

*Leave of Absence**Friday, April 22, 1994***HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES***Friday, April 22, 1994*

The House met at 1.40 p.m.

PRAYERS[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]**LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, I have granted leave of absence from today's sitting of the House to the Member for Naparima (Mr. Subhas Panday); the Member for St. Ann's East (Hon. Wendell Mottley); the Member for Tabaquite (Dr. Carl Singh); the Member for Fyzabad (Mr. Chandresh Sharma); the Member for Caroni East (Mr. Shamshuddin Mohammed); the Member for Port of Spain South (Hon. Jean Pierre); and the Member for Tobago West (Miss Pamela Nicholson).

VACANT SEAT

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, section 69(3) of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago provides that:

“Where a vacancy occurs in the House of Representatives within the first four years of the life of the Parliament a bye-election shall be held to fill such vacancy not later than ninety days from the date of the announcement by the Speaker of the vacancy.”

I have in my possession a death certificate certified by the Registrar General, Mr. Bert Legere, which indicates that Mr. Cyril Rajaram, Member for Pointe-a-Pierre, died on April 15, 1994.

In accordance with the provisions of the Constitution which I have just read, I hereby declare the seat of Pointe-a-Pierre vacant.

CONDOLENCES**(Mr. Cyril Rajaram)**

The Minister of Education (Hon. Augustus Ramrekarsingh): Madam Speaker, when we met two weeks ago, the hon. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre presented the report of a select committee on the incorporation of the St. Ann's East Spiritual Baptist Church. Little did we know at the time that today we would be saying a few words in his memory. Little did we know that on that occasion,

Condolences (Mr. Cyril Rajaram)

Friday, April 22, 1994

[HON. A. RAMREKERSINGH]

April 8, it would be the last time that the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre would be making a contribution in this Parliament.

Mr. Cyril Rajaram was elected Member for Pointe-a-Pierre in December, 1991. Previously, he had served for some 33 years in the teaching service of Trinidad and Tobago. During the 28 months or so in which Mr. Rajaram was the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre, he made his contributions unobtrusively and without fanfare. While he did not speak on several occasions on the second reading of bills, he did considerable work during the process of being a member of parliamentary committees.

Very often it is believed that one's contribution in Parliament is determined solely by the criterion of eloquence or oratorical skills. Important as those things are, important as debate is, there is another quieter side of Parliament which is equally important, and the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre at the time, Mr. Rajaram, was one of those who made his contribution here to the work of this Parliament in an effective, quiet, unostentatious way. It is interesting that he was also a Minister of religion, and that his last contribution would be in relation to the incorporation of an ecclesiastical body.

We, on this side of the House, wish to express our sympathy to the family of Mr. Rajaram. We know that it is a great moment of grief for them and I am sure that I speak on behalf of all Members here when I say that our prayers are with them, so that they can surmount the difficulties in this their hour of grief.

To Mr. Cyril Rajaram, we say, thank you very much for the contribution you made in such dignified fashion. I end with a prayer:

Eternal rest grant unto him, O Lord.

And may perpetual light shine upon him.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Basdeo Panday (*Couva North*): Madam Speaker, on behalf of the Opposition, I join with the hon. Minister in expressing our deepest sympathy and our sincerest condolences to the family of our former Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

The death of any human being is a loss always to all mankind. The hon. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre was not anybody's political gift to the world but he was a down-to-earth person, inoffensive and pleasant, and I am sure he would have done his duty to the best of his ability.

I recall, however, about three weeks ago I came into the Parliament and saw him looking rather poorly. I went across to him and told him that he must not

Condolences (Mr. Cyril Rajaram)

Friday, April 22, 1994

allow this job to kill him; he must be like me. He told me that I must tell him the secret. I wish I did.

All of us on this side extend to his family our sincerest condolences, our deepest sympathy and hope that God would give them the courage and equanimity to bear their loss. We pray that his soul rest in peace.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Arthur N. R. Robinson (*Tobago East*): Madam Speaker, it is always a noteworthy event when a parliamentarian dies in the course of duty; and so it is very meet and fitting that we of this Parliament should take note of the departure of our former colleague, the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre, and extend our deepest sympathy to his widow and other bereaved relatives.

I did not have the honour of getting to know the Member very well and I seldom heard his contributions in this Parliament, but from what I have noted in the media, and from what I have heard, it seems that he serviced his constituents in other ways well, and that is a matter for commendation. So, I join in these expressions of sympathy and commendation and ask that these words, together with those of the Minister of Education and the Leader of Opposition, be conveyed to his widow and bereaved relatives.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, I too, should like to join with the hon. Minister of Education, the hon. Leader of the Opposition and the hon. Member for Tobago East in expressing my sympathy and condolences to the bereaved family. I, myself, have not really had the opportunity of knowing Mr. Rajaram too well, but very often when I do not know people, I listen to what others have to say about them and I get a fairly good impression of the nature of that individual.

I had the opportunity of going to visit the family during the period that his body lay at the funeral home and I listened to all that was being said by persons who were there, and it was really very heartening to hear each one—they were almost unanimous—saying that he was a person devoted to service—serving the church the family his constituency and the community; and I thought that if that is so, then surely he, too, would have heard the voice: Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter now into the joy of the Lord.

Condolences (Mr. Cyril Rajaram)
[MADAM SPEAKER]

Friday, April 22, 1994

So, my prayer for him is, wherever you are, Cyril Rajaram, you are in the joy of the Lord, peace be with you. May the light of God guide your soul wherever that soul is at this time.

Hon. Members, at this point, can we stand and observe one minute's silence in memory of the soul of Cyril Rajaram?

The House stood.

PAPERS LAID

1. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Tunapuna Regional Corporation for the period October 1, 1991 to December 31, 1991. [*The Minister of Industry and Trade and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. K. Valley)*]
2. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Trinidad and Tobago Export Development Corporation for the year ended December 31, 1992. [*Hon. K. Valley*]

Papers 1 and 2 to be referred to the Public Accounts Committee.

ISLAMIC HOME FOR CHILDREN (INC'N) BILL

Special Select Committee Report Presentation

Mr. Raymond Palackdharrysingh (*Caroni Central*): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the report of the Special Select Committee of the House of Representatives appointed to consider and report on a Bill for the incorporation of the Islamic Home for Children and matters incidental thereto.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

The following questions stood on the Order Paper:

Prime Minister's Trips

- 63.** (a) Could the Prime Minister state to this honourable House the cost to the public of Trinidad and Tobago of his recent trip to Cyprus, the United Kingdom and the United States of America?
- (b) Could the Prime Minister give the names of the persons who formed part of the official party at each of the destinations and could he inform this honourable House of the expenses incurred by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago for having those persons as part of the trip? [*Mr. R. L. Maharaj*]

**Domestic Route
(Air Fares)**

- 82.** (a) Is the Minister aware that there was an increase in air fare after the new domestic travel arrangements were established from August 8, 1993?
- (b) Were there any identified concessions that the two airlines serving the domestic route should meet? If there were, would the Minister identify these concessions?
- (c) Since the increased air fares, did the Government or its agent, ATLA, confirm these changes? If the answer is in the affirmative, would the Minister say why there is a difference in the fare structure between British West Indian Airways (BWIA) and Air Caribbean?
- (d) Would the Minister please inform the House what were the conditions outlined in the agreement reached after an attempt was made to keep or limit BWIA's operation on the domestic route? [*Miss P. Nicholson*]

**Drug Trade
(Foreign Assistance)**

- 86.** Would the Minister of National Security kindly state:
- (1) whether, since his Government assumed office, any government or agency of it offered any assistance (whether in the form of money or the provision of goods and services) to the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to help it to combat crime and/or to help it to combat the drug trade and/or to help it to promote law and order and/or to help it to promote national security?
- (2) If the answer is in the affirmative:
- (a) Would the Minister give particulars of the offers?
- (b) Would the Minister state whether:
- (i) these offers were accepted or refused or allowed to lapse?
- (ii) any conditions were to be satisfied by the Government for any of these offers?
- (iii) the Government satisfied the conditions attached to the offers? [*Mr. R. L. Maharaj*]

**Petrotrin Refinery
(Gaseous Pollutants)**

- 87.** Could the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries kindly state:
- (a) whether he is aware that the “waste oil” and other gaseous pollutants emanating from the Petrotrin Refinery in Pointe-a-Pierre are adversely affecting the residents in the Marabella area especially along the Guaracara River?
 - (b) If the answer is in the affirmative, could the Minister state what steps are being taken to improve and to alleviate the suffering of the residents of the Marabella area? [*Dr. C. Singh*]

**National Insurance Board
(Judgment Implementation)**

- 88.** Could the Minister of Social Development state:
- (a) when the National Insurance Board intends to implement the decision of the National Insurance Appeals Tribunal which handed out a written judgment in favour of widows and survivors of deceased insured persons according to Class “C” ratings?
 - (b) Could the Minister also state whether it would be necessary for each family, so affected, to apply individually for these benefits that are due to them since the amendment of Act No. 35 of 1971 by Act No. 23 of 1980? [*Dr. C. Singh*]

