

*Paper Laid**Friday, April 29, 1994***HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES***Friday, April 29, 1994*

The House met at 1.37 p.m.

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER in the Chair]

PAPER LAID

Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the San Fernando Carnegie Free Library for the year ended December 31, 1992. [*The Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley)*]

*To be referred to the Public Accounts Committee***ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS**

Mr. John Humphrey (*St. Augustine*): Madam Speaker, the Member for Couva South has indicated that he has a court matter and will be a little late for the sitting. He has asked if I would represent him in asking the questions.

*Assent indicated.**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*]

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 good 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]*

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 it is 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, who does the Government continue to be involved in these ventures? *[Mr. K. Jurai]*

Justice Crane Issue (Financial Liability)

- 99.** (a) Could the Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs state the financial liability it incurred in the Hon. Justice Crane issue giving the amounts it paid and is 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) Could the Attorney General specifically state what sum the Government anticipates it would have to pay in damages and costs to the Hon. Mr. Justice Crane?
- (c) Could the Attorney General state 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

reained attorneys after the Government got into office in 1991? If it 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]

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Madam Speaker, we have to request a further deferral of question No. 63. We still do not have the information.

We are also requesting a deferral, for one week, of questions Nos. 86, 93, 99, 100 and 101.

Questions, by leave, deferred.

**Domestic Route
(Air Fares)**

82. Miss Pamela Nicholson (Tobago West) asked the Minister of Works and Transport:

- (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?

The Minister of Works and Transport and Minister of Local Government (Hon. Colm Imbert): Madam Speaker, the Minister of Works and Transport wishes to advise this honourable House that the licence issued to both Air Caribbean Limited and BWIA for operation on Tobago/Trinidad route from August 8, 1993, identified the following fare structure:

Adult one-way fare	\$115.00
Adult return fare	\$230.00
Child one-way fare	\$ 57.50
Child return fare	\$115.00

One day mid-week return fare:

Monday to Friday except public holidays \$190.00

There are no identified concessions to be met by the two airlines serving the Tobago route.

The approved air fare structure was instituted by the Air Transport Licensing Authority with the understanding that the \$190.00 overnight return fare was experimental and would come up for review on December 31, 1993. Air Caribbean Limited informed the Air Transport Licensing Authority on December 8, 1993 that due to its flight structure the \$190 air fare was not economically viable. The Air Transport Licensing Authority subsequently allowed Air Caribbean Limited to remove this fare from the schedule.

BWIA has not advised the Air Transport Licensing Authority of any difficulties being experienced by the utilization of the \$190 air fare. It should be noted, however, that due to BWIA's flight schedule, this fare can only be used on one flight per week, one way from Trinidad and two flights per week one way from Tobago.

Agreement was reached on March 24, 1994 by consent of the attorneys representing Air Caribbean Limited and the Air Transport Licensing Authority on the following:

- (1) The Air Transport Licensing Authority has undertaken not to grant a licence to, or to extend or vary any licence of BWIA on the airbridge service between Piarco/Crown Point, Crown Point/Piarco without giving BWIA and Air Caribbean Limited an opportunity to be heard.
- (2) In making a decision with respect to that already referred to, to exercise its discretion (that is ATLA) in accordance with the Air Navigation—Licensing of Air Services Regulations, 1951 to 1963.

Miss Nicholson: Madam Speaker, the Minister stated that the air fare structure was experimental until 1993. Could he tell us whether a committee sat and came up with the structure for the air fare and why that committee was not put together again when Air Caribbean came up with their position?

Hon. C. Imbert: Madam Speaker, that appears to be a different question, but I will try to respond to some of the points raised by the Member.

The company, Air Caribbean Limited, applied for a increase in air fare and gave certain data to the Air Transport Licensing Authority, which examined its request. On the basis of certain calculations and certain data, this air fare structure was agreed to. It was subsequently discovered that a large volume of the traffic was utilizing the \$190 air fare, thereby depleting the overall income on the route. I am advised that it was on that basis that the Air Transport Licensing Authority allowed Air Caribbean Limited to withdraw that experimental fare.

1.45 p.m.

Miss Nicholson: Madam Speaker, another supplementary question, please. When Air Caribbean made their change—and my question was put to this House—BWIA did not only have the number of flights that the Minister in speaking about. Could he therefore give us some clarification on that?

Hon. C. Imbert: Madam Speaker, I am afraid that I am not clear on the question, but I would like to say that the authority that determines the air fares on this route is the Air Transport Licensing Authority. And that authority has examined the experience, the data and the criteria and has allowed the \$190.00 air fare to be withdrawn, because as I said, and as I am advised by ALTA, it was reducing the overall income on the route.

**Petrotrin Refinery
(Gaseous Pollutants)**

87. Dr. Carl Singh (*Tabaquite*) asked the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries:

Could the Minister 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 of Marabella area specially 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 residents of the Marabella area?

The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries (Hon. Barry Barnes): Madam Speaker, the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries is aware that there is a low level escape of pollutants into the environment from the Petrotrin refinery at Pointe-a-Pierre. These derive from:

- (1) Waste water discharges from the refinery into the Guaracara River that sometimes contain droplets of emulsified oil which, on occasion, contaminate the river banks.

- (2) Exhaust gases from the refinery flares which are discharged high above the refinery, but which comprise carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides, hydrocarbon vapour and a low level of sulphur oxides.

While initial levels are monitored regularly to ensure that pollutant levels are well below the threshold values for human toxicity, the gaseous pollutants can cause noxious odours and these sometimes become a public nuisance when meteorological influences cause in-shape air currents and inversions.

The existing problems of the Pointe-a-Pierre refinery result from its outdated pollution abatement and control facilities which conform to the petroleum industry standards of the 1960s. As part of the current refinery upgrading project, some TT \$40 million is earmarked for the upgrading of waste water collection and treatment facilities to ensure that all refinery effluents comply with currently accepted environmental standards.

Additionally, new sulphur recovery facilities are being constructed and necessary exhaust scrubbers will be installed to eliminate any problems with noxious exhaust gases.

Moreover, the Japan International Corporation Agency in conjunction with the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries is currently conducting an 18-month exhaustive study of pollution prevention and control over the entire petroleum land operations in Trinidad and Tobago, including the Petrotrin refineries.

Measurements taken by the team on February 25, 1994, and again in March 1994, confirmed that refinery emissions of nitrogen oxide particulates and hydrocarbon vapours are well within acceptable limits. The tests detected the presence of sulphur dioxide, but this was well below threshold levels.

This study will determine and recommend strategies for the improve environmental management of the Pointe-a-Pierre refinery and these will be implemented as part of the refinery's upgrade project.

Dr. Singh: Madam Speaker, a supplemental question. With respect to the acid rain in that Marabella area due to NO₂ and SO₂, are there any measures of activities taking place to prevent or reduce that to the minimum acceptable level?

Hon. B. Barnes: Madam Speaker, within the current design of the abatement facilities, and which incidentally are maintained—and we have checked that—it just does not have the design capacity. What I have said is that as part of the refinery upgrade, the necessary scrubbers and the improved treatment facilities

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will be installed. The approximate cost is TT \$40 million and they are going to be built into the upgrades refinery. That is about the earliest that we shall be able to deal with that problem.

**National Insurance Board
(Judgment Implementation)**

88. Dr. Carl Singh (*Tabaquite*) asked the Minister of Social Development:

Could the Minister kindly 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.

The Minister of Social Development (Dr. The Hon. Linda Baboolal):
Madam Speaker, I wish to advise that the National Insurance Board hold the vies that Table C rates appearing in the Third Schedule to the National Insurance (Amdt.) Act, No. 23 of 1980 were intended to apply only to persons qualifying for the survivors' benefit on or after the appointed day, that is August 11, 1980.

In the absence of specific provision to treat with persons who were already in receipt of the benefit before and at the appointed day, the Board administratively introduced a special table, but that procedure has not found favour with the National Insurance Appeals Tribunal which has ruled in favour of payments at the rates appearing in Table C.

To resolve the issue, the Board has recommended the introduction of legislation to provide retroactively for the translation of survivor benefit payments already in force prior to August 11, 1980 on the basis of a transitional table as recommended in the relevant actuarial review and which inadvertently was not included in Act No. 23 of 1980.

Since this matter is a legal one, it is now being examined by the Solicitor General and payments on the basis of the tribunal's decision will depend on the advice received. The records of the National Insurance Board will permit identification of affected families in the vents recommendation is made for retroactive payments.

Sugar Factories Emissions

89. Mr. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj (*Couva South*) asked the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources:

Could the Minister state:

- (a) Whether he is aware that the emissions of soot and fly ash from the sugar fly ash from the sugar factories of Caroni (1975) Limited at Brechin Castle and at 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 and 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?

The Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources (Dr. The Hon. Keith Rowley): Madam Speaker, the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources was made aware of the discomfort to some residents of Central and South Trinidad as a result of emissions of soot and fly ash from the sugar factories at Brechin Castle and Usine Ste. Madeleine.

Caroni (1975) Limited uses at Brechin Castle and Usine Ste. Madeline Sugar factories a fly ash arrest or and removal system which was installed at Brechin Castle in the early sixties and at Usine Ste. Madeleine in 1976. These systems, by their design and operating principles, cause fly ash emissions which have been affecting residents in Central and South Trinidad. The company conducted examinations at the Brechin Castle and Usine Ste. Madeline factories during the 1991 and 1992 crops to determine the extent of maintenance and design changes required to alleviate the problem and to finalize a plan of action.

At Brechin Castle rehabilitative work was conducted on the system during the 1992 and 1993 crops and the feedback obtained from the neighbourhood outreach programme indicated a reduction in soot emission problems. Steps are being taken to further restrict the problem of the dispersion of fly ash by the design and construction of two ventilated caps. These will be installed during the 1994 wet season.

At Usine St. Madeleine two conveyor fans were installed in 1992 to improve the effectiveness of the system. The entire system was again refurbished during the 1993 wet season and was recommissioned into service during the start of the 1994 crop. Its effectiveness is, however, confined to trapping coarser particles.

1.55 p.m.

Cognizant of the problems associated with the fly ash and also the removal system, Caroni (19975) Limited is examining the feasibility of obtaining a more effective and efficient system which will further alleviate environmental problems in the areas so affected.

**Cunapo Southern Road
(Landslip)**

91. Mr. Krish Jurai (*Nariva*) asked the Minister of Works and Transport:

Could the Minister kindly state:

Whether he is aware that work has ceased on the massive landslip and major depression on the Cunapo Southern Road at Sadoo Road Junction?

- (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 will work begin to remedy the entire situation?
- (d) When will the said project be completed?

The Minister of Works and Transport and Minister of Local Government (Hon. Colm Imbert): Madam Speaker, the Minister is aware of the condition of the massive landslip on the Cunapo Southern Road.

The landslip at this point has been stabilized, although 50 per cent of the work remains to be done. At this time no further major slippage is expected.

Repairs have been undertaken to the depression on the road surface of the Cunapo Southern Road. The road is now passable to vehicular traffic. Work to remedy the entire situation is expected to begin later this year.

The project is expected to be completed by the end o 1994. The road at that time is expected to be in an acceptable condition.

Mr. Jurai: Madam Speaker, I know if I ask the Minister a question with respect to this matter he would evade the question, but I am simply stating that he is misleading the House because no remedial work has been undertaken in that area, and the road is slipping.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Member, can we proceed to question No. 92 please.

Nariva Sanctuary

92. Mr Krish Jurai (Nariva) asked the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources:

Could the Minister kindly state:

- (a) What system is in effect to prevent farmers from encroaching on the Nariva Sanctuary?
- (b) What steps is he taking both in the short run and in the long run to prevent further destruction of the environment of the Nariva swamp?

The Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources (Dr. The Hon. Keith Rowley): Madam Speaker, regular patrols by Forestry and Wildlife Officers constitute the major means of monitoring for preventing encroachment on the Nariva swamp by farmers. These patrols, which are conducted for the prevention and detection of squatting offences, forest offences, fire offences and wildlife offences, take place during the week and on weekends.

As a result of these patrols, and the reports emanating therefrom, a number of squatters and other offenders have been charged before the magistrates' court.

The system also includes the visible re-demarcation of boundary lines further identifying the Bush Bush Wildlife Sanctuary. Additionally, on the basis of the best technical assessment, a certain area of the Nariva swamp, including the Bush Bush Wildlife Sanctuary, was declared a prohibited area by Legal Notice No. 78 dated May 21, 1993. This means that it is an offence under the Forest Act, Chap. 66:01 to enter the area without a permit. The boundaries of this area were established and demarcated in 1993.

Finally, educational advisories and warnings are issued to farmers by officers on patrol as to the dangers of degradation of the environment and the general eco-system. Information is also disseminated via the media.

In the short run, regular patrols by Forest and Wildlife Officers to detect and prevent further illegal activities will continue and will be intensified. Offenders will be dealt with according to the law.

In the medium term it is proposed to revise and update the legal framework to facilitate more expeditious treatment of breaches of the law. Additionally, institutional strengthening of the relevant agencies will be undertaken to improve surveillance and enforcement activities.

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It is also to be note that the improved system of land management which is currently being devised and put in place within the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources will contribute significantly to the alleviation of current problems of tenancy and utilization of state lands, especially those which border the Nariva Swamp Reserve.

Mr. Jurai: Madam Speaker, I notice the Minister deliberately evaded the issue of the wetlands. Is the Minister aware that the wetlands no longer exist in that area? Due to heavy drainage these no longer exist.

Madam Speaker: I am afraid that is not the question.

Mr. Jurai: That is part of the country, Madam Speaker.

**Naparima Constituency
(Water Supply)**

102. Mr. Subhas Panday (*Naparima*) asked the Minister of Public Utilities:

Can the Minister state—

- (a) Why La Paille Road, Churkoo Village and Manahambre Road have not been receiving pipe-bone 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, Ciperro Road;
 - (ii) Papourie Road in the vicinity of Inverness Presbyterian School;
 - (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?

The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries and Minister of Public Utilities (Sen. The Hon. Barry Barnes): Madam Speaker, the Water and Sewerage Authority has advised that La Paille Road, Churkoo Village and

Manahambre Road are at the end of the distribution system served by the Malgretoute Offtake.

In these areas, a pipe-borne water supply is scheduled once per week, and even so, because of the low water pressure at the Malgretoute Off take, most residents receive their supply during the night.

The deterioration in the water supply has been caused by:

- (i) a lower operating pressure and reduced operating hours at the Malgretoute Booster Station of the Navet system.
- (ii) several consumers along the lower sections of La Paille Road have connected domestic pumps to WASA's service lines, thus aggravating the water supply problems for other customers downstream on the same road.

In previous years, a truck-borne supply was provided to service customers on the elevated sections of La Paille Road. Water truckers withdrew these services at the end of February 1994 because of WASA's inability to make timely payments for their services. WASA is now seeking to have some measure of truck-borne service restored to the area.

The Water and Sewerage Authority has confirmed that the pipe-borne water supply to the seven areas identified continues to be unsatisfactory because of the inadequate transmission and distribution systems serving these areas. There has been further deterioration to the service because of:-

- (i) defective control valves on the Navet trunk main which have necessitated a reduction in the working pressure on the Navet transmission system;
- (ii) eleven major leaks on the Daisy transmission main, which have reduced the water pressures in that sub-system.

As a short-term relief measure, WASA has been provided with the sum of \$6 million, specifically to undertake repairs to leaks and bursts throughout the country over a six-month period. As part of this exercise WASA's leak correction programme for the period April/May, 1994 gives priority to repairs on:

- (i) the Nave transmission system;
- (ii) the Daisy transmission main and sub-system and
- (iii) replacement of defective flow control valves off the Navet trunk main to permit effective scheduling of the pipe-borne supply.

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WASA expects these repairs to be completed by the end of May 1994, at which time consumers in the affected areas will receive some measure of relief.

The Water and Sewerage Authority has indicated that necessary materials and personnel are expected to be in place by early May 1994, to repair major leaks and defects in the constituency of Naparima as part of the short-term programme to repair leaks and bursts throughout the country.

2.05 p.m.

Road Paving

103. Mr. Subhas Panday (*Naparima*) asked the Minister of Works and Transport and Minister of Local Government:

Can the Minister state:

- (a) Whether the repaving of the Naparima/Mayaro Main Road between St. Clements'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 (a)?

The Minister of Works and Transport and Minister of Local Government (Hon. Colm Imbert): Madam Speaker, under the Ministry's Road Improvement Programme the section of Naparima Road between St. Clement's Junction and Tramline Street, which is mile mark between the 2 and the 7 ¼ mile marks, is programmed for reshaping and spot paving works in 1994 since the existing road structure is in fairly good condition.

Several other sections of the Naparima/Mayaro Road, however, have already been completely resurfaced since the condition of the road structure in those areas was considered to be unsatisfactory.

Hon. Member: That is not true!

Hon. C. Imbert: Madam Speaker, on inspection, the road structure of the Naparima/Mayaro Road in the vicinity of Malgretoute, Iere Village, was found to be in good condition. As a consequence, this area was programmed for spot paving and strengthening rather than complete surfacing.

At present the area between the 3.8 and the 7 ¼ mile marks is free from all potholes. Although the general road structure is in good condition, some potholes

do exist in a small section between the 2 and 3.8 mile marks on the Naparima/Mayaro Road. These potholes, however, have been created by leaks in the Water and Sewerage Authority's mains and can only be repaired satisfactorily when WASA repairs these leaks.

**WRITTEN ANSWER TO QUESTION
URP Projects**

104. Mr. Subhas Panday (*Naparima*) asked the Minister of Works and Transport and Minister of Local Government:

Could the Minister state:

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

The Minister of Works and Transport and Minister of Local Government (Hon. Colm Imbert): Madam Speaker, I have the answer to this question. It will be circulated shortly.

Vide end of sitting for written answer.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Minister of Trade and Industry (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Madam Speaker, I beg to move that Motion No. 2 be taken; then Motion No. 1; followed by Bill No. 2 on the Order Paper.

Leave granted.

**MAXI-TAXI (AMDT.) BILL
Senate Amendment**

The Minister of Works and Transport and Minister of Local Government (Hon. Colm Imbert): Madam Speaker, I beg to move,

That the Senate amendment to the Maxi-Taxi (Amdt.) Bill listed in the appendix be now considered.

Maxi-Taxi (Amdt.) Bill
[HON. C. IMBERT]

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Question proposed.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 4.

Senate amendment read as follows:

Delete and substitute the following:

- | | |
|-------------------|---|
| Section 2 amended | 4. Section 2 of the Act is amended |
| | (a) by renumbering section 2 as section 2 (1); |
| | (b) in the definition of "permit" by inserting after the words "section 7 (1)", the words "and includes a permit to own and operate a maxi-taxi issued prior to the commencement of the Maxi-Taxi (Amdt.) Act 1994"; and |
| | (c) by adding after subsection (1) as renumbered the following subsection: |
| | (2) notwithstanding any law to the contrary, an operator of a maxi-taxi is deemed, for all purposes including that of the Motor Vehicles Insurance (Third Party Risks) Act, to be the servant or agent of the owner of the maxi-taxi. |

Hon. C. Imbert: Madam Speaker, I beg to move that the House doth agree with Senate in the said amendment.

