993 arrears of these bodies, so that funds allocated for 1994 can actually be used for the purposes indicated in the 1994 *Draft Estimates*?

**Local Government Bodies  
(Wages)**

- 52.** (a) Will the Minister of Works and Transport and Minister of Local Government indicate to this House how he intends to deal with the shortfall in wages to local government bodies?
- (b) If it is the intention of his ministry to reduce the work force at local government bodies, will he indicate to this House how this is going to be effected and how many persons are going to be affected?

**The Minister of Works and Transport and Minister of Local Government (Hon. Colm Imbert):** Madam Speaker, I have spoken with the Member for Siparia and I respectfully request that these questions be deferred for a period of two weeks.

*Questions, by leave, deferred.*

**Princes Town Hospital**

- 54. Mr. Mohammed Haniff** (*Princes Town*) asked the Minister of Health:

Would the Minister state:

- (a) What is the nature of works being undertaken at the Princes Town Hospital?
- (b) What is the estimated cost of the proposed works?
- (c) When is the Hospital scheduled for reopening?

**The Minister of Health (Hon. John Eckstein):** Madam Speaker, the undermentioned works are being undertaken:

The main building—which is a wooden structure:

- (i) Removal and replacement of all rotted timber in interior wall panels separating wards, external walls, door frames, doors and floor;
- (ii) Repairing existing roof, which involves changing corroded galvanized iron roof sheets where necessary, fixing leaks, removing and replacing all rotted timber in roof framing and ceiling boards;
- (iii) Repairing all plumbing where necessary;
- (iv) Checking and upgrading electrical system as necessary to comply with the standards set by the Electrical Inspectorate.
- (v) Performing subterranean termite treatment for the main building and fumigating floor against termites;
- (vi) Refurbishing of all joinery in the kitchen;
- (vii) Repainting of entire building including the roof.

The first set of works refers to the main buildings.

Utility buildings located on the compound and ancillary works:

- (i) Demolishing all outside utility buildings, namely; sewing room, laundry, drying and generator rooms, pharmacy stores and disused toilet block;
- (ii) Construction of one new single-storey building, 20m x 6m, to accommodate the laundry, sewing room, general stores, pharmacy stores and doctors' rest room;
- (iii) Providing car park facilities and access to the new building as well as landscaping of the front area;
- (iv) Demolishing of the protective concrete barrier surrounding the diesel tank, relocating the tank along the perimeter fence and reconstructing the concrete barrier;
- (v) Reconstructing the generator room along the perimeter fence;
- (vi) Relocating the electrical panel linking the hospital to the health centre from one of the utility buildings referred to at (i).

The estimated cost of the proposed works is TT\$600,000.

Construction works are scheduled to be completed by the end of February, 1994, following which the hospital will be reopened.

**Mr. Haniff:** A supplementary question, Madam Speaker. Can the hon. Minister inform this House whether there are any plans to close down the Princes Town Hospital?

**Hon. J. Eckstein:** Madam Speaker, there are no immediate plans to close down the Princes Town Hospital, but we are looking into the rationalization of all our hospital services and everything is being looked into as part of that rationalization exercise.

**1.45 p.m.**

#### **PRIME MINISTER'S CAR AND HOUSE**

**The Prime Minister (Hon. Patrick Manning):** Madam Speaker, in recent times a number of carefully crafted newspaper articles relating to my private transactions have been appearing in the media. In the light of these unfortunate developments, which deliberately seek to give the impression that the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago is involved in some form of wrongdoing, I crave your indulgence today to present facts, not only for the parliamentary record, but also for the benefit of the wider national community who might have been exposed to the calculated mischief of others.

I refer, firstly, to an article which appeared on the front page of the *TNT Mirror* newspaper of Friday, February 11, 1994. This particular article alleges that in 1984, I sold a motor car PAN-1010, a Toyota Royal Salon, to one Nankissoon Boodram, also known as Dole Chadee.

This allegation is totally false, since I do not know the man, and I categorically state that I have never transacted any business whatsoever with him. The fact that he might have obtained a vehicle which I once owned has nothing whatsoever to do with me.

The facts are that I purchased a Toyota Royal Salon car on November 21, 1983, but one month later, on December 17, 1983, when the Minister of Finance in a budget speech raised the price of premium gasoline from \$0.28 to \$0.55 per litre, I decided to sell the car and replace it with a smaller one, a Mazda 626, PAN-7070; it was a four cylinder car. The sale was effected through purchase by one Sankie Subance, a known car dealer from Cocoyea Village where I was born and grew up.

Indeed, in a recent newspaper article, the dealer confirmed that he did purchase the vehicle from me and later resold it to Mr. Boodram at a substantial profit.

With respect to the transfer of the car, I signed a transfer form to the car dealer on receipt of payment. I sold the car on January 24, 1984, but the recorded transfer to the new owner apparently did not take place until February 7, 1984. The dealer, being the new owner, could have sold it to anyone subsequently. The system which existed at the time for transferring ownership of a motor vehicle permitted this action. This system, however, has recently been changed.

A number of other totally unfounded allegations—and wild speculations—were made in the article with respect to my use of motor vehicles other than my own. These speculations and innuendoes are totally baseless since in the said and subsequent period I have always retained ownership and use of a motor vehicle.

It is interesting to note that the first time I heard of this matter in this context was in this very Parliament on Friday, February 4, during the debate on the Regional Health Authorities Bill when the Member for Couva South had this to say to me and I quote from *Hansard*:

"Do you want me to show you some certified copies of motor cars? Do you want me to tell you about the motor cars you used and who bought them?" One week later "Manning's Deal with Dole Chadee" was the lead story of the *TNT Friday Mirror*.

It is in this disturbing context that Members must view an article which was carried subsequently in the *Sunday Express* of February 13, 1994. This article alleges that licensing officials could give no explanation for the fact that there are no records of previous ownership of PAN-1010 prior to March 20, 1992, and that checks at the Licensing Office showed that there are no card or computer records for my other cars, PAS-4040 and PAN-7070.

Nothing is further from the truth, since subsequent to the publication in the *Express*, copies of the said documents have been obtained from the Licensing Department where the records exist—and just for the record, these are the copies. Clearly, the intent here was to give the impression that a person or persons unknown had surreptitiously removed the said records for whatever reason.

It is also interesting to note that Mr. Sankie Subance, the car dealer to whom the car was sold has, in the *Trinidad Guardian* of Saturday, February 12, identified Mr. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj as his attorney. Clearly, therefore, the Member for Couva South would have been aware of all the facts surrounding this matter when he made his comment in Parliament on Friday, February 4, 1994.

It is against this background that I revisited another lead article on the front page of the *TNT Sunday Mirror* of January 30, 1994, one week before the Member

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for Couva South had made his comments in the Parliament and two weeks before the erroneous motor car story. The article to which I refer on this occasion dealt with purported transactions with respect to the sale of my family's dwelling house at Union Park in Marabella.

Again, this article contrived, by use of innuendo and misinformation, to link me to persons with whom I have had no business dealings whatsoever. It alleges that my home was sold to one Paul Mantoor. It is not coincidental that the name "Mantoor" appears in the report of the Scott Commission of Inquiry into Drugs—this is the *Scott Drug Report*—or that Paul Mansoor is the name of a convicted drug trafficker.

Contrary to what has been reported in that article, my house has not been sold to any person bearing the name "Mantoor" or "Mansoor." For the benefit of hon. Members, my house, which has been on the market for over a year, was officially valued at \$395,000—I have a copy of the valuation if Members wish to see it. It has been up for sale through a real estate dealer and a transaction is currently being processed to effect a sale at a price of \$330,000.

Try as I might, with the best will in the world, given all the facts as presented here this afternoon to this honourable House, one cannot but come to the inescapable conclusion that a deliberate attempt is being made to tarnish the character and sully the good name of the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago.

It is quite clear that there are those who believe that in politics anything goes. But, in a small country such as ours, struggling as we are against the evil forces of the international drug trade, the national community would be well advised to take careful note of who are the likely beneficiaries of the orchestrated conspiracies which I have outlined.

**1.55 p.m.**

When unsavoury elements in the national community seek to link the Prime Minister of the country to their own shady dealings, then the country must sit up and take note. Clearly, an attempt is being made to destabilize the country.

This strategy to discredit key individuals and institutions is a well worn ploy of the international drug trade. In this instance, I have been targeted. But from information available to me as Prime Minister, this is only the beginning.

I have been in public life as a Member of this honourable House for 23 years and it is with some sorrow and disgust that I feel constrained to stand up here to deal with this matter as I have done. It may very well be a fitting testimony to the times in which we live.

Recently, I have had occasion to say in Tobago that "All that is required for evil to prevail is for good men to do nothing." Madam Speaker, the Lord is my Shepherd. I repeat, "the Lord is my Shepherd" and as leader of this country, I am determined to face the challenges of the times in defence of my own good name and in the interest of the people of Trinidad and Tobago who elected me to serve them.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Mr. B. Panday:** Madam Speaker, on a point of information. Would the hon. Prime Minister, having regard to what he has just said, but more importantly, having regard to what he has failed to say, not agree that a full-scale inquiry should be held into the extent of the involvement of the Prime Minister and other Members of his Cabinet with persons known to be connected with the illicit drug trade?

**Mr. A.N.R. Robinson:** Madam Speaker, this is a matter, as must be appreciated, of profound importance. The Prime Minister is saying that deliberate attempts are being made to smear his character. It seems he is insinuating that possibly one or two Members of this House are involved. I think this matter calls for an independent inquiry. The conscience of the country cannot be at rest until this matter is cleared up.

#### ORDER OF BUSINESS

**The Minister of Trade and Tourism and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley):** Madam Speaker, I beg to move that the item "Private Business Bills Second Reading at page 9 of the Order Paper be considered at this time before "Public Business".

*Question put and agreed to.*

#### MOUNT BETHEL NATIONAL SPIRITUAL BAPTIST ASSEMBLY (INC'N) BILL

**Mr. Hedwige Bereaux (La Brea):** Madam Speaker, I beg to move,

That a Bill for the incorporation of the Mount Bethel National Spiritual Baptist Assembly of Trinidad and Tobago and for matters incidental thereto, be now read a second time.

*Question proposed.*

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Bill accordingly read a second time.*

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

*House in committee.*

*Clauses 1 to 9 ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

*Preamble ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

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

*House resumed.*

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

**The Minister of Trade and Tourism and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley):** Madam Speaker, I beg to move, that the House now consider the Bill second reading rather than the Motion listed at page three of the Order Paper.

*Question put and agreed to.*

#### MAXI-TAXI (AMDT.) BILL

[SECOND DAY]

*Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question [January 21, 1994]:*

That the Bill be now read a second time.

*Question again proposed.*

**Dr. Rupert Griffith (Arima):** Madam Speaker, I rise to support the Bill before us, presented by my colleague the Member for Diego Martin East, the Minister of Works and Transport and Minister of Local Government.

This Bill, which I must say was most eloquently presented and adumbrated by my colleague, sought to emphasize among other things, four main issues.

Firstly, the owner/operator issue—clause 4—which would extend the definition of permit to include "a permit to own and operate a maxi-taxi issued prior to the commencement of the Maxi-Taxi (Amdt.) Act, 1993." This is necessary since the Bill proposes to abolish the issuance of permits to own and operate maxi-taxis, and to substitute a system of registration of maxi-taxi owners together with the issuance of permits to operate maxi-taxis.

**2.05 p.m.**

Under owner/operator issues, by clause 5 the authority would be required to compile and maintain a register of maxi-taxi owners; the holders of permits to



own and operate maxi-taxis would, without application, be entitled to be registered. Persons seeking to own a maxi-taxi after the passing of the Bill would need to apply for registration on the prescribed form, and to attach a certificate of good character. They would also be required to be the holder of a taxi-driver's licence and badge and a permit to operate maxi-taxis.