Sugar Factories Emissions

- 89.** (a) Is the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources aware that the emissions of soot and fly ash from the sugar factories of Caroni (1975) Limited at Brechin Castle and Usine Ste. Madeleine are causing discomfort and hardships to residents of Central and South Trinidad?
- (b) If he is aware, can he say what has been done or is being done to arrest the problem?
 - (c) If he is not aware, can he undertake to make inquiries so that he may be aware and respond to the question? [*Mr. R. L. Maharaj*]

**Cunapo Southern Road
(Landslip)**

91. Could the Minister of Works and Transport kindly state:

whether he is aware that work has ceased on the massive landslip and major depression on the Cunapo Southern Road at Sadhoo Road Junction? If the answer is in the affirmative, would the Minister state:

- (a) what remedial work will be done to prevent the road from slipping further?
- (b) what remedial work will be done immediately to the massive road depression which makes the road impassible to vehicular traffic?
- (c) when work will begin to remedy the entire situation?
- (d) when the said project will be completed? *[Mr. Krish Jurai]*

Nariva Sanctuary

92. Could the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources kindly state:

- (a) what system is in effect to prevent farmers from encroaching on the Nariva Sanctuary?
- (b) what steps he is taking both in the short run and in the long run to prevent the further destruction of the environment of the Nariva Swamp? *[Mr. K. Jurai]*

URP Estates

93. Could the Minister of Works and Transport and Minister of Local Government kindly state: with respect to work being undertaken on URP estates:

- (a) the names and locations of estates on which work is being undertaken by URP workers?
- (b) why is it that only well-known PNM party supporters and activists are given regular jobs on these estates and the unemployed, poor and destitute persons are not given any employment on these estates?
- (c) what sums of money are spent on each of these estates per year?
- (d) what is the income derived from these respective estates per year?
- (e) if these estates are running at a significant loss, why does the Government continue to be involved in these ventures? *[Mr. K. Jurai]*

**Justice Crane Issue
(Financial Liability)**

- 99.** Could the Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs state:
- (a) the financial liability it incurred in the hon. Mr. Justice Crane issue giving the amounts it paid and are owed to the lawyers it retained? Could the Attorney General give particulars of the liability, including the names of the persons owed and the amounts owed or paid?
 - (b) specifically what sum the Government anticipates it would have to pay in damages and costs to the hon. Mr. Justice Crane?
 - (c) whether in the light of the contents of the Privy Council judgment in the matter, he and/or his Government intends to take any steps against members of the Judicial and Legal Service Commission who made the impugned decisions? [*Mr. J. Humphrey*]

**Attorneys-at-Law
(Retainment)**

- 100.** (a) Could the Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs give to this honourable House the names of the attorneys-at-law and the sums it incurred in retaining attorneys-at-law since it got into office in 1991? Please give the purposes for which the lawyers were retained and the amount of moneys paid or owed to the lawyers?
- (b) Could the Attorney General state in each case the reason or reasons it was necessary for the Government to retain the attorneys-at-law instead of using an attorney employed with the state? [*Mr. J. Humphrey*]

**Statutory Bodies
(Retainment of Attorneys)**

- 101.** Could the Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs state whether the:
- (i) statutory boards;
 - (ii) statutory authorities;
 - (iii) public authorities;

- (iv) service commissions; and
- (v) Government-owned companies.

retained attorneys after the Government got into office in 1991? If they did, could he give particulars of the names of the attorneys, the dates of their retainment, the nature of the cases which they were retained to do, the amount of moneys paid or owed to them and the reasons for retaining them in preference to using attorneys employed with the state for the purpose for which they were retained? [*Mr. J. Humphrey*]

**Naparima Constituency
(Water Supply)**

102. Could the Minister of Public Utilities state:

- (a) Why La Paille Road, Churkoo Village and Manahambre Road have not been receiving pipe-borne water while immediate surrounding areas are well supplied?
- (b) When can the following areas expect even a partial pipe-borne water supply:
 - (i) Sugar Road, Bronte, Ciperio Road;
 - (ii) Papourie Road in the vicinity of Inverness Presbyterian Shool;
 - (iii) Lengua Village Papourie Road;
 - (iv) Kanhai Road North and South;
 - (v) Kansammy and Rees Road;
 - (vi) Jaipaulsingh Road;
 - (vii) Cunjal Road.
- (c) When will WASA obtain the materials and personnel in order to repair the numerous burst mains in the constituency of Naparima? [*Mr. S. Panday*]

Road Repaving

103. Could the Minister of Works and Transport state:

- (a) Whether the repaving of the Naparima/Mayaro Main Road between St. Clement's Junction and Tramline Street, Princes Town would have been included in the 1994 Budget?

- (b) Why the repaving of the Naparima/Mayaro Main Road in the vicinity of Malgretoute, Iere Village, Mt. Stewart has been improperly done?
- (c) Why are there still many potholes in the areas referred to in 2(a)?
[Mr. S. Panday]

URP Projects

104. Could the Minister of Works and Transport state:

- (a) How many URP projects are there in Trinidad?
- (b) The exact locations of these projects?
- (c) The nature and types of projects?
- (d) How many URP projects are there in Naparima?
- (e) The exact locations of these projects in Naparima? [Mr. S. Panday]

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Madam Speaker, after consultation with the Leader of the Opposition, we have agreed that the questions listed on today's Order Paper be deferred for a period of one week.

Questions, by leave, deferred.

ADJOURNMENT (LEAVE REQUEST)

(Closure of Schools)

Mr. Sahid Hosein (Siparia): Madam Speaker, the matter relates to the closure of a large number of schools in several parts of the country and in the Siparia constituency, in particular.

It is definite because thousands of school children are being sent home daily because of a lack of water at their schools. It is urgent because since the new school term has begun, a large number of schools have been unable to function. References to the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Public Utilities have not brought about a resolution to the problem.

It is of public importance in that children are being denied the right to education and, therefore, are at a disadvantage when compared to their peers who are not so affected. The closure of the schools also means, that a large number of children are left unsupervised, resulting in unwanted consequences.

Additionally, this problem must be addressed now, in that there is a worsening of the situation when compared to the previous term, where in one instance last

Adjournment (Leave Request)

Friday, April 22, 1994

term a school had to be closed for 17 days. Obviously then, this situation cannot be allowed to continue and the issue has to be urgently addressed. I am satisfied that this matter ought not to await a Motion on the Adjournment next week, having regard to the denial of education to so many young people.

I also wish to state that I was mandated by several school principals and hundreds of parents to raise this matter. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: I am not satisfied that this matter falls under Standing Order No. 12, but like the Member for Siparia I, too, would urge the Minister of Education and the Minister of Public Utilities to put their heads together with the hon. Member and the school principals to find a quick solution to this problem. I have spoken with the Member for Siparia, who has intimated all his efforts to me, and although I find that the matter is not of urgent public importance, I do want to appeal to all parties concerned to see whether there could not be a resolution to the situation with respect to these schools.

2.00 p.m.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Minister of Trade and Tourism and Minister of Local Government (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Madam Speaker, I beg to move that the House now consider Motion No. 7 under "Private Business" on page 12 of the Order Paper.

ISLAMIC HOME FOR CHILDREN (INC'N) BILL Special Select Committee Report

Adoption

Mr. Raymond Palackdharrysingh (Caroni Central): Madam Speaker, I beg to move,

That this House adopt the Report of the Special Select Committee of the House of Representatives appointed to consider and report on a Bill for the incorporation of the Islamic Home for Children and matters incidental thereto.

Question put and agreed to.

Report adopted.

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

Bill accordingly read the third time and passed.

Friday, April 22, 1994

**BRIAN LARA
(CONGRATULATIONS)**

Mr. Mohammed Haniff (*Princes Town*): Madam Speaker, having regard to the current development in our nation and in the Caribbean, please allow me a short statement.

Let me at this very first sitting of the House after that great achievement by one of our young and talented world-class professionals, Mr. Brian Charles Lara, join with all sports-loving people all over the globe in offering congratulations and best wishes to this youthful son, and to express all support to him and to the West Indies team for continued success which is the main talking point and strength of our people.

Also, let me extend congratulations to the National Football Team and all other sportsmen and women, and young people in general at this time in the history of our country. These achievements are indeed great moments for us. It is our hope that this will inspire our youth in particular to strive for excellence at all times.

ROAD REPAIRS

Mr. Mohammed Haniff: Madam Speaker, I beg to move the Motion standing in my name, which was tabled over two years ago. It reads as follows:

Whereas it is well known that the majority of roads in this country are in urgent need of repair, especially in rural areas;

And Whereas a large number of vehicles and equipment needed to effect such repair, whether under the control of the Ministry of Works and Transport of local government bodies, are not in working condition,

And Whereas the necessary materials for such repairs are available in this country;

And Whereas this Government has not demonstrated any serious undertaking to effect such repairs:

Be it Resolved,

That the Government be condemned for its lack of attention in trying to improve the state of the roads in this country,

And Be It Further Resolved,

That this honourable House recommend that the Government take the necessary steps to urgently repair vehicles and equipment needed to effect repairs to the country's roads, drains and bridges.