Question proposed.

Question put and agreed to.

NORTH AMERICAN FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Madam Speaker, I am extremely pleased to move the following Motion standing in my name:

Be it Resolved That this House take note of the statement by the hon. Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance on Trinidad and

Tobago's decision to declare formally its interest to access the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), made in the House of Representatives on Friday, April 8, 1994.

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Hon. K. Valley: Mr. Deputy Speaker, our quest to access NAFTA is owing to the critical role that preferential market access, especially to large markets, plays in our current development strategy. Quite simply, the Government's current development strategy remains relatively simple. Stripped of all its nuances, It says that Trinidad and Tobago must be positioned as an export platform if it is to be relevant in the current world economy.

Members would know that in Trinidad and Tobago the import substitution or industrialization by invitation model which we followed from the 1950s well into 1970s, and perhaps even into the late 1980s, assisted in the development of the largest manufacturing sector in the Caribbean. Behind protective walls, the assembly type industries deepened the manufacturing processes, but at some expense to the consumer in terms of quality and price. That developmental model also requires for its success an accompanying regime of negative lists, import and exchange controls, licensing requirements, work permit restrictions, and so forth.

The reality is that as we prepare for the competitive imperatives of the 1990s and into the 21st century, a new paradigm is mandated by the world scenario. The same way that policy consistency was required to make a success of the development mode of import substitution, so also will that consistency of policy be required if the new outward oriented strategy or development mode is to be successful. Basically, this represents a fundamental repositioning of Trinidad and Tobago, and that is why we say, in effect, we are making a crossing.

2.15 p.m.

Quite simply, while the import substitution industrialization by invitation model served its purpose, we believe it is no longer valid.

Just as that model required a certain policy environment for its success, so, too, this model requires an enabling environment which may be different from the old. So that, it is in that context one has to take some of the policy decisions which this Government has been pursuing over the last two years in particular. Quite simply, the new environment of an open economy with international competitiveness is not consistent with, for example, a fixed exchange rate or exchange control, for that matter, or a high level of state involvement in the economy.

In this two-year period, we have done quite a bit in terms of providing that enabling environment. This is why we believe at this time we are an ideal candidate to access NAFTA; and it is against the background of the policy matrix that we have pursued, that the explicit decision of the Government to accede to NAFTA must be considered.

The agreement caters to the realization of two of the main elements of Trinidad and Tobago's development strategy at this time; one is market access—very important—and the other, export-related investment, which would underwrite the establishment and expansion of internationally competitive production in the local environment. It must be noted also, that the effect of NAFTA on Caricom countries could be damaging, with trade and investment divergence towards Mexico. Which could engender a sense of being marginalized. For example, a study done by the Caricom Secretariat on the impact of NAFTA on Caricom suggested the following.

First of all, it makes the point the external trade accounts for over 40 per cent of the GDP of Caricom. Caricom currently enjoys preferential access to Canada and the United States, the two major markets in NAFTA—advantage which will, by definition, be reduced with the implementation of NAFTA, assuming that the Caricom countries are not in NAFTA. The bulk of Caricom exports to the NAFTA region is concentrated in products not covered by CBI and Caribbean, and which will, therefore, be even more affected with the implementation of NAFTA.

That is a fundamental point that, yes, we have CBI, we have Caribbean, but the bulk of our exports to the United States and Caribbean is not covered by these agreements. For example, the point was made that for eight product groups textile and apparel; petroleum and petroleum products; citrus and citrus juices; sugar, rum, cut flowers, leather products and footwear, all of which are excluded from CBI, or which have other limitations in accessing the United States market, are most vulnerable. These eight product groups account for some 70 per cent of Caricom's total domestic exports to the United States in 1990. That is up from 66 per cent 1984. So that, although we have CBI, here we have 70 per cent of the exports from Caricom that go into the United States not covered by that agreement.

More importantly, the effect on different countries is different. It says, for example, that these eight products which I have just listed and which are excluded from CBI, account for over 80 per cent of the exports of Belize and Trinidad and Tobago to the United States in 1990. In the case of Trinidad and Tobago, in 1990 some 83 per cent of our exports going into the United States was not covered, or

did not have that favourable treatment under CBI. It says further that petroleum/petroleum products is the largest single export of Caricom into the United States whilst textile/apparel is the fastest growing, having doubled since 1984. So the fact that there is CBI, that by itself is not a sufficient condition for growth in Caricom countries, or to have favourable access.

Based on that, it is important that there be a strategic response, and because of the varying preparedness among member countries in Caricom, member states or their Heads agreed, at the conference in St. Vincent, to allow countries to access NAFTA. I want to refer Members to the decision at that conference recorded in the draft dated March 12, 1994. It says:

“The Conference in Caucus...reaffirmed the commitment of Caricom Member States to approach the question of their relations with NAFTA as a unified group, while recognizing that individual Member States may need different provisions and timetables to accommodate their particular interest;”

The point was made, that in terms of timing to access NAFTA, member countries may want a different time. Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago may be ready in 1994; St. Kitts may not be ready in 20 or 25 years, or what have you. So that the Heads took that into consideration. They also took into consideration the concept of the different levels of reciprocity among member countries. Because, again, Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica may be able to phase down tariffs in quick time, but a country such as St. Kitts may want protection in certain areas for a considerable period. So that the Heads reaffirmed that decision and agreed that:

“the Caricom community, through the Chairman of the Conference, would communicate with the Government of the United States indicating the Community’s desire to be listed as being eligible for negotiations with NAFTA...”

That was the first decision taken; and it continued:

“Individual Member States would also send a similar communication.”

So that the Heads mandated the Chairman of the Conference to inform the United States that Caricom wanted to be listed. The Heads also gave the authority to individual member states to state their intention, and is what we did. We did so with the concurrence of the Conference of Caricom Heads in March 1994.

2.25 p.m.

Members should note also that Trinidad and Tobago’s accession to NAFTA will be both symbiotic and reciprocal. The symbiosis would be reflected in the

mutual benefits to be gained by both Trinidad and Tobago and the United States. Trinidad and Tobago is expected to gain market access to that megamarket of some 363 million persons, and also to attract export-related investment to engage in production for preferential markets. Remember, our concept of the export platform—

Mr. Robinson: Mr. Deputy Speaker, could the hon. Minister explain very clearly how he anticipates the negotiations to proceed so as to allow the Caricom approach to take place at the same time or at a different time from the individual approach? It is not clear. Could he clarify for us?

Hon. K. Valley: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not think the intent was that the negotiation with Caricom would be simultaneous with negotiations with individual countries. Caricom, obviously, would be constrained by the slowest member in the group. Caricom Heads mandated the Chairman to communicate Caricom's interest in being listed, but in terms of negotiating the agreement with Caricom, obviously that negotiation would have to wait until all members agree that we want to access NAFTA.

On an individual basis, however, countries may go ahead, so as a practical matter, if 11 of the 13 countries go ahead and have negotiations, the others will fall in line. More importantly, on July 1, the President of the United States in his list, would indicate which countries or regions he may wish to fast track with that legislation. So it is at the instance of the United States Government rather than of Caricom of Trinidad and Tobago.

I was making the point that Trinidad and Tobago would gain by having market access to this mega market and also by being able to attract export-related investment to Trinidad and Tobago, all within the concept of having Trinidad and Tobago positioned as an export platform. Given that large market, one can then attempt to attract investors from the Far East, Europe or South America, to locate here based on that favourable or preferential treatment into that market.

Mr. Robinson: I am very sorry to be interrupting the Minister, but it is very important that this aspect of the matter be understood. The matter that I would like clarified is: When the President of the United States indicates his readiness to negotiate with a particular country, does that country then proceed to negotiate on its own? Secondly, the secretariat is supposed to be preparing a study regarding the whole process which is to be undertaken. What is the purpose of that study? Can he clarify that?

Hon. K. Valley: Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me deal with the second point because that is the easier one, obviously. The secretariat is doing a study to

inform member countries with respect to its negotiating position. First of all, one has to have a ticket to be in the game, so we want to be listed but, at the time of negotiation, that study is going to inform the member country or Caricom, concerning which product tariff can be reduced in one year, or on which product a 15-year protection phase down should be looked for, or which should be phased down over ten years, or for which an attempt should be made to protect. That is the purpose of the study.

The first question was—

Mr. Robinson: When the President of the United States indicates his readiness to negotiate with a particular territory, is that territory going to negotiate on its own?

Hon. K. Valley: I hope he indicates his interest on July 1 to negotiate with Trinidad and Tobago, and if he does that, we would want to do so.

Mr. B. Panday: Exactly! Caricom is dead! That is what he is saying! That is the whole point!

Hon. K. Valley: Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me review once more the thinking of the Heads at the conference. All members realized that, in fact, NAFTA is a reality—

Mr. B. Panday: One minute of silence for Caricom!

Hon. K. Valley: —that Caricom must get into NAFTA at some time. For example, let us assume there is an indication that Caricom is listed and given priority in terms of negotiation, obviously, that negotiation would be much more difficult than with a country such as Jamaica or Trinidad and Tobago, because one would have to look at asymmetrical reciprocity for the smaller islands which may need much more protection—St. Kitt's, St. Lucia and so forth. So that, yes, there will be negotiations, but here we are going to have 13 countries attempting to protect different things. I can tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in my short time, how difficult it is to negotiate with 13 governments.

In the case of Trinidad and Tobago, we are advanced in our negotiations on our bilateral investment treaty; we are advanced in our negotiations with our intellectual property rights agreement. We expect that these agreements would be executed by June 15. We expect that there would be a phasing in—in other words, that these two agreements, with NAFTA parity, would provide a stepping stone as it were, into full accession into NAFTA.

Mr. Robinson: Just one final question before the Minister sits. How does he propose that the coherence and the integrity of Caricom be preserved in this process?

Mr. B. Panday: He has answered that, Ray. He has said Caricom is dead!

Mr. Bereaux: Is that so?

Mr. B. Panday: Yes. That is what he said!

Hon. K. Valley: Mr. Deputy Speaker, Trinidad and Tobago has been known—and I think the former Prime Minister knows this—to provide a certain level of leadership in Caricom. I think it was his administration that deal with the partial scope agreement with Venezuela, after which there has been this Caricom one-way free trade into Venezuela. Caricom has mandated Trinidad and Tobago to negotiate bilateral agreements with Brazil and Argentina. One expects that that would be a leadership role with Caricom coming after with a Caricom agreement.

We have to show leadership in Caricom: Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica, Barbados. Barbados has also asked to negotiate a bilateral investment treaty as well as an intellectual property rights agreement. We have to know that as we go, we give that confidence to our smaller brothers and sisters in Caricom, getting them on board and letting them know that this is the brave new world, that they can go without fear, that there can be protection, that the game has changed and we have to move in that direction.

I make the point that NAFTA provides—

2.35 p.m.

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Madam Speaker, I was making the point that NAFTA provides benefits to both Trinidad and Tobago and the United States; that it is better than CBI, because whereas under CBI only about 15 per cent of Trinidad and Tobago's exports the United States are now covered, we expect under NAFTA to have a phasing down of tariffs and so be in a much better position.

I made the point also that our indication of interest has the concurrence of the Heads of Governments in Caricom. I also made the point that we are doing all of this within that overall initiative with respect to the export platform, having Trinidad and Tobago positioned to accept investments from third countries, to access preferential market, both in South and North America and in Europe and under LOMÉ.

I want to end by simply pointing to the fact that market access is merely one of about five initiatives that this Government has earmarked for accomplishment for 1994. The others are the transshipment hub concept on which we are working with that Orinoco/Apure project and all that it involves; in other words, making this waterway in this part of the world another Rhine, and the vision that goes with that.

We are also pursuing the initiative of the regional air carrier. I must confess that it has not been as easy task, but we continue to work towards that initiative, and at the appropriate time we would expect the small man in Trinidad and Tobago to take share participation in our aircraft.

There is also the telecommunications initiative, information technology, which is an area that is opening widely, and we want to be positioned to take advantage of that. That last, of course, is the whole area of tourism, where we have earmarked Tobago to build a critical mass of hotel rooms, and so forth. These are all initiatives that the Government is working on at present, so that this initiative of NAFTA must be seen in that wider context of seeking favourable preferential market access with a view to being able to market that to investors looking for markets for their products, all with the bottom line of creating more employment in Trinidad and Tobago and the earning of foreign exchange.

It is in that context that our initiative of NAFTA must be seen, and I know we have the support of the Opposition in our quest to join NAFTA.

I thank you most sincerely.

Question proposed.

Mr. Basdeo Panday (*Couva North*): Madam Speaker, history will record that since independence, no party, whether in the Government or the Opposition, has been more consistently right on national and international issues than the United National Congress. The issue of NAFTA which is before the House today exemplifies that fact more than any other issue. We are the ones who have been telling them for a long time that unless they do something about Caricom and make Caricom effective, it will, in fact, become a dead letter, having regard to what we evolving on the international economic scene.

Today, after listening to the Member for Diego Martin Central, the Minister responsible for Trade, we have only one alternative which is to ask this House to stand for a minute's silence to mourn the death of Caricom. That is why he could not answer the questions asked of him by the Member for Tobago East. It is clear now that the Government has, in fact, abandoned Caricom. That is a fact.

Now, remember, we have been the ones in this House who, for years, have been telling them they are dragging their feet on Caricom and unless they do something about it, Caricom will disintegrate; and our words have come to pass.

I agree with the Minister on many of the points he has made: I want to make that absolutely clear. I agree with him on the point that you cannot attract investment unless

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you have a market. Have we not been saying that for 15 years? How is it it is now listening? We have said this in this House for some 15 years, particularly since the Government made the point that it was washing its hands of its responsibility—like Pontius Pilate—for the unemployment situation in the country.

The Government's policy in recent times has been that it will no longer be the prime mover in the creation of jobs in the society and that that task was to be left to the private sector. It has said over and over that it is the private sector which must create jobs in the society. The government is going to be a facilitator—whatever that word means.

Mr. Manning: Madam Speaker, just out of an abundance of caution and for the record, what the Government has said is different from which the distinguished Member for Couva North is now indicating that the government has said. I wish to ask him to, please, do not speak for us; we can speak for ourselves, and we will.

Mr. B. Panday: I agree with the Member that we cannot speak for him. Every time he speaks he says one thing, and something else speaks for him. When we looked at the certified copy of ownership the sale of his care that was saying one things and he was saying something else. It is always like that. He speaks one thing and everybody else hears something else. We listen to him and we interpret what he is saying, and we have argued with him that his Government has washed it hands of its responsibility for employment in the country. The Government is the facilitator. Private enterprise must take up the unemployment slack.

We have argued with the Government that the only way private enterprise can take u that kind of slack, is that Government must attract investment in sufficiently large quantity and quality that would make an impact on the unemployment problem. For example, the Government's policy has been that, "We are going to deal with our unemployment problem by attracting investment into the country"; but it has failed in that, in that it has brought investment into the country, but into a sector that does not create jobs. It has succeeded in bringing investment into a sector that brings in investment on its own anyway, the petroleum sector. It has always done that, particularly if it is giving away our gas and so on. There will be people lining up there to collect our gas free. Ask Nucor.

2.45 p.m.

We argued that people do not come to our country to invest because they like the looks on our faces, investors do so because they are going to make profits; people invest to make profits, and can make profits, only if there is a market for their products; and we had argued that Trinidad was too small a market to attract that kind of investment.

We had argued that Caricom itself was too small a market; we are the ones who had advocated so long ago that there was need for a special economic arrangement with the United States of America. We had also argued, you would recall, for the kind of economic arrangement that involved not only the movement of some of the factors of production, but of all factors of production that are movable—of course land is not—but we had argued that we should agree on an economic treaty with the United States of America that involved the movement of labour, capital and goods; not only capital and goods, but labour, capital and goods.

The point I am making is that you have totally failed in your economic policy, and because of your failure, today, Caricom is gone. That is the point. If this Government had provided the leadership I heard of today—the time to provide leadership was during the oil boom when oil prices were high; when Trinidad, with its power of ownership of petroleum and petroleum products would have been able to pull Caricom together, but it did not do that.

Mr. Manning: How many of us were in Government then?

Mr. B. Panday: All of you! Why are you denying your political ancestors? Are you PNM or are you not PNM? Did you agree with what the Government did during the oil boom or did you not agree?

Mr. Valley: Ask Sham!

Mr. Mohammed: Why ask me? You answer!

Mr. B. Panday: I was absolutely surprised today to hear the hon. Minister talk about the need for the development of this new model from the one that existed before—the model which he describes as industrialization by invitation—and to feel that upon that he can build what is called "the productive platform" that is necessary to be successful in NAFTA.

We have argued, again, on several occasions in this House, that when one looks at the manner in which this Government adopted the policy in order to industrialize this country—to diversify it and so forth—it invited screwdriver industries. It invited assembly-type industries and we began assembling from motor cars to toilet paper here.

Mr. Manning: What year was that?

Mr. B. Panday: When you were there. *[Interruption]* It does not matter. The point is that on that kind of economic base you were importing completely knock down parts, screwing them together—whether they were motor cars,

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fridges, stoves, television sets, radio or even toilet paper that one cuts into pieces and rolls onto smaller rolls. That kind of industry could have only survived in the situation we talked about; that is, the protected market—a licensing regime. The result of that was not to build any productive base in the society, but to create an economy that produced shoddy goods at high prices with the so-called manufacturers making tremendous profits.

Mr. Manning: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. Leader of the Opposition for giving way. Perhaps, he would also like to say how many jobs may have been created as a consequence of that approach. *[Pause]* It was 43,000, in case he does not know.

Mr. B. Panday: The question is the alternative.

Mr. Manning: That is not the point.

Mr. B. Panday: That is the alternative, but do not take me away from my argument. What the Government is now saying is that from that base we are going into NAFTA—

Mr. Manning: Yes.

Mr. B. Panday: And you are going to become competitive.

Mr. Manning: Yes.

Mr. B. Panday: I am saying you cannot be competitive.

Mr. Manning: Fine!

Mr. B. Panday: That is the basis of the argument. Whom will you compete with? The very people from whom you are importing the completely knock down parts? Are you going to compete with Japan in the sale of motor cars, the knock down parts of which you have assembled here? Upon the present productive base, this country cannot become internationally competitive.

Mr. Manning: I thank the hon. Leader of the Opposition again for giving way, Madam Speaker. If his argument is to be accepted—and we do not accept—and we do not accept it, we accept it only for the purpose of the argument—I wonder if the hon. Member would be kind enough to tell us what a Government led by him would do, given the base from which we are coming?

Mr. B. Panday: Oh, we said much about that last night in Laventille, and it was very well received. You do not expect me to repeat my speech, but I will repeat it, I will do so where it will not fall on stony ground.

Mr. Manning: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. Leader of the Opposition again; he is a supreme democrat—I should like to believe that he is. I ask him: Why not engage in a debate? Last night he was engaged in a monologue at Laventille; let us have a dialogue today.

Mr. B. Panday: I understand the Member for Diego Martin East was at the meeting, I am going to insist that the hon. Prime Minister also attend and we will inform him of the date of the next meeting.

Mr. Manning: Not if Ricardo Welch is going to be there. When Hulsie is talking I will come.