Under owner/operator issues, it also includes that no person would, after the passing of the Bill, be allowed to operate a maxi-taxi without a permit to do so. Holders of valid permits to own and operate a maxi-taxi would be deemed to be holders of valid permits to operate a maxi-taxi. Applications for permits to operate a maxi-taxi would need to be on the prescribed form with a certificate of good character attached thereto, and applicants would be required to hold a taxi-driver's licence and badge and a Class IV driver's permit, if the maxi-taxi is a heavy motor vehicle; that refers to those 13 to 25 seaters.

Under owner/operator issues, clause 8 would make it an offence for a person to operate a maxi-taxi without a valid permit to do so. It would also be an offence for an owner of a maxi-taxi to employ or allow a person not being the holder of a valid permit to operate a maxi-taxi. The maximum penalty for this offence is \$5,000.

The second issue this Bill seeks to address is the status of the 13 to 25 seater maxi-taxis. It seeks the following:

- (a) The applicants would be required to have a certificate of good character.
- (b) Applicants would be required to hold a taxi-driver's licence and badge and a Class IV driver's permit for the maxi.

The third issue has to do with penalties for breaking any of the provisions of the Bill. It is an offence for a person to operate a maxi-taxi without a valid permit to do so, and for an owner of a maxi-taxi to allow or employ a person not being the holder of a valid permit to operate the maxi-taxi. The maximum penalty for the offence is a fine of \$5,000.

The fourth issue of the Bill deals with what appears to be the most contentious issue to those on the opposite side; that is, the prohibition of the use of electronic equipment.

Clause 9 would prohibit the use of televisions, videos, radios, tape decks, compact disc players, amplifiers, equalizers, speakers or other electrical or electronic equipment, for the purpose of playing music or other electronically

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transmitted sounds in maxi-taxis. The contravention of these provisions would constitute an offence punishable by a fine of \$5,000.

Those are the four issues of the Bill. Members opposite appeared to take serious objections regarding the restricted use of electrical equipment. My good Friend the Member for Couva North concurred that he has no problem with the control of noise pollution, but he does not agree that if it cannot be controlled, it should be banned. He sees this as a first step towards a vicious dictatorship. This perception really boggles the mind, but one is not surprised.

The Member for Couva North went on to say that most people were saying to him that he should support the ban on loud music, but he should not agree to ban radios. In fact, he has concluded that TV, tape decks and the other electronics other than the radio, should be prohibited, but not radios.

Given today's electronic technology, radios and miniature speakers are capable, as was vividly shown by the Member for Diego Martin East, of generating loud noises that are deafening to one's ears. How is this to be controlled? Can the Member for Couva North say? He suggested that only speakers capable of certain decibel levels should be allowed to be installed in maxi-taxis. How would this be monitored? He has failed to say that.

Who is to ensure that once the vehicle is licensed, owners/drivers will not tamper with the speakers or replace them with speakers capable of putting out high decibels. Saying that one has to monitor the sound system, where and when will the evaluation take place? Would this be done for every maxi-taxi? Would this not be cumbersome in terms of the expertise and the technology required to effectively monitor the system? How would this be done?

The Member for Couva North said that there would be a need for more traffic wardens to monitor the loud music, and that they should have the power to order maxi-taxis down to the Licensing Authority. Can you envisage a little warden somewhere perhaps in the East/West Corridor or in deep South ordering a maxi-taxi filled with passengers to go down to the Licensing Authority so that the sound system could be monitored? Let us get serious!

How would the introduction of traffic wardens establish effective control of loud music on over 4,500 licensed maxi-taxis in Trinidad and Tobago? This would only lead to a cat and mouse game between maxi-taxi drivers, owner/operators and the wardens. When the wardens are in the area, obviously the maxi-taxi drivers would turn down the volume. Further, if fate has it that a maxi-taxi driver is found guilty, he is charged and refuses to pay the fine, would this not

clog up the already over-burdened courts? Can you imagine that? I guess the Member for Couva South will appreciate that.

**2.15 p.m.**

The Member for Couva North further stated that maxis with loud music, pulling up at schools to attract students, should be pulled in and charged. How is this to be done? Will we also have traffic wardens posted at all the schools? If so, would not the maxi-taxi drivers know which schools the wardens are placed at and make the necessary alterations and adjustments? Obviously this would happen, so to suggest that the maxis pulling up at schools should be charged by the traffic wardens, to me is a frivolous suggestion. I see the Member for Couva North is not here, but I take it that the message will be carried.

The Member for Couva North also wants a joint select committee on the matter. What is the joint select committee to do? Has he said? Then he says to allow the maxi-taxis the use of radios for six months, and, if the authorities cannot monitor the radios after six months, he would swallow his pride and support the Bill.

**Hon. Member:** What pride?

**Dr. R. Griffith:** The *Hansard* records are there.

Madam Speaker, as you very well know, the problem is not only loud music in the maxi-taxis, but also one of lewd lyrics being played in dub and calypso music. Also, there is no way the authorities will be able, totally, to control the volume of radios as suggested by the Member for Couva North. It is for this reason I support the total ban of music in maxi-taxis.

I agree with the Member for Couva North that radios are important for information, news, and, as he suggested, cricket. Maxi-taxi drivers do not use news to attract passengers. It is solid dub and lewd calypsoes. They play the loud music to attract the passenger, particularly those of school age.

I do not believe that waiting for six months to field-test whether maxi-taxis are complying with the provisions of the Bill will have any significant benefit. I believe what would happen in the interim is the continued decline in morality particularly in the young school-aged children, the continued damaging of their hearing—because this music, as we indicated, is played at tremendously loud levels—and a continued high level of accidents involving maxi-taxis. This is the price we would have to pay if we allow six months for monitoring that system. That is too high a price for the nation to pay.

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It was only last year that I had to visit a family in my constituency whose son, who had just passed Common Entrance, and was attending North Eastern College, was involved in a maxi-taxi accident in the Wallerfield area. I was very traumatized to see the grief of the family during the time of bereavement. I was told that loud music was still blasting while the people of the area were pulling the mangled bodies from the maxi-taxi. How many more must die before we put a Bill in place to stop the carnage on the roads by the maxi-taxis?

The Member for Diego Martin East gave a very vivid description of the effect of noise on the maxi-taxi driver. He referred to the effects on the driver's hearing and on his manual dexterity. I believe that there is a high correlation between loud noise and the frequency of accidents between maxi-taxis.

I just want to record the number accidents of maxi-taxis for the period 1992 to 1994. There were approximately 1,938 accidents with maxi-taxis in 1992. Non-injuries were 1,725; fatal were 10 and serious injuries were 203. The number of accidents in 1993 was approximately 2,029. The number of fatal road traffic accidents in 1993 was 18. The number of fatal road traffic accidents involving maxi-taxis for 1994 to date, is two. Two people have already died for 1994 and that is only reported maxi-taxi accidents.

These days people are being encouraged, on television, to write their MPs about all sorts of issues—write your MP and complain. I received several letters, many of them concerning the maxi-taxi issue. I just want to read one of these letters for the record to emphasize the points. It is addressed to the Member of Parliament for Arima. I received it on February 2, 1994. I would like, with your permission, to read it into the record. It states:

"The drivers need to concentrate on driving, especially as competition is very keen and, in many instances, the speed limit is ignored. Should an adult passenger suggest that the driver lessen the speed, very often the driver stops and asks the passenger to leave."

It does not matter where that happens, the driver would stop and ask the passenger to leave.

"The type of music played most of the time does not assist concentration on driving. Therefore, must we not do everything possible to ensure the safety of passengers?"

That is the question the constituent is asking. The second paragraph says:

"There are maxi-taxis which show blue movies. On one occasion I travelled by a maxi-taxi from Broadway, Port of Spain to Arima, around

midday when students on the morning shift were going home. The show depicted a bedroom scene with nothing left to the imagination. Sexual activity does not assist, but rather hinders students at both primary and secondary levels. The blue movies arouse emotions which the students endeavour to emulate. Since most of our schools are co-educational, many students have difficulty concentrating on the subjects on the curriculum after viewing blue movies".

This is being done at midday.

"As young people grow up, they should be given positive and prudent sex education".

And he went on to say how this is done. I move on to paragraph three, which says:

"We spend millions of dollars on education and one of the important and compulsory subjects in the 'O' Level, CXC and National Examination is English, yet every morning for at least one hour between Arima and Port of Spain and on afternoons, the students using maxi-taxis are bombarded with dub music which does not assist their knowledge in English."

### **2.25 p.m.**

"Moreover many of our songs are crude and vulgar. Do we feed them dub, then expect them to write a proper letter applying for a job?"

Many of our local songs, with special reference to calypsos, ought not to be on the national air waves".

So when we talk about retaining radios we are still going to have the lewd songs on our nation's air waves.

"Young people arrive at the opinion that if they are played on the air, they are all right."

The constituent is asking, is vulgarism to be our standard of culture? If the radio stations refuse to use songs which bear vulgar emphasis, our calypsonians and dub artistes would clean up the language.

The fifth paragraph says:

"The behaviour of the students in maxi-taxis which specialise in dub and blue movies leaves much to be desired.

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At the corner of Prince Street and Broadway in Arima, I have witnessed the most unacceptable behaviour; a maxi-taxi from Sangre Grande turned into Prince Street, to discharge passengers. Before all the passengers were out, a student, a young man, stood at the entrance and allowed only certain students to board the taxi. Two other students, girls, jumped and held on to the space between the windows, two boys nearby helped them to get in. Books fell, but that was not important.

Pandemonium reigned.

When the maxi-taxi moved off, I turned to some students who did not engage the affair. I said, "So you did not get a chance to get in the taxi?" One small girl replied, "We do not belong to that class."

You will understand, that the local saying is not holding, "all ah we is not one."

Paragraph 6 says

"There are students who do not need to travel by maxi-taxis, their parents, take them to school in the family car and as a consequence are dropped off at the school quite early.

Hearing from their peers about the thrills of travelling in maxi-taxis, they find their way to such taxis, take a ride and return to school, in time for the commencement of classes, or if it is done when they are dismissed at 2.30 they are back in time to meet their parents who leave work at 4.00 p.m."

And the question is: Are we happy with such adventures?

The final paragraph of this letter from my constituent, says:

"Travelling in a maxi-taxi, a citizen was speaking over a radio station, and he was making a number of intemperate attacks on people of a certain ethnic group, living in a particular area of the country, and also on an individual who is considered the father of the nation."

Well listen to this. Now this is a normal radio programme.

"Two passengers began to discuss what was being said; the discussion became heated and one of the persons involved threatened violence. The maxi-taxi driver stopped and asked them to leave. One person left. The radio was then turned off. Do we really need a radio in public transport?

Many students refuse to use a bus pass. They want money to travel by maxi-taxi and refuse to attend school if money is not forthcoming."

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Madam Speaker, this is a letter from one of my constituents about the situation, not only of loud noise and lewd music, but also of the types of activities going on in maxi-taxis. It is for that reason we ought to support banning entirely all the electronic equipment.

One hears from the other side that there was wide consultation of the general public, and that the general feeling is that while all the other electronic equipment should be banned, the radio should not be. I just want to look at some of the public views regarding the maxi-taxis, many of which were covered by my colleague the Member for Diego Martin East.

I want to read into the record a few of the paragraphs from page 6 of the *Sunday Guardian* dated January 30:

"Human rights vs societal wrongs."

It reads:

"It ought to be pretty clear at this point that the government elected two years ago to run the country is trapped in a constitutional tangle which has placed it in the unenviable position of being unable to change outdated laws relating to maxi-taxis and the Police Service in ways which most reasonable citizens believe to be in the public interest.

The checks and balances deliberately introduced into the republican constitution to prevent a ruling party exercising absolute authority even if it were vested with a particular majority in the House of Representatives have reduced the Manning Government to a state close to impotence in these affairs".

The article goes on to say:

"The opposition is demanding its kilogram of flesh. If the Government does not agree to its proposals ('demands' might be a more realistic word) it will not play ball".

A serious issue as maxi-taxis affecting the wider population out there.

"Doubtless these debates about how to curb maxi-taxi excesses in the relaying of music and how to transform the Police Service into an effective institution would be useful if circumstances were different.