Madam Speaker, when this Motion was filed, the roads in this country were in a bad state. Today, two years later, they are in a worse situation because very little has been done and in most cases nothing has been done.

I speaker of roads generally, whether these roads are under the control and responsibility of the Ministry of Works and Transport or local government bodies; whether they are under the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources or even in many of the areas which have been developed for housing by private developers who during the boom years got approval for poor quality work, sold the lands and left. Most of these areas have not been taken over by any government agency so those areas have not been cared for or maintained at all.

The resident of such areas are taxpayers, and there is need for a firm policy so that these areas can be taken care of by the local government body, or the Ministry of Works and Transport, or the National Housing Authority. These areas need attention like any other part of the country.

Not too long ago in this House I was listening to a presentation by the hon. Member for Arima. The hon. Member said it should be a signal of the willingness of Members of both sides of this House to transcend party politics in the interest of putting the nation first. I am in total agreement with that statement. All I say about that, however, is that it should apply not only when one issue is being discussed, but it should apply across the board. That sort of co-operation has never really been witnessed in this Parliament, and I am not satisfied with that. I therefore join with the hon. Member for Arima in calling for that kind of co-operation in this House.

We have a situation where the presence of the URP is outside there and no agency has the responsibility to go out there and do the work which is required. If, however, there is a PNM connection in some of these areas, it is likely that you will get URP to come in and do the work. On the other hand, if those residents have no PNM connection, "all hell break loose"; there will be no work done in that area by the URP, and there is no other agency.

The URP is operated by the PNM and its party groups. There is no government policy as far as the URP operations are concerned and as a result we have that situation.

2.10 p.m.

Today, I do not feel like going into the details in presenting this case. There is the feeling in the Parliament that we are all sharing in this very historic moment. I am somewhat daunted in resenting this case.

Mr. B. Panday: Get up there and hit that for four.

Mr. M. Haniff: However, what do I see? We see there is a situation with LIDP which has been transformed to URP. There are talks, allegations and statements of fraud, bias, political patronage and favouritism in the URP and our roads and infrastructure are not being attended to.

Mr. Imbert rose—

Madam Speaker: Would you give way?

Mr. Imbert: Sorry, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Proceed please.

Mr. M. Haniff: Sure, Madam Speaker, if the Minister wishes.

LIDP is now referred to as the URP. That is the new name. Incidentally, I came up with a clipping which reads, "LIDP Fraud." The newspaper is dated Saturday, October 24, 1992. The Minister said that arrests would be made soon.

Madam Speaker: I see the Minister is standing again. Would you give way?

Mr. Imbert: Madam Speaker, I sat down because I thought that the Member was simply using URP in reference to the Motion, but it refers to roads and equipment. It has absolutely nothing to do with URP and fraud for that matter.

Mr. M. Haniff: In such a situation, I would prefer the hon. Minister to tell this House what then is the responsibility of URP, in the context that we see them on the roadside performing certain functions which are normally the responsibility of the local government bodies. By and large, we do not see them on the roads where all sorts of things are happening, including as I said, calls from members of the public—accusations of corruption and all sorts of things.

We are saying that the funds which should have been allocated to the Ministry of Works—

Madam Speaker: The Motion is that this House recommend that Government take the necessary steps to urgently repair vehicles and equipment. I think you should pay attention to all these vehicles: what state of repair they are in; how they can be used in improving the country's roads, drains and bridges.

If you wish to discuss fraud in URP then I am afraid you would have to bring a separate motion to do so. You have very good material here on which you can develop a healthy debate. I would urge you to do that.

Mr. M. Haniff: Yes, Madam Speaker. It is in that context, I would continue. I am coming to that part of the Motion.

I am saying that money that was intended for the Ministry of Works and Transport, and for the local government bodies regarding their responsibilities, is now being utilized by URP and the work is not being done.

The hon. Minister of Works and Transport admits that there is a seven-year backlog of road repairs in this country. I ask: Why is it seven years of backlog? What has happened? Have we not been spending money and doing work during the last seven years? Which of the seven years are we talking about? How long would it take us to make up for that backlog? The situation out there is extremely bad.

As a result, I ask: Which are the seven years? Is it last year, the year before that and the five years preceding those two years? Or is it last year and the year before that which is 1993 and 1992 and 1985 and four years back, the 1981 to 1985 period? I am of the view that that is the period when very little was done and the last two years under the control of the present Government. As such, we have a seven-year backlog.

In this country, sometimes we are given the impression that lack of money is the reason for the present condition of our roads and infrastructure. That is not exactly the situation. Money, equipment and manpower have been utilized over this period. Based on what is happening outside there, it is frightening to say that there is a backlog of seven years. We want to know why this situation has developed and how long we must wait to get the necessary attention and repairs.

Let me give an idea of the amount of money which has been utilized during that period that we are talking about. My calculations are that \$45 billion was spent under recurrent services in the Ministry of Works and Transport from 1984 to 1993. What is the condition of our roads?

Mr. Imbert: The annual allocation for the entire Ministry of Works and Transport is of the order of \$500 million, so that over a ten-year period, it would amount to \$5 billion. That is the entire ministry. If it is broken down into roads, it would be far less than that, maybe 10 per cent of that figure. It would be a few hundred million; so that \$45 billion could not possibly be correct.

Mr. M. Haniff: Madam Speaker, as I said I am talking about figures from 1984 to 1993. If that is not the figure, I would not mind if the Minister would give us the correct figure. The figures are as follows:

Year	\$ Million	Year	\$ Million
1984	330	1991	994

Road Repairs
[MR. HANIFF]

Friday, April 22, 1994

Year	\$ Million	Year	\$ Million
1985	296	1992	485
1986	299	1993	412
1987	174		

Mr. Valley: If the Member adds those figures, I cannot see him getting \$45 billion.

Mr. M. Haniff: I am saying that is why I am looking at the detailed figures. There might have been an error in the figures that I quoted; I now realize that it seems to be \$4.5 billion, rather than \$45 billion. However, the point I am making is that: Are we saying that there was no money? Since we had this amount of money which was expended on the roads and infrastructure, why is there now a backlog of seven years?

It is not a situation where we did not have money. Now that it is being said there is a backlog of seven years, the Government is looking to borrow money.

Mr. Imbert: The figures that the Member has called out—is that the total allocation for the Ministry of Works and Transport—total personnel expenditure of goods and services development programme, the entire thing? Does that include drainage, highways and construction?

Mr. M. Haniff: Yes, total recurrent.

Mr. Imbert: Thank you.

Mr. M. Haniff: Now while that expenditure was taking place under recurrent expenditure, we had development funds separate and apart from the recurrent funds, such as \$2.5 million; \$1.2 million; \$184 million in 1989; \$48 million 1993; \$43 million 1992. The point I am making by quoting these figures is that we have had massive expenditure, yet we find that there is a seven-year backlog. We have flooding and all sorts of problems in this country, and yet, there is a seven-year backlog.

2.20 p.m.

The Minister says to this country and to the Parliament that we have a seven-year backlog, so we have to look for money to repair our roads and drains. What do we have? In this time when there is so much talk about tourism and encouraging investment, it is perhaps ironic that a country which is endowed with the rich resource of a pitch lake, and one in which the government claims it is

keen on attracting investment and promoting tourism, would allow its infrastructure to decay over the years to the extent that it has.

Indeed, there is one school of thought that there are reasons why this is happening. I can remember thinking that one of the reasons is to cause motorists very regularly to have to buy expensive parts and have extensive repairs done to their cars. In this time it is costing a great deal, and people are squealing all over the country about this situation.

We continue with a situation where big expenses have been undertaken and the Government is probably looking to borrow big money to continue to do what ought to have already been done. Side by side with that, we have a situation where the Government is claiming that it wishes to repair all the roads in the country, notwithstanding the fact that there is a backlog and a situation of layoffs, retrenchment, early retirement, voluntary separation; and in these situations these workers will not be replaced.

The President General of the National Union of Government and Federated Workers in a clipping is quoted to have said that 4,200 members will be sent home by the end of the month. Those members of that union are daily-paid workers attached to the local government bodies and the Ministry of Works, and their duties are to attend to that problem. In that situation, I ask: How does Government intend to meet that backlog and take care of the situation with our roads, drainage and bridges?

Also, the vehicles and equipment which belong to the Ministry of Works and the local government bodies are not being attended to, so that there is a double situation. The number of workers who have been with the Ministry of Works and the local government bodies has been increased over the years, but the demands have increased on the Ministry of Works, the local government bodies and others. The number of workers has not been increased and as a result the roads continue to deteriorate.