Mr. B. Panday: The first point I wish to make is that we missed the Caricom boat. The Government at that time, of which the Member for San Fernando East was a Member, should have been perceptive enough to have seen the direction which the economic development of Caricom was taking. There was CBI; also Caribcan; Lomé—these preferential agreements and arrangements, and in spite of those arrangements neither American nor Canadian market could be penetrated. You could not penetrate those markets, sometimes because of economies of scale, but you did not provide the kind of leadership that Caricom needed to have, a regime that involved the rationalization of production that would enable you to enjoy the economies of scale to take advantage of Caricom, Lomé and Caribcan.

So, in spite of all this preferential treatment, Caricom was not able to develop economically. That is why there was need to set up the protective regime to protect the assembly-type industries; and having done so, industries, you cannot use that same productive base for export. It would not work because you would be trying to sell your finished product to the very people from whom you are importing the CKDs.

Mr. Manning: You need two years in Government.

Mr. B. Panday: I am saying that, yes, you cannot avoid the development of megablocs, that is a fact of life, I accept that. NAFTA is on your doorstep, you cannot wish it away and you have to deal with it. I am not quarreling about that at all. I accept that. All I am saying is that because of your failure to see what was happening on the international economic scene, Trinidad and Tobago, today, finds itself totally unprepared in order to deal with this new situation.

NAFTA involves reciprocity. It means that not only will markets abroad be opened up to Trinidad and Tobago's products, but that our market will be opened up to theirs.

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2.55 p.m.

Because of your failure to see that that kind of development was going to take place in the international economics, Trinidad and Tobago today is unprepared. You have a productive base which was designed to suit another economic philosophy, an economic model of industrialization by invitation which you hope, by the wave of a magic wand, to transform into a productive base that could compete on the international market with the international titans of the world: the United States, Japan and Europe. I do not think you will be able to do that. Therefore, the Government is going into NAFTA not only unprepared as an economy, but also unprepared as a government.

For example, as far as I am aware no one has done the kind of statistical work, the research and the data that is necessary to form the basis of meaningful negotiations. Negotiations are going to be the most important thing in this exercise upon which you have embarked. Although the basis of NAFTA is reciprocity, Mexico has been able to negotiate a 15-year period, before reciprocity, with some of its industries.

As far as I am aware the Government does not know the areas in which it needs time for retooling its productive base. No work has been done. If it has been, I would be most happy to learn about it.

Mr. Valley: Madam Speaker, I want to inform the hon. Member that that is the work the Secretariat is doing at present.

Mr. Sudama: Whose secretariat?

Hon. Member: Caricom.

Mr. B. Panday: I thought that was the point the Member for Tobago East was trying to have clarified.

Mr. Sudama: What work is Trinidad and Tobago doing?

Mr. B. Panday: The first point—the Government is ill-equipped to enter into negotiations; the Minister has not indicated at all what the Government would be looking for when it begins to negotiate with NAFTA. What kinds of concessions it would be looking for! What kind of period it would be looking at in order to retool its industries, in order to make them internationally competitive! As the Government failed in Caricom, I fear it will fail again. Unless it is removed from that position, Trinidad and Tobago will fail. That is the unfortunate thing about this country.

Admission into NAFTA is not automatic. As a matter of fact, NAFTA is based on clear-cut ideologies. Not only that, it is not a purely trading arrangement. The

Government has to notice—and it is our duty to point this out—that accession to NAFTA is premised on a very clear-cut ideological basis, neoliberalism.

Mr. Manning: Explain that.

Mr. B. Panday: That will take me some time. We will have to meet otherwise.

Mr. Manning: Madam Speaker, if the hon. Member for Couva North puts it in terms of neoliberalism or some other catchword that is not understood, then his contribution in the Parliament is going to be weaker. I strongly suggest to my hon. Friend that he clearly spell out what he means by this so that we can engage in proper debate in the Parliament this afternoon.

Mr. B. Panday: Members in this Parliament have on more than one occasion spoken on the doctrine of neoliberalism, and have actually tried to explain it to the hon. Member. If in a full-length debate they were not able to do it, do you think in this short time I would be able?

Dr. Rowley: As an old communist you cannot teach. He does not know.

Mr. B. Panday: However, the ideological basis on which I am speaking, the adoption of a package along the lines of a laissez-faire type of capitalism favoured by the United States, implies the adoption of a private sector-led market-driven model. You understand that one, do you not?

Mr. Manning: Yes.

Mr. B. Panday: The former involves advancing the privatization process towards lowering Government participation in the economy. Is it coming through? It involves market liberalization of which you have spoken, the opening up of the economy to investors and foreign service providers, and the institution of market determined interest and exchange rates.

This Government has been following a kind of warped version of that. Accession to NAFTA is not only based upon acceptance of its ideological framework; it is an agreement that goes beyond trade and economics and includes matters of environmental safeguards. As far as I am aware, this Government has not put in place sufficient legislation to meet the criteria of environmental safeguards that NAFTA requires. I was pointing that out while the Member was talking to someone, that it is more than an economic and trade agreement, it involves things beyond economics and trade. It involves the environment.

We are probably among the worst countries in the Caribbean as regards failing to enforce legislation relating to the environment. Pollution; our seas, rivers and land! Do

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not believe that you are going to get into NAFTA just because you applied. NAFTA also involves the enactment of clear rules of Government procurement. As a matter of fact, this was one of the areas in which Mexico was given a 15-year breathing spell because it was recognized that much of the infrastructure had not been in place for them to have had any kind of effective government performance.

I am saying that the Government has not indicated to this House the information that it has at hand that will enable it to negotiate in the interest of this country.

3.05 p.m.

It also involves rules of standard and certification. I do not like to talk about the ministry of the Member for Barataria/San Juan; it is probably one of the worst ministries in the whole Government. For example, it is a ministry that deals with standards but does not have any standards itself. It may very well be that it does not have the mechanism and resources, but the standard of goods that come into this country is abysmally low. That ministry is a total waste.

Dr. Baboolal: Madam Speaker, my ministry does not deal with consumer affairs any more. There is now a Ministry of Consumer Affairs. I think the Member for Couva North is getting a little mixed up.

Mr. B. Panday: That absolves her; that absolves the whole Government; because it is not part of her ministry any more, that is the end of it; whatever it is. What matters is that while it was hers, it was a total shambles, and now it is his, it is equally so.

The point about it is that this country has no rules and mechanisms for enforcing standards. Standards and certification are going to be important parts of the negotiations with NAFTA before the goods can be allowed to enter those countries. They know as well as I do that many of the products of Trinidad and Tobago that sought entry into the United States under CBI were not allowed because they did not have the proper certification and labelling. I am sure that he is aware of that. I am sure that they are aware that a whole container of condensed milk was being returned because there was no certification.

Dr. Rowley: The Member is misrepresenting information and is totally erroneous. There is no basis for making a statement like that. Our difficulty with marketing condensed milk in the United States has nothing to do with the standard of our milk; it has to do with quota assignments by the United States.

Mr. B. Panday: We are talking about the wrong shipment. Incidentally, it was not in his time. He likes to talk about his time and not his time, this one was not in his time. Does that satisfy him now? *[Interruption]* It is always in your time. They must satisfy other criteria before they can get into NAFTA. It is not only standards and certification that I have mentioned.

Rules relating to competition—that is a matter that we have been raising in this House from time immemorial. Because of the fact that the Government is in the grip of monopolistic forces in this country, it has been very reluctant to introduce anti-monopoly legislation. It is putting its name down on this to gain acceptance into NAFTA but it is not going to be as easy as it thinks. The Government knows that this country lacks any mechanism to deal with monopolies here.

We are saying the Government cannot introduce any legislation to deal with monopolies because it is in the pocket of the monopolists. That has been our argument. We are warning the Government and the country of the likely problems that we shall face as long as the PNM is in power. That is what we are really doing here today.

Mr. Manning: Madam Speaker, I am sorry. I really do not like the idea of interrupting my hon. Friend as often as this, but I must ask him if he could be kind enough again to let this Parliament know how a government under his leadership would proceed against the background that he is now outlining. We would like to know.

Mr. B. Panday: He must come to my meetings. He would enjoy them. Unlike the cultural show that he had masquerading as a political meeting last Sunday; we actually speak economics to our people. We tell them how they would be employed. We did that last night. We do not put on all kinds of cultural shows, rum and roti to attract people. We have serious politics.

Let me go on with this argument; I am not going to let him deter me from it. It is very important. In order to be able to negotiate its way into NAFTA, there would be the need to have proper legislation to deal with intellectual property. Again, I think this Government is not in a position. Maybe before the end of the year it would come to the House with all the legislation that is necessary. If it does, then I would congratulate it. All I can say is what I have before me at the moment.

Mr. Valley: Madam Speaker, may I merely inform the hon. Member that all those things have been taken care of. Up to last week in New York and in

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Washington the team had preliminary negotiations on the Intellectual Property Agreement as well as the Bilateral Investment Treaty. We expect to sign those by June 15.

Mr. Manning: What did I just tell you?

Mr. B. Panday: Before you came into power you told people that you would solve the unemployment problem. We expected that too, but you did not solve it. We cannot believe it. I have to argue with what I have before me today.

As of now, there is no enactment with respect to fair rules of government procurement; no proper legislation with respect to standards and certification; no proper legislation with respect to competition; no intellectual property rights and occupational health and safety in this country. That is an important aspect of getting into NAFTA. NAFTA is merely not about trade. That is the point I have been trying to make all afternoon. If you have the necessary legislation, tell me so that I am mistaken, and I shall accept that I am wrong.

Do not try to mislead this House and the country by saying that things are going to get better because the Government has made an application to get into NAFTA. The fact remains that not only is the Government ill-prepared, but because of this fact, it is likely to agree on all kinds of things that would push this country into further economic chaos than we are today. First of all, let me remind him that it would be a mistake for him to believe that admission is automatic.

Mr. Manning: Diplomacy.

Mr. B. Panday: My Friend says “diplomacy”. If he is going to depend upon diplomacy in order to save the Government and this country, then all I can say is God help him. The money that he was getting to fight the drug trade, he has lost it. He has so much diplomacy, that in order to fight—you and I know that was deliberate; was it not? In order to fight the drug trade, moneys that we had coming in to us, because of his tremendous diplomacy—I do not know whether it is diplomacy with Dole Chadee or with somebody else—he was able to lose that money. Do not tell me about diplomacy! Diplomacy is the last thing everybody on that side has.

Earlier on I had mentioned that although the agreement demands reciprocity, it is possible that during the negotiations, provisions can be made for differential treatment for specific goods or services. Could he assure me? He should tell me that he has done all the research and considered all the data and he knows exactly the goods and services for which he needs this deferential treatment and for how

long. As a matter of fact the agreement also caters for capability differences. Has he done work on that? Has he done any studies to ascertain the kind of capability of the productive base of which he speaks? How much time would be needed to adjust in order to be competitive? I am hoping that we will hear something during the debate, for the Prime Minister has threatened that he will debate the matter today. That would be something new.

3.15 p.m.

I think I mentioned that Mexico was allowed more time to institute regulations relating to government procurement because it did not have any established system. In terms of market access, have you done any work? If you have, please let your Ministers tell us before the time expires. Have you done any work, for example, with respect to the kind of market access you would need? The Mexicans were allowed up to 15 years protection, and that is the point I am coming to.

As I said, I think that Caricom is dead. You have killed it by not providing the leadership—okay, we have to look to new vistas and visions and so on—I am sure you will mention it. If you do your homework properly and think things out well, you could negotiate a very long period for local businessmen to retool and restructure their industry.

Mr. Manning: Madam Speaker, the hon. Leader of the Opposition made the point earlier that Mexico got 15 years to adjust in some specific areas. I should just let him know that it is not the bulk of the areas. Perhaps he would like to advise the Parliament of the areas in which Mexico was given such a long time period. It is not correct for the hon. Leader of the Opposition to use that to apply to all industries in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. B. Panday: I do not think I said that, and I do not think I said that Mexico got 15 years for all its industries. My point is that Mexico was able to get a period of 15 years during which it would continue to protect its industries in order to survive when this reciprocity agreement came into full effect. What I was saying is: Have you done the work as a Government? Do you know the goods and the industries that you want to be protected? For how long do you want them protected? Has there been consultation? Have you set up consultation with the business community in the country? Have you set up consultation with the farming community in the country? That is another area in which you will need a tremendous amount of time in order to deal with the influx of subsidized goods.

Unless you are very careful about what you are doing in NAFTA, you will have free trade with the United States, and the United States subsidizes its agriculture

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in a tremendous way. We all know that. When the American Government subsidizes their farm products, the farmers are able to sell at a price in the United States and elsewhere that gives them a fair profit. Once they make a fair profit, they then dump their goods in other countries, and unless you know what you are doing, they will dump their goods here. If they do that, how would you protect the farmers of this country? That is all I am asking the Government to indicate to us. What guarantees and assurances are they going to give the nation that our agriculture will enjoy a measure of protection that will allow it to become competitive?

I should like to advise the Government of one other thing. If they are going into NAFTA and they are going to negotiate, during the period of negotiation and during the time that they get to restructure our industry, it is extremely important that the Government take a positive initiative to deal with unemployment. That is why I started my argument about unemployment the way I did. As far as we on this side of the House are concerned, all economic development is about human development; all economic plans are only meaningful when they redound to the well-being of people. *[Interruption]* Last night, I promised the people of Laventille to bring that book and read from it.

The reason I make this point is that I should have expected that the hon. Prime Minister, at an election meeting launching off his campaign in a place like Laventille with 68 per cent unemployment, poverty, destitution and crime, would have told those suffering people who have voted for the PNM all their lives, how their plight was going to be eased. Instead, the Prime Minister went and said: "Do not worry, things are going to be better. We have gas." We have always had gas. "We will have an oil boom." We had an oil boom.

Mr. Manning: Madam Speaker, it is quite clear that the hon. Leader of the Opposition was not present at Sunday's party rally. Had he been present, he would have known that one of the things I went out of my way to do was to indicate to those present a short-term programme that we have in place designed to stimulate the construction sector and to create jobs in the first instance. *[Interruption]* I can make the point a little later and I will; but I make the point at this stage so that the hon. Leader of the Opposition can understand that it is not a monologue. We can reply to him and we will. I would prefer if he would be more careful with the facts.

Mr. B. Panday: The hon. Prime Minister was speaking about growth. How much per cent growth was there? There was 0.009 per cent or whatever it was. Growth is meaningless unless it impacts upon their lives. The PNM has fallen into

the trap of most Third World countries, and that is they divorce growth from development. They look at figures and say that the economy is growing at "X" per cent per year, therefore things are all right.

In Brazil, the economy keeps growing while the mass of the people who are suffering keeps growing too, to the point that they shoot their children in the streets. That is while the economy is growing, you know! Brazil has an economy that shows on the books that it is growing. There is growth rate there, and while there is growth rate, there is growth in crime; there is growth in unemployment, growth in brutality, poverty and destitution.

That is exactly the pattern of development that this Government has fallen into why it cannot see the point of how NAFTA will relate to the people who are unemployed in the country. There were CBI, Caricom and Lomé. How did those impact on our people? They created more unemployment. So that I advise the Government to abandon its Pilate-like philosophy of washing its hands of the unemployment situation and the crime situation in the country. We all know why the crime situation is there.

The Government in getting into NAFTA—remember I told you there was an ideological basis. I did not make that point *en passant*. If they are going into NAFTA, they must not surrender the right of the Government to take positive action to deal with things like unemployment. They cannot abandon that right. They cannot continue saying that the Government will be a facilitator and private enterprise will take up the slack. Private enterprise has told you that they cannot take up the slack. If this is do and the Government is not taking up the slack, what would happen to the people? So that, in negotiating, it is important to remember that the Government must not surrender its right to intervene economically, that is to say, it must not succumb to the ideological bias that seems to be an imperative before you enter NAFTA.

3.25 p.m.

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

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

Mr. B. Panday: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The proposal I want to make is, the Government must not keep telling people "hold on, things will be all right down the road." In my reply to the Budget Speech, I did a whole historical survey of promises that were made since 1956.

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The Government is always saying to "hold on, things will be better" and for 30 years the people have been hearing that things are going to be better. With respect to Caricom, things are going to be better: Caricom collapses. We have NAFTA, things are going to get better and so forth.

The Government must intervene positively, and I think one can intervene with the consent of private enterprise, because private enterprise does not really want the Government to intervene in areas where it is involved. I am not concerned in intervening in areas where private enterprise is involved; in fact private enterprise should be invited to take the initiative of which I am about to speak, and if it refuses, then the Government should do it.

The Government should use its resources abroad—I made this point before in the House and I will make it again—its embassies, in order to locate small niche markets in the metropolitan countries of the world. *[Interruption]* You did that already? Then the Government, having done that, must now organize—*[Interruption]* they must do it both in agriculture and industry. With respect to agriculture, it must then organize the agricultural production to meet the demand. If you leave it by itself it would not be done. If you leave it to the private sector, it would not be done because the private sector has more lucrative areas in which it can be involved.

I had pointed to niche markets, ethnic markets, in which we can engage in non-traditional agriculture. However, do you know why we cannot do it?? Because of our small size. We cannot do it because we do not have any farmer in this country with two and three thousand acres of land who can go into agriculture on a large scale and enjoy the economies of scale. What we have is a number of small farmers, and therefore no single farmer can produce in quantity and quality enough to export.

To export successfully, one needs to be able to produce goods of high quality at competitive prices, but more importantly, in quantities which are exportable, that is there has got to be a periodicity of supply. *[Interruption]* Yes, but your export trading company has not organized the farmers! That is what I am saying, the Government has to go further.

Having organized it, you may hand it over to them eventually as a co-operative and therefore go back to privatization if that is the inevitable direction that you must move to. But the initiative must come from the state. *[Interruption]* How do you mean that is no problem? Why are you not doing it? There are small farmers about the place. Let us say you are going to produce one

crop, you need to identify a crop that is marketable. Having done so, you need to produce it in such quantities that it is exportable.

Mr. Manning: Which crop has the UNC identified?

Mr. B. Panday: I will lend you the manifesto when I am finished. We were reading yours last night actually.

Having identified the crop, you organize the small farmers—there is a tremendous amount of facilities that the small farmers need in order to be organized to deal with an export market. That initiative has got to come from the state. It cannot come from anywhere else; it cannot come from the small farmers; they do not have the wherewithal. It will not come from private enterprise because they have more lucrative areas. *[Interruption]* You have not been doing it! For example, farmers do not even have roads to bring their crops out. How are you facilitating them? They do not have water. How are you facilitating them? *[Interruption]*

Madam Speaker: The Member for Couva North is finding it difficult to make his contribution.

Mr. Humphrey: It is the Member for Oropouche who is making it difficult for him, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Sudama: Madam Speaker, I am merely facilitating the debate. I am a facilitator.

Mr. B. Panday: The Government had asked about a product. If there is one product that Trinidad and Tobago can mobilize for the export industry, it is our fish. We are surrounded by seas teeming with fish; we have a 200-mile economic zone and so forth.

Mr. Manning: Madam Speaker, as the hon. Member for Couva North is making the point I wonder whether he would pronounce on sugar cane; whether it is one of the crops that we stay in or not?