But over the last year maxi-taxis have been involved in a series of horrendous vehicular accidents involving much loss of life, and the instant

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problem, that of playing music much too loud and with obscene lyrics in the presence of school children, is regarded as a contributing factor."

Here again the newspaper editorial making reference to this. They talk about:

"From the pulpit..."

I want to know whom the Members on the opposite side are consulting for they have not identified in any significant way those they have consulted and what they have said specifically. You get a broad statement. But the article says here, and we are talking about the several churches:

"...from the teachers and from parents, individually and in groups, the complaints have been bitter against what is termed the maxi-taxi culture.

The opposition, in response, is seen to be consulting with the government, but appears bent on introducing what seems to be little more than cans of red herrings to block the proposed legislation."

As I said, this is the editorial of the *Sunday Guardian* of January 30, 1994. The article further goes on to say:

"In the meantime, the maxi-taxi operators ..."

Listen to this:

"In the meantime, the maxi-taxi operators are on fairly good behaviour."

They are on fairly good behaviour because they realize that the Bill is being debated in this Parliament and perhaps they feel that if they were to lower the music, the Bill may be defeated and they would resort to their old ways after the Bill is passed. The article continues:

"But who knows how they will react once the legislative process takes the certain road to failure?"

Another article says: "Schoolgirl falls out of maxi-taxi". This is on page 1 of the *Trinidad Guardian* of January 24, 1994. It says:

"Arouca Police are continuing investigations into a report that a schoolgirl travelling in a maxi-taxi on Thursday was thrown through the door when the vehicle swerved suddenly.

Kinnesha Edwards, 15, a student of St. Dominic's Convent, Barataria, reported to police that she and other classmates were on their way to a funeral on Thursday.



She said music was being played loudly in the 25-seater maxi-taxi and the door remained open while the vehicle was in motion."

I think that underscores the point made by my colleague the Member for Diego Martin East about the effect of loud music on the ability of maxi-taxi drivers to concentrate. He drove off the maxi-taxi unaware and unconcerned that the door was open, and the schoolgirl was thrown out of the maxi-taxi. God alone helped that child from dying!

**Mr. B. Panday:** He had his music on? He could not hear that the door was opened?

**Dr. R. Griffith:** She said loud music. He was unaware that the door was open.

"Witnesses reported that when the vehicle reached the corner of the Old Golden Grove Road and the Eastern Main Road, it swerved and Edwards, who was seated near the door, was thrown outside.

The schoolgirl received injuries to her left shoulder and was taken to the Arouca Health Centre where she was treated and discharged.

The driver failed to make a report to the police and he is expected to answer several charges soon."

He did not even consider making a report to the police of such a serious action. We must ask the question: Is the loud, lewd music being played in the maxi-taxis having that impact on the behaviour of maxi-taxi drivers? My belief is that it is. The article further says:

"The operations of maxi-taxis have come under scrutiny recently, following a series of fatal accidents as well as complaints from members of the public about the loud and lewd music being played in many of the vehicles."

Here, again, we see that the wider public is complaining about the loud music and the type of electronics in maxi-taxis.

Another article on page 6 of the *Trinidad Guardian* of January 22, 1994 states: "Ban maxi music completely." This is a letter to the editor, and I should like the Member for Couva South to listen because he may have an interest in it.

**Mr. B. Panday:** I will tell him about it when he comes back.

**Dr. R. Griffith:** It says:

"I just want the Government to know that this time I am fully behind them in the Maxi-Taxi Bill which they are bringing to the House of Parliament.

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I know that my Member of Parliament has already stated that the UNC will not back the Bill and that they want maxis to be allowed to have radios. I say no, no, no!"

**Mr. B. Panday:** Let us go to the polls.

**Dr. R. Griffith:** I continue:

"Before long, and as soon as the police are out of sight, it will be up with the volume once again, with the most obscene music corrupting the minds and hearts of our sons and daughters.

Just last week, Sir, I took a maxi from..."

Listen to where she took the maxi-taxi from! There are many arguments in here that the problem is only in certain geographic areas—the East-West Corridor. I want the Members to listen carefully as to where this writer took this maxi-taxi.

"Just last week, Sir, I took a maxi from Couva to Chaguanas one evening."

From where? Couva to Chaguanas!

"The TV was playing a video, a tape deck was blasting very obscene music and the radio was also playing the news, all very, very loud."

**Hon. Members:** All together!

**Dr. R. Griffith:** Listen to this:

"The lights in the maxi were a dim blue."

That reminds me of romantic lights. I see the Member for Couva North smiling, apparently he knows about blue lights. It goes on:

"The conductor's appearance made me think twice about asking him to turn any one of the radios down."

When one looks at the behaviour of some of the assistants—I think they are called touts—one could understand the fear of this young lady. Some of them look like half machines, half men. How are they called, cyborgs? For a young lady to approach them and ask them to turn down the music, I could well understand the fear. This is what she says:

" I say ban the music completely, ban TVs in maxis completely. I have never seen any but I understand that the sex movies are shown.

If Ramesh Maharaj..."

I think she is talking about the Member for Couva South.

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"ever wants to get the support of my family ever again, he will persuade his party to support the Bill."

**M. Maharaj:** Let us go for elections.

**Dr. R. Griffith:** Take heed!

There is one other newspaper article I would like to read into the record. It is a letter to the editor on page 6 of the *Trinidad Guardian* of January 18, 1994. It says:

"Please do not oppose this ban.

The decision of the Opposition party not to lend support to the Government in its attempt to ban music in maxi-taxis is most alarming. For those of us who see the effects of noise on hearing it is a very disturbing development.

There have been volumes written on the effects of loud music on individuals not only in scholarly journals but also in the popular press. Indeed, a group of American rock stars has even made a video warning of the deleterious effects of loud music on hearing.

To reiterate, the exposure of the ears to sounds over 85 decibels daily will eventually lead to noise induced hearing loss.

But hearing loss is not the only effect."

That is a very important point, Madam Speaker.

"Subjects exposed to loud sounds suffer physiological and psychological upsets."

Do we wonder why certain maxi-taxi drivers behave the way they do?

"Loud music has a stimulant effect (almost drug like) causing arousal, aggression and irritability.

Do we need our schoolchildren to arrive at school every morning partially deaf, aggressive and irritable?"

Do we wonder why there are so many reported cases of violence in the schools, and children against children. It goes on:

"There is also the effects loud music has on the driver. Apart from those listed above, there is also the distraction that loud music causes.

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So that we now have the situation of a maxi full of partially deaf, irritable and aggressive schoolchildren driven by a partially deaf, irritable, aggressive and distracted driver. What a recipe for disaster."

The writer went on to talk about support for the Bill. The author is Dr. Austin Trinidad. One paragraph of this letter was already read into the record by my colleague, the Member for Diego Martin East. Dr. Trinidad is an ENT specialist (ear/nose/throat specialist). This is not coming from any frivolous person and it is something that we in this honourable House ought to sit up and consider seriously.

**2.45 p.m.**

Madam Speaker, I believe the case has been made for the total ban of all electronics in maxi-taxis. Only last week a principal told me he was walking the corridors of his school observing the behaviour of the students while classes were in session. He said at the math class the teacher was at the chalk board doing a mathematic problem and many of the students were just sitting in class clicking and stepping off at the math instruction. Clearly, the children have the music in their heads and are not concentrating on what is going on in school. That is the observation of the principal—not mine.

**Mr. Sudama:** What caused that?

**Dr. R. Griffith:** Another example was in Detroit, Michigan, in the United States. Just a couple weeks ago, there was an article in the *Michigan News*. Four young people, all friends, left their home together to go to a dub and rock music show. One of the songs at the dub show was laced with violent suggestions and violent acts. One such part of the statement indicated, "Shoot him in the head, watch the blood flow and laugh." Those are the lyrics. It is still being played in dub music today.

But the significant thing is that after the show, while the young people were walking back home, one of them whipped out a gun, shot his friend in the head and watched the blood flow. When he was questioned by the police officers who arrested him, they asked, "Why did you do this to your friend?" He would not say anything.

**Mr. Sudama:** The maxi-taxis caused it?

**Dr. R. Griffith:** When they pressed him, he said something in his head told him to shoot his friend. That is the kind of impact that kind of music has on the children. The Member could bury his head, but it is a fact.

Madam Speaker, as we assemble here today in this honourable House, there are many pressing problems confronting us in Trinidad and Tobago and, indeed, the world community. The duty is, therefore on us, as a national Parliament, to send a positive signal to the wider population. That signal should be one of seriousness in handling the affairs of the nation. It should be a signal of the willingness of members of both sides of the House to transcend party politics in the best interests of the nation. We must put the nation first.

**Mr. Sudama:** Look at who is talking—the PNM.

**Dr. R. Griffith:** We should send that signal of understanding and respect for each other as we debate the Bill and the many issues before us and the many issues facing Trinidad and Tobago. We must remember that at all times the nation is looking to us for leadership; and we must set the tone not only for 1994, but beyond.

Let us, therefore, send a signal of love, peace, goodwill by working in harmony in the best interests of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. It is in this spirit, that I ask all Members on the other side to support this Bill. May Almighty God bless us and grant us peace in 1994 and beyond as we face the myriad problems together.

I thank you.

**Mr. A.N.R. Robinson (Tobago East):** Madam Speaker, may I congratulate the last speaker, the hon. Member for Arima, on his very stirring appeal. I wish to assure him that his appeal has not fallen on deaf ears, insofar as the Member for Tobago East, at any rate, is concerned.

This issue has emerged as one of great national importance, apart from the controversy; and it is an issue that has to be approached in a very deliberate, cautionary and objective fashion, for it is in times of crisis, or major difficulty, that emotions are most likely to take control; and when emotions are in the driving seat, then the direction in which the country goes is unpredictable. So I have sought to look at this proposed legislation as objectively as possible.

This morning I received a letter from [*Interruption*]—I hope he will not mind if I—

**Madam Speaker:** Order in the House please! The Member is making his contribution.

**Miss Nicholson:** It is that rude lady; she must be put out of here.

**Mr. A.N.R. Robinson:** I hope he will not mind my disclosing his name. There is no reason why he should mind—one James Sammy. I would not give his address. I must say that this letter has been a very, very thoughtful one and also very appealing. In it he calls for a certain degree of support for the legislation but he recognizes, as I think all independently minded citizens would recognize, that there are difficulties that need to be addressed and concerning which we need to be satisfied.

Now, what we are seeking to do is to regulate the use of maxi-taxis which, undoubtedly, is recognized as required. I think it is recognized universally, from the outcries that have been taking place, that the use and operation of maxi-taxis should be regularized or regulated. There is a history to this matter: When the maxi-taxis were first introduced as a means of transport, it was felt by many, including myself, that one should not allow such private means of transport to be substituted for proper public transport.

In considering this issue, let us look at it in a comprehensive way rather than limit our scope and perspective merely to one small aspect of it. What is critically evident here is the need for adequate means of public transport. Over the years, we have left it up to 4,500 individual entrepreneurs, in many instances competing against one another. Clearly, basically, that system is not working. That is the first fact we have to recognize in this situation. What are we doing to provide proper and safe means of transport, particularly for the children of the nation, to and from school?

The second measure that is necessary is that the actual operators and users of these means of transport should also be carefully scrutinized and regulated. What, for example, is the training prescribed for a maxi-taxi driver who has such great responsibility on his shoulders, and who is capable of doing so much damage to the children of the nation? What is the training provided?

**2.55 p.m.**

What sort of means are employed for the organization of these maxi-taxi drivers so that they should themselves be in a position to impose restraints on their own conduct? These are matters which are of fundamental importance because they relate to the whole situation of crime in the country. We are now criminalizing certain additional activities. That is what we are doing.