What is happening today? We are going to reduce that staff by 4,200 by the end of this month; there will be no replacement for them, and side by side with that we have had a lot of equipment lined up at the Ministry of Works and the local government bodies, which is going to nought because of lack of repairs and maintenance. Nothing is happening with those vehicles and I ask: How then do we intend to repair those roads? How then do we intend to deal with the flooding problems? How then do we intend to deal with the hundreds of landslips all over the country?

Road Repairs
[MR. HANIFF]

Friday, April 22, 1994

In the Princes Town constituency alone, I have a report from the Ministry of Works that there are over 100 landslips that need to be attended to urgently. Workers are being sent home equipment is not being repaired, and that situation continues to get worse. How then does Government intend to deal with it? Is it a case that Government intends to send home all workers who are attached to the local government bodies and the Ministry of Works? The last thing I heard is that workers with over 10 years service will be made permanent, but they will not be replaced when they attain the age of retirement. So, we see that the intention is to get rid of the staff.

The same thing is happening with the equipment. I have in my possession a list of the equipment in the local government body, the Princes Town Regional Corporation. There are 62 pieces of equipment of different types. I will not go into the details, but I will tell you that 11 of those are managing on the roads a little. They are not in the best possible condition. It is in that context that I ask: What have we done with the moneys? What have we done in the present situation?

Are we going to contract out all the work? Are we, in fact, giving up the responsibility for those workers and equipment at the Ministry of Works and the local government bodies? I am expecting the Minister of Works to tell this House and the country whether that is the intention, because workers, local government representatives and the people are getting tired of that situation; they are getting fed up and frustrated. Even where workers are on the job, materials and releases are not being made so again, very little is happening.

Now that is contrary to what is happening in the URP. Although production is not high in the URP, they have no problems with equipment or materials. The policy and intention must be examined.

Road Improvement Programme, RIP. I know that the hon. Minister will tell us that this is in place. I can tell you what I have observed. There is confusion, and there are charges of corruption. The programme is moving at a very slow pace and nothing else is happening in the Ministry of Works apart from work on a few selected roads.

Let me give an example of what is happening in the Victoria East district. When the hon. Minister made his announcement in the House, he said that there would have been consultation in selecting the roads, notwithstanding the recommendations of the technical people. So, 12 roads were recommended for repairs under the Road Improvement Programme in the Victoria East district. My

information is that work has started on two of those roads. It could be more. But my information is that work has started on two—the Naparima/Mayaro Road and the St. Croix Road.

On the Naparima/Mayaro Road, what we are observing is that the potholes are being fixed, but the surfacing that is being done and the base materials which are being put down by the contractor are of poor quality. I observed this and drew it to the attention of the Civil Engineer of the district.

What is happening with the other 10 projects? When would they start and in which six months, as was stated by the Minister, would these roads start, and when would they be completed?

Side by side with that, what is happening is that some potholes are being patched. But what sort of contracts have been awarded? I noticed that some contractors are working alongside the little labour left in the Ministry of Works. Labourers from the Ministry of works are putting down the base materials and then the contractors are working alongside them and resurfacing. The question is being asked whether the contractors are not being paid for work that is being done by the labour from the Ministry of Works.

2.30 p.m.

Therefore, I am asking the Minister to clarify that situation. While that is happening, there are 15 other roads, ten of which are not being attended to under the Road Improvement Programme. Nothing has started as yet. There are 15 other roads, all in terrible condition with over 100 landslips and nothing is happening, because the little labour is being concentrated where the road improvement work is taking place, to the extent that certain roads are closed.

I am using this as a reference. I am acquainted with what is happening in the Victoria East district, but similarly, the same type of situation exists in most parts of the country, and especially in the constituencies represented by the UNC. The roads and the infrastructure have been allowed to deteriorate over the years, and very little is happening. This Minister came here and gave the impression that all the roads in the country would be fixed—just give him a chance to borrow \$700 or \$800 million.

I know of a situation where another PNM Government Minister of Works said to this country that he was going to repair all the roads, as this present Minister is saying. And what did he do? He brought in the Germans and formed the Secondary Roads Company (SRC). What has happened? Millions of dollars went

*Road Repairs**Friday, April 22, 1994*

[MR. HANIFF]

down the drain. First class equipment came into the country. Millions of dollars were spent in all sorts of ways. We have had very little improvement to our roads. Here today, after these millions have been used up we are told that we have a seven-year backlog.

The only thing we can see is a few millionaires coming out of the Secondary Roads Company. The equipment, distributed in different parts of the country, in some cases is lying there rotting. The accounts of the SRC are not yet up to date so we cannot say exactly what is the situation. But, indeed, we had a situation where there was good equipment as well as much money involved and first-class technical advice. What then is the problem as regards the roads and infrastructure?

The present Government are saying: Let us borrow some money and we are going to deal with all the problems on the roads. We are going to repair every one of them. At present, there are four major government programmes for the rehabilitation of roads and bridges. Two of the programmes are to be jointly financed by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and the Inter-American Development Bank. The first programme is the rural access roads and bridges programme being undertaken by virtue of loan No. 700/C TT, US\$31.5 million. I would like to humbly enquire whether anything has started; if it has, where it has started, and what is the position with loan No. 1?

We were told that the second programme under the IDB would be treated according to the results of a comprehensive highway maintenance study which was scheduled for completion by the end of March, 1994. The Minister may choose to tell us what is that situation. The loan that is being sought in that case is US \$100 million.

With respect to the third, Madam Speaker, we are talking about another TT \$110 million, giving a total of TT \$862 million. We are talking about borrowing moneys on top of what this country is owing and Government has a reputation for not accounting for these moneys, and we are not seeing our money's worth. We are struggling to pay the debts of this country. We are seeking to borrow loans to the tune of TT \$862 million, plus the 5 per cent tax. Why are our roads and bridges in their present condition?

With this Road Improvement Programme, as has happened with the SRC, there are already many complaints about all sorts of corruption. In my possession, I have a clipping from the *Sunday Mirror*, April 17, 1994. "Inferior hot mix rejected, but contractor back in play." I am sure that the Minister knows very well

about what has been said here. The name of the company which is being accused of using bad material is "Jusamco". I do not know who they are and I do not know whether this is true or not, but we have not heard any statement.

Technical people of the Ministry of Works are said to have rejected the material saying that the quality is bad. What do we have, however? The contractor is back on the job, spreading material as usual, as though nothing happened. I would like the hon. Minister to tell us whether he has investigated this, whether it is in fact so, and if so, what steps have been taken, and whether proper criteria have gone into awarding these contracts.

This article goes on to say that in this day and age when accountability ought to be the number one priority in this nation, when we speak about the scarcity of funds and accountability, the contracts have not been awarded in accordance with Central Tenders Board Regulations. In fact, this article is saying that the contracts have been broken up so that the awards could have been made in the way they were made.

This country has a history of all sorts of corruption, inaccuracies and inefficiencies. We are right now in a situation where each dollar expended ought to be properly accounted for, but we find that contracts are being awarded contrary to the regulations outlined. Not a word is being said, and as a result we would expect that the hon. Minister would make the situation clear as to whether that is so, what he has done, and what he intends to do.

We are in the dry season. Last year we had a terrible year with respect to flooding. Central Trinidad, South Trinidad and other parts of the country experienced serious flooding. I would like the Minister to tell us, because on the ground we have not seen anything taking place that will, in fact, deal with flooding during the wet season. This is the time that we should be dredging the rivers and doing the necessary construction work. The Minister says that the 5 per cent road tax will be utilized this year for patching potholes and resurfacing. I am saying that that is not the best way. While some potholes are being attended to, the more important thing is that we should be dealing with the infrastructure. We should be dealing with the drainage system before the wet season. What is going to happen? Any schoolchild could tell you that again we are going to have erosions, we are going to have floods and we are going to have damage in those areas. We have flooding year after year, but the Government is only planning to deal with it.

Road Repairs
[MR. HANIFF]

Friday, April 22, 1994

2.40 p.m.

The Government has announced a system through which moneys will be put in its hands to do some work; it has chosen, therefore, to patch a few potholes and leave the infrastructure as it. What is, therefore, going to happen? My conclusion is that nothing has happened and nothing will happen, because the Government does not care about the flooding; it is not directly affected. As a result, I would like the hon. Minister to tell us what has been done, what is currently happening in this dry season. Within a month or two, according to our weather pattern, the rains will come.

Mr. Imbert: I thank the hon. Member for giving way. Could I ask, since this Motion deals with roads, which is what I am seeing here, would he like me to respond about flooding in this Motion, or in another Motion dealing with flooding?

Mr. M. Haniff: Madam Speaker, please allow me to read this:

“Be it further Resolved that this honourable House recommend that the Government take the necessary steps to urgently repair vehicles and equipment needed to effect these repairs to the country’s roads, drains and bridges.”