Ms Nicholson: Do not let him dictate to you.

Mr. B. Panday: As I was saying about fish— *[Interruption]*. I would not let him—you see he knows that the Government is going to get nailed, because my colleague the Member for St. Augustine has pointed out to me that the Gulf of Paria is one of the most stable marine environments in the world. It is also regarded as one of the largest salt water lakes in the world. *[Interruption]* It is

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also an area that is very conducive to fish farming [*Interruption*] The hon. Prime Minister asked me to identify a product and I have identified a product which, if the Government manages the economy properly, could employ over 20,000 people, because of the volume of marine life that surrounds us.

Hon. Member: It is over-fished.

Mr. B. Panday: And why is it over fished? Because of policy and management that I am talking about Your party has been in power for 30 years! You have brought this about.

The Government must begin to identify products—

Dr. Rowley: Madam Speaker, the Member was sidetracked. He was making the point about using the Gulf of Paria—which he has described as a salt water lake—to create 20,000 jobs. Could he complete the point? I was very interested in it.

Mr. B. Panday: I said your fishing industry includes Tobago and a 200-mile economic zone around the country of Trinidad and Tobago, which includes the Gulf of Paria. In conjunction with the Venezuelan authorities which have rights there, the Gulf of Paria can be fish-farmed and all the profits that you are talking about with respect to over-fishing can be dealt with, and Trinidad and Tobago can become an exporter in that regard because it can enjoy economies of scale there. Its production can be large enough to compete, if the Government handles the economy properly. That was one product. Now surely, you do not expect me to give you all the other products. I will do that at Laventille during the course of next month.

3.35 p.m.

Mr. Manning: Tell us about sugar cane.

Mr. B. Panday: No, you want to take me off; I will deal with sugar cane on another occasion. We have talked about diversification in sugar cane and we have a plan that is agreed upon—ask my learned Friend there—but I do not want to read that for you here. If you want to know about sugar cane, ask my Friend who went to cut cane, I saw his picture in the newspapers.

Mr. Sudama: He went to suck cane.

Mr. B. Panday: Oh, I am sorry, he was not cutting cane, he was peeling it to suck. Sorry, I thought he went to cut cane. I saw a picture in the newspapers and the Minister looked good actually, with his nice Richie Richardson broad-rimmed hat. [*Laughter*]

During negotiations the Government must immediately begin this task that I have been speaking about for years: identify niche markets, to organize agriculture in such a way that it can begin to take up unemployment. It can do that in the industrial sector, as well, by also identifying niche markets and organizing people to produce on a sort of a cottage-type industry basis. It is done in India and China, where thousands and thousands of people are employed, working in their homes, and that is what makes it cheap enough.

When you have to put up a big factory, large sums of money involved in investment, and you have to put up all this infrastructure, in order to make profits you have to charge high prices. However, if you organize your industries—and of course it applies only to certain types of industries—that is the function of the Government: to locate and identify them. What will happen is that people will be engaged in production in their own homes, on their own time, using family labour at a time that is convenient to them. That reduces the cost of production, because overhead costs are reduced, and that is the kind of production that will enable you to export.

Hon. Member: That is a dream.

Mr. B. Panday: The Member says that is a dream; and that is the problem with this Government. It happens as I say, in—

Miss Nicholson: Fish was a good argument.

Mr. B. Panday: Fish was a brilliant argument. The Government asked for one, I gave it. The Indian Government, the Chinese Government, and also in Taiwan, have done much work on that.

Madam Speaker, I was at the home of a businessman in Gasparillo over the weekend.

Mr. Sudama: Is that in the Pointe-a-Pierre constituency?

Mr. B. Panday: Yes, that is in the Pointe-a-Pierre constituency, but I was not there for that purpose. I want to just tell this honourable House how easy it is. While talking to him—he is going to either Taiwan or Hong Kong—he took out some documents and began to show me feasibility studies that have been done in those countries for small industries, very, very small industries. If we adopt that pattern here, we can employ thousands of people. First, you have to identify the markets, because these small poor people cannot do market research abroad, they cannot go to England, they do not have the money, so the Government has to use the state resources to identify the markets, the rules, the regulations about packaging, transport, and so on. Small business needs the help of the state.

Mr. Manning: Madam Speaker, is the Member saying, therefore, that the state must do all the research and prepare the climate for the small businesses to then thrive and prosper? Is that what the Member is saying?

Mr. B. Panday: That and more.

Dr. Rowley: That is what you call facilitation.

Mr. B. Panday: You use the word “facilitation”, but that is as far as you go. Dr. Eric Williams created one of the finest institutions to facilitate small people to get into business, called the NBC; what have you done with it? The NCB was designed—

Hon. Member: By whom?

Mr. B. Panday: By Dr. Eric Williams and the PNM. That was a good job. What is wrong with my saying that? That was a fantastic job, the setting up, but who broke it up? Answer that one as well. The NCB was designed to provide capital to small business people who would not have access to the traditional banks. What have you done with it? You have destroyed it completely, and now you are talking about small business.

Mr. Valley: Are you sure?

Mr. B. Panday: Of course, you have put it back into the hands of the people who control banks. Ask anybody from Laventille who went to the bank for a loan to put up a small business what was the result.

Dr. Rowley: What is this new love for the PNM?

Mr. B. Panday: My dear fellow, I am one human being who is in love with everybody. I believe that a man does good and he does bad, and you judge him on the totality of his life, not by one incident. Therefore, even Dr. Eric Williams has done some good; he has done a hell of a lot of bad as well.

Mr. Humphrey: You people are betraying Dr. Williams.

Mr. B. Panday: To come back to my theme, while you are negotiating NAFTA, please begin to look at employment. That is extremely important. If you do not do so and the Government negotiates the traditional way into NAFTA, what is going to happen is that NAFTA is going to result probably in our economy growing; probably showing that we are having investments; probably showing that the GDP and the GNP are growing: but while all that is happening, there will be more and more people unemployed, more and more people suffering, more and more crime, more and more instability in the society. So I thought I should bring

that to the Government's attention. I would like to hear before this debate is over how the Government proposes to deal with agriculture, for example, when it comes to negotiate with NAFTA.

I would have hoped that the Government would have begun to set up the basis for negotiations. For example, not only does the Government have to know what it is going to negotiate about, but it must have a negotiating team. These kinds of negotiations are not the run-of-the-mill negotiations, so that I imagine the Government would be consulting the business community and setting up its team of negotiators.

I imagine you would be setting up the farming community; I also imagine labour would have a tremendous input into the negotiations. That is one commitment I want to have from the Government today: that labour would have an input into the negotiations, not only in respect to their contributions to what you negotiate about, but also their presence on the negotiating team. That is extremely important.

There is one other point that I almost forgot. I think the Government should be extremely careful that in negotiating with NAFTA it does not put all its economic eggs into one basket. Because, as you know, although culturally and economically we are tied to the United States, insofar as trade is concerned, the geophysical reality is that we are part of Latin America, and, therefore, the Government should not ignore the possibilities of trade with Latin America. Already Mexico, Colombia and Venezuela, the big three, have made initiatives, and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago must begin to deepen its ties with Venezuela so that the economy begins to enjoy the advantages of things like ALADI, the Latin American Integration Association, which includes Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Chile, Ecuador, Mexico, Paraguay and Venezuela.

Create an economy that produced shoddy goods at high prices with the so-called manufacturers making tremendous profits.

Mr. Manning: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. Leader of the Opposition for giving way. Perhaps.

3.45 p.m.

In negotiating, do not, as I said, put all your economic eggs in one basket. Do not succumb to the pressure, but rather recognize the geophysical reality that we are part of Latin America and that there is a great opportunity for Trinidad and Tobago business in Latin America. *[Interruption]* I do not know since when you

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began talking about that. I thought you said at one time that Caricom was the answer. That you have killed. We are the ones who have always been telling you that you should not put all your eggs in one basket.

Madam Speaker, before this debate is ended, I hope and trust that the Government would bring us up to date on its capability, capacity and the kind of foundation it has laid for its negotiations with NAFTA.

I thank you.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs (Hon. Ralph Maraj): Madam Speaker, I rise in support of the Motion by my colleague, the Member for Diego Martin Central, asking this honourable House to take note of Government's intention to access the North American Free Trade Agreement. I am sure that in the course of my contribution I would be able to deal with some of the points raised by the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Madam Speaker, first of all—and I am sure we all accept it—trading blocs are part and parcel of the international economic reality of today. In our own hemisphere there is the North American Free Trade Agreement already in force and elsewhere in the hemisphere, for example, the Mercosur grouping is emerging, another megamarket, in the southern cone of the South American continent. There is the Central American Integration Movement, and, closer to home, the Andean Pact, all economic groupings. May I deal right away with the last point that the hon. Member for Couva North made and assure him that we have no intention of putting our eggs into one basket.

The fact of the matter is that during the course of this administration we have made significant strides towards deepening our relationship with Latin America, giving it substance both at the bilateral and multilateral level. Over and over we have spoken about the developments, and I do not intend to go into all of them here. For example, with Venezuela, there is the Orinoco/Apure project coming up. We are looking at visa waiver agreements for businessmen, and other areas of co-operation. We are looking at our relations with Colombia. There are many items on the agenda that will be followed in the course of this year, all of which are supported by the fact that at present Trinidad and Tobago is Caricom's representative in the Rio group.

The point I am making is that in this part of the world, as in other areas, trading blocs is a reality of the international economic environment. If one looks at Europe one would see that the European Community has now transformed itself into the European Union. There are four countries seeking to gain access to

the European Union—Finland, Sweden, Norway, Austria. Also, there are countries of the former Eastern bloc which are also queuing up to join the European Union with the prospect of enlarging that economic space in Europe notwithstanding the considerable difficulties they would face internally and externally with respect to enlargement.

In the Far East as well, there is the Asian grouping involving Indonesia, Malaysia, Taiwan, Singapore, all of the Asian tigers. That grouping has taken the decision that by 2006 it would be involved in a free trade agreement zone as well in that part of the world. There is also APEC, another economic grouping, coming together. It is very interesting that APEC is a kind of grouping that crosses the Pacific Ocean, as it were, to the extent that the United States of America and Canada both see themselves as Pacific Rim countries, and the geographical reality supports this. So that there is coalescence, as it were, across the Pacific Ocean with respect to integration among these mega blocs that are emerging in the world. The fact of the matter is—and I think everyone here accepts this—that these mega blocs are a fact of international economic life.

We in Trinidad and Tobago are part of an integration movement called Caricom. Much has been said about Caricom. The hon. Member did make the point about Caricom dying, and may I state categorically, I do not share that view at all.

The fact of the matter is that the integration process has been on and even though it has not moved as fast as we would have liked towards the achievement of the Common Market, I am convinced that we have reached significant milestones along the way—for example, the Common External Tariff. I am sure that before long we would be moving towards the signing of a double taxation agreement, establishing the Caribbean Investment Fund, mechanisms which, Madam Speaker, I am sure you will agree, would go a long way towards encouraging intra-Caricom commercial activity.

In addition to that, significant hassle has been removed from travel in Caricom, but we must accept the fact that we need to do significantly more towards encouraging free movement of people in the region. We ourselves are part of an integration process. We ourselves are part of a bloc that we are seeking to create in our part of the world. What we have to realize is that being part of Caricom and deepening the integration process cannot be enough for Caricom as a group; neither can it be enough for the individual members of Caricom. I think we have accepted that fact.

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We cannot seek only to deepen the integration process. The acceptance of this fact is seen in the ready acceptance of the idea of the Association of Caribbean States which seeks to widen the Caricom relationship and to create yet another economic space in the hemisphere involving all the countries of the Caribbean littoral. That is something that has been going on.

I assure this honourable House that significant strides have already been made in that direction. We have been having technical discussions; another meeting will be held in Santo Domingo soon where the technicians will be getting together and we expect that this new entity will come into being before long. We hope that we would have made significant progress by the Heads of Government Conference in July.

The matter is that Caricom has sought to deal with the NAFTA phenomenon. We have not sought to deal with it on our own; we have found ready allies in the Central American Integration Movement and, as you know, one of the exciting things that have been happening in the region is that the two sub-regions—the Caricom region and the Central American Integration Movement—have been coming together. There have been meetings as we seek to consolidate our position to deal with the international economic environment, to fashion new ways for co-operation, and to integrate our markets and discover what problems we have that militate against integration.

We have found ready allies in the Central American countries as we seek to deal with the NAFTA phenomenon, and we have come to the common position that we should maintain the preferential access that we both enjoyed under the CBI and Caribcan.

We must be honest with ourselves and admit that we have not been able to significantly influence the outcome of NAFTA in the way that we would have liked. In the process of lobbying, and making our positions known, we remember the openings that came about as a result of the gibbons Bill, for example. We recognize, and still have on the agenda, the achievement of parity for Caricom products. At least this still remains on the agenda, and let me say that we have instructed our ambassadors in Washington to pursue the Caricom agenda in this regard.

3.55 p.m.

However, the point that we have to realize is that we have to come to grips with NAFTA in a very real way. We have to face it very squarely indeed. We can no longer rely on, and hope for, what I want to call the "handouts of preferential

access." The world has changed. Indeed, this whole question of preferential access is coming more and more under question; and with the conclusion of the General Agreement on Tariffs Trade, we may find that it has become obsolete. Though, in the case of the CBI and Caribcan it has survived the GATT agreement simply because of the unilateral action taken in this regard by the United States and Canada with which we have these particular arrangements.

The point I want to make is that as difficult as it is, and as uneven as the playing field would seem to be, countries like ours must go out there now and compete. There is no shelter any more. We had a measure of protection during the days of the ideological divide, when the two super powers were competing for spheres of influence. Now the game has changed and reciprocity, really, is the name of the game. Small countries like ours can no longer benefit from the battle of the giants that took place during the cold war.

It cannot be denied that this administration has accepted this reality about which I speak, and that we have sought very concretely, and in a planned and programmed manner, to take our country along the path of deregulation, to modernize the way we do things, and to position this country for participation in a globalized economy, one manifestation of which is the emergence of trading blocs, like the North American Free Trade Area.

Other Caricom countries, with the exception of Jamaica—and we have to face this fact—have not gone as far as we have along the road of deregulation. Indeed, Jamaica has proceeded much further than we have, and when we do conclude the Investment Treaty and the Agreement dealing with Intellectual Property Rights, we would have made ourselves a little more prepared for accession to NAFTA.

Mr. Manning: This happened before us.

Hon. R. Maraj: Yes, this happened before us, and it is against this background that we must see the Heads of Government Conference decision when they met at Inter-sessional in St. Vincent. We must see it, indeed, as a wise one, taking into account the political and practical realities; taking into account the fact that we in Caricom are at different stages of development. Some of us are more industrialized than others; some of us still have a mainly agricultural base. That decision did take into account the fact that some of us would have more interest in acceding to NAFTA than others; and realizing, as well, that whilst the ultimate and ideal goal would be for Caricom to accede as a unit, it recognized that different countries were in different stages of preparedness and allowed individual countries to proceed along their own timetable.

Contrary to what some people are saying, that the decision would end up sundering Caricom and would spell the demise of Caricom, in fact, in the final analysis, as far as we are concerned, it would help to preserve the integration movement. This is because the decision allows people a measure of freedom to proceed along their own pace of development and, in the final analysis, contributes to Caricom, and because, as I have said elsewhere, I think the time has come for Caricom to recognize that it is going to be better off if the strong are allowed to get a little stronger. They will then be able to help those who need the help much more than others. So I say, it does not have to mean the end of Caricom.

Now, some people, with some justification, have talked about the fact that Caricom could break up—

Mr. Manning: They said that at the Common External Tariff, too. No justification.

Hon. R. Maraj: Exactly. That was the prediction when we were facing the problems with the Common External Tariff. There was a lot of talk about the end of Caricom, but the fact is that we did achieve that!

The important point we want to make, is that a negotiating process is on, and access has yet to be undertaken. It is my view that increasingly you are getting signals, from Washington, for example, that the terms of accession do not have to be as rigid as originally forecast, and that there is some flexibility. There is more and more talk about special concerns of individual countries, and we are aware of the possibility that, in the negotiating process, these special concerns can be brought to bear on the final outcome.

So that many of the concerns that the hon. Member for Couva North had with respect to the negotiations, and so forth, have yet to be determined; and I want to assure this honourable House that we are convinced that the research which the Caricom Secretariat is going to undertake will provide us with the wherewithal to strengthen our position, as we carry through the negotiating process.

May I also say—and it is something that we can take up at the Heads of Government Conference when we meet in July, it was discussed to a certain extent at the Inter-sessional—that whilst Caricom has allowed an individual country to accede to NAFTA and to negotiate on its own, there is the possibility—and the matter has been discussed—of Caricom having some kind of observer status whilst that negotiation is taking place, so that the problems and the process

of negotiation will be exposed to the rest of the Caricom community, and they may benefit from whatever precedents may have been set.

4.05 p.m.

Mr. Robinson: Madam Speaker, can the Minister state whether theoretically Caricom can accede to NAFTA?

Hon. R. Maraj: Theoretically, it seems that as a unit it is very difficult and that is my personal view at this point—for Caricom to accede to NAFTA because different countries are at different stages along the process of deregulation.

Mr. Robinson: I am not now dealing with the practical problems. I am asking theoretically whether it is conceptual.

Hon. R. Maraj: Theoretically—yes, it is. If the right moves are made, if the countries move at an equal pace along the process of deregulation and make the kinds of changes that will allow them to participate in a globalized economy, I am sure that that would position Caricom to be able to accede to NAFTA as a unit.

Another point, that we have to realize is that the phasing-in process is going to be a pretty lengthy one, lasting for about 15 years, covering about 10,000 products, so that during this period countries do have an opportunity to make the kinds of adjustments they need to make and to take the steps to prepare themselves more adequately for dealing with this phenomenon.

As I said, Madam Speaker, it seems to me that Caricom could benefit from any one of its members taking the pioneering step, as it were, to attempt to accede to NAFTA, especially as I said earlier on, there is the possibility of Caricom having an observer status on any negotiation that is taking place. If Trinidad and Tobago, for example, has the opportunity to negotiate entry into NAFTA, I am sure it would be willing to make its experiences available to the rest of the Caribbean community and will, in this way, continue to play the kind of leading role that it has always played in the integration movement.

Let me say this. Should Trinidad and Tobago succeed in our effort to accede to NAFTA and should we, after we have succeeded, successfully face the challenge—let us face the fact, it is not going to be honky dory, it is going to be a tough task to successfully face the challenge I am saying that if we do it, and I am sure that we will, then it is going to benefit Caricom in the final analysis; because I am sure it will be agreed that a vibrant dynamic economy in Trinidad and Tobago will augur very well for the markets and the economies of the rest of the Caribbean region, which have a very great dependence on the markets and the economy of this particular country.

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At the purely domestic level, my colleague the hon. Minister, in his address to this House, did highlight some of the positive effects to be had from acceding to NAFTA. He spoke about investment flows from America, from Europe and other parts of the world; he spoke about market access.

I should like to add that one of the things that we have done through this decision, is to send a very strong message to the world that Trinidad and Tobago is a confident nation with forward-thinking leadership, ready to stand on its own two feet and make its way in the world. There is no doubt in my mind that this is one of the very positive advantages of our decision to accede to NAFTA. We have signalled to the world that we are confident in ourselves, that we have forward thinking leadership and that we are prepared as a nation to stand on our own two feet to face the music in the world.