Now, what are we doing to address the whole crime situation? We cannot do it merely by legislation. More fundamentally, it has to be done by seeking to improve the moral tone of the nation. That is fundamental. I heard the Jamaican

Prime Minister about two days ago speaking on radio and television, about placing ethics and morality at the centre of national life. If I were asked what is the main problem in Trinidad, not Tobago—

**Miss Nicholson:** Good point!

**Mr. A.N.R. Robinson:** —I would say it is the absence of ethics at the centre of the life of the community.

**Miss Nicholson:** Good point!

**Mr. A.N.R. Robinson:** It applies all around.

Yesterday, for example, I saw an editorial in one of the newspapers and I could not believe it was a national newspaper that was engaging in that level of dialectic. I just could not believe it. That is what perpetuates the lack of ethical behaviour, because when one form of ethical behaviour is challenged, the attitude is, "Look at that! Look at the other person!" It is not dealing with the situation on its merits. It is creating distractions and irrelevancies and not addressing the problem. Unfortunately, maxi-taxi drivers are now victims of a tremendous national focus of concentration. But some of these maxi-taxi drivers are the fathers of the very children.

**Miss Nicholson:** Good point!

**Mr. A.N.R. Robinson:** They are the heads of households. If they are so delinquent so that we all lump them together and seek to criminalize activities throughout—just everyday normal activities, for example—what are we doing to these people who are heads of households? Is it not better to adopt as a fundamental approach, a rehabilitative approach, rather than a criminalizing approach? These are matters that need to be addressed. Fundamental, philosophical issues are involved. And the Government needs all of us—not the Government alone—to address these issues.

It is right to require certificates of good character at least, but that is not enough. It is right to separate the operator from the owner and to require particular qualifications and criteria for the operator as distinct from the owner. That is in the legislation. I fully support that. All of that is completely right. But, is the right to information, in the information age, not a very basic and fundamental human right?

All right. I agree. Ban loud music; ban lewd music; do all that; or, criminalize it. I would prefer if it were dealt with on a more comprehensive basis, where it

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includes public places, for example. Laws exist already which are not being implemented concerning noise pollution. All these matters should be dealt with in a way that shows a coherent, comprehensive and principled approach.

Hearing from the Member for Diego Martin East, I see that the Jamaicans have made illegal: playing any sound equipment in any vehicle; any radio, tape or record player or other sound equipment or musical instrument in any vehicle.

Now, that is a recognition of some kind of equality. That is recognition of a principle.

**Mr. Imbert:** Yes. On a point of clarification. It is public transport vehicles that are referred to in the Jamaican legislation, not any vehicle—public transport vehicles.

**Mr. B. Panday:** So all taxis.

**Mr. A.N.R. Robinson:** Thank you very much—any public transport vehicle. That shows it includes all the vehicles that are engaged in public transport. The Barbadians have approached it differently. They talked about playing any music. So one is playing sound equipment in any vehicle—public transport; another is playing music. The Guyanese sought to regulate the level of sound, which I agree is a very difficult thing to do, and they were very brave indeed, very courageous in seeking to adopt that particular method.

I agree with all the other provisions, but I am concerned about the provision in clause 9. I would like the Attorney General to explain to this House what this really means. I must confess I am not sure of the interpretation of this provision and if I am not, then I take it that the ordinary person would be in even more difficulty than I am. I read:

"The use of televisions, videos, radios, tape decks, compact disc players, amplifiers, equalisers, speakers or other electrical or electronic equipment for the purpose of playing music or other electrically or electronically transmitted sounds in a maxi-taxi is prohibited."

So there is a prohibition against the use of these various devices for the purpose of playing music.

**Mr. B. Panday:** Or transmitting sounds.

**Mr. A.N.R. Robinson:** Or transmitting sounds. Their use, but their presence is not prohibited. They may have them but not use them. I am not saying there is



anything irrational about that. A person may purchase goods in a shop and may be transporting such goods in a maxi-taxi, so the draftsman exercised wisdom, if that was his or her intention. Then it goes on to say:

"An operator of a maxi-taxi who contravenes subsection (1) commits an offence and is liable on summary conviction to a fine of five thousand dollars."

**Mr. Sudama:** How?

**Mr. A.N.R. Robinson:** My interpretation of that would be that nobody else is liable but the operator, and he must commit the offence. I may be wrong. I am subject to another point of view from the hon. Attorney General, but that would be my submission to the court, that the operator is provided for and if he commits the offence.

**Mr. Imbert:** Good point.

**Mr. A.N.R. Robinson:** So this also gives another kind of difficulty. Whom are they trying to catch? Are they trying to catch anyone? Are they trying to catch anyone who plays an instrument in the maxi-taxi? Are they trying to catch the operator only? Whom are they trying to catch?

**3.05 p.m.**

In all of this, ordinary citizens are deprived of very basic facilities, basic rights. I am told by the Minister of Works and Transport that there are 4,500 maxi-taxis. Imagine 4,500 maxi-taxis on the road conveying all sorts of people, including numerous children, and there are no means of communication from their homes at all; there are no means of communication concerning a possible disaster, fire, earthquake, hurricane, anything of the sort.

A hurricane watch may be on and these people are on the road; the traffic may be snarled; a radio announcer is giving instructions, trying to assist with traffic; something happens, the police are transmitting signals by radio. Did the hon. Minister consider all of these eventualities? There has been no indication whatever, so far as I have seen, that these very disastrous and possible situations have been calculated for.

So when the Government comes here and seeks my vote on the basis of a constitutional requirement, I consider that I am in as responsible a position as a member of the Cabinet, and I would like to see Cabinet members do their homework. We must have the kind of information that would satisfy us that we

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are not seeking to throw the baby out with the bath water; that the legislation is not guilty of penalizing the innocent unduly for the guilty.

While we seek to criminalize acts by law, I want us to recognize that law sets out a framework within which moral acts, ethical behaviour, are required. The people who are shouting for a total ban are well-meaning citizens. This letter that I have is from a well-meaning citizen. He says:

"I am a good moral-thinking maxi-taxi driver..."

I have no doubt.

"...and in full agreement of the Government to ban music, video and all electronic equipment completely."

This is how moral people, out of the goodness of their hearts, give up responsibility. So we have authoritarian regimes, and when it happens in one direction, it happens in other directions, because some people mobilize for the kill. Those who have sought and obtained their objective in one direction, mobilize for the kill in the other direction. That is why some of us must stand solidly on our feet and not be swept away by waves of emotion and by moods, but must exercise a clear, informed and independent judgment. That is why we are in this Parliament. That is why I consider I am here, by the grace of the Shepherd of—[*Laughter*—the good Shepherd of the Member for San Fernando East.

While I will not be longer—I regret that I will not be here to exercise my vote—I am still available for persuasion. Quite some time ago I made a commitment which I must keep, before I knew anything that this debate would be continued this afternoon. But I have entrusted my conscience into the capable breast of my colleague the Member for Tobago West. [*Laughter*]. I want to assure Members opposite that her vote would be as good as two.

I hope that in the course of this debate—it is not too late—hon. Members opposite would address some of these issues. Is it necessary to criminalize all these acts? Is it necessary to regard all maxi-taxi drivers as villains, so to speak? Is it necessary to adopt that hostile approach, rather than to identify in a very scientific and methodical way the sources of the problem and to address those sources so as to arrive at a more fundamental and permanent approach?

You see, what can very well happen also is that innocent maxi-taxi drivers who may use the radio for religious music, maybe—I am sure the Member for San Fernando East will support that wholeheartedly—or for programmes of instruction and information, or for news—it can be very boring to be in a vehicle

all day long—they may feel hard put upon. Some people can have their reactions break out in unpredictable ways. We may very well be creating neurotics out of some of the drivers.

We have got to look at the different angles in order to arrive at a sane, sensible, rational and balanced approach, and that is what I recommend to hon. Members opposite. My view is—I have not been persuaded otherwise—that one can maintain a means of essential communication with a radio. In the same way as you standardized maxi-taxis, tyres, all sorts of things, let the Licensing Authority standardize, and do not depend only on the police. The community has to understand that it is part of crime prevention. In my constituency I know what would happen. The children would complain; the parents would complain, and the driver would soon find that he is *persona non grata* in the whole community.

Let us seek to develop that kind of approach in our country. Let us not lose faith in our citizens. Let us have confidence in them that the society as a whole—you will always find delinquents—can be a strong, vibrant society which bases its acts generally on ethical considerations. My advice to hon. Members opposite, for what it is worth, is to set the lead.

Thank you very much.

**Mr. Jarette Narine** (*Arouca North*): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the Member for Oropouche giving way, but I am sure that I was on my feet before he was on his.

I rise this afternoon to support the Maxi-Taxi (Amdt.) Bill which was piloted in this House on Friday, January 21. I was absent from this House when the Minister of Works and Transport did his presentation, so I had to get the *Hansard* and take time to read it. I must say that I am well pleased and I compliment him on the quality of his presentation.

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

Maybe, it would be of benefit if one would go back to the *Hansard*, because when I had finished reading it, I was amazed at the level of opposition that was given to this Bill in this House, over the weeks. The Minister identified and dealt with most of the criticisms that I have heard levelled at this Bill.

I would also like to congratulate the last speaker on his very short contribution; but when he was speaking I felt that he was very far away from the people of Trinidad and Tobago, and the facts out there as regards maxi-taxis. I was amazed to hear him say that one has to be alerted by radio of an earthquake.

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The Member also spoke about a storm watch and I remembered "Bret" of last year when we knew hours before what was likely to take place. We are a country that is abreast of the rest of the world in communications. Who is taking a maxi-taxi and travelling in it all day? I would like to find out, where in Trinidad and Tobago one sits in a maxi-taxi all day. Probably we are in Africa where we would have to do that because of the size of the country.

When the Member for Tobago East was Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago there were two helicopters used by the Ministry of National Security; one was very small and made much noise. I heard that he preferred not to travel in that small one that made much noise.

**Mr. Robinson:** Madam Speaker, I had no preference in the matter. The security people provided a helicopter which I used; whatever they provided I used. So I want to disabuse the hon. Member of that idea.

**Mr. J. Narine:** Madam Speaker, the point is that one is aware of the noise pollution that is created by the many maxi-taxis that are operating. There are 4,500 maxi-taxis in Trinidad, transporting an average of 76,000 people within one hour, a great percentage of whom are students going to school. Later on in my contribution, I shall tell of my personal experience yesterday morning while traveling in a maxi-taxi, not knowing that I would have had to make a contribution today.

The effect of loud music on school children inevitably leads to many of the problems in the school system. My colleague, and Member for Arima, who is a schoolmate of mine, dealt with that situation in a fine nice manner, and I must congratulate him on his contribution. We have not heard him many times in this House, but whenever he speaks I listen to him very carefully. He is a person I admire for the volume of research he does before making his contributions in this House.

In speaking to some of the youths in my area, I learnt that some maxi-taxis carry two tape decks instead of one because they rest one at a certain hour and play the other one. The maxi-taxis also carry three equalizers; an amplifier with a pre-amplifier; approximately four to six 12 to 20-inch speakers—where the boxes for those speakers are placed causes inconvenience—eight tweeters. The Member for Diego Martin East was very eloquent in his contribution about the size of the speakers and what effect they have; it does not matter what inch they are, but they prefer to have about four to six 15-inch speakers placed in the maxi-taxis, with two large horns. To wire these and place jacks costs about \$10,000 per maxi-taxi.

It is clear to me that the foreign exchange that we have lost on these maxi-taxis is clearly over \$4 million. We will continue to lose foreign exchange because of the competitiveness of the maxi-taxi trade. There are persons who borrow from the bank and pay interest so that they can have loud music in their maxi-taxis. The presence of such costly equipment causes much stealing to take place because there is a very lucrative market for amplifiers, speakers etc.

I once sat on the rear seat of a 12-seater maxi-taxi. I am a very short person, but normally my feet would touch the ground. On that occasion I wondered why it was that my feet did not touch the ground, but my head was almost to the ceiling [*Laughter*] Members on the opposite side would laugh, because they drive in their air-conditioned cars and they do not know about the maxi-taxis.

When I enquired, the driver told me that he had to readjust and weld rods onto his seats. Because of the 15-inch speakers he had in the back he had to lift the seat to accommodate them. The point is that passengers' heads were almost to the roof. This is a situation that has caused many problems for persons travelling in 12-seater maxi-taxis.