Why do we have to repair drains? To take care of the rainfall, to take care of the excess water. I really do not understand what the Minister is saying when he asks if I want him to tell us what he is doing about flooding. Most certainly we wish that he would tell us what is happening about flooding; nothing has happened in two years, nothing is happening now, and that dreadful memory of the floods that are with us year after year is with us. Within a few months we shall have it all over again.

Hon. Member: We will block the road again.

Mr. M. Haniff: If it comes to that, it might happen again. If the citizens of the country realize that they are not getting the attention required they may take all sorts of action, as happened somewhere in the deep South, when I understand the Member for La Brea was present.

This issue of privatization and sending home workers is frightening. But notwithstanding all the statements being made by the Ministers on the other side, I wish to point out that the blueprint that was handed down when they went and knelt before the IMF, the World Bank, and other lending agencies—in the absence of consultation with workers of this country, the citizens, and their representative organizations—none of those plans will work.

So what is the Government doing? It plans to send home workers—the TDA, the local government bodies, right-sizing at BWIA, PTSC and others. The same thing that is happening with the local government bodies is happening in the Ministry of Works and the Ministry of Agriculture—privatization all over, with no care for the workers of the country. Workers' jobs are being declared redundant—permanent, casual or otherwise—without any care for the social issues that will arise as a result of these measures. And definitely that is going to have an effect on the overall atmosphere in this country. Once the workers from the agencies with responsibilities for the infrastructure in the country are being sent home and equipment is not being attended to, no new ones, no repairs, nothing is happening, a dreadful situation is just ahead of us.

What are we to expect in such a situation? It is happening every day—fortunately, certain things have happened. What is happening today regarding our young sports personalities is the best thing that could have happened to this country, otherwise, today, like other sittings of this Parliament there would have been people demonstrating outside. Monday will come and other days will come. I am, therefore, calling on this Government to stop dreaming dreams about fixing all the roads and borrowing millions and not doing the work that is necessary.

So, Madam Speaker, in the spirit of what is happening in the nation today—when I came here I had consultations with my colleagues [*Interruption*] Madam Speaker, I was in a particular village last night, where there is no water—Robert Village Hindu School and the community, no water. The local government body's equipment is not functioning; it is known that the local government equipment normally transports water in situations where there is urgent need. There are no trucks at the Water and Sewerage Authority, so it cannot help; the Fire Services, not helping either.

And when I went there last night, one of the main complaints of these residents from Robert Village Road—where the school is being closed on a daily basis as a result of a lack of water—was this: “Until such time as the pipeline is repaired and WASA comes to the area to do what is required, please try to patch the roads, because we cannot even pull the box carts on the roads.” And box carts, are the normal way of transportation in the rural areas; that has been so for years and it is happening today, in a situation where the children have to go out at all hours of the day and night to fetch some water. And they also said to me, please see if you can provide some sort of material to even patch the potholes.

The Minister of Works is quoted as saying that these local roads are under the responsibility of the local government bodies, as if that is not well known. That is

Road Repairs

[MR. HANIFF]

Friday, April 22, 1994

very well known. The point, however, is that the local government bodies are being starved for funds, nothing is happening—they have no funding, they have no equipment, they cannot even send a piece of equipment to La Brea for a load of pitch. The responsibility is with the local government bodies to prevent flooding in the local drains and roads; the responsibility is with the local government to repair the roads in the local government areas. But they are being deliberately starved for funds. And let me add, that is especially so in those councils controlled by the UNC.

It is in that context that I quoted the Member for Arima who is now in the House. And in the spirit in which it was said I want to call on this Government to stop dreaming big dreams about repairing all the roads when it cannot even patch a pothole; let us get up and get together. The National Commission for Self-help has thousands and thousands of applications from citizens to try to deal with the roads in their respective areas. The Government agencies have given up the responsibility and, therefore, there are hundreds and hundreds of self-help projects. The people are being called upon to put their hands into their pockets, to provide labour, hire equipment—because there is no equipment either in the Ministry of Works and Transport or the Ministry of Local Government—materials are not forthcoming and, as a result, there is no one to turn to.

So residents go to the National Self-help Commission for help, the commission provides some assistance, the people provide some assistance, and that seems to be the method being allowed to continue by the Government: let people help themselves; we are not going to undertake our own responsibilities again. What is happening there only allows very little repairs to take place.

If then, the responsibility is with the Ministry of Works and the local government bodies, and some of it is with the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, I would want to hear the Minister tell this nation, tell this Parliament, what he is doing, what he intends to do, what he has done so far. If they cannot do the work, the spirit, as far as the citizens are concerned, is to offer co-operation. You are saying money is a problem. Let us go to the local government bodies and repair a few pieces of equipment; collectively, it could be done! That spirit coming from the authorities—the Minister is here, you know.

2.50 p.m.

I remember very well, I am the first Member in this current term to have written him inviting him to Princes Town. I have written him on several occasions to remind him. No, he would not come to Princes Town, and he says that he

cannot spend \$4 million to repair 19 landslips on St. Julien Road. Since he cannot do that, do not spend any, let all the landslips remain there. That is what is happening in many other parts of the country.

Mr. B. Panday: Why do you want to waste your time by taking them there? I will not invite them to my constituency at all. That is a waste of time!

Mr. M. Haniff: That is the point! I thought that if he had gone and seen—I know sometimes you imagine what the situation is but it usually turns out to be much worse or different when you visit.

In the spirit of the consultation I have had with my colleagues, I therefore rest my case at this point. I beg to move.

Seconded by Mr. R. Palackdharrysingh.

Question proposed.

The Minister of Works and Transport and Minister of Local Government (Hon. Colm Imbert): Madam Speaker, the mover of the Motion indicated that it was approximately two years old, and in view of the significant work being done on the country's roads at this time, I should have thought that the appropriate thing for the Member to do, since the Motion is obsolete, was to withdraw it.

Mr. Haniff: It was bad then; it is worse now!

Hon. C. Imbert: Since the Member has persisted and has made a number of irregular statements, complete misrepresentation of facts, fictional statements and so forth, let me deal, firstly, with the question of the seven-year backlog which I have referred to inside and outside this House. For the benefit of hon. Members and the public, let me indicate how this has been calculated. Let me say at the outset that the statement that there is a seven-year backlog of road repairs was at no time intended to be a political statement. It appears that the Member may have misconstrued when he asked what the seven-year period referred to—whether it was a period in the past or if it includes the present. Nothing of the sort, Madam Speaker.

In a statement to this House some months ago when I introduced the Road Improvement Programme, I indicated that a team of consultants engaged by the Inter-American Development Bank who had been working on a comprehensive highway maintenance study on behalf of the Ministry of Works and Transport had done an analysis of the condition of all main roads throughout Trinidad and Tobago. Based on a number of engineering techniques, methods, computer

Road Repairs
[HON. C. IMBERT]

Friday, April 22, 1994

models, analysis of the state of the road surface, the pavement, and so forth, the consultants had indicated a pothole repair backlog for each of the districts throughout Trinidad and Tobago, a crack repair backlog, using scientific techniques, and had come up with an average for the total of Trinidad and Tobago of 7.3 years.

This is a scientific figure. What it indicates is that if we were to start now and spend \$50 million on equipment and materials for seven years, at the end of that seven-year period we would have cleared up the backlog of road repairs in the country. I hope this has cleared up any confusion in Members' minds. I also stress that this was not a political statement; it was a statement of fact.

Mr. B. Panday: The political statements are not statements of fact. Is that the conclusion?

Hon. C. Imbert: Madam Speaker, let us move now to the expenditure that it was alleged had been incurred on recurrent expenditure on roads and so forth over the last 10 years. The Member initially indicated that some \$45 billion was spent on roads over the last 10 years; he then reduced that, after questioning, to \$4.5 billion.

What the Member did was a calculation of the total recurrent expenditure—I do not know how accurate it is—in the Ministry of Works and Transport and Ministry of Local Government for the period local government was attached to the Ministry of Works, Infrastructure and Decentralization. He took the recurrent expenditure for this entire ministry, added it up, and sought to give the impression that was the amount of money that was spent on roads. Now, that is not correct.

The recurrent expenditure in the Ministry of Works and Transport is for all the divisions of the ministry—Highways Division, Drainage Division, Maintenance Division, Construction Division, Unemployment Relief Programme, Airports Authority, Port Authority, Maritime Services Division, Civil Aviation Division, and so forth; personnel expenditure and goods and services; my ministry's accounting unit, administrative staff, and so forth.

The actual amount that could be assigned to roads is a fraction of the total recurrent expenditure. I venture to say that the total expenditure on personnel emoluments and goods and services is less than 10 per cent of the figure that the Member quoted; less than 10 per cent of that figure which was first exaggerated to \$45 billion, then brought down to \$4.5 billion—it is perhaps 10 per cent of that figure over the last 10 years. It is not correct to say that vast sums of money have been spent.

It is an interesting point. If one analyzes the pattern of expenditure in the Ministry of Works and Transport, and the Ministry of Local Government, for that matter, and many other service ministries of Government, one would see that a large proportion of expenditure goes towards personnel emoluments and very little is spent on goods and services.