As the Foreign Minister of this country, I have the opportunity of interacting sufficiently with the representatives of other countries, and I can say that I see the effects of the confidence that we today exude as a nation. The fact of the matter is that since we have made that announcement of our intention to accede to NAFTA, we got more and more requests for contact with this country at the highest level. People are talking about visiting Trinidad and Tobago. There are requests from countries seeking to have investment agreements with Trinidad and Tobago and Italy to mention just one. I had that particular experience recently.

It is becoming increasingly clear to me, from the conversations I am having with my Foreign Minister colleagues, that whenever they think of this part of the world, they think of Trinidad and Tobago; they focus on Trinidad and Tobago as a leader in its field and the place where business can be done on more concrete and practical terms now more than ever before.

So whether we are in the Rio group, whether we are dealing with the Andean pact countries, whether we are dealing with the Central American Integration Movement, whether we are talking about Washington, Ottawa, Mexico, Venezuela, Brussels, or wherever, the fact of the matter is that Trinidad and Tobago is today known as a country that has left behind its airy fairy notions of foreign policy and has really settled down and is translating its international contacts into concrete and substantial benefits for its people through a kind of pragmatic and hard-nosed approach in the pursuit of its foreign policy objectives.

People respect us for that in the international circuit. We know where we are going. We have a very clear idea of where we are going. We have a practical, pragmatic and programmed approach to achieve what we want to do. There is a

very clear relationship between foreign policy objectives and domestic objectives. People respect us for that, and they respect us as well for our principles, as they did respect us for holding on to our principled position in a certain hemispheric election recently.

I submit that in taking note of the statement by the hon. Minister, we must be aware of its implications. The fact is if we ignore NAFTA, or the European Union, or the ASEAN, or the Mercosur, or the GATT and the emerging World Trade Organization, we will be left behind. We would be left behind as a relic of abundant regulatory procedures; we would have barricaded ourselves into a stagnant corner of the Caribbean Sea; and we would have done a terrible injustice to the future that is already so much upon us.

However, let no one think that it is going to be easy, as I said before, and a safe passage. Independence came fairly easily. There was a measure of struggle to gain the commanding heights of the economy. In my view, this is the real tough one. The world is harsher and more cruel than ever.

NAFTA means reciprocity; it means opening one's markets and consequential competition in goods and services. It is going to mean a struggle for survival for some and an opportunity for others, because it also means as well, market access, and, in a very real sense, acceding to NAFTA means taking on the world and the question is: Can we do it?

We in the Government are confident that we can. We feel we have laid the foundation for this leap into the future. We have the infrastructure; we have the skilled population; we have the diversification; we have the industrial base; we have the process of modernization on the way to position ourselves to be able to deal with it. We have all that in place.

4.15 p.m.

It is our view that we, as a people, have an undaunted and resilient spirit. We have many examples in Trinidad and Tobago of individuals who, by their own hard efforts, have taken on the world, have carved a place for themselves, and at this point we should look to them as inspirers. I am talking about people like Learie Constantine, Sonny Ramadhin, Charlie Davis, Larry Gomes, Brian Lara. I am talking about Hasely Crawford, Wendell Mottley, Roger Gibbon, Leslie King, Gene Samuel, Jean Pierre, people who have taken on the world. We are talking about Sparrow and Kitchener, V. S. Naipaul, Samuel Selvon, Michael Anthony, Dereck Walcott; we talk about Kola Rienzi, Uriah Butler, Eric Eustace Williams. They all did it. That is the kind of cultural inspiration that we have and which we need in Trinidad and Tobago at this point in time.

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They are not the only ones who did it; many other did it, thousands of ordinary men and women who overcame ancestral obstacles and shaped their lives successfully in the world. They are an example to us. They did it. There is a spirit undaunted in this land. I am saying, we can do it too. Through acceding to NAFTA, we in Trinidad and Tobago have the potential and the strength to take on the world.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Krish Jurai (*Nariva*): Madam Speaker, let me begin my contribution by stating that I agree wholeheartedly with the of accessing NAFTA. Indeed, as my Leader the Member for Couva North indicated earlier, it is a UNC policy which was founded in this country long before the 1991 general election. That was one of the major pillars on which the UNC fought that election.

Let me now quote from the Newsday of Saturday, April 23, 1994 under the headline: "TT ideal candidate for NAFTA." It states:

"Minister of Trade and Industry Kenneth Valley stated that Trinidad and Tobago is an ideal candidate for entry into NAFTA. Minister Valley was speaking at the monthly general meeting of the American Chamber of Commerce in Trinidad and Tobago. He stated that Trinidad and Tobago is an ideal candidate because it has already fulfilled many of the conditions for entry into NAFTA.

Trinidad and Tobago has eliminated foreign exchange controls, reduced the stamp duty and has begun a privatization drive."

Madam Speaker, if that is the principle on which this Government has decided to take Trinidad and Tobago into NAFTA, I am afraid that it has not reached anywhere close to readiness for this.

I cannot but register my disgust at the clandestine manner in which this Government has handled this NAFTA issue. If Trinidad and Tobago is granted access to the Free Trade Agreement, it would affect every man, woman and child in this country. This NAFTA issue is bigger than the PNM. This is what will determine trade for the 21st Century and beyond. To come here this afternoon, very sneakily, and say that this debate must be completed today, I think is shortsightedness on the part of the Government. We on this side have to state our case; we have to speak and we have to debate this issue fully.

Madam Speaker: Rest assured you will have all the time to speak. The hon. Member need not fear that he would be curtailed.

Mr. K. Jurai: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

As I said, I am very happy with the Government's application to join NAFTA, but I am also equally unhappy because the Government has not prepared itself fully for this.

The Motion speaks volumes for the PNM's agenda. On such a big issue, we are simply advised just to "take note" that the PNM Government is taking this country into NAFTA, and we must accept that; this is not something that should be debated, they feel; but we will give them a surprise today. We are going to debate this issue fully.

Let me outline some of the major objectives so that people of this country would know what is involved in this application to go into NAFTA:

- The elimination of barriers to trade, and the facilitation of the cross, border movement of goods and services between the territories of the signatory parties.
- The promotion of conditions of fair competition in the free trade area.
- Expansion of the Telecommunication trade.
- A substantial increase in investment opportunities in their territories.
- The provision of adequate and effective protection and enforcement of intellectual property rights in each member's territory.
- The creation of effective procedures for the implementation and application of the agreement, and for its joint administration and the resolution of disputes.
- The establishment of a framework for further trilateral, regional and multilateral co-operation to expand and enhance the benefits of this agreement.

Some other major objectives are as follows:

The removal of mutual customs duties within 15 years.

Most agricultural levies will be removed as soon as the Agreement becomes operational.

The 6 per cent tariff on various vegetables, maize, sugar and fruits will be systematically removed over a 15-year period.

The duties on automobiles will be removed over a 10-year period.

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The United States will reserve US \$90 million for workers in that country who become redundant as a consequence of use of cheaper Mexican labour.

This is something they need to take note of. What are they going to do for Trinidad and Tobago? It goes on:

Punitive measures will be imposed on companies which do not adhere to the ban on child labour, the paying of a specified minimum wage and demands relating to the occupational health and safety standards.

The Mexican market must be completely open to the American and Canadian financial institutions by the year 2000 at the latest.

Fines will be imposed on companies which do not comply with environmental regulations.

A North American Development Bank will be established.

Madam Speaker, these are the objectives which Trinidad and Tobago has to negotiate to enter NAFTA. Later on I will come to question whether the Government is prepared to handle these negotiations so that we can enter NAFTA for the benefit of Trinidad and Tobago.

As I said, these objectives cover a wide range of issues. If these are properly negotiated and the necessary conditions created, there is potential for tremendous opportunities and benefits for Trinidad and Tobago under this Agreement. Similarly, if the issues are not properly addressed, it means that this country could suffer substantial loss.

4.25 p.m.

At the moment, trade with NAFTA countries average about 50 per cent of this country's foreign trade, close to \$7 billion, which is good, but we need to expand on this. Let me quote some statistics so one can see the pattern of trade imports over the years.

In 1988 Trinidad and Tobago imported \$1,830.3 million from Caricom countries and exported \$3,115.4 million; in 1989, we imported \$2,851.4 million and exported \$3,705.0 million; in 1990, \$2,460.8 in imports and exports \$5,003.4.0 million; in 1991, \$3,126.9 million in imports and \$4,274.5 in exports; 1992, \$2,864 million in imports as opposed to \$3,994.2 million in exports.

This is a \$4 billion trade and we cannot afford to lose it, but I fear somewhat that, if we enter into NAFTA, perhaps some of this trade will be diverted to

Mexico, which will be to our detriment, and we need to look at that very cautiously.

Most of this trade has been done with the United States of America through the CBI and in Canada through Caribcan. When Mexico gains preferential trading rights within NAFTA, there is the fear that Trinidad and Tobago's trade with NAFTA countries will be affected negatively. As I said earlier, there is need for protection to ensure that trade will not be diverted to Mexico from Trinidad and Tobago when we enter into NAFTA; if that happens, it can adversely affect our situation here in Trinidad and Tobago.

The obvious question is: Is the Government of this country ready for entry into NAFTA? The answer, simply is, no. *[Interruption]* I am telling you that you are not ready and I will show you how you are not ready as I go along. *[Interruption]* That is what I said: it is a secret; you have been keeping it from the public.

If this Government had any serious intention of gaining entry into NAFTA, it would have begun preparations a very long time ago. This is a tremendous adventure with several prerequisites for success, many of which remains unaddressed by this Government.

The mere fact that every citizen of this country is going to be affected in one way or another, should have logically prompted the Government towards educating the manufacturers, as well as the public in general, concerning the issues that relate to NAFTA. If Trinidad and Tobago is not fully prepared, and the Government takes us into NAFTA without sufficient preparation, this country's manufacturing sector, especially the small manufacturers, could be completely eliminated. So, we need some form of protection.

Manufacturers of this country will not be able to withstand the onslaught from the NAFTA giants. So we need, as I said, some form of protection for our small manufacturers.

4.30 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.05 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Mr. K. Jurai: Madam Speaker, before we took the tea break, I was about to say that I am of the view that this country's entry into NAFTA could become a success story. This will depend largely on how the Government addresses the serious problems by overcoming the hurdles and the stumbling blocks for entry into NAFTA. The evidence forces us to conclude that this Government is totally

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incapable of addressing the real issues facing this country's entry into NAFTA, just as it is incapable of handling other national issues such as crime, poverty, unemployment and other serious problems facing the country. In 1993 the Minister of Finance in his Budget presentation stated:

"This Government has recently established a National Business Advisory Board to co-ordinate the operations of the Industrial Development Corporation, the Export Development Corporation, the Tourism Development Authority and the Free-zones Company."

I quote this in reference to what the other side has been saying when I told them this Government is not prepared for entry into NAFTA. Today, in spite of the Business Advisory Board created some 15 months ago, there are still problems facing that board. The workers of the IDC, EDC and the TDA continue to be in limbo. They do not know what their position will be; whether their jobs are secure or whether they will be sent home.

When there are workers in an organization responsible for advising business on trade and investment aspects in this country, and they are unsure of their position, how can they perform satisfactorily? These are some of the problems that the Government has to address before they can deal effectively with negotiations for entry into NAFTA.

In 1991, the Government at that time professed having the answer to all the problems in the country. Today, almost three years later, the problems continue unabated. As I said, unemployment, crime, poverty, destitution, alienation, lack of water, bad roads, lack of proper infrastructure—but very high rates are demanded for services that are not provided by this Government.

When an investor comes from North America and he sees the employees of the Business Development Corporation with placards demanding their rights, and wanting to know what their positions are—the daily and continued rise in callous crimes in the country—

Mr. Valley: Madam Speaker, I would just hope that the investor from abroad would have more knowledge than the Member, and would know that it is the Industrial Development Corporation.

Mr. K. Jurai: You are creating a Business Advisory Board. When investors come and see workers marching around the Red House Friday after Friday—*[Interruption]* when they see the workers of the Business Advisory Board, they will have a very poor perception of what is taking place in this country, and they

will pack up their bags and leave. If you need to attract investors, you have to set the right climate.

The high unemployment rate and the very little or non-existent environmental laws may encourage North-American investors to come, but they will come only to take advantage of those situations that exist. We need to have proper laws in place so that when the investors come, they know exactly what they are going to meet.

The lack of water and electricity in a number of areas will certainly not advance the tourist industry. There are many areas in this country where tourism development can take place but because of the lack of the basic infrastructure—the utilities are sadly lacking—this does not occur. The investors may not want to go into those areas. We need to develop those areas in order to attract investors.

Tourism still accounts for a significant amount of hard currency in this country. As you know Madam Speaker, the Government pays only lip service to tourism development, and there is the real possibility that NAFTA will lure tourists away from Trinidad and Tobago to Mexico. *[Interruption]*

5.15 p.m.

I know, but what is happening at the moment is that Mexico is developing a tourism industry in the Caribbean Mexico and if we do not provide the proper facilities here to attract the tourists, they would prefer to go into those areas. *[Interruption]* It is easier for them to drive down there. *[Interruption]* I am talking about the Caribbean Mexico. They would prefer to go down there and that would be to our disadvantage, so we need to look very closely at our development. To say that our tourism industry is doing very well—we have built a hotel here, and one is going up there—does not solve the tourism problem. We need to have a proper policy for tourism.

This Government has a tourism plan which has been kept as a secret document. No one knows what is in that document: whether the Government has a plan which will be effective for attracting tourists to this country, and whether the Government is following the plan, we do not know. For some reason, as I said, this is a hush-hush Government. It keeps everything under cover and suddenly comes to us to do this and that without notifying the country well in advance of its policy.

When we look at the new Tourism Development Authority, it is very laughable. That looks more like a PNM party executive group. There are only

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PNM party hacks on the board. They need to go across the board. They need to take people from all shades. They know very well that there are only party hacks on that board *[Interruption]* If you do not know, I will tell you. We have to go beyond party. We have to get people with expertise, who will cut across party lines. That is the only way they can have an effective tourism policy to work for the benefit of this country.

Mr. Manning: I thank the hon. Member for giving way. I wonder if the hon. Member is aware that there is a standing committee of Cabinet on tourism and included among the members is the Chairman of the Tobago House of Assembly, who is not a member of the PNM. In fact, he is, in a political context, in a party opposed to the PNM.

Mr. K. Jurai: You see, Madam Speaker, I was right when I said it is a PNM party group. He pointed out only one who is not a member; what about the others?

Further evidence of this Government's unpreparedness for entry into NAFTA is its lax attitude in governing this country. More than two years ago the Anti-Dumping and Countervailing Duties legislation was passed, but to date the regulations have not been brought to this House. As a result, it is likely that cheap goods from abroad can be dumped into this country to the detriment of the small manufacturers. This is another area that I said the Government is not serious about when it applied for membership of NAFTA. It needs to set its house in order first before it goes abroad looking for markets.

What about the Bureau of Standards? What has been done? Has it been upgraded? Do they have the technical skills, manpower, testing equipment and finance to handle all these matters which would be needed to determine standards for entry into the North American market? The Government needs to address these issues. They have budgeted money, but is the money spent? Is it spent adequately for the purpose of testing our products for entry into the North American market?

Similarly, the Food and Drug Division. I do not know what has been done. Simple products like pepper sauce take such a long time before they can qualify for entry into the North American market. Does the public know what is required to submit products to the local Chemistry, Food and Drugs Division? We need that liaison to know what is required in order to educate the public so that they would meet the standards of entry into those niche markets.

In order for Trinidad and Tobago to survive under NAFTA, there will certainly be the need for incentives for retooling. The 1993 Budget made some provisions for business expansion and industrial restructuring loans from the World Bank, but what is needed at present is a generation of interest in accessing the Business Expansion and Industrial Restructuring Loan from the World Bank. This is very important so as to provide credit to manufacturers who are improving their competitive ability. The manufacturers need to retool and upgrade their machinery and equipment to meet the challenges of NAFTA.

To my mind the Government is not doing sufficient. If it is, the public, by and large, is not aware of what is taking place. We need an education programme.

Although the North American Free Trade Agreement between the United States, Canada and Mexico is regarded as a fully reciprocal free trade agreement, there exist avenues for concessions.

There have been several concessions granted to Mexico and these have been negotiated one by one. To begin with, do we have the relevant data to inform negotiators? Do we have adequate information on banking, telecommunications, agriculture, tourism and the environment? Has the Government determined what industries or specific products will require protection? Negotiations relate to specific products. Do we have specially qualified negotiating teams and personnel to negotiate this treaty item by item. These are serious questions which the Government needs to answer.

As I said, Trinidad and Tobago's success in NAFTA will depend largely upon the negotiating skills at the bargaining table. They need to have the right type of skills. Sadly, I do not see this Government possessing the personnel, the skills, the talent, the information and the wherewithal to negotiate this agreement properly. We need to ask ourselves whether we have people in place who are very conversant with the American, Canadian and Mexican trade laws. We need to have experts so that when they sit at the bargaining table, they would be in a position to negotiate. Do we have personnel who can negotiate intellectual property rights? I am sure that the Member for Diego Martin West does not even know what I am talking about.

In the case of Mexico, they had to hire Canadian and US experts to negotiate their trade agreement. The negotiations are very complex in nature and, since they could not handle it alone, they had to hire these experts. Do you know that Mexico started off with 15 negotiating teams and ended up with about 20 which comprised some 300 members? About 300 members were needed for negotiating.

5.25 p.m.

These negotiations have to be on an ongoing basis, because laws are changing daily and we need to have people in place who will be conversant with the laws and who can continue the negotiations as these laws change.

I am wondering whether this Government will continue to hire firms like Neill and Company and Holland and Knights and pay them substantial sums to give away our patrimony, because here we are hiring foreigners to negotiate for us. What we need to do is to handle those negotiations for ourselves. We cannot afford to allow foreigners to negotiate on our behalf. [*Interruption*] You cannot negotiate anything, you cannot even fix a pothole in the road and you are telling me, yes!

In addition to all this, Government expenditure will have to be incurred and this has not been budgeted for in 1994. I heard the Minister of Trade and Industry saying that we are going into NAFTA in 1994—

Mr. Valley: I said that we were going into NAFTA in 1994?

Mr. K. Jurai: You said that you were attempting to gain entry. There is already a budget shortfall, so how can the Government handle the situation? Where is it going to find the money? As you know, Madam Speaker, to retain and maintain negotiating teams in Washington and elsewhere in North America will require substantial expenditure. The cost will include housing, travelling, office accommodation, support staff, office machinery and equipment, telephone, fax services, computers, and of course salaries for the teams.

Today, the Government has come to this House and asked us to take note of its decision to apply for membership in NAFTA. It appears that the Government does not have its priorities right. The Government seems to be running helter-skelter like a headless chicken. In one breath it wants Caricom; in the next, it wants to be the gateway to Latin America, then there was talk of a group of three nations but today the new cry is for entry into NAFTA. NAFTA can become a reality and can bring very good results, but as I said, this will depend on how good our negotiating teams are.