The Member for Arima raised an issued that took place in the Arouca North constituency around Golden Grove Road. But, one point that he probably had no knowledge of, and which I, as the Member for Parliament for Arouca North would have heard from my constituents, is that at that point when the child fell out of the maxi-taxi, the conductor who was sitting by the doorway was calling out to the driver to stop, but the driver never heard him because of the loud music that was being played in the maxi-taxi.

### **3.25 p.m.**

The loud music caused the driver not to hear. You would realize that the automatic door in maxi-taxis can also be opened and closed manually; it works with a hydraulic system from the front seat.

The conductor was sitting near there, had the door open, the child was getting out, the maxi-taxi was in motion and the conductor and other persons in the maxi-taxi were calling out to the driver to stop. He never heard because of the loud music in the maxi-taxi. When you are travelling in the maxi-taxis at the peak hour and you press the bell, very often you are dropped at the wrong location because the loud music most of the time prevents the drivers from hearing that stop-bell. It happens regularly on the Priority Bus route. They drive at a rate, the noise is so loud, and when the bell is pressed very often the driver does not hear.

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Many have dealt with the obscene language in songs; the violent songs. I remember several years ago when maxi-taxis came on the scene, and they started to play these songs, even the lyrics did not make any sense to most of our people. As a matter of fact, I remember about 20 years ago there was this song coming out from Jamaica—it did not make sense to me.

"Starsky and Hutch went for a bus, Starsky tell Hutch doh make no fuss, is a government bus"

Imagine that. This is the garbage that is being played in the maxi-taxi that our children have to listen to every day. I just draw your attention to those lines.

When the Minister raised the question about the calypsonian, I remembered "Plain Clothes" from my constituency singing about the "boom-boom" noise in the maxi-taxis—even at that time. The noise also affects the health of our population. Very often people get home with a headache and they are not even aware of what caused it. The children get home in the afternoon—and I have children that are still at school—and complain about headaches; you can imagine that by travelling in these vehicles so often when they get home they are sure to have headaches.

Everybody has to have this loud music in his maxi-taxi. They are very clever. When they get near to a police station or they see an officer in uniform or there is a road check, one switch and you do not even know because it is just like a light switch; it takes off all the base sound from the music; and as soon as they have passed the station, it is back on again. So that the contact system is very well developed. They are on the road every day, they are plying special routes so that they know what takes place and where they are to tone down their music.

I have been driving vehicles for about 30 years; in 1964 I got my licence. I have had vehicles for about 25 of those 30 years. I know that if you are driving a vehicle and you are not aware of what is taking place, and you get a blow-out, with that noise in your vehicle you would not be able to hear. Whether it is a smooth tyre or one that was bought yesterday you can get a blow-out. We know how the persons in Central died. They are saying that there was a blow-out. *[Interruption]* In a large vehicle like that! Your experience is probably for small vehicles. You hear the blow-out long before the vehicle starts swerving. My experience in driving is probably beyond yours.

The situation is that there are others things which can go wrong with a vehicle and which is dangerous to the passengers, especially if you are doing public transport. Imagine a maxi-taxi with 25 passengers, whose lives are in the hands of

the one person who is behind the controls. If he is not aware of what is taking place around him, the lives of the 25 passengers are in danger at all times.

Sherwood Park in Arima is a popular area where maxi-taxis are held-up. There are instances in that area when maxi-taxi drivers were held up, but persons on the side of the road heard none of the cries that were coming from inside. Somebody told me that they heard the cries from inside, but felt the passengers were bawling because of the nice music that was being played inside the maxi-taxi. So there is the noise pollution and the safety that are connected with the vehicle. That is so important.

On many occasions when the school children are returning to their homes there are some wicked boys who interfere with the school girls in the maxi-taxis. With the loud music neither the conductor nor the driver is conscious of what is going on in the maxi-taxi until they reach their destination. On many occasions the youths were able to complain only long after they reached their destination. They had to wait until they reached their destination. This is carrying it too far with the loud music in the maxi-taxis. It also goes for the sick. *[Interruption]* You are not observant when these things happen.

Another point is that persons are placed at a disadvantage because they cannot afford the \$10,000 to buy the music. They too have their instalments to pay. They too have bought their maxi-taxis for \$250,000, plus the other fees. There will always be competitions; if competitions is clean, I am for that. The competitions in the maxi-taxi trade with the loud music, I am totally against it or any music in the maxi-taxi at all.

If you raise the question that the music of a radio will be less than that of the tape deck, let me remind Members that some of our radio stations are inclined to play music for the entire day. They just break for short periods.

**Mr. Palackdharrysingh:** What type of music?

**Mr. J. Narine:** Any kind of music. From dub go right back.

**Mr. Palackdharrysingh:** You now getting into the songs.

**3.35 p.m.**

**Mr. J. Narine:** The point is that it is neither the radio nor the tape deck; it is the additional amplifiers, speakers and pre-amps which are put into the vehicle that produce the volume. Some say that the radio would solve our problem, I say no. The Minister was quite clear, when he came in here, I understand, with a

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speaker that could have created the same amount of noise as the 15 inch and 18 inch speakers.

I now go on to an experience that I had yesterday. With my new portfolio, I had to visit the Siparia Regional Corporation yesterday to meet the people at the Debe/Penal Regional Corporation at 1.00 p.m. On my way down, the vehicle in which I was travelling broke down at Penal Junction. Because I had only half an hour to get there, the Administrative Officer V and I decided to take transport from the Debe/Penal Junction to go on to Siparia for the meeting. We called the ministry to inform them that the vehicle was down.

At that junction, which is close to the police station, we felt it was quite safe to take one of those maxi-taxis to go down to Siparia. As soon as we left the market and were going up that small incline, the music started. I can tell you that when I got off the maxi-taxi at Siparia, and walked across to the Regional Corporation Building, about 15 minutes after I was still hearing this pounding noise in my ears. I am not exaggerating.

The point is that when that happened yesterday—

**Mr. Imbert:** Which band was that?

**Mr. J. Narine:** Brown band.

**Mr. Imbert:** Do not make joke. I thought it was only the red band maxi-taxis.

**Mr. J. Narine:** From reading some of the documents, I understand that there is a problem with the band. It is definitely not the band, but the music inside the maxi-taxi. When I travelled yesterday, that was a brown band maxi-taxi. I can tell you of that experience which I had in that area. I thought that the East/West Corridor was bad because I live there, but I am convinced that it is similar even in Tobago. Three years ago, when I used to visit Tobago on a weekly basis, in my capacity as a trustee of the National Union of Government and Federated Workers Trade Union, even ten years ago—

**Miss Nicholson:** Do not talk about Tobago.

**Mr. J. Narine:** Do you know Mr. Mohammed of Milton Road?

**Miss Nicholson:** Yes.

**Mr. J. Narine:** He had a maxi-taxi. I would tell the Member something. If she is coming here to say things that are not happening in Tobago, they would be aired and the people there would know.



Yesterday, I had an experience which suggested to me that regardless of the colour of the band, the same type of music and amplifiers are used.

I have been reading newspaper clippings; it is not my style to come and read them out here. I know that the Member for Caroni Central likes to do that. I have read certain articles—from Chaguanas—which amazed me. The people are writing about the green band maxi-taxis. As a matter of fact, I understand that the greatest amount of pornography on the television sets comes from that area.

I would not like to go on too long because I understand that there is some consensus on the other parts of the Bill. The problem which this Bill seeks to deal with is the loud music that is played in the maxi-taxis. I feel I should not reiterate all that was said by the other speakers. I have had some time to look through their contributions. I even looked at the comments of some of the organizations such as the Trinidad and Tobago Unified Teachers' Association; the St. George East Primary School Principals Association—I take pleasure in saying that they are also supporting us on this Bill—the National Parent/Teachers' Association; the Trinidad and Tobago Automobile Association, and the thousands of letters that were sent to each Member of Parliament on this side.

Last night I knew that I was going to make a contribution today and the stack of letters that came to me at my constituency office, I could not get them out early this morning. I can tell you that the people of Arouca North are also concerned about this legislation.

Even some of the maxi-taxi drivers from my area told me that they are willing—if it is cut across the board—to give up their music in the morning, but they are not going to compete with others who play the loud music and get the passengers. They would have to do it also; they would have no choice. If this matter is settled in Parliament they are willing to go without music. They also said that on the Eastern Main Road every five minutes they take up and drop off passengers. They do not need anything. There are passengers who would come in their maxi-taxis with their transistor radios and they would have their earphones and information is shared. As something takes place it is well known to most of the people in the country.

In closing, I compliment the Minister on bringing the amendment to Parliament. I also appeal to those on the other side, because I know that if they had the experience that I had yesterday, and from what I knew before about the loud music that is played in the maxi-taxis, they would not pull that line of opposition. They should support this Bill fully so that the people of Trinidad and

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Tobago would recognize that they elected members to Parliament to represent them in a way that would make them proud.

If the teachers, parents and the Automobile Association and other organizations are saying that Parliament should pass this Bill, then I would like to know to whom they would listen, if they were on this side.

Thank you.

**3.45 p.m.**

**Mr. Raymond Palackdharrysingh** (*Caroni Central*): Madam Speaker, I rise to support the position taken by the United National Congress because I have had the opportunity, over a number of days, to sit down and think deeply about this matter.

The United National Congress has not said to this Parliament or the nation that it is not going to support those areas in the Bill, where there is more or less, a source of concern. What the United National Congress has said and is saying is that you cannot deny the population the use of a radio. The Member for St. Joseph was almost moved to that point the last time in this House. He recognized how much punishment was being inflicted upon the people, and gave an undertaking that he was going to have further discussions on the matter with his Cabinet. But the moment that happened, the Member for San Fernando—

**Mr. Ramrekersingh**: Madam Speaker, I think I distinctly remember saying that it is a point raised by the Member for Couva North, and at least one must consider it. I went on to say that consideration does not necessarily mean agreement. That would be reflected in the *Hansard*. Obviously, when people on the other side make points, we do not just throw them by the wayside. When people make points, we consider them. Consideration and agreement are not synonymous. I made that clear.

**Mr. Maharaj**: Madam Speaker, can the hon. Member say what level of punitive measures we need to implement in order to achieve the desired effect, rather than possibly going *carte blanche*?

**Madam Speaker**: Member for Caroni Central may continue.

**Mr. R. Palackdharrysingh**: I want to assure the Minister that I did not give the wrong impression. Probably he received the wrong signal, but he said, and from his contribution in the *Hansard* dated January 21, 1994, I quote:

"I can give the undertaking that the suggestion of the hon. Member for Couva North will be taken into consideration. Whether we would have an agreement I cannot say at this stage."

That is what he said. The moment that statement was made the hon. Member for San Fernando East went to the community and began to solicit, almost to demand, support for the total banning of music in the maxi-taxis. He went out to the Moslem community and said, "I want to hear your voice now," and I wondered whether that was the same Member who said dub had its heart in the scenario of this country. I wonder if he was the same Member of the party when the late Dr. Eric Williams had to say that every family in this country must have a stereo set in their homes. It seems that when the stereos are at the home, they play a different type of music from when they are in the maxi-taxi. So, today I believe we are witnessing one of the greatest travesties of the interpretation of morality in this country because they are wanting to say on that side that if maxis play radios, children will become immoral. That is the argument.

The Member for Arouca North indicated that the music comes from the music stations, yet at the same time, with all the debate going on, one hears nothing about looking at the music from the music stations. They have made out the maxi-taxi drivers to be the greatest villains in this society. I am not defending them, but at the same time, the other people who project the music from the radio stations, those who print them, those who compose the lyrics, are given the licence. Why, today, have maxi-taxi drivers been made the sacrificial lamb upon the altar for the sins of the corporate community?

Like the Minister of Education, I am concerned about the children. All of us have to be concerned because all of us are parents, or will assume the role of parents some day. Children belong to the nation and we want them to tread the path where values are inculcated that would lead them to be useful citizens of this country.

Do you understand what has been happening? In the debate on this Bill, all the immorality and all the deviance that has been taking place in the society has been blamed upon the music in the maxi-taxi. I simply ask: Are there not more fundamental problems in the society giving rise to the unethical and even criminal behaviour of people in this country today? A case was made out here about children rushing for maxi-taxis because they have special music.