Mr. B. Panday: That is bad management.

3.00 p.m.

Hon. C. Imbert: The reason for that is, if the labour force remains constant and the pool of money diminishes, then in order to retain the same number of persons employed, one has to make adjustments to goods and services. What has happened over the last 10 years, with inflation, with the decline in world oil prices, with the global recession from which Trinidad and Tobago was not spared, is that there has been a persistent decline in Government revenues; and in order to maintain the same labour force, the piece of the pie allocated to goods and services and to equipment and road building materials, has shrunk consistently over the years, and now it has shrunk in order to maintain employment levels in the public service.

I heard a comment from the Member for Couva North that that is bad management. Now, if the pie remains the same, if your income remains the same, and you are seeking to change the ratio between expenditure on labour and expenditure on materials by keeping the total the same, then the only thing you can do is reduce expenditure on personnel emoluments and labour. I doubt that the Member for Couva North, with his background, is recommending that this government retrench workers in order to provide funding for equipment and materials. So that option is simply not available to this Government—

Mr. B. Panday: What are the alternatives?

Miss Bhaggan: You could increase productivity.

Mr. B. Panday: We shall show you how to do it in 1996!

Hon. C. Imbert: Madam Speaker, I also want to address some of the blatant inaccuracies in the Member's contribution. I have before me the expenditure to date on the 1994 Road Improvement Programme; and I will read it, district by district, to also put paid to the inaccuracy, the exaggeration and the rampant misrepresentation that areas not represented by the PNM are not given appropriate attention.

Mr. B. Panday: You will prove that your discrimination is against everybody!

Hon. C. Imbert: In the district of St. George East, Madam Speaker, which stretches from Valsayn to Sangre Grande, the Road Improvement Programme in merely a two-month period—and this is a point I will come back to—the Road Improvement Programme has been running for only two months. Now, remember, there is a seven-year backlog, (that is 84 months), but in two months already, we have spent in St. George East \$3 million; in Victoria West, which I am sure the Member is familiar with, \$2.4 million; in St. Patrick we have spent \$2.1 million; in Caroni—and I shall say this twice, Madam Speaker—in Caroni we have spent \$5.1 million; in Caroni we have spent \$5.1 million.

In St. George West, which is the greatest area of population—it has a far greater population density than the area I just referred to, Caroni—we have also spent \$5.1 million. St. George West stretches from Chaguaramas in the West, to Valsayn in the East and southwards to beyond the banks of the Caroni River. We have spent the same amount—in that densely populated area where more than 25 per cent of the population of this country lives—that we spent in Caroni, which has a smaller population, and I will come to the reason for that in a short while.

In St. Andrew/St. David we have spent \$1.8 million; in Nariva/Mayaro we have spent \$1 million; Victoria East, \$1.1 million; and the total spent in just two months under the Road Improvement Programme is \$22 million. We have delivered and put in place over 80 km of roads in the last two months 61,000 tonnes of asphalt; we have paved half a million square metres of road in the last two months under the Road Improvement Programme.

Mr. Palackdharrysingh: How many metres?

Hon. C. Imbert: Half a million square metres or 80 km. I am putting it in simple numbers so you will understand.

Mr. B. Panday: How much was spent?

Hon. C. Imbert: Twenty-two million dollars to pave—for your information—553,584 sq. metres and if you do your calculations you will find we are very efficient.

Madam Speaker, let me read out some of the roads in the Caroni district that we are working on at present and on which by the end of the year, we would have done a lot of significant road resurfacing work.

Couva—Southern Main Road, Cedar Hill Road, Couva Road, Waterloo Road, Couva River Bay Road, Freeport Mission Road;

*Road Repairs**Friday, April 22, 1994*

Chaguanas—Southern Main Road, Orange Field Road, Caroni/Savannah Road, Freeport Mission Road;

Brasso—Guaracara/Tabaquite Road, Tabaquite/Rio Claro Road, Tabaquite/Brasso Road;

Cunupia—Caroni Road, Caparo Valley/Brasso road, Munroe Road, which is in Cunupia, as you well know, where paving of the road is being done right now; Jerningham Junction Road, Longdenville road.

Madam Speaker, these are just samples. These are the roads on which, by the end of 1994, we would have done substantial work—and all this is in the Caroni area. We are also doing work in Victoria West, Solomon Hochoy Highway, Naparima/Mayaro Road, South Trunk Road, St. Croix Road, Cipero Road, S.S. Erin Road, Bon Aventure Road, Hermitage Road, Papourie Road, New Colonial Road, Rochard Douglas Road, Garth Road, Mayo Road, and so forth.

Now, Madam Speaker, you have some knowledge of Trinidad and Tobago. The areas I have called out here are not yet represented by the People's National Movement, but they will be, in time. I simply wish to indicate the geographic spread of our Road Improvement Programme to put paid to the, as I said, rampant misrepresentation, the distortions and inaccuracies of the Member for Princes Town, which are a source of great regret to me.

The engineers in the Highways Division of my ministry have gone to great lengths to ensure that there could be no justifiable—and that is the important word—no justifiable allegations of discrimination in the ministry's road paving programme. We have assessed the condition of roads in this country; we have looked at the traffic volumes and, using those two criteria, we have come up with a programme which gives those areas of the country, which are not yet represented by the People's National Movement—

Miss Bhaggan: And never will be.

Hon. C. Imbert:—at least their fair share of attention. It is a great source of regret to me, madam Speaker, as I visit the various parts of the country—

Mr. Jurai: Madam Speaker, would the Minister state how much money has been allocated and how much work has been done in the constituency of Nariva?

Hon. C. Imbert: Madam Speaker, for the benefit of the hon. Member, let me go back. St. George East, \$3 million; Victoria West, \$2.4 million; St. Patrick, \$2.1; Caroni, \$5 million, and so forth. We do not deal on a constituency basis. We

deal on the system of demarcation under the old county system. I have said so in this honourable House on many occasions. It is not possible for me to indicate to you on a constituency basis how many roads are going to be dealt with. What you should do is take a look for yourself at the county grid, determine which are the roads that you have some query on, how they fall into the county of Nariva/Mayaro, or St. Andrew/St. David for that matter.

3.10 p.m.

Mr. Jurai: In your list of roads for repairs under the Road Improvement Programme, the Plum Mitan Road and the Cunapo Southern Road were mentioned. How soon is it intended for work to be undertaken on those?

Hon. C. Imbert: Madam Speaker, it is clear that the Member for Nariva intends to distract me.

But, Madam Speaker, lest the people in the areas represented by the PNM feel left out, I should also point out that we have a programme of works in St. George West, St. George East, Victoria East, Victoria West etc.

Mr. B. Panday: I want the roads in Laventille repaired in a month! All the roads in Laventille!

Hon. C. Imbert: Madam Speaker, we are talking at this time of the Road Improvement Programme and I have been at pains to state on a number of occasions that the first phase of this programme, which is from January to the end of June, 1994, will focus on repairs to main roads.

I have come to this honourable House; I have laid the list of roads; I have answered the question on numerous occasions that for the first half of 1994 we intend to focus on those main roads which were published in this honourable House and which include roads in Tobago—the Windward Road, the L'Anse Fourmi Road and so forth.

Madam Speaker, it is with regret that I get queries about other roads—roads which have no relevance to that list. Questions like: When are you going to work on this road? What about this road? I thought I had made it absolutely clear that in the second—

Mr. Haniff: Will the hon. Minister be kind enough to say, apart from what is happening with the Road Improvement Programme, what else the Ministry of Works and Transport is doing? Are they not doing their normal work? Or, are they not expected to be doing that?

Hon. C. Imbert: Madam Speaker, I am not sure how much time I have to speak on this Motion—

Miss Bhaggan: You have enough time! Go ahead!

Hon. C. Imbert: —but I am only talking about the Road Improvement Programme at this point, and I am dealing with the statements made by the Member for Princes Town on this programme. There are many other issues raised in the Motion and in the hon. Member's contribution that I will come to in due course, if he would have some patience.

I simply wanted to put on the record that we have spent \$22 million under the Road Improvement Programme. We have repaired over 80 km of roads and a substantial amount of work has been done throughout the country—without discrimination, without victimization, without fear or favour, with equity and equality for all. I wish to put that on record.

The point I wanted to make before I was interrupted is, as I drive through the country and pass on the highway, I look to my right and left in the Chaguanas area and I see paved roads; and the other day, we went down into the southern area and I passed along the S.S. Erin Road and I saw paved roads. I am confident that my ministry is fulfilling its mandate under the Road Improvement Programme and that for the first time in a long time, significant and meaningful work is being done on the roads of this country and this will continue.

We have made the point that the Road Improvement Fund is not a one-off; it is not a flash in the pan. We intend to continue this programme for at least the next seven years. We are going to be spending a minimum of \$50 million every year for the next seven years. That is a minimum of \$350 million to be spent on roads in this country over the next seven years until the backlog is cleared off. Then we will be going into what is termed "preventive maintenance."