The ideal situation would be, as the Leader of the Opposition said, not only a free trade movement but also the free movement of labour and capital as in the case of the EEC where there is free movement of labour, capital, goods and services in 15 countries throughout Europe.

Even if that possibility was feasible, I am sure the Government would certainly not opt for that, for fear of the free movement of labour and capital. If we have free movement of labour and capital, the DEA could walk into this country freely at any time and arrest people involved in the drug trade. Free movement means anyone can travel freely anywhere, and if only for this reason, the PNM would not call for the EEC type of union where there is free movement of capital, goods and labour, as they want to protect their friends who are involved in the illegal drug trade.

No matter what we say here today it will not change the price of cocoa. The Government has already made up its mind, come hell or high water. It has asked us to take note of its intention to apply for membership in NAFTA. Although we are outnumbered, the Government's numbers are decreasing daily and when the vote comes the "Ayes" would have won the day.

I have a sneaky suspicion that when the former Minister of Trade, Industry and Tourism saw the magnitude of the problem that could arise with the coming of NAFTA, he dropped his portfolio and went off to sell chicken and chips; but I am sure that some of the Members on the other side are not even fit to sell fish and chips. All we can do at this point is to hope and pray that the Government would have the right people in place to negotiate this treaty with NAFTA for the benefit of Trinidad and Tobago.

What we would need to have in place is a 10-to-15 year grace period so that our weakling industries and our agriculture could be protected. We need to look at industry by industry; agriculture is a special area that needs protection over a number of years. We need to look at those things very closely. Although you may win the day, there is still room for negotiation and we hope that the Government will use the right personnel to negotiate on behalf of Trinidad and Tobago. If the proper treaty is not negotiated, Trinidad and Tobago manufacturers and people engaged in agriculture would be left at the mercy of the American giants.

The Hon. Minister of Works and Transport and Minister of Local Government (Mr. Colm Imbert): Madam Speaker, I enter this debate to support the statement and the initiative made by the hon. Minister of Trade and Industry, the Minister of Finance, and the Government in declaring its interest to access the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

Listening to the contributions from Members on the other side, especially the Member for Couva North, it is a great source of regret to me that the Leader of the

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Opposition did not make better use of the talent available to him. Perhaps he would have allowed the Member for Chaguanas to respond and then I think we would have had a more intellectual and stimulating debate this afternoon [*Interruption*] but it is not for me to advise the Member for Couva North on how he should use the resources available to him.

It has become painfully apparent that the Members on the other side, especially the Leader of the Opposition, are woefully unaware, ill-informed and ill-advised. It is clear to me that they simply do not have a clue the formation of the NAFTA, the rationale for NAFTA, the perspectives in NAFTA and the implications in NAFTA, especially for Trinidad and Tobago.

5.35 p.m.

Let me advise the Member for Couva North of some of the benefits that will accrue when we enter NAFTA. Under the Caribbean Basin Initiative Agreement, certain products were excluded. Under NAFTA, Trinidad and Tobago will be permitted duty-free entry to the US market for the following products—I will say them slowly so the Member would understand: textiles, petroleum and petroleum products; footwear, leather goods, handbags, and so forth. At present, textiles, petroleum products and others are not allowed duty-free entry into the United States and Canada. Our entry into NAFTA would remove these restrictions. So that is an immediate benefit for Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Sudama: Madam Speaker, would the Minister give way to a question? If I heard the Minister clearly, he said that at the present time petroleum products are not allowed into North America—the United States and Canada. Petroleum products are not allowed? Did I hear him correctly?

Hon. C. Imbert: Madam Speaker, this simply demonstrates what I have said in this House on innumerable occasions: they just do not listen.

Mr. Sudama: Repeat what you said.

Hon. C. Imbert: I will do so. Certain products will be permitted duty-free entry under NAFTA. Wake up! Wake up! Madam Speaker, let me attempt to educate the Members on the other side about the rationale for NAFTA; why NAFTA came about.

Recent economic developments in the United States, such as the budgetary deficit which in 1991 was US \$281 billion, and their debt which now stands at \$2,851 billion, or \$2.8 trillion, and their trade deficit, which in 1991 was US \$73.6 billion have prompted the United States to push for the formation of a mega-

trading bloc. The United States is still the world's largest exporter, but it is heavily dependent at this time on inflows of foreign capital from the rest of the world.

At the same time, in the context of a new global environment with the dismantling of the Soviet Union, the removal of the Berlin Wall, and the whole changing geopolitical situation, and with increasing military competition among major powers, there are global rearrangements which point to the eventual emergence of a European super bloc.

So what is happening on the other side of the world is that the countries of the former Soviet Union and the countries of democratic Europe are coalescing into a European super mega-trading block. In much the same way, Japan and the Asian countries appear to be configuring into a closer economic partnership. So that, if the United States did not take action it would be faced with the spectre of a fortress Europe and a heavily protected Asian/Japanese trading bloc.

Given this situation, the United States has sought to consolidate trade and investment arrangements within its own hemisphere. It started out in 1987 with the signing of the Canada/United States Free Trade Agreement or CUSTA, for short. This agreement took effect in 1989, and called for the gradual elimination of all tariffs in bilateral trade between the two countries within ten years.

In 1991 the United States and Mexico negotiations were initiated, expanded to include Canada, and eventually in 1992, there was the formal announcement of the conclusion of negotiations for NAFTA. This in a nutshell, is the rationale for NAFTA from the American perspective and some history about the formation of this large trading bloc in our hemisphere.

I thought it necessary to put this on the record so that the Members on the other side, who are obviously woefully short of research personnel, would understand what NAFTA is and why it came about.

Now, there are some fears within Caribbean countries about some negative effects of NAFTA. There is the fear of diversion of trade, for example, with increased Mexican access to US and Canadian markets. It is felt that this will erode the benefits of the Caribbean Basin Initiative, for example, and erode the preferences for Caribbean products through the CBI into the United States. This is a point that was completely misunderstood by the Member for Nariva.

The reason we must get into NAFTA is that Mexico is already in NAFTA; Mexican products will now have dut-free access to the United States and, therefore, Caribbean products will be at a disadvantage compared to Mexican

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products. So that it is necessary for us to get inside, otherwise we would lose the competitive advantage; not the other way around, as the Member for Nariva sought to misrepresent in this House.

In addition, there is diversion of investment—investors may be attracted to the more secure access to the United States and Canadian markets that NAFTA gives Mexico. So there is a real threat that if we do not get into NAFTA, within the quickest possible time; there will be diversion of investment and trade away from the Caribbean to Mexico and into the United States. These are some serious issues.

We have to face reality. I have a paper from the 14th Session of the Caribbean Development and Co-operation Committee, which is a committee of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, or ECLAC for short. A session was held in Grenada in December 1992 where it examined in detail the possible implications of NAFTA for Caribbean countries; the impact of NAFTA on selected sectors of Caribbean economies. I will refer this paper for the perusal of the Members on the other side, so that they might understand a little better what they are talking about.

What struck me were the conclusions. I will read from the conclusions:

"The Caribbean has a number of possible options. It might do nothing, and hope that time and other circumstances would determine the fate of NAFTA or otherwise result in the preservation of the *status quo*. This would be unfortunate in that it would serve to postpone inevitable economic adjustment."

This is very important: we can sit still and do absolutely nothing, and we would postpone the inevitable transformation of our economy; but this Government is not sitting still and doing nothing.

We have indicated our interest. The Minister of Trade recently headed a mission to the United States to lobby for Trinidad and Tobago's inclusion in NAFTA. I must say that I am very pleased with the Minister's ability, his negotiating skills, and I am quite confident that with the Minister of Trade leading our negotiations into NAFTA, we will be successful. I am quite confident about that.

5.45 p.m.

There are some other issues on which I think it is necessary to educate the Members on the other side. Access to the NAFTA market will give us access to a

market of 365 million people, with a combined GDP of US \$6.6 billion. Our internal market in Trinidad and Tobago is for a population of 1.2 million. Our Caribbean market is 5 million.

Mr. Sudama: \$6,550 billion.

Hon. C. Imbert: Sorry, I stand corrected. It is \$6,550 billion. I thank the Member for Oropouche.

Madam Speaker, at present we have an internal market in Trinidad and Tobago of 1.2 million people and a Caribbean market of, maybe, 5 million. Our GDP in Trinidad and Tobago is approximately US \$3 billion. The NAFTA market will increase access by over 300 times, from 1.2 million people to 365 million, and give us access to markets with a GDP of \$6.6 trillion, as the Member for Diego Martin West has pointed out.

Mr. Mohammed: Nobody is against that.

Hon. C. Imbert: As I speak here, I hear the Members on the other side making all sorts of snide remarks.

I would like the Members on the other side to tell me if one is seeking to expand one's export market; and if the intention is to improve one's economic base by focussing on exports—because this is what the Member for Couva North adverted to—one must target a market. If one is going to export one must export to somewhere. I really do not understand the rationale for the argument. The whole point of NAFTA is that it opens up a market of 370 million and \$6.6 trillion of GDP. I think it is a momentous occasion in world history; so too the formation of the European trading bloc. The world is going through fundamental change.

The formation of NAFTA is an attempt by the countries of the United States and Mexico to achieve the ideal of free trade. We all know that free trade is a very difficult objective to achieve. Within the European Union the whole concept is to have a market of 300 million people and free trade within those borders. In the NAFTA arrangement the intention is to create a large hemispheric bloc where there is free trade within the borders. It is a genuine and significant attempt to achieve the ideal of free trade.

It is clear to me that the Members on the other side do not understand these things. They make comments about accessing NAFTA being a dangerous thing. There is no guarantee that we would gain access to these markets and so forth. I have with me the latest information on Trinidad and Tobago's exports to the United States and, for the benefit of hon. Members opposite, who, as I said, are

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woefully uninformed, our exports to North America—the United States that is—average over the last three years US \$840 million.

Mr. B. Panday: How much was petroleum and petroleum-based products?

Hon. C. Imbert: Crude Oil—\$500 million. *[Interruption]* Since your Research Department is unable to compile these figures, I will call them out for you. Of that, \$500 million was crude oil; another \$130 million was petroleum products; \$100 million was ammonia and hydrous solution. The other amount—well over US \$100 million—was our exports of manufactured and primary products.

When we look at the total imports from the United States—US \$400 million—we would see that we have a favourable balance of trade with the United States at the present time of US \$400 million. *[Interruption]* One hears the Member say it is not true. If they read the newspapers they would have noticed recently that methanol and, ammonia prices are going through the roof. Petrochemicals are one of our major exports. The People's National Movement government established the heavy industries in Point Lisas. I saw the price of methanol recently—US \$200 per tonne. That is a product produced in Trinidad and Tobago from primary products in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Sudama: Why do you need NAFTA?

Hon. C. Imbert: Madam Speaker, they do not understand.

The point I was making was that we already have a very favourable balance of trade with the United States, and I am certain that in the medium to long term as we access NAFTA our balance of trade would improve. I am certain of that!

For the benefit of the Member for Nariva, who has the tendency to make all sorts of inaccurate statements, I have in front of me the agreement with Mexico et cetera. One of the agreements between Mexico and the United States is a reduction of tariff to zero over a period of 20 years. The Canadian period is 10 years. So that the United States and Canada have agreed to eliminate all tariffs over a period of 10 years but in Mexico they have agreed to a period of up to 20 years, depending on the product.

When our negotiating team headed by the able Member for Diego Martin Central—I have been reminded that the Member for Diego Martin Central is a policy maker—when he sets the general policy and it is agreed to by Cabinet and our technocrats go to do the detailed negotiations, I am certain that our team will negotiate at least as favourable terms as the Mexicans have done, which is, market

access, reduction of tariffs over a period of up to 20 years. How many of us would be in this House 20 years from now?

Mr. Valley: Me!

Hon. C. Imbert: I am sure the Member for Nariva will not be in this House 20 years from now. I am not sure he will make it the next time around. The point is they come here and spread misinformation. I am sure the Member for Chaguanas would have been more accurate.

I have pointed out that we stand to benefit considerably from our access to NAFTA. Let me also correct some of the misinformation given by the Member for Nariva on what is required to access NAFTA. Let me read out some of the eligibility criteria for NAFTA:

- A country seeking to enter NAFTA should be committed to a stable macro economic environment and market oriented policy;

which is what we are.

- A country should be committed to multilateral trading systems;

which we have:

- We must have been seen to have demonstrated progress in achieving open trade regimes

We are in good standing with GATT. We are a signatory to GATT.

- We should make progress towards elimination of tariffs over an agreed phase out period;

which I have demonstrated may be up to 20 years.

- We must agree to a bilateral investment treaty.

The Member for Diego Martin Central has already indicated that we have gone through several drafts of this treaty and expect to sign it by June 15.

- We must recognize and protect intellectual property rights.

Again, we should be signing that on June 15.

- We must take cognizance of the environment's natural resources and natural resource based products.

There is nothing to it!

5.55 p.m.

Let me make the point. The Member spoke about upgrading the Bureau of Standards. The requirement is that there should be agreed rules for the applications of standards and rules of origin. That is so far away from the allegation made by the Member for Nariva that we have to upgrade the Bureau of Standards. This country already recognizes the standards. Those are the standards we use in this country, standards of the International Standards Organization; and all we have to do to access NAFTA is to agree on a particular international standard. We have already agreed to ISO standards. So, as I said, the Member does not have a clue to what he is talking about. The Member comes to this House week after week—misinformation, misrepresentation, distortion—

Mr. Jurai: Will you give way to a question, please?

Hon. C. Imbert:—you name it!

Madam Speaker: The Member is asking you to give way.

Hon. C. Imbert: Oh, I am sorry.

Mr. Jurai: Is the Minister, therefore, saying that all the structures are in place to determine the ISO standards?

Hon. C. Imbert: Madam Speaker, I am not sure I can answer that question. I am not sure. The point is that we must agree on the standards, and this country already recognizes ISO standards. Those are the standards we will be using, so let us not get carried away with side issues and trivialities.

Now, let us come to the last, and most important, point. Should we access NAFTA as Caricom as a whole, or as individual countries? The question is, some members of Caricom, including Trinidad and Tobago, are much closer to being ready for NAFTA than others. This is the point the hon. Minister of Trade made. The pace at which Caricom will enter NAFTA is determined by its slowest member. Trinidad and Tobago is already in an advanced stage, so in our view, it is eligible for entry into NAFTA at this time, and this Government believes that it is appropriate for us to go ahead of the others, seek access to NAFTA and, as my colleague the Member for Diego Martin Central has indicated, point the way for the rest of Caricom.

This is because, as time passes, sooner or later, as this mega-trading bloc is formed, one by one the countries of this hemisphere will have no option but to get involved; because if you are not in, you will be kept severely out—and the consequence of that is that our goods will be banned from entry into this large

trading bloc; our industries will close down; there will be rampant increase in unemployment; there will be no economic growth, and so forth. So I am at a complete loss as to why the Members on the other side criticize the Government's effort in seeking this window of opportunity—

Mr. Sudama: Stop talking stupidity!

Hon. C. Imbert:—to get to the head of the queue, as it were, on the list of countries entering NAFTA at this time; to take advantage of the tremendous opportunities available.

I have pointed out there will be immediate benefits with the removal of restrictions on petroleum products, textiles, and long-term benefits with complete duty-free entry of all our products to the North American, the hemispheric, market. I genuinely believe that our balance of trade can only continue to grow as we enter this market; that our local manufacturers, our companies will become streamlined and more focussed; will orient themselves towards niche markets; will remove the uncompetitive elements of their operations, and we will see a continuation of the rejuvenation of the manufacturing sector, which started in 1986 with the policies of the former PNM administration.

The groundwork was laid in 1985/1986 for the mobilization of the export sector. The benefits began to come in the late '80s and when one looks, for example, at the performance of our export market—I have with me the February issue of the publication of the Export Development Corporation—one sees at page 59, the comparable month in 1993 there has been a tremendous increase. Our exports in all different sectors continue to take off. Between January 1993 and January 1994, our exports have gone up by a total of \$185 million—

Mr. Valley: About 75 per cent increase in the non-oil exports.

Hon. C. Imbert: This is all exports, oil and non-oil; but when you take the non oil sector, it has gone up by over 50 per cent. I am advised it is a 75 per cent increase in non oil exports. This all came to pass because of the policies of the former PNM administration in 1985/86 when many changes were made to the fiscal incentive regime and many incentives were given to manufacturers.

This country is reaping the rewards and we shall continue to reform the regime of fiscal incentives, so that our export sector would become more and more competitive. I happen to be aware that the Member for Diego Martin Central is working on this at present, and I am confident that in the future, our non oil export sector will begin to rival our oil export sector because of the policies of this PNM administration and PNM administrations in the past.

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Therefore, I commend the Member for Diego Martin Central. I wish that this House will give total support to the initiative of the Government in declaring its interest to formally access the North American Free Trade Agreement and I hope, in time, those few Members on the other side—

Mr. B. Panday: But we are not against you!

Hon. C. Imbert: —one or two of them who will still be here five or 10 years from now—when they see the benefits that come about from our accessing NAFTA will then, acknowledge the wisdom of this Government in seeking to enter NAFTA now.

I thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Raymond Palackdharrysingh (*Caroni Central*): Madam Speaker, we are told that Cabinet took the decision to declare this country's interest to the Government of the United States with respect to accession to NAFTA. At the same time the Government of Trinidad and Tobago agreed that efforts should be made to have this country included on the list of potential NAFTA countries, which will be submitted to Congress on May 1, 1994 by the President of the United States of America as having met the proposed eligibility criteria for accession.

Two issues are not immediately clear, and must be explained. On the issue of accession, will the Government clearly state why it is so optimistic that the NAFTA countries would give them a favourable response to their application? Because in this free trade treaty, it is well known that accession is not automatic; and it has been said that there is still a lot of lobbying to be done and they are still doing it, and there are no pointers as to the outcome of this lobbying.

6.05 p.m.

Mr. Eckstein: It is better to love and lose than never to love at all.

Mr. R. Palackdharrysingh: Well, you take that and carry it to NAFTA.

Secondly, when the Member for Diego Martin Central indicated to this House that we would be debating this Motion today, he tried to give the impression that our accession to NAFTA was merely a simple matter and that it was an issue that could have been finished in a few hours in this Chamber. As we are finding out today, however, on the issue of NAFTA, the debate has only just begun. In that respect, I am disappointed that the wider community did not have enough time to get into the pros and cons of our accession to NAFTA.

The Member for Couva North dealt very adequately with some of the measures relating to the programme of NAFTA, when he indicated to the

Government what ought to be done with respect to economic reform, the environmental safeguards, fair rules for government procurement, standards, competition and intellectual property rights. In addition, issues such as the promotion of fair competition, increased investment opportunities for member countries and protection of the environment and further regional co-operation—we are not sure that these issues have been looked at in a manner that would indicate that we are going to be satisfied with the direction in which we are moving.

It is time that we asked the Government what assurances we have for products from Trinidad and Tobago having duty-free access to a market of some 365 million people. Is there the provision of an environment conducive to the relocation of operations of some of the European firms from other non-member countries into Trinidad and Tobago as they seek to benefit from the potential rewards of NAFTA?