I ask, Madam Speaker: Why would children rush for those maxi-taxis? Is the maxi-taxi the sole agency of training for our children in morality? What has happened to the foundation and the cornerstone of the family? That is disintegrating every day because of the policies of this Government, and the Member for San Fernando East would do nothing about it. As a matter of fact, he

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exacerbates the situation. But he and his Government come here today and is so sanctimonious about saving the lives of these children.

I also want to indicate that it is not only the family that is on trial today. Yes, the society is in a moral crisis and it is that way because the excesses of the past, particularly under the PNM administration, are now bringing home the fruit planted over the years. So, when you look even to the school system—I was waiting for the Minister of Education to say "that the Government has a moral/ethical programme in the school system for our children which they would be able to discern; at least some measure of moral values would be passed on to them. So the question of morality does not have to depend, as the Government is making it out today to be, mainly on the issue of the lewd music in the maxi-taxis. And I think we must get that clear.

**3.55 p.m.**

All the presentations from the other side have indicated, in no uncertain manner, that the children must have their own way, so that if they say they want maxi-taxi, they get maxi-taxi. Nothing has been said about the stability of the family or what Government intends to do about the family. The Member for Barataria/San Juan made a statement about family life in crisis and so forth, but obviously they are not prepared to make the link with some of the other issues that are now the offshoot of those situations.

Also, especially in the government schools, there is no ethics or moral education that impart a system of values to our children; that tell them what to choose and what not to choose. That also has to be addressed. If those issues are not addressed, one can do what one wants to the maxi-taxi operator some other form of deviance will emerge.

I read recently, where the Pope was moved to say in effect: Look, that TV culture you have in your homes teaching about infidelity, crimes and all those things, has destroyed the family by and large. No longer do people sit down to talk; no longer do people sit down to enjoy some of the natural things around them. But he did not say, ban the television; he said you must have the moral strength to take it off.

These are some of the critical issues that we have to remind ourselves about today, because as I went through some of the literature; "Imbert—it is not easy to check noise levels on the maxi". Is it really easy to enforce so many laws that have been passed? Laws have been passed and they cannot be enforced, what is the point? I want to know if there is a total music ban on maxi-taxis how you

would know who is breaking the law unless you put people to monitor that. How will you even know who will be playing radios and so forth? The same problem is there! Then we have the PNM "gallerying" to the public saying "Pass the Bill, please, in the interest of the nation."

Are we saying that those people who invented the radio and so forth were of evil minds? If one is saying that, there are so many things that have been considered as great inventions, would one also say ban them when certain things cannot be controlled?

Again in many opinions in some of the newspapers: "Country before party". No one can take the position that the UNC was never willing to co-operate with the PNM. I recall very early in this House when the Member for St. Augustine stood up and extended a hand of co-operation to the Member for San Fernando East and said, "Let us have some form of national method of dealing with problems," the Member for San Fernando East waved his manifesto like a real flag-man and said, "We have a mandate to rule." A mandate to rule, but he goes out to the nation and says that the UNC is not helping him. That is the contradiction. He has to state clearly to the nation whether the Opposition never offered to assist in nation-building.

What happened afterwards was that article after article; "Take away radios, take away everything." I agree, that there is an emotional aspect to all of this. Of course, when you see your children being led off in the wrong ways; when you think that children are not acquiring certain behavioural patterns, then parents and everybody else get concerned. But, let not emotions destroy the rational thinking of our country.

Not long ago, one Friday evening on our television, there was a news feature which said, "Discrimination against blacks in America because the courts were imposing very high penalties on Blacks for using crack." Do you know what came out of that story? When crack was being peddled in the inner cities in the United States, the very people who lived in that community cried out for very stiff penalties against those who were using crack. Today, as the system has settled down and they recognize that others who have been charged for the use of "coke," even in the proportion of ten times more, are receiving lesser fines, they are now saying that the system discriminates.

What I am saying here, is that we ought not to take a sledgehammer to kill a fly. As Member after Member on that side said, yes, the Government was able to mobilize to have public opinion against the UNC, and because of this they

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Government able to take that very emotional stand. By all means we on this side are saying, yes, protect the children; we are saying no to loud music; we are saying, no, to lewd music; we are saying no to values that destroy our children's well-being and, consequently, the nation's well-being; but what we are doing here this afternoon this debate is making it look as though those issues which we have agreed upon are still being contended; and that is not so at all.

**4.05 p.m.**

Our contention is that the Government cannot destroy the fundamental right of people to information. There must be a trial period to see if it works, and if there is need for reconsideration, the UNC has made it abundantly clear that it is prepared to do so. How much more reasonable do you want the UNC to be on this matter?

I am afraid that there is a sort of tendency emerging in the society where if you cannot control anything totally, ban it. Ban the music! I simply ask: When are they going to call for the banning of the United National Congress and other voices in this country?

**Mr. Valley:** No, Palack, that is too much.

**Mr. R. Palackdharrysingh:** This is the trend. We have seen whenever dictatorship rears its head, even legitimate voices are being banned. That is the path they want to go. Way back on October 12, 1991, there was an article in a newspaper headlined: "Bring back school buses says Mahase". It said:

"How many more must die? asked the principal."

She did not say to ban music. This is a very critical point. The Government has failed to provide a fundamental service to the community; and having failed to do so, it sought in its liberal approach to doing things, to get maxi-taxis. When it got maxi-taxis, there was no ethics about it; there was no training for the drivers, and they end up in the syndrome of what is called "the free market mentality", and in this mentality, in order to survive and compete one does anything to attract one's clients. That is the situation.

I am wondering whether the Government called in the maxi-taxi drivers and said: "Look, this is what we expect in terms of a certain level of sober operations." Maybe just a code of conduct would have sufficed. Before maxi-taxi permits or licences, whatever is necessary, are issued, there ought to be training to orient drivers as to their role and function in the community. That may not have been the case. But today in a bid for survival, the maxi-taxi drivers have gone to

excesses and have now become, as I said, the scapegoats for Government's moral intentions in the society.

They like to bring the Lord into the picture, but He is a man of music. He also said:

"Maketh joyful noise unto the Lord all the time and serve the Lord with gladness."

**Mr. Valley:** He did not say maxi-taxis.

**Mr. R. Palackdharrysingh:** At the same time, there are certain things that need to be considered. If we look through the newspapers we would see many writings on it, but there is one article to which I would like to draw the attention of this honourable House. The reason they say I like to read is that I do a lot of research and find a lot of facts, but from now on, I will treat them on that side differently. The Member for Diego Martin West believes that when he gets up and rants, raves and misbehaves, he puts fear in the hearts of people on this side. That is far from being the case. I shall quote from page 9 of the *Express* of January 26, 1994 which says:

"Volume control is what maxis need".

The writer says:

"I am neither a member nor supporter of the three political parties in Parliament, however, I feel compelled to support the position of the UNC on this issue."

**Mr. Imbert:** Do you believe that?

**Hon. Member:** It is you who wrote that.

**Mr. R. Palackdharrysingh:** No, the name of the writer is here—Brian Alleyne.

**Mr. Imbert:** Does he exist?

**Hon. Member:** Produce him!

**Mr. Sudama:** The letters you all read, were written by whom?

**Mr. R. Palackdharrysingh:** It goes on:

"Why does this bill seek to discriminate against maxi-taxi drivers? What about other taxi drivers and PTSC buses? It is not at all clear to me why a

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blatantly unconstitutional measure such as this proposed bill should be passed."

I am one of the parliamentarians who ride maxi-taxis, and very often I have been taking the red bus from Chaguanas to Port of Spain. In the red bus there is music which is quite refreshing, enjoyable and edifying, and the drivers respond to the suggestions of the passengers whether they want to listen to music or cricket. There is that facility, and one gets to know what is going on while taking a nice little ride on the bus which is very comfortable. At \$4.00 from San Fernando to Chaguanas on the bus, not everybody can ride the red buses, so some people have to ride the blue buses.

That shows that if the system could work in the Government buses because the necessary controls and ethical practices are there, if we educate our maxi-taxi drivers and give them a chance to show their new consciousness with respect to what is required of them, I am sure they will respond. We must not crucify them without giving them the opportunity to be heard and tested. We need to do that.

I skip certain parts and I continue:

"On the second issue of the content of much of this music, which appears to be an underlying concern of many persons, I should like to make several points. First, I am stunned at the level of hostility of many persons towards dancehall music. Yes, some dance-hall is vulgar and violent in tone, but the lyrical and thematic range of this music runs as wide as any other form of popular music.

This hostility appears to be rooted in a profound ignorance of dancehall music and of urban Jamaican working class culture, and in the kind of petty insular nationalism that led to the break-up of the West Indies Federation and which keeps Caricom from moving any further. I speak as a citizen of Trinidad and Tobago who has lived elsewhere in the region."

#### **4.15 p.m.**

Those of us who were fortunate, in a sense, to move out of Trinidad, if we were born here, and live elsewhere to have our education, will recognize the tremendous exposure and learning experiences that one gets in other places, especially in the Caribbean. As a matter of fact, I, like the Member for San Fernando East probably, had the opportunity to do my first degree at Mona, Jamaica. I told him that on the first day I landed in Jamaica and they began to speak the dialect to me, I could not understand a single word, because their dialect



was so foreign to me. But after three years, and in constant rapport with the population, I began to understand the dialect and saw the uniqueness of their communication.

I began to see that the Rastafari culture, that is so hopelessly imitated by several of our people in this country, has had a deep, rich, meaningful significance with a total world view of things, including music. That is why it spoke to the Jamaicans, especially the working class, oppressed Jamaicans, in the way and fashion that it did.

I am not saying that I agree with everything that is dub, but if we are a Caribbean people, then we must begin to understand that even in our insularity and little differences, the culture must be understood. That is why when I lived in Jamaica and came back to Trinidad, I began to understand how important it was for us to survive as a Caribbean people and not necessarily just as Trinidadians and Tobagonians. It is important that we be exposed in the same way.

I have heard over the radio, time and again, the debate about calypso—whether it is a Bajan invention or a Trinidad creation. The debate continues and no side has budged, but of course, because I am Trinidadian, I know from my grounding in calypso what it ought to be—not the kind of stupidity, people like Super Blue and so on sometimes sing, and wave the national flag upside down and all sorts of things.

**Miss Nicholson:** Good calypso.

**Mr. R. Palackdharrysingh:** Madam Speaker, these things are important. The writer also says—

"By all means control the volume level, but do not presume to tell me what I may and may not listen to while riding a maxi-taxi—this should be worked out between passenger and driver..."

**Mr. Narine:** Twenty-five passengers?

**Mr. R. Palackdharrysingh:** These are some of the issues that Brian Alleyne has addressed in this article and he further says—

"The Government would be well-advised if it directed its energies to expanding job and educational opportunities for the youth, rather than taking draconian measures to appease a chauvinistic and self-righteous segment of the public, whether majority or not. Sometimes public policy must lead public opinion, not to follow it, and minorities have rights too."

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We are talking about this music in this society today, but what is very disheartening about this whole approach we have taken is that there has been no national survey done on the matter. The Government has not been able to produce any facts and figures for its conclusions.

There is one assignment carried out by the North Eastern College, and the teacher overseeing the survey is Harricharan D. Sieunarine. That is documented in the *Express* of October 13, 1993 and it says—"Survey: Control Music in Maxi-Taxis" Those who were interviewed were not convinced that banning the radio was the solution.

I also want to read into the record today a piece done by a college student whom I asked for his views on dub music. He wrote this—

"Dub music, as probably everyone knows, originates from Jamaica. It is (not) the sort of music that the school children frequently hear in maxi-taxis, going to and coming from school..."

**Mr. Imbert:** What!?

**Mr. R. Palackdharrysingh:** Sorry, pardon me.

"It is the sort of music that the school children frequently hear in maxi-taxis, going to and coming from school (for those who have to travel that is). It is also the No. 1 dance hall music that young people listen to in parties and fetes.