What we are doing at present is reconstruction. It is called "reconstructive surgery." There are roads where the condition of the pavement has deteriorated to the point where routine and preventive maintenance cannot be undertaken and, therefore, we are completely rehabilitating those roads. But if there is a continuous programme of maintenance, once the roads are upgraded to a certain standard, then we shall only have a programme of preventive maintenance, and with regular inspection of the condition of road surfaces all over the country, we should be able to reduce the expenditure. But that is only when we have cleared the backlog and brought the roads to an acceptable standard.

Mr. Eckstein: Well said! Well said!

Hon. C. Imbert: My colleague the Member for Arouca South has been reminding me that we shall be here to put in place the system of preventive maintenance seven years from now.

Mr. B. Panday: Ghosts cannot repair roads whether they be political or real ones! They cannot! I shall consign them to the flames!

Hon. C. Imbert: There are certain issues where there can be different opinions—and this will clarify a statement I made earlier. Depending on which political party one belongs to, one may have a particular view of or a particular opinion on a certain subject. But there are certain things which are not opinion. They are fact.

An investigation that has been done at my request on having sight of this Motion with regard to the state of the ministry's vehicles, indicates that the condition of these vehicles is better at this time than it has been for the last 12 years.

One of the things we have done—

Mr. Haniff: That cannot be true! You are not serious!

Mr. B. Panday: That does not say anything!

Hon. C. Imbert: Madam Speaker, it is very easy for people to make all sorts of wild statements. It is very easy for the Member for Princes Town to say that \$45 billion was spent on roads over the last 10 years, when it is about 2 per cent, or 3 per cent of that figure; or 1 per cent. But Members in this House have the liberty of making all sorts of wild statements, pulling figures out of a hat, making all sorts of allegations, and they do not have to account to anybody.

Mr. Haniff: Did I not correct that?

Hon. C. Imbert: The fact of the matter is that the fleet of vehicles in the ministry has never operated at such high efficiency, at least over the last 12 years, than it has at this time. My information is that within the next four weeks we shall be up to 75 per cent efficiency in terms of operational vehicles.

Miss Bhaggan: Well, your information is wrong!

Hon. C. Imbert: And the Member will know. I answered a question in this House some months ago with regard to the percentage, the operational efficiency of the fleet of vehicles in the ministry. It was below 50 per cent at that time. But

what we have done under the Road Improvement Programme is that we have carefully selected those vehicles and pieces of equipment that need minimum repairs. We have apportioned part of the Road Improvement Fund to repairing those vehicles; there has been a constant programme of repairs to the ministry's vehicles over the last two and a half months, and we are now at 75 per cent operational efficiency.

Mr. Haniff: Where? Where? Which part? That is not true!

Hon. C. Imbert: Madam Speaker, I have the figures here. The Member will know. The Member has some knowledge of the Ministry of Works and he will be aware that what I am saying is correct. It is a great source of regret to me that with the knowledge that the Member has, he will come here and make misleading and inaccurate statements, when the facts are otherwise.

Mr. Haniff: Would you agree to go down into these depots with me to inspect them? Would you agree? That is not true!

Hon. C. Imbert: Madam Speaker, I satisfied from my visits to the various depots and sub-offices of the ministry throughout the country, that the operational capacity of the ministry has shown vast improvement over the last three months since we started the Road Improvement Programme, and we have had a source of funding to do the necessary repairs to vehicles and equipment. Notwithstanding whatever the Member may say, I am satisfied that the ministry's equipment capability is vastly improved.

Madam Speaker, the motion requests:

“that the Government take the necessary steps to urgently repair vehicles and equipment needed to effect these repairs to the country's roads, drains and bridges.”

It also seeks to condemn the Government:

“for its lack of attention in trying to improve the state of the roads in this country:”

Well, that could not be serious, Madam Speaker. It speaks about a large number of vehicles being down and the majority of roads in the country being in urgent need of repair.

Road Repairs
[HON. C. IMBERT]

Friday, April 22, 1994

3.20 p.m.

The Member made reference to some internationally-funded programmes that the ministry is trying to bring on stream. He told me to abandon this grand dream of trying to repair all the roads in this country.

Hon. Member: Start working!

Hon. C. Imbert: He is now saying, start working. Well, we have been working. We have repaired 80 km of roads in two months. After two years of this administration and two months of operation of the Road Improvement Programme, we have repaired 80 km of roads. That has never been done in this country. It is unprecedented. This is why I was wondering why the Member brought this obsolete Motion to this House. Maybe two years ago when I entered this Parliament when this Government was returned to power, it was appropriate at that time. Maybe after five years of another administration there was a problem with roads and so forth, but I can tell you that I am confident that the work the Ministry has done over the last two years, and especially in 1994, has made a serious dent in the backlog of road repairs in this country.

We are not just dealing with routine maintenance and repairs. We are forward-planning. We have a number of road rehabilitation programmes, road reconstruction programmes and intersection improvement programmes in the ministry. One of them is a programme for the complete rehabilitation, widening, straightening and so forth, of 81 km of roads, in a stretch from the north to the south of the country, taking, in particular, the major North/South link: the Uriah Butler and Solomon Hochoy Highways.

We have already received approval from the European Economic Commission for funding for this programme. The European Economic Commission has given us a funding package which includes a soft loan and grant funds, so that some of the money that we are getting from them we shall not have to repay. It is a grant. I might add, that there are no strings attached to the EEC programme of rehabilitation of the 81 kilometres.

I also want to put that side of the Member's contribution to rest. There are absolutely no conditionalities attached to the programme of works being funded by the EEC—some TT\$115 million. We have already invited proposals from consultants to do the designs and the EEC already have a recommendation. It is at their head office in Brussels, and we expect within the next few weeks a consultant will be appointed and within a month things will be put in place to do

final designs on roads, in particular the north and south-bound carriageways—the Uriah Butler and Solomon Hochoy Highways. The Members on the other side travel on those roads and they will be aware of the need for urgent reconstructive work on them.

I am confident that early in 1995, under this programme funded by the EEC, we shall start major rehabilitation work on the major North/South link—Uriah Butler and Solomon Hochoy Highways. We would also be doing some work on the Tarouba Road, on the San Fernando Bye-Pass, the Point Lisas Link Road, Rivulet Road, which is an important arterial road which links the major North/South arterial highway to our major industrial estate at Pt. Lisas.

As a matter of fact, we have been proactive, and although the Pt. Lisas Link Road or Rivulet road is under the EEC programme of rehabilitation, we have made another arrangement and we expect that urgent rehabilitative work will start on Rivulet Road within the next month. That road—and this is a point that is worthy of consideration—was an old country road which evolved from an earthen track and was paved with a thin layer of asphalt with no foundation, base and so on. That road has proved inadequate and unsuitable for the heavy container traffic and heavy trucks, and its condition was indicated to us to be a deterrent to investment in the Point Lisas estate.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Madam Speaker, I am proposing that we suspend the House for five minutes to have a glimpse of our national hero—Brian Charles Lara.

Assent indicated.

3.28 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

3.30 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

ROAD REPAIRS

Hon. C. Imbert: Madam Speaker, before the brief suspension, I was pointing out that the ministry is not engaged only in routine maintenance, but also in forward-planning; and that we have a series of different road reconstruction programmes, one of which is a loan and grant funding from the European Economic Commission in the sum of \$115 million which is expected to rehabilitate some 81 km of roads in a stretch from the north to the south of Trinidad.

Road Repairs
[HON. C. IMBERT]

Friday, April 22, 1994

In addition, the ministry has been engaged in a comprehensive highway maintenance study. One of the outputs of this study, as I have indicated, is a detailed study of the condition of every main road in Trinidad and Tobago.

The consultants who did the study also did a cost/benefit analysis.

They have tabulated all the roads, in terms of the cost/benefit ratio, for doing necessary repairs to those roads—we have also done so in Tobago. As a result, for the first time in many years, the ministry now has in its possession, proper and accurate information on the condition of every main road in Trinidad and Tobago.

The consultants have also done some analysis to indicate to us, what would be the condition of all these roads—they have done it for each road—if we were to spend a certain sum of money on an annual basis on the particular roads; they have done it for varying levels of maintenance and recommended certain minimum levels of maintenance for all roads in Trinidad and Tobago to bring them up to appropriate standards. So, we now have the information that is necessary for us to go forward to the next stage.

The next stage of this programme will be a loan application to the Inter-American Development Bank, and we hope that we would be successful—there is no reason to believe that we would not be; we have already had favourable reviews from the Inter-American Development Bank. We shall be taking the information out of the Comprehensive Maintenance Highway Study and putting it into a loan application for the reconstruction of a further 300-plus km of roads in this country.

So, it is 80 km of roads which is already in train, which will start early in 1995, from the European community, part of which is a grant and, therefore, there is no repayment. Then we have 300 km of roads to be rehabilitated under a major loan from the Inter-American Development Bank.