Also, there are certain domestic exports which have not been excluded under the provisions of the CBI or Caribcan and we are told that Trinidad and Tobago has already satisfied some of the conditions for entry into NAFTA, having implemented wide-ranging economic reforms.

In addition, the Member for Diego Martin Central stated that with the increase of both investment and trade flows, the environment will be created for increased employment and foreign exchange earnings. Membership in NAFTA will put products from Trinidad and Tobago on an equal footing with products from Mexico in terms of access to the community's market. Well, we shall examine the truth of this statement in terms of the cost of labour and the productivity factors later.

The Member for Diego Martin East tried his best to give a rationale for NAFTA, and in truth and in fact I believe he saw that the arguments from his side were not really located at any point of focus.

NAFTA in its present form became operational on January 1, 1994, after some four years of negotiations and discussions with member states, namely Canada, the United States and Mexico. NAFTA created the world's largest trading bloc, a single market of 360 million people which produces goods and services worth more than \$6 trillion annually. It rivals the Common Market of the European Community, which joins 12 nations and has a market size of 345 million people and a gross annual product of US \$6.2 trillion.

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The agreement lowers, as he pointed out, the cross border trade barriers between Mexico and the United States and phases them into, as he also pointed out, in a sort of integrating way, with the free trade arrangement of Canada and the United States.

We all know that generally speaking, the general objectives of any free trade movement are basically the elimination of barriers to trade and to facilitate cross border movement, the promotion of conditions of fair competition in the free trade area and the expansion of telecommunication trade. It is hoped that there will be a substantial increase in investment opportunities in the territories, and there must be the provision of adequate and effective protection and enforcement of property rights in each member territory, the creation of effective procedures for the implementation and application of the agreement and for its joint administration and the resolution of disputes.

There must be the establishment of a framework for further trilateral, regional and multilateral co-operation to expand and enhance benefits of these agreements. I had hoped that some of these broad parameters would have been dealt with, but I have not heard anything about this coming from the other side.

There are also some, what we call, specific objectives of NAFTA, like the removal of certain customs duties within 15 years, that agricultural levies will be removed as soon as the present agreement becomes operational and so forth.

6.15 p.m.

This is extremely important, because if these measures are not taken, we would find that there would be unequal trade, or unfair trade practices. It has been said by every speaker on this side that we support the move by the Government to access NAFTA, but we have a responsibility to point out to the Government some of the flaws in its move towards accession. So we have come to the point where we have got to take Trinidad and Tobago in the context of the region and see its own limitation *vis-a-vis* the larger Caribbean economies which have some comparative advantage over their neighbours.

When the United States was initiating this move, it was clear to that country that it knew where it was going. In a paper called *Export Today*, of September/October, 1988, the guest editorial on page six states:

“George Bush, Vice President of the United States said: ‘But the real answer to maintaining America's competitiveness lies at home, in the actions we can take. In my view, America's competitive strength must be built on three solid footings:

- (1) our ability to compete;

- (2) the opportunity to compete, and;
- (3) our will to compete.

To be able to compete we need a skilled and dedicated work force. We need to improve America's education system so that our young people are prepared for tomorrow's jobs and are ready to compete in the world market. No young person should be denied the opportunity to develop his or her skills to their highest level. Where necessary, we need to make sure that those who need re-training receive it so that they can become full contributors in our economy and receive its rewards.' ”

George Bush went on to indicate that if he was elected as President, he would make sure that the Government provided the necessary resources to help American companies export their goods and services and to compete in the world market on equal terms with foreign companies. He would enforce America's trade laws vigorously against those who refuse to let their products compete on an equal basis in a free market.

The United States trading partners must respect its rights to compete in their markets. He felt that once they had the opportunity and ability to compete, only the lack of will could stop them. He believed that protectionism was not the answer to the problems of competitiveness; it was just an escape and an attempt to shelter themselves from a tough and dynamic market place.

Americans were kidding themselves if they thought that they could sustain a purely domestic economy, for there was no such thing anymore. They were all part of the international economy and they needed to embrace the fact and not to fight it. They must fight trade barriers through serious negotiations, not mandatory retaliation or protectionism. A restrictive trade policy at home would lead to retaliation abroad leading to a destructive trade war that would hurt all Americans.

We must take note of the American political, economic rationale for the initiating of the free trade movement if we are to be the wiser for our decisions. On August 23, 1988, President Reagan signed the Omnibus Trade and Competitiveness Act providing fundamental prerequisites for the launching of the free trade initiatives. What are the principal features of that Act ?

A workers' readjustment programme created a considerably expanded and newly designed programme and authorized \$980 million for retraining of workers who must shift jobs as the economy adjusts to competitive challenges. An estimated 700,000 dislocated workers would be served by that programme when

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fully implemented. The programme generally expanded services to dislocated workers, emphasized early intervention and incorporated a number of innovative approaches for serving those workers. Those included rapid response teams to assist communities impacted upon by major lay-offs, labour management committees to co-ordinate assistance to workers and emphasized high quality training to assist workers in their transition to emerging opportunities in the labour market.

That is important for us, because today as we move on in this country to free trade, I do not think that the requisite effort is being made by the Government to have dislocated workers retrained so as to give them a new chance to contribute to the new phenomenon of free trade.

In terms of unfair trade, the Bill authorized the United States trade representative to determine whether a foreign government's trade practice was unfair and, subject to specific directions of the President, would allow the United States representative to decide what retaliatory action to take. Action was required in response to violations by foreign governments of trade agreements but provided exceptions such as if the foreign governments ended the practice. So this situation is likely to arise in this country, and I hope that the Government would be taking note of some of the demands to follow.

Of course, they put in place under that Bill, the issue of intellectual property, telecommunications, harmonized systems of tariff and export controls. All these matters were dealt with by that piece of legislation. These are matters that we must look into.

Controlled Technology: They imposed sanctions against foreign firms that sell controlled technology in a manner that would violate internationally agreed upon export controls that would damage United States' national security.

6.25 p.m.

Anti-dumping and Countervailing Duty: My colleagues on this side indicated what position the Government ought to take on this matter, and the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act ought to be amended so that only those businesses and people who know of bribes and other illegal payments to foreign officials could be subject to civil and criminal liability.

It is clear that the entire climate was being looked at by the United States Government before it went into the situation of initiating the Free Trade Agreement. It is important that we look into these provisions so that we would

have a clear understanding of what is needed with respect to foreign investment, agricultural trade and other related issues.

The United States Government took a look at the Nairobi protocol which provided for duty-free imports of educational, scientific and cultural materials and articles for the handicapped.

The United States was preparing itself to respond to the momentum of Europe, for the European community market would have changed and affected the business prospects of enterprises of the United States, and the United States had to deal with important technical problems like standard of products, development, testing procedures, regulations, food additives and residue, safety and the environment, and the regulation of health industries.

The United States needed to make sure that Europe did not retreat from its intention to create a truly open single market; that it did not come to view the single market as a powerful private reserve that would give Europeans advantages in competing for the United States market while denying United States access to the European market.

In 1985 the Secretary of the Treasury, James Baker, launched a strategy to correct the United States' trade problems by devaluing the dollar and coordinating economic policies with their allies, hoping that deficits would not stall above \$1 billion and climb again. America could not continue in the international debtor position, rising to \$1 trillion and beyond.

It is also important to note that the Americans were looking at what was happening in the foreign markets of Japan and were meeting that test, expanding their growth. It became clear that the United States was limiting its own demand growth and other countries would have adequate incentives to keep boosting theirs.

We also had to take a look and see what was happening with the relationship between the United States and Canada. Opponents of the free trade movement charged that the Canadian's social programmes such as medicare, unemployment benefits, insurance and pensions would be affected by the need to compete with the United States' economy on an equal footing.

Can we be assured that social programmes will not be affected by this arrangement? We need to know that, because already we have a high unemployment problem; we have the medical services extended beyond the reach of many of our citizens. Will our joining NAFTA exacerbate the problems of some of our social programmes?

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With respect to culture, the critics pointed out that Canadian industries such as publishing, broadcasting and film making would be overwhelmed by American competition. Therefore, what would be the impact of NAFTA on our cultural programmes and policies? Would they be exempt from the agreement and remain protected?

Employment: Can we in Trinidad and Tobago be assured that many new jobs would be created during the first several years of our accession? The opponents of NAFTA in Canada indicated that it would be a too high a price to pay, under the agreement, for a relatively small number of low-paying jobs in the service sector. These were some of the concerns with respect to Canada.

Canada also had concerns about its natural resources, and the critics of that free trade felt that the United States would be given non-discriminatory access to Canadian energy supplies, and this could lead to Canada losing control over vast energy sources, for example, water, and being reduced to a source of raw materials for the United States market. Would Trinidad and Tobago's energy exports be guaranteed against NAFTA's trade sanctions that could limit sales; and that Trinidad and Tobago still control allocation of its resources in the event of shortages in this country?

In the end, as it was pointed out, even if there is some growth in terms of the GNP, would it redound to the benefit of the vast number of people in this country? Would unemployment be reduced; would the street children and vagrants be no more? Will the infrastructure be improved? *[Interruption]* I hear "yes, yes, yes;" but it is always a very sarcastic response to concerns raised.

When the critics looked at the Mexican trade arrangement, it was felt that it was less sweeping than the Canadian pact, but the Mexican talks seem to have been moving industry by industry. In their steel agreement, the United States eased quotas for Mexican imports in return for concessions that eliminated Mexican barriers to United States beer, wine and liquor. Similarly, the textile agreement gave Mexico greater access to the American market for clothing made with United States textiles and at the same time the United States' makers of textiles and clothing got a better chance for selling in Mexico.

Mexico seemed to have adopted the sectoral trade agreement approach with the United States—

Madam Speaker: The hon. Member is not known to read his contributions; I notice he is reading extensively on this occasion.

Mr. R. Palackdharrysingh: Madam Speaker, you would appreciate that this is a highly technical debate and I would like to be very specific in what I am saying. It is not the type of debate in which I can jump up and just rattle off things.

Madam Speaker: For that reason you should have informed the Chair that you would be reading from your notes. Now that you have told me you find a technical debate, permission is given for you to read. Proceed, please.

Mr. R. Palackdharrysingh: Madam Speaker, you would appreciate that for yourself.

Madam Speaker: I only mentioned it because I know this Member does not normally read his contributions.

Mr. R. Palackdharrysingh: Madam Speaker, when these things go down in *Hansard*, they must say something.

Madam Speaker: Yes, I appreciate that. Proceed, please.

Mr. R. Palackdharrysingh: Madam Speaker, I was saying that Mexico seems to have adopted the sectoral trade agreement approach whereby it was entering into relationships with the United States of America on a sector by sector basis. However, now that trade liberalization seems to be the order of the day, Mexico started moving in the direction of free trade and it started to include measures like cutting subsidies, selling unprofitable state-owned enterprises as a needed prelude to concluding free trade agreements, similar to that of the United States and Canada.

Something significant has really happened on the world stage, and this is important. A new GATT arrangement will be signed in Morocco later this month and will become—*[Interruption]*. All right, I am told it has already been signed and that it would become operational by 1995.

6.35 p.m.

It has signalled that it intends to open the world market to free competitive trade in goods and services. GATT, which means the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade would be transformed into what is called the world Trade Organization from January 1, 1995. Therefore, this transformed organization would now have the status of institutions like that of the World Bank that of the International Monetary Fund.

Market access, therefore, would be important, for seven years ago the Uruguay Round meeting set targets for reducing import tariffs on non-agricultural

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products by an average of 33 per cent. The ultimate result is an average tariff reduction of 40 to 45 per cent in five equal steps beginning January 1995.

The remaining four tariff cuts would be implemented by January 1, of the ensuing years. However, it is stated that any country can lower its tariff more quickly. We are members of the World Trade Organization that has come into being and the question to be asked is: what impact would that have on agriculture in Trinidad and Tobago? We already know that a number of farmers throughout this country have been crying out for assistance. I do not think that the Government has been able to respond in any way expected by the farmers, and this seems to further complicate the problems for the farmers with respect to the provisions of GATT.

However, agriculture is now included in GATT and import duties, it is stated, would be reduced or lowered by 35 per cent for developed countries and 24 per cent for developing countries. The decrease is spread over six years for developed countries and 10 years for developing countries. It is important that the Government state how it intends to respond to the problems of agriculture in this country, particularly with respect to the major export corps.

The other matter that GATT has addressed is the anti-dumping rules. There are certain procedures to follow with these rules. Therefore, it is important for this government to state what it has done to effect the anti-dumping laws in this country. Since the anti-dumping legislation has been passed, nothing has really happened to put into effect many of the requirements of the law.

Clothing and textile agreements in the past were established bilaterally various countries and their multi-fibre agreement. Now, all import quotas for textiles and clothing will be removed in 10 years from January 1, 1995. We have to ask the question: what changes are now taking place in Trinidad and Tobago to have the clothing and textile industry remain or become viable in the face of open competition and, more particularly, competition from Mexico in the near future?

Goods and Services: The most favoured nation clause comes in effect; that is to say, any concessions made to any one member must be open to all members and, therefore, this most favoured nation clause is of the protectionist policies. Therefore, the sort of protection we have been seeking under Caricom, LOMA and CBI would now very much must be challenged by the new demands of GATT.

In that respect, we would have to decide in Trinidad and Tobago, how much and for how long we would be trying to seek preferential treatment. It is stated that the age of preferential treatment has come to an end and, therefore, we cannot

adopt the mendicant mentality of special concessions. It is either we get up and get or stay behind.

The problem we are faced with in this country, is that while we know all these things—and it was pointed out—no mechanisms have been put in place for retooling. That is to say, when we look at the education system we find many of our graduates are largely non-functional in economic circumstances because they cannot find jobs. We find displaced workers not being able to be rehired because they are not trained; we also find that technology has brought a new demand for us to look at it in terms of development.

It is very clear to me that the retooling exercise will need great efforts, and we have not really considered some of the major issues in terms of looking forward to free trade. The bottom line of free trade is competitiveness and reciprocity. No longer will you be given that sort of free trade. It is what you are prepared to allow to come into your country as against what will go into there people's country with no barriers against the commodities so exported and imported.

It is a question, therefore, of how we take the local economy and move it forward into high gear. It is a question of how we motivate this entire population to become productive. It is a question of how we bridge the various divides in this country, and get all of us to recognize that there is no need for what is called bitterness and conflict; we fail to do that at our peril. For, productivity would not be enhanced and our competitiveness would not be ensured, and that would lead to our demise.

It is interesting to look at what happened in Mexico. It was pointed out that Mexico attracted United States \$15.6 billion in investments in 1993 and there was a 2.4 per cent growth in GDP. Inflation decreased to 8 per cent despite the fact that 50 per cent of the country's budget was spent on social programmes. While privatization was supported, it was noted that government activities should not be privatized, and that Permex, the state owned oil company, was not intended for sale because of its nationalistic value.

6.45 p.m.

It is also noted that Mexico's Federal Electric Utility Service which privatized some areas of its service, retained ownership of some other areas. It is not just that countries are moving to dispose of all that they have, because they have recognized that certain areas are important for Government's continued monitoring and intervention.

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Mexico, which like Trinidad and Tobago was once dependent, has recuperated since oil prices began their deep dive in 1982. In 1982, 78 per cent of their exports was from oil. Over a decade later, in 1993, that figure had dropped to 15 per cent. At the same time it has increased its manufacturing exports from 14 per cent in 1982 to about 80 per cent last year. You see how Mexico has moved away from an oil dependency syndrome to a somewhat competitive diversification?

Mr. Valley: I wonder whether the Member would repeat those figures and provide the source. He seems to be saying that oil exports declined from 72 per cent in 1982 to 15 per cent in 1993, and manufacturing exports increased from 14 per cent to 80 per cent.

Mr. R. Palackdharrysingh: That is in Mexico. I will supply that source later to him, but I am sure that I saw that in one of the daily newspapers.

The question, therefore, is: What plans does the Government have with respect to savings, mobilization and export competitiveness? I simply ask the question that many people would not want to ask: Is the Government also considering devaluation of our currency? *[Interruption]* I am just asking it. You tell us whether that is impossible. How will the Government respond to an unemployment problem of major proportions as we move to the year 2000, and what will be done to accelerate substantial growth? What will be done with respect to improving our technological capabilities? While seeking accession to NAFTA, what relationship, especially economic relationship, will we seek to further with the Pacific Rim, the EEC, Lomé and the CBI?

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. K. Jurai]*

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. R Palackdharrysingh: Madam Speaker, we must take a look at some of the employment practices at home because it is important to investigate this matter. It is very easy for the Government to say it would create "X" number of jobs, but in truth and in fact it might be an overestimation and, in the final analysis, one would find that the number of jobs promised would never materialize. This has happened from time to time.

Would the Government continue to borrow in a way that would keep us in the debt trap? There are times we would have to meet obligations with respect to the public service and to other debts. Sometimes what we do while we pay our debts

is that we borrow again, and there is no significant reduction. In this respect, how much external financial assistance would be required on a projected basis—maybe until the year 2000—if we are going to make sense? *[Interruption]* It is an important question.

Also, we need to know what is the projection of the terms of trade: whether there would be a falling off and we would have to export more for the imports that we need. These are important because if we do not take a look at these matters, we might confuse ourselves, our optimism might not be very evident. We would find that this country's social condition degenerates to an uneasy position. I am also concerned, like many others, about the unemployment situation and the social conditions of our people.

As I said, we can benefit from NAFTA, but at the same time our foreign policy must be informed by our domestic situation. It is on the domestic response to our problems that we will correct our weaknesses, and unless we can manage the local resources in terms of efficiency and the cost of production, unless our own local resources, including the human resource, are not fully utilized in a manner that would give us a competitive edge, we could hardly benefit from any arrangement.

There is also the political question to be addressed, and that question is: How well can the leadership of the country motivate our people to feel a part of this society where there will be equal opportunity for all and where each one would be given some measure of access to the country's resources: where the resources of this country would be so distributed as to subserve the common good? This is also an important question. No matter what we do, in terms of our foreign policy, and in terms of accession to NAFTA, if we cannot build a base from our local resources—the human resource and the materials that we have—and use them in a manner that would generate the sort of product that is necessary, then we would only delude ourselves that we could benefit from NAFTA.

6.55 p.m.

As I said, we on this side agree that we must access NAFTA. It was pointed out very early and it is commendable that the Government is now looking in that direction; but we must not fool ourselves. Unless we have, like the Americans, the will to compete or the will to create the opportunities, or the will to take the necessary political decisions, we shall not benefit. We have tried to point out some of the obvious pitfalls on the road to NAFTA and hope that the Government will address the situation and allow the country to benefit in the best possible way.

The Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources (Dr. The Hon. Keith Rowley): Madam Speaker, I rise to support the initiative as stated in the Motion in the name of my colleague the Member for Diego Martin Central, the hon. Minister of Trade and Industry, wherein he has brought to the Parliament the intention of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to seek to have our country put on the list of those countries which are to be considered by a major trading partner, which is also the prime mover of the NAFTA arrangements.