I, personally, do not have anything against dub music. Of course, I am only exposed to it 10 minutes of the day when I am coming home. For me, dub music is not all that influential, and I frequently use my discretion when I am listening to it.

The topics, or subject matter, of dub music is not all that varied. Usually most dub music deals with overt sexual activity, or extremes of violence. (The lyrics are not all that wholesome either). However there are some songs that encourage positive behaviour, such as the use of condoms in the prevention of AIDS, but these are rare.

It can be said that those dub songs can be related to many counts of misconduct and violence among young people. An example of this is the stabbing of a boy by his peers when "His Shot Was Called". Other songs such as "Pure Hate" by General Grant, actually encourage the use of violence among youths.

While listening to Morgan Job one day, he expressed some views that I think are important when the issue of dub arises. His views were that "Dub Culture" which has risen out of dub was the worst crime that black people can perpetrate on each other

"Picture this," he said, "If you have school children waiting for these maxi-taxis from 7.00 a.m. and then they are bombarded with dub, by the time they reach to school, they are not prone to work but to violence. This dub culture which has arisen appeals to the base nature of man. It encourages this sort of jungle behaviour and promiscuous activity, rampant among youths today.

He attributes dub as one of the causal factors in the high failure rate of secondary schools. He said that a recent study of these schools showed that by the time children reach Form V, they can't pass one subject. "What you have happening is by the time Form V is reached, you have these delinquents or "black savages," as he puts it, who cannot produce at all, and you have the future drug dealers and prostitutes. He attributes dub as having school children in a "morass".

This is the letter, and that is the perception of a student who is exposed to it, but who also has the ability to make a judgment on the matter because he goes to one of the schools that have a moral, ethical programme for its students. This student comes from Presentation College in Chaguanas.

#### **4.25 p.m.**

I want us to look at this very closely. We in the UNC, have nothing against the banning of lewd music; we have nothing against doing away with dub music; but we are also saying, find those radio stations which play the music all the time and do something about that as well. Do not penalize the owners/operators of maxi-taxis only. There are a number of people who are involved in the music industry who must take responsibility for the development of culture and even in the social ways we accept. They must also be part of this whole process of change.

In the absence of what I consider no compelling figures to show what the actual position is, we must start looking at the radio stations and a code of ethics and public service responsibilities for radio broadcasters for they, too, must be brought into the picture. The radio can be especially used as an instrument to link teenagers to additional sources of information and assistance, so it is not only a matter of writing your MPs to get something done, ill-advised as that it—

**Mr. Valley:** Especially if it is you!

**Mr. R. Palackdharrysingh:** Madam Speaker, music can be used to convey help messages to groups at risk. There was an experiment carried out in Latin America where, perhaps in an effort to stem population control, music was used as a sort of facilitator to pass on the messages.

**Mr. Sudama:** Like the PNM Government then?

**Mr. R. Palackdharrysingh:** Madam Speaker, we can also try getting involved with musicians and music personalities—those who are role models in the music field—to do things which are positive in terms of associating with appeals to the community. These measures would help. We have not developed any materials and methods to assist parents and teachers to discuss the health and social implications of music media messages. Music, properly used, could be used to advantage as an educational tool, rather than being seen in terms of only negative vibrations.

I do not think that the community has been called upon to provide funding for primary entertainment in sounds and videos that are pro-help and that have an enlightening relationship with the rest of the community. We do not have programmes, for example, with music, to convey messages that are positive, and, therefore—

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

**Mr. R. Palackdharrysingh:** Madam Speaker, I am winding up.

Therefore, unless we can take the music and use it as a positive force, then banning music in maxi-taxis would be to no avail as regards the morale and development of the country. Therefore, I am fully supportive of my party's position that we are going to support the Government in all its pronouncements on the Bill, save and except the radio. We want the maxi-taxis to have radios. The hon. Member for Couva South will probably deal at length with the matter of insurance when he makes his contribution.

Madam Speaker, I, I, I,—

**Miss Nicholson:** I thank you! *[Laughter]*

**Mr. R. Palackdharrysingh:** I thank you very much. *[Applause]*

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

**5.05 p.m.:** *Sitting resumed.*

**Miss Pamela Nicholson** (*Tobago West*): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to be here this evening to make my comments on this Bill to amend the Maxi-Taxi Act. What has been happening in the society is that a very passionate position has been taken by the Government and it is using all forms of technology, that is, radio stations, the electronic media, to impose their views on people, and also using certain people in certain important organizations to do likewise.

Because when you look at the People's National Movement as a government, this is its approach. If the Government wants to take a certain line, it wants to privatize, it runs down WASA in order to buy the people on its side. It tries to do the same thing with T&TEC, to buy the people on its side. It is always a buying of the people to impose its policies.

Instead of taking a non-passionate position and having—

**Mr. Imbert:** Dispassionate.

**Miss P. Nicholson:** "Non-passionate" is the proper term. Do not interfere with that. The Government is trying to impose its views instead of adopting a consultative approach to the people.

The National Alliance for Reconstruction supports most of what is in this Bill. My area of concern is clause 9. I am not concerned about the rest. One cannot understand how this clause is to be interpreted. The first comment I would like to make on this clause is, if you want to take a position re the banning of the music, why be discriminatory? It is discriminatory because it says in clause 12A (1):

"The use of televisions, videos, radios, tape decks, compact disc players, amplifiers, equalisers, speakers or other electrical or electronic equipment for the purpose of playing music or other electrically or electronically transmitted sounds in a maxi-taxi is prohibited."

I am saying that if we are dealing with the loudness and the lewdness of music, it cannot be confined to one section of the public transport system; it has to be across the board, because the music in many of the five-seater taxis in Trinidad is very loud also.

If the Member for Diego Martin East studied the Acts of some of the countries from which he copied his Bill, he would have noted and I want to stress the same argument made by the Member for Tobago East—what Jamaica did. I am quoting

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from what the Member for Diego Martin East said on January 21, at 2.45 p.m. He was quoting from the *Jamaican Gazette Supplement*, Thursday December 1, which stated:

"No person shall play or cause to be played on any vehicle any radio, tape or record player or other sound equipment or musical instrument."

Note what they have said.

**Hon. C. Imbert:** I had made the correction before. In that particular piece of legislation the word, "vehicle" refers to a public transport vehicle.

**Miss P. Nicholson:** But even to, they are talking about any public transport vehicle, so the point that I am making holds. This is what regulation 15 says, and even though it refers to public transport, they are saying any public transport vehicle, which is different from what Trinidad and Tobago is saying in this document. Clearly, the drafting of our document needs a lot of cleaning up.

Also look at the Barbadian position; and what does Barbados say?

"Notwithstanding any other provision of these regulations, no driver of a motor omnibus or minibus shall play or allow anyone to play any music in the motor omnibus or minibus whilst the motor omnibus or minibus is plying its route or parked in a public place."

But when you look at our document there is a discriminatory position, and if you are going to deal with it and you want our support, you cannot have a discriminatory position in clause 9. This is the first point I would like to make.

### **5.15 p.m.**

When I listened to the Member for Arima, one tended to get the impression that the people of Trinidad and Tobago are lawless. Therefore, you cannot use any other position besides total banning. I take umbrage at that. That is why I again support the Member for Tobago East, very strongly, in that one should be using rehabilitative measures; the bringing of the people together; whether you are bringing the west of Trinidad together as a body and there are people to train them; then the East, Central and South. Because this position—which I would deal with later—does not hold for Tobago.

This is another point that I want to argue. We have two separate islands where there are two different kinds of cultural development. Against this background and we do not have this problem in Tobago. Even though they play music, it is played at an enjoyable level. One cannot, in 1994, have people going miles from

Scarborough to Charlotteville and the Government saying they cannot even have a radio. We are saying they must have a radio. They must be able to have their nice soft music; sometimes a driver has to drive those miles alone to go into Charlotteville—27 miles. How does he cope with that loneliness?

If the driver wants to listen to *The Breakfast Club* in the morning, the Government is saying he must not have a radio that informs about what is taking place in the country? If he wants to listen to Panchayat in the evening, that again informs, and people are asking questions, the Government is saying that drivers must not have a radio in their transport system so that people can hear this? I take very strong umbrage at this.

Coming back to the contribution of the Member for Arima, I tended, as I said, to get the impression from his argument that we have a lawless society. When he was criticizing the arguments that were made by the Member for Couva North about the noise levels and how it will be monitored, he was trying to show that it cannot happen. I can tell him how it can work. Take away some of the security people that are around the Minister of National Security and use them to address that particular area, and it will work.

I am very concerned about the discriminatory position that is being taken in clause 9 of the Bill. I feel, also, that one can allow standard radios and owners can be told that they cannot have amplifiers and so forth operating at a certain level, so that people can get information, listen to sports, soft music and a number of educational programmes, and alongside that, use the rehabilitative system to address this problem.

Besides that, I feel very strongly—this is my personal view—that one needs punitive measures: whether it is that the licences of the drivers would be taken away if they are caught disobeying the law. But how it is drafted in clause 2, I cannot see that. I am saying that I believe in those strong measures because it is a minority of drivers that are imposing pressure on the majority, and I do not feel that the majority should suffer because of the minority.

If it is a minority, one must have measures to take care of those caught playing loud music, but it must be properly drafted to indicate it must be the driver of the vehicle. Clause 9 12A(2) says that:

"An operator of a maxi-taxi who contravenes subsection (1) commits an offence and is liable on summary conviction to a fine of five thousand dollars."

I think that case was strongly argued by the Member for Couva North.

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The Member for Arima also raised the question of lewd dub music. The Member for Arouca North also raised that. I am very concerned about the society of Trinidad and Tobago when we argue in this way. If one has to deal with lewd dub music, one has to deal with lewdness in Trinidad and Tobago from a holistic perspective. One cannot have a situation where one is imposing the pressures on the maxi-taxi drivers alone, and one sits and cheers calypsonians, in all their lewdness, attacking the women of Trinidad and Tobago. One cannot have that kind of situation.

You, as Government, cannot cheer. When you are in Opposition you cannot cheer. When I was vehemently attacked, I did not respond because I thought it was better to be quiet. I look at people today who sit in this Parliament, like the Prime Minister, who cheered and laughed heartily while calypsonians performed in that way. I am not supporting the maxi-taxi drivers using lewd music in their maxi-taxis, doing something that is immoral to our young people, I do not support that.

I am strongly against immorality, but I am saying if one has to address this area, one must attack the lewd calypsoes; the radio stations which play them—because when I was young I never heard lewd calypsoes on the radio; one had to go to the tents to hear them. I am saying that if one is concerned about our young people and keeping them in a strong, well-rounded, developed society; and if they have to be brought up in well-rounded families, one has to deal with this issue in a holistic way. It just cannot be the loud, lewd dub music in the maxi-taxis alone.

So, Preacher, it has to be looked at. The Member for Arima—as a parson, one must look at things from a holistic perspective when one talks to the congregation. One cannot have a politician using the facilities of state, buying a car, selling it one month after and then saying that that is not immoral. It is immoral and unethical and should be frowned upon strongly in the society.

Madam Speaker, I am appealing again, and I would be writing you formally. When I come to this House, I come to talk on behalf of the society of Trinidad and Tobago. I was put here by the people of Tobago West, and I am not entertaining any rude behaviour from the public gallery. I am appealing to you.

**Madam Speaker:** Since you are appealing to me, I would answer to the appeal.

Members of the public, the hon. Member is performing her constitutional duties in this House; I wish that all of you would appreciate this. She has a



rightful place here. Therefore, if you cannot listen silently to what she is saying, and appreciate what she is saying; or, if you do not like what she is saying, you are free to leave, but, please do not disturb the sitting of the House.

**5.25 p.m.**

**Miss. P. Nicholson:** Thanks, Madam Speaker. It is becoming over-bearing. We are down on this side and we are getting everything. We are not entertaining that any more.

If we are dealing with immorality only from the standpoint of listening to lewd music and watching films that can only put young people on the road to immorality and unethical behaviour, I am arguing that we have to go in a holistic way. You cannot have certain facilities of the state, you use them, and then come with a very superficial argument in relation to the maxi-taxis drivers. These are the things that the society of Trinidad must understand. If you do not see the ethics, the moral values in those areas, you cannot maintain a strong, well-developed society. Those are the things that break down a society.