The ministry, of course, will have to compete with all the other ministries in the Government—the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources has its plans for loan applications and so forth—but we are confident that we shall be fortunate to receive substantial sums for road reconstruction from the Inter-American Development Bank in 1995 and shall be able to commence another programme of road reconstruction of several hundred km of roads throughout Trinidad and Tobago.

Additionally, we are also working on a Trunk Network Road Expansion Programme which, essentially, is improvement of some of the major intersections

in the country and also improvement of some of our major highways and main roads; that, again, is programmed to take place over a period of years. The programme I have referred to previously is expected to take place over the period 1995 to the year 2000—this is the IADB Road Reconstruction Programme—and the EEC Programme, over the period 1995 to 1996 or 1997.

The Trunk Network Road Expansion Programme will be the construction of grades separated into sections, improvement of our major highways and completion of some highways which have not yet been completed. For example, we are now contemplating the extension of the Solomon Hochoy Highway to the Cross Crossing area as a first step in a new road link to the Point Fortin/La Brea area.

We expect this to be another centre of industrial activity in the country with the coming on stream of the major LNG plant which, as you may know, is a \$5 or \$6 billion investment in that Brighton/La Brea area, and it will be necessary for us, as complementary industrial activity mushrooms around that LNG plant, to put in a proper road link to that part of the country.

One of the first components will be the extension of the Solomon Hochoy Highway from its present conclusion by the San Fernando Technical Institute or the Toruba Area to the Cross Crossing with a major link, potentially, at this time, into Lady Hailes Avenue or probably a little further onto the South Trunk Road. We have already completed designs for that and I will be approaching Cabinet in the near future for a proposal from a different source of funding to accelerate that road programme, and, hopefully we can start that towards the end of this year or early in 1995—this is the extension of the Solomon Hochoy Highway—to relieve the traffic congestion in San Fernando and to truly take the traffic that is not destined for San Fernando beyond the confines of the city and make a freeway, as it were, to the southern area.

I might also add that we are looking at similar programmes for a road through the Diego Martin valley to the Chaguaramas estate. It is at the planning stage at this time, but there is already a route alignment that will come out somewhere in the Diego Martin area onto the Diego Martin Highway providing a proper link to the Chaguaramas area, and, therefore, allowing a proper expansion and development of that area as a major tourist and manufacturing centre.

There are many other road expansion programmes that we have planned. We are looking at the completion of the duelling of the Churchill-Roosevelt Highway up to the Wallerfield area where there is just a short piece to be put in there.

Road Repairs
[HON. C. IMBERT]

Friday, April 22, 1994

3.40 p.m.

We are also looking at some of the major links, for example, between San Fernando and Princes Town; we are looking at another route alignment there. Another route alignment we are looking at— and this is geared towards tourism— is the construction of a road from the St. Joseph area straight through to Maracas Bay, the North Coast area to open up that area for tourism development. We have estimated from the alignment we have studied that it will cut some 45 minutes off travel time for tourists from the airport to the Maracas Beach area.

Our ministry has not been standing still. We have been taking steps to improve the conditions of roads in the country, to improve the operational capacity of the ministry, to improve the state of equipment in the ministry contrary to the assertions in this Motion. I simply cannot agree with the Member for Princes Town.

Madam Speaker, the Motion very briefly referred to flooding. Before I take my seat I shall indicate what we plan to do in that area. As a matter of fact, only one word in the Motion referred to flooding. The first three recitals to the Motion read:

“*Whereas* it is well known that the majority of roads in this country are in urgent need of repair,...

And whereas a large number of vehicles are needed to effect such repair” (this is the repair of roads) “whether under the control of the Ministry of Works and Transport...

And whereas the necessary materials for such repairs are available...”

The whole thrust of the Motion is towards road repair, and at the end it talks about urgently repairing vehicles, and equipment needed to effect repairs to the country’s roads, drains and bridges. It appears the Member used the opportunity of that single word in the Motion to bring in the whole question of flooding. I am afraid I cannot take my seat without answering the allegations, misrepresentation, distortion of facts and complete inaccuracies.

Over the last three months, I have been fortunate to be in discussions with representatives of the World Bank who have been to this country on several occasions. Just this morning I had one of my usual planning meetings with senior staff of the Drainage Division, and we are already looking at a national drainage development programme. It has already been approved in principle by Cabinet. It has already gone to the World Bank, which approved it in principle, and we are fast-tracking this programme.

One of the important features of the programme is that we will take out critical segments where designs and feasibility studies have already been concluded, and we will implement those as the first phase of an overall package.

The funding we are seeking at this time for the national drainage development programme is US \$100 million. I am not certain whether we will get the whole US \$100 million because, as I said, we have to compete with other ministries: the Ministry of Trade and Industry, the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources and the Ministry of Education. Countries receive an allotment of funding from the World Bank, \$300 million or \$400 million over a period and the ministries have to fit inside there. So we may receive \$60 million or \$70 million. But, I am very encouraged by what the World Bank officials have been telling me.

We are reaching the conclusion of a major study of the Caparo River Basin. We have already pulled that out: the development of the Caparo River Basin, the installation of retention ponds, the dredging of that area, the widening and straightening of the river would be one of the first priorities in our National Drainage Development Programme—the development of the Caparo River Basin. I say that for the benefit of hon. Members on the other side, especially the Members for Caroni Central and Chaguanas who are wont to come into this House and make all sorts of statements.

We are in discussions with the World Bank at this time. The Caparo River Basin study is in progress. We are hoping that some time at the beginning of next year the study will be completed, the loan application will have been approved, the designs will have been completed, the tenders will have been invited for the construction, consultants, will be in place and, therefore, at some point in 1995, we will commence our national drainage development programme in the Caparo area in Central Trinidad. The member knows this. So that to make the statement to start before the rainy season he has to be joking.

To also add for your benefit, Madam speaker, as I know you are from the southern part of our country, we already have designs for the Vistabella and Marabella catchments in the San Fernando area. There are some designs in the Ciperio River catchment and we will be pulling those out as well. In the East/West corridor we have designs done on aspects of improvement of drainage of the St. Ann's River or the East Dry River, as it is called, the Maraval River, as we go along the East/West corridor up to Sangre Grande.

There are designs done for the San Juan and the Malick Rivers, and we are incorporating all of these into our major national drainage development

Road Repairs
[HON. C. IMBERT]

Friday, April 22, 1994

programme which includes not only the Caroni, the Caparo River and the East/West Corridor drainage system, but also the Oropouche Lagoon which is going to be the focus of some detailed study, and also is being considered within this National Drainage Development Programme.

I am confident that 12 months from now our plans for drainage development and repair of the country's drains, if I take what is in this Motion, will be very well advanced. By April of next year, we should be very close to the commencement of construction for a major programme of drainage rehabilitation improvement in Central Trinidad in particular, and also in the East/West Corridor—the Malick River, the St. Ann's River, the Maraval River, the Diego Martin River, the Vega de Oropouche in Sangre Grande and the San Juan River.

I am confident we are doing our work; we are taking steps to deal with these problems. We have started the road improvement programme, we have ongoing work, we are doing forward planning in road rehabilitation, reconstruction, road improvement, new highway construction. We are going into a major flood control, flood relief drainage rehabilitation programme, and we are planning this over the next seven to ten years.

I want to make this point: I have every reason to believe that we on this side will be in this Parliament for some time to come. I hope that over the next five to seven years as this Government puts in place its plans and action programmes for major rehabilitation of infrastructure in this country and, as the public begin to feel the benefits—as they are already beginning to feel from our Road Improvement Programme where, as I said, we have spent \$22 million and repaired some 60 km of roads; there are letters in the newspapers, you can hear it on the talk shows and call-in programmes.

Our citizens are already paying tribute to the Government for its foresight in implementing this programme. I am merely the instrument; it is the Government's programme. I am confident that over the next seven years, as we put in our national infrastructure rehabilitation programme, the population at large will recognize that this Government has been doing its work and that it cares about everybody in this country and that it does not discriminate against anybody. It does its work without fear or favour.

I am sorry this Motion contains a number of inaccuracies. The Member has made a number of wild allegations which have no foundation whatsoever. I cannot support it. The information in the Motion is wrong. The Member's information is wrong. We are doing much work, and I am confident that the public is aware of that, and that is what is important.

Road Repairs

Friday, April 22, 1994

Notwithstanding whatever the Members on the other side say, once the public is satisfied, aware and happy with the work this Government is doing, then we are satisfying our mandate. Notwithstanding whatever noise they may make, whatever sounds, criticisms—unwarranted and unjustified as they may be—once the public is satisfied, and I am sure they are, this Government will continue to administer the affairs of this country. On that note I regret I cannot support this Motion. It is obsolete, unwarranted, unjustified, and simply misplaced.

I thank you, Madam Speaker,

Motion made, That the House do now adjourn to Friday, 29 April, 1994 at 1.30. [*Hon. K. Valley*]

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 3.50 p.m.