It is unfortunate that the impression would have gone across to some of our colleagues on the other side that the Motion was saying that we intended to be in NAFTA in 1994 or even tomorrow. What in effect the Member for Diego Martin Central is doing, firstly, by saying to take note, is following the parliamentary procedure to permit this debate. I remember distinctly that when the Motion was placed before the House, it was indicated that Cabinet had taken a decision that the matter will be debated, and "to take note" here is to indicate that that was the way the debate would have been initiated. I was very surprised today to hear at least one of my colleagues on the other side refer to the phrase "to take note" to mean that we were, and as he put it, coming as a thief in the night to sneak this thing on the country and the Parliament. That makes me wonder why my colleague was reacting in that manner.

We are really taking part in a fundamental debate, and those who are surprised by the debate, again, make me wonder: this whole question of NAFTA, its genesis, the prognosis for its birth and its coming into being, has been in the public domain locally, regionally and internationally for quite some time, and I do not really see the point being made that NAFTA should surprise us. In fact, last year, when the negotiations were coming to a head and the deadline was placed for the American President to get an agreement, I think the whole world was watching to see whether the President would have got enough support.

I had the opportunity to watch the debate on television in the United States at the time; I saw the actual voting process; in fact, at one stage, it appeared as though the process would not have come into being because it was such a fundamental development. However, notwithstanding advice to the country from some quarters where we were told that it would not come to pass, it did come to pass. What has been happening in Trinidad and Tobago since 1992 is that this Government shared the view of those persons who believed that a NAFTA agreement would have succeeded, because it was in the context of what was happening elsewhere in the world.

The coming of the Economic Union in Europe, the hint and action being taken to bring about a one-market economy in Europe had put such pressures on many European traders that it seemed to us in this Government and elsewhere, that it was inevitable that the response to that would have been the creation of a balancing trading bloc from Alaska to Tierra del Fuego as is stated in some quarters, starting with the agreement between Canada and the United States and now Canada, USA and Mexico.

Of course, we are now hearing that the Chileans are on their way in, and some of us in the Caribbean, such as Trinidad and Tobago, believe that we, too, stand to do benefit from such an arrangements. Yes, not only we stand to benefit from being in such an arrangement, but when we look at the alternatives of not being in, that arrangement, that is where we see the real perspective. The question is not simply: What are we going to get out of NAFTA? There is a corollary: What would be our position if we are not in such an arrangement? This is where the Caricom consideration comes into being.

I have heard it said this afternoon that the accession to NAFTA signals the death of Caricom. Neither I nor the Government share that view. Being in NAFTA permits you certain arrangements with your counterparts in NAFTA, which one will share only with those counterparts, but it does not prevent you from having other arrangements. I think my colleague the Member for San Fernando West made that point. NAFTA would be one aspect, a major aspect of our trading relationship, but we will also have access to other arrangements.

The point comes in: Is it that Caricom will die? Or is that Trinidad and Tobago will live and have life more abundantly? I prefer to say it the other way around, because first and foremost, while we are resolute in our commitment to Caricom, we have to be equally resolute in our commitment to the interests of the People of Trinidad and Tobago, and on this occasion we see no diversions of interests in the matter; what we see is a diversion of process.

My colleague the Member Diego Martin Central made it very clear that we are working in concert with the Caricom Secretariat, where there is commonality of purpose. We must accept that if we are to take the position, that we do nothing until Caricom as a unit is ready, I daresay, history has shown to date that it is quite possible that the opportunity could pass us by, because notwithstanding all that we say about our Caricom colleagues, many of them have been proven guilty of not preparing themselves to deal with the reality of the outside world. That is a fact! There are members of the Caricom community who do not have the same

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kinds of concerns as Trinidad and Tobago, has because of the nature of their size, their economy and their interests.

There is one particular Caricom country which has had a history of looking after its own backyard; does not have major trading arrangements, has no real outstanding benefit to be gained from NAFTA, because not much is being produced there to enter into international trade. It lives largely on tourism, but NAFTA generates wealth in the USA and elsewhere, tourists will go there. As you seek to make certain arrangements, financial and otherwise, they do not see that they stand to benefit, nor would want to change the present arrangement. History will show that it is quite likely that a country like that, albeit a member of Caricom, would be the last country to want to access the North American Free Trade Agreement. Does that mean that Trinidad and Tobago, which has so much to lose by not accessing it, must wait on the decision of that country?

7.05 p.m.

Honestly, we cannot take that position. If we are in a position to benefit, a stronger Trinidad and Tobago can contribute to a stronger Caricom. We will go ahead and we will drag them along if we have to, but we are not going to stop the clock. The world is not waiting on Trinidad and Tobago, the world is not waiting on Caricom; in fact, the world was not waiting on NAFTA.

Notwithstanding the crosstalk and picong that took place during the debate, I would like to compliment my colleagues on the other side, the Member for Couva North and the Member for Caroni Central, for taking the approach of identifying for the Government some of the pitfalls to look for as we go along because, we are not seeking to create a Trinidad and Tobago for the PNM, nor for the UNC, nor for any other party. In matters of this nature it has to be non-partisan; it is the interest of Trinidad and Tobago. I am very happy that Members on the other side stood up here today and placed in *Hansard* in fact that they support this initiative by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, because that will send the correct signal to the nation: that what we are doing is in their best interests, and that point of view is shared by all of us in Parliament. What we have to do is to explain the details.

I also want to caution Members on the other side that if the mood changes, they should not change their approach on this particular matter, because the coming into being of NAFTA and its operations would not be all plain sailing. There will be times when there must be adjudication on matters, and there would be nothing more detrimental to the case of Trinidad and Tobago at any point in

the history of NAFTA, whether we are in or whether we are out, when we have to fight for our interests, to have comments from Members of Parliament in Trinidad and Tobago used outside Trinidad and Tobago to strengthen the case of others who seek to fight our position.

I make this comment in the context of what happened with ISCOTT, when the company was sued in the US court under anti-dumping statutes, where it was alleged that subsidized products from Trinidad and Tobago were being dumped on the US market; even though our state production was but a minimal amount of what was being exported to the US, we had to face serious difficulties in getting into that market. When that case went to court, one of the strongest lines of legal arguments by those who sought to block us from the US steel market, was comments made by Members of Parliament in Trinidad and Tobago.

I raise this matter this evening so that Members may really understand that comments which are ill-informed can be far more detrimental than what they perceive to be Government's inaction or misguided action. I am happy that we are starting out on this footing; that we see this issue as one where we can have a commonality of purpose in terms of saying, "Yes, Trinidad and Tobago has every reason to want to access the North American Free Trade Agreement. We are agreed on that."

The next issue is, when. It cannot be too soon, because if there are benefits to be derived, then we need to get those benefits as quickly as possible. In the last two years, this Government in anticipation of what will develop in the hemisphere, and where our position will be in the hemisphere—has been systematically taking steps to put this country in a position where it can quite credibly make the application that it is making now, saying to the United States that Trinidad and Tobago is a country which believes it is in a position to be considered for accession to the treaty. We will work towards that.

Of course, we know the time table for being put on the list; if we miss it this time we are going to lose a significant amount of time. If we miss the window now another window comes up in 1997. I have heard it said from ill-informed quarters that we are rushing this and that we should delay the process; That is either an ill-informed comment or a comment meant simply to take the opposite view for the sake of so doing.

We have every confidence that Trinidad and Tobago has the wherewithal to received favourable consideration, and, therefore, if we do not miss the boat this time, we would be on board and sailing. If we miss the boat this time, for

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whatever reason, we have to wait until 1997. The question arises, if we are agreed, as we have heard from all sides that we should be on board, then why should we want to miss the boat for another three years, especially if we have taken steps, as we have done, through highest level involvement of Caricom, to ensure that we cannot be justifiably accused of abandoning our Caricom partners? We have taken all of these in context, and we are prepared to move to get on aboard so that Trinidad and Tobago may benefit.

We have made tremendous sacrifices in this country over the last three years to put us in this position today, and it would be ill-conceived for anybody to take the position now, that the people of Trinidad and Tobago, having paid the price to be in the present position to access something which can bring benefits to the country, to say no, we do not want those benefits as yet, we are waiting for somebody else. It does not make sense we cannot do that; and I am happy that we are agreed that ours is the way to go.

It would not be all plain sailing. As is said in common parlance: "In this life there are no free lunches." In the same way that we agree that there are significant benefits to be had from entering NAFTA, we have to recognize also that there will be significant prices to be paid. It was after we weighed both sides that we saw where we would gain more on the reel than lose on the jig, and we took the decision that it would be better to be inside than to be outside.

There have to be certain adjustments whenever we do business. There would have been absolutely no consideration of Trinidad and Tobago accessing NAFTA if we had taken the position, as some had advised, that this country had to maintain foreign exchange control indefinitely because that was the only way we can conduct our affairs. I grew up knowing foreign exchange control; all my life in this country I have known foreign exchange control, but in April 1993, this PNM Government took the bold step to float the Trinidad and Tobago dollar to free up exchange control. That is a fundamental requirement for entering NAFTA, without it one would not even be considered.

When the Government floated the currency there was much prognostication as to what bucket of hell fire would fall down on Trinidad and Tobago, and the "Guyanization" of Trinidad and Tobago, and the "Jamaicanization" of Trinidad and Tobago; and exchange rates of \$20 and \$100 to one were being predicted. In fact, there was great trepidation in the population; there are those who will still prefer to wake up one morning and hear that these things have come to pass; but alas! These things have not come to pass.

One talks about devaluation. The Trinidad and Tobago dollar today, is where it is, not as a result of any Government fiat; In fact, some of the persons who were most frightened of the action are today most supportive of it, and they are benefitting from it.

7.15 p.m.

The point I am making is that we may never have been in the position to think about accessing NAFTA and the potential benefits had there not been a PNM Government in Trinidad and Tobago. From what I am hearing, one has to ask the question, Had others been in government would they have taken that step? Those who were in government before us did much talking; but did they take the step?

It took the PNM government one year in office to take the step that is required to put us in position. One would let the rhetoric pass because all the talk that we are hearing does not change the fact that we are dealing with serious international developments at this time.

We were told by the Member for Couva North that we are not ready. Surely, we are not totally ready but we have done the fundamentals to be on the wagon, to start the process. It is a process; we have done enough to get on that. What has been done to put us in that process has all been done in the last two years under this Government—all of it. This country began to take the direction under this Government. We agree that there is much more to be done.

My Friend the Member for Couva North made the point about not being ready because the system requires monopolies regulations. He is saying that something has to be done to prevent monopolization of any aspect of the economy. That agreement is anti-monopoly. I know that the Member has been saying along the way that he and his side are for a monopolies exchange commission, or something like that. That is one way of dealing with it. The fundamental point is you have to be against monopolies.

There are very few instances where monopolies can survive in that arrangement. In fact, if the economy has monopolistic aspects then they would have to be addressed. We accept that! Therefore, there is National Flour Mills, one of the biggest monopolies in Trinidad and Tobago. The Government recognizes that in the context of what we are doing and what we have agreed on.

The Government has carefully and systematically been seeking to demonopolize that arrangement so as to comply with the requirements of what we have agreed on. Of course, there are effects and fallouts from that. Unfortunately, Members on the other side have the option of speaking from both sides of their

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mouth—today they can support something and tomorrow they cannot. The Government does not have that option. The Government has to take a firm position and follow through with it. When we take steps to demonopolize National Flour Mills, I hope I would not hear from the other side that that is some fly-by-night action on the part of the Government which would do this, that and the other. I hope they would see it in the context of what they have agreed to. I hope they would see that!

We are well on the way to doing that. I am advised that from May 1, 1994 the monopoly that National Flour Mills now has and enjoys would be changed—it is not being done willy-nilly. We have studied the situation and have taken certain procedural steps, the objective being to bring National Flour Mills into a more liberal trading arrangement. These are requirements of the present reality.

My Friend the Member for Couva North said that the Government should put certain things in place for the benefit of the smaller units in the country, small farmers and businessmen, because they do not have the wherewithal to do certain things and the only way they can be done is if the Government does the organizing and co-ordination and so forth and find markets for them. That is not correct at all. History has shown that the Governments have tried to do that before, not only in Trinidad and Tobago but elsewhere, and it has not worked.

I am surprised that the Member for Couva North quoted the experience of China. We have to understand that what the Chinese can do in China, we cannot do here. China has a command economy where what the Government wants, it gets; where what the Government says the country does. It is a communist dictatorship. I know that my friend the Member for Couva North has communist credentials, but that does not apply to Trinidad and Tobago. Do not compare us with China. Compare us with a free society where there is the right of the individual to comply or not to comply as long as he or she does not break the law.

Contrary to what he has said, this Government took part not only at the local level but also at the regional Caricom level. We are a major shareholder in a company called Caribbean Agricultural Trading Company (CATCO) which does precisely what the Member for Couva North says should happen. It is in place! Dominica, St. Vincent, Grenada, Trinidad and Tobago, seeking out markets for our products in North America and Europe and seeking to fill those niches with our products. There are certain fundamental problems with this kind of arrangement; it is not the kind of panacea it is made out to be.

In fact, at this precise moment that agency is on the verge of collapse because it has not delivered in the way in which it was said such an agency would have

automatically delivered. The international market place is fierce. The international market place has not place for sentiments; it has no place for emotion, and charlatans do not do well. That being the experience of the state-organized approach—and I need not get into a debate here on the local Central Marketing Agency (CMA); one knows the history of that.

Look at what is happening with those persons who have found niche markets for local cut flowers. They are doing the same thing, without state involvement. They have come together as a grouping and are seeking out and finding new markets, organizing their export products, pooling their resources and their products and filling orders. That is happening right now in the cut flower industry; making a relatively small contribution to the national economy but doing quite well and growing, and as they grow they get stronger. They are benefitting from the arrangement of collective action.

The same thing is happening—small again—with the growing niche market of ornamental fish.

Mr. Mohammed: Even mamatayta.

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: I do not know how many Members know that Trinidad and Tobago is now exporting a number of species of ornamental fish; again, pooling their resources and exporting as a unit—Trinidad and Tobago. That is how it is being done, so therefore it can be done without Government's involvement. My ministry is encouraging that! As we all know, attitudes vary with the origin of the exercise.

We have had some very unfortunate experiences in this country when the state took the position of doing things which people can do for themselves. This is where the phrase of facilitating the environment comes in. The state can help those sectors that are helping themselves. It does not mean that you wash your hands of the situation. It does not mean that at all! If I had the time this evening I could have listed all the things that the state does to facilitate those persons who are going in a certain direction.

As we built the facility at Piarco Airport, in Phase II, one of the facilities that we are pressing for is something that is missing now—a facility to deal with the export of agricultural products. Once we put that in place it will give a great fillip to those persons who are now engaged, and those who would join as we go along, in exporting from these shores those products which we are now accessing markets for, and others to come. It will provide them with a facility which will allow them to benefit from Piarco being a major transportation hub—cold storage

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facilities, customs clearances, security, quarantine arrangements and so forth, which are important considerations, all in one place at the airport to facilitate export, recognizing that that is a growth area in Trinidad and Tobago.

We on this side, while we reach for the sky, we want to keep our feet firmly planted on the ground. That is why when I hear my colleague from Couva North talk about the Gulf of Paria being the world's largest salt water lake, and what can go on in there, I know he has been talking to my Friend from St. Augustine. That kind of vision, which has no basis in logistics, can only come from the Member for St. Augustine.

7.25 p.m.

We on this side, while we reach for the sky, we want to keep our feet firmly planted on the ground. That is why when I heard my colleague the Member for Couva North talk about the gulf of Paria being the world's largest salt water lake, and what can go on in there, I knew he had been talking to my Friend the Member for St. Augustine. That kind of vision, which has no basis in logistics, can come only from the Member for St. Augustine. I do not know which may my Friend looked at, but to come to the Parliament and say that the gulf of Paria is the world's largest salt water lake is really laughable, and not to be taken seriously. With respect to the species that we extract from the Gulf of Paria, I would be very impressed and the first to congratulate my Friends the Member for St. Augustine and Couva North when they start the first kingfish farm anywhere in the world.

Mr. Maharaj: What did you all start over the last two years?

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, the question of negotiations was raised by my Friend the Member for Nariva. He started out by questioning this country's ability and competence to negotiate its way into NAFTA. I followed his line of argument very closely, notwithstanding the little "picong" in between; and I was happy that he closed on the score that he was confident that this country has the talent and the wherewithal to negotiate in the best interests of Trinidad and Tobago, and I commend him for that.

What we must not do is to take the position that the 20 people in the Cabinet, somehow, represent all of Trinidad and Tobago. The Government is not all of Trinidad and Tobago. The Government draws on the talent in Trinidad and Tobago, wherever that talent might reside. [*Interruption*] Unfortunately, as much as we would like to invite our Friend the Member for Oropouche to join the team, he does not qualify, and I do not say that facetiously. The record will show.

Mr. Sudama: To join the PNM is something worse than death.

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: Not the PNM. I want to make a distinction here. I said all the talent in Trinidad and Tobago, it does not have to be political parties. To join the PNM is another story. There is no way anyone in the PNM would sign a nomination form for the Member for Oropouche. No way! That settles that!

Mr. Sudama: That is such a blessing, that is a divine blessing.

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, that is not to say that if he has talent elsewhere, that can be used—I mean, his contribution here in the Parliament, when it makes sense, is in fact his talent being brought to bear; and from time to time, once a month or otherwise, he makes a point that can be used in a Bill, and so forth; but that has nothing do with joining the PNM! After all, Madam Speaker, we must have someone to beat.

The point was also made about the use of foreign talent. Let us make no mistake about it. In a country of 1.3 million people, notwithstanding how we feel about ourselves, there will be occasions when we need to draw on talent outside Trinidad and Tobago, just as other countries are drawing on the talents of some of our sons and daughters. We have people of Trinidad and Tobago who are serving other countries. Therefore, it is wrong to say that because a person does not hold your passport or does not belong to your nationality, that person cannot work in your interest.

In fact, not long ago I had the opportunity of watching a programme about Japanese industrialization and I was surprised to find that the driving force behind the Japanese concept of industrialization was an American. The individual who was driving the process, as a concept, was an American. The world today is like a global village in more ways than one. This Government will have absolutely no difficulty in drawing on talent from the international community to assist us in smoothing our path as we go towards accessing NAFTA. There is some talent that we have to buy. If you do not have it, you buy it.

Mr. Maharaj: There are people who do not have water in Trinidad and Tobago.

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, I will not descend to the level of trivia, which is the hallmark of my colleague the Member for Couva South.

Mr. Maharaj: You cannot give people water, yet you are talking about NAFTA?

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, there are certain things we have to face. Even before the GATT agreement was signed and, again, while we were signalling that it was our reading that a GATT agreement would be concluded in the near future, there were those in this Parliament who were telling us that we were being misled, and that after 15 years there was no chance of any GATT and there would never be one, because France would not agree and Japan would not agree, and so forth; and we kept saying the Berlin Wall came down.

I had the opportunity at the FAO to cast a ballot to allow South Africa to return to the FAO. Tomorrow morning, they begin to count the ballots of what Mr. Mandela has said to be, for all practical purposes, free and fair elections in South Africa. I never thought I would have lived to see the day when any batsman would have made more than 365 runs, or when South Africa would have been experiencing free and fair elections, and a South African President taking the position that Mr. F.W. de Klerk has taken in this matter. I did not think I would see that. The world has changed fundamentally and