You cannot be criticizing the lewdness of the music—any kind of music, whether it is dub or calypso—and what it will do to our society in terms of the values, while developing gambling in this society for example Play Whe. You are entertaining not only race-horse gambling but all kinds of gambling in which those same children and their families would be engulfed. Those are the things that lead to the whole breakdown of any society.

It was only today I was reading the *T&T Mirror* newspaper—February 18, 1994. There was a comment. When I saw it I felt very good to know that we still have a few people in this society who are seeing these weaknesses and can comment on them and tell the people what is wrong, and direct them in the right way. It was Pastor Dottin, on page 10:

"Pastor Dottin Slams Play Whe." I am going to read it into *Hansard*.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Member, would you like to wait until that Bill comes into the House and concentrate now on the Maxi-Taxi Bill?

**Miss P. Nicholson:** No, Madam Speaker, it has a bearing on this.

**Madam Speaker:** All right.

**Miss P. Nicholson:** I am talking about morality, unethical behaviour; what comes out of the singing of lewd calypsos. I am saying that is only a part of the issue. We must look at our issues from a holistic perspective and this is one. If

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you want to deal with the maxi-taxi drivers, you cannot bring Play Whe to licence it in this country.

Pastor Dottin is making a very pertinent comment.

"Legalizing Play Whe is another attempt by Government to institutionalize immorality, sin and degradation."

This is not what Pastor Dottin says; it is a comment.

This is pastor Dottin.

"Gambling never helps a society, but only contributes to its moral decadence."

So said Pastor Clive Dottin on Government's proposal to legalize Play Whe, a version of the illegal whe whe."

I do not know about that part either.

"Dottin, a Seventh-Day Adventist pastor added: "We should not be trying to raise money from destroying the nation. Instead, we should be doing the opposite, that is trying to uplift the nation.

"Play Whe will only contribute to the disintegration of the family unit."

This is the same argument that was being postulated earlier today by the Member for Arima: that lewd music in the maxi-taxis, that dub music in the maxi-taxis, can only lead to the disintegration of the family unit and to the society. If you are dealing with the maxi-taxis, you cannot come at the same time to tell us to indulge in Play Whe. It is a total contradiction in your policy direction of the Government.

The Member for St. Joseph should really be congratulated on the way he argued his case a few weeks ago. I am just urging him to feel strong. I know that some of his colleagues would not be happy. He is the kind of individual that we want in a government. In the same way that they are trying to impose on the people, and saying that we in the Opposition must support because this is for the good of the society, in the same way that when they are doing the wrong things or when they see a good point made, they should sit and meditate and look at it more closely. Because it might be an approach that they should take.

Mr. Representative from St. Joseph, you are a strong fellow to that point, and I urge you not to be afraid, because today you looked a little worried when the point was raised by the Member for Caroni Central. I listened to him and I meditated and said, this is a good fellow.

The Member for St. Joseph said:

"However, having mentioned those difficulties relating to amplified sound of a particular nature, we must pay some attention to the point made by the hon. Member for Couva North where he mentioned that we could look into the possibility of having a radio.

I am not saying that I agree with it or that we on this side agree with it. What I am saying is that it is a suggestion that merits consideration. I do not know if he appealed to my sporting instincts by saying we would be deprived of listening to cricket or football."

He went on later to say:

"I make the point that it is something worth consideration, because as we seek to correct an evil we must not take a position that is purely punitive. Yes, there is a punitive dimension."

He is accepting that there is a punitive dimension. Here I differ from him a little in the sense that my view on the punitive area is, if you are going to ban, I am saying you have to go across the board. You cannot just deal with the maxi-taxis drivers and leave out the other drivers who drive five-seater taxis. They make noise too. You cannot do that. That is my view. You have to go right across board; you must not be discriminatory. You cannot try to correct something by going part of the way. I believe he said that it is punitive because they want to ban it totally.

I am very supportive of the view of our side that we must at least leave the maxi-taxis with a radio. If we are leaving them with radios, we just cannot say that would not stop them from playing loud. I am saying that you must have some punitive measures for those who act illegally afterwards. I believe that there are some, in the minority, who, even though you try the rehabilitative approach, would want to do wrong. If we are trying to correct something in the society it is either we are taking away the licence totally—that kind of thing. I hope the Member for Couva North has an amendment to suit that—that you would take away the licence fully from that driver acting illegally or you would take it away for 20 years or something like that.

**5.35 p.m.**

We are saying, give the people at least a radio, so that they can listen to informative programmes. If there is a disaster in the country, they would be informed immediately. They would be able to listen to soft music, especially for

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those who travel long distances. It is my personal view, that if any Maxi-Taxi driver is found acting illegally after the Bill is passed, there must be punitive section that would allow action. I do not believe that everybody would be lawless; I believe that we have a society where the people are law-abiding, but it is how we handle our business.

When the Member for Arima said that if this measure is implemented there would not be sufficient persons to monitor these drivers, and that could never happen, one got the impression, that everybody in the society is lawless and that nothing could be corrected. I do not think that as a representative and as a government that message should be sent to the people. Everybody is not lawless. I am sure that even with the situation as is, it is the minority that is behaving badly.

If we implement the rehabilitative measures—just as we have public service reform, which is rehabilitative, there should also be police service reform. Out of that organized grouping, there can be people who can do rehabilitative work with the maxi-taxi drivers throughout Trinidad and Tobago. When that kind of work is done and there are legal measures to back that up, I am sure that everything would work well. The Government cannot come in haste and handle them like that without giving them an opportunity.

I listened to the Member for Diego Martin East. He said they did certain things which did not work. I do not agree that it had the depth of rehabilitativeness that it should have had.

**Mr. Imbert:** That was in your time in 1988.

**Miss P. Nicholson:** Madam Speaker, he is saying that it was in my time. I did not come to implement this system. Did I come here to say that there must not be loud music in the maxi-taxis? He is saying that, so he must do his home lesson first. He just cannot use someone's home lesson and say that he is using that to do this. He must do his rehabilitative and reform work with the people.

As the Member for Tobago East argued, these people have children. All the arguments made—except the one by the Member for St. Joseph—gave the impression that these maxi-taxi drivers do not have children; that they do not have families, that they do not have any moral values within them and they do not know anything about ethics. The Government does not want a strong moral society. That is the impression one gets coming from the Government benches.

I think that that message is wrong. Even though the Government feels something should be done, it should not say that it must be banning. The people

voted for the Government and put it in power to run the country because they feel it can run the country better than other people. The people want to be treated in that way. The position now is not right. I am trying to help him. He should do his home-lesson. Do rehabilitative work with the maxi-taxi drivers, even though I know I would be cleaning him out in 1996.

I had to compliment the Member for St. Joseph, and I mean that from the bottom of my heart. I am different from those people over there. I believe in strong moral values. I believe in ethics, particularly for politicians, because when we do not send out that message, the people would go in a certain direction and feel a certain way about us, like how they feel today about politicians. A member holds a ministerial position, he gets a car that nobody else could have obtained at that particular time; he sells it in one month and makes up an anancy story that the price of gas was doubled, so he sold it.

The people are not stupid. Somebody borrows \$12 million; it is not repaid and the debt must be written off. That poor person in Laventille—even the lady who comes here weekly and makes noise—who borrows a little change from a bank and cannot pay it back, would lose her little property for that money. She must learn to appreciate the good work that we are doing in the House, and if she can come here and listen, she would learn and help in the development of Laventille.

It is all these things that this leads to. If we want to ban the music—for example, it was said that TTUTA and others agree. It is good that TTUTA agrees. Ban it! What is the tone that teachers are setting in the society? I am prepared to bear my burden when I make statements of this kind. It is a serious statement that I am making. Neglected are basic practices like going to school early and preparing class-work, so that they can give the children their best. After carnival teachers must be there to teach the children, and the children must not be able to say they did not go to school or that a particular teacher is not coming to school, at all.

There are other moral values that I want to raise, but I would not raise them for certain reasons. I would use another time. If we the politicians do not set the tone, the teachers and the pastors—some of the pastors preach very loudly, then take the money from the church and disappear.

**Mr. Valley:** Palack!

**Miss P. Nicholson:** Madam Speaker, I did not say Palack. I do not know anything about that. I am talking about some American pastors whom I saw get some blade because of that. That is what I am talking about.

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Leaders must set the tone in the society. We have to understand that the people are not foolish. When we try to solve the problem with maxi-taxis and the loud music, we have to come from a holistic perspective. We as representatives must set a particular tone so that the people in the society may emulate us. This is my view on this.

Madam Speaker, I want to thank you for the opportunity that I have been given to make this contribution. I cannot sit unless I raise an argument in respect of the two islands. Every time we raise these questions, people look at us in a certain way. They tend to behave as if we feel this and that. It is not that. I did some home lesson which I always do before I come here and open my mouth. We do not have many maxi-taxis in Tobago. There are probably about 30 of them.

**Mr. Imbert:** Seventy-two maxi-taxis are registered.

**Miss P. Nicholson:** Even though it is 72, my 30 is a proper representative figure because I did Charlotteville, which is where I grew up. It is a very important area and that is the farthest part on that north-eastern corner. I did my home lesson with all of the maxi-taxis there. I did it with some in the west and north. There is no problem with loud music in Tobago.

**5.45 p.m.**

There is no problem with loud music in Tobago.

Music in the maxi-taxis or the taxis is also very, soothing supportive to the drivers especially when they have to do the long routes, for example, from Scarborough to Charlotteville, and when they are working with tourists. We must look at that because Tobago, we say, should be the centre-piece of tourism. Government believes that tourism is one of the areas that should be developed because it recognizes that energy is not the only area; that, besides energy, tourism probably produces as much money in the world, or more, therefore, we must have all the facilities to make the tourists happy and comfortable.

The maxi-taxis are used a lot on the tourism tours. Boats come in every Monday to the Scarborough harbour and the maxi-taxis are the centre-piece of their tours. It is organized so that they use those maxi-taxis first. I have been looking at them lately and a number of maxi-taxis take tourists on tours, take them to certain hotels to buy art and craft, and to certain beaches. Hotels like Arnos Vale and Grafton have several maxi-taxis that work with them. They take people around the island, to Bloody Bay, L'Anse Fourmi and those distant areas, and I believe that music is a very important feature.

I am not raising this just because Tobago is separate. I am raising this because of the role I believe it has to play in the whole development of tourism.

As I argued before, the distances that these—and I am not talking about your flat roads, you know. We have hills with a number of winding, narrow corners, too. That is another area I would like the Central Government to give attention to in the banning of music on maxi-taxis.

There might be a problem here in Trinidad, but there is no such problem in Tobago and to the role it should be playing regarding tourism, outside the other areas, I would like the Government to give some serious consideration. As the Member for St. Joseph would say, I would like them to give serious consideration to that area.

I support the other clauses, but I want to stress that clause 9 is an area of concern to us in the Opposition—the NAR and the UNC. We have one voice on this clause.

**Madam Speaker:** The hon. Member's speaking time 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 P. Nicholson:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, I will not be very long.

Clause 9 is the area of concern. We believe that there is a problem in the drafting of clause 9, which amends section 12A(1) and (2). We need an amendment here; we believe that deeper consideration should be given to these areas. There is the question of discrimination which should be addressed, and the question of the Tobago's tourism, which I just raised

We also would like to know that when we are dealing with areas like this which we feel would impact upon the moral values and the ethical development of our young people and our society, we must look at the Bill, not from a narrow, myopic perspective, but from a holistic perspective.

We, therefore, feel that this should be addressed in a more serious manner. While we support most of the Bill, I think this bill is problematic and the kind of support the Government would need for the total document if—to be passed is impossible unless the bill is totally overhauled.

Thank you.

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*Motion made and question proposed, That the House do now adjourn to Friday, February 25, 1994 at 1.30 p.m. [Hon. K. Valley]*

*Question put and agreed.*

*House adjourned accordingly.*

*Adjourned at 5.51 p.m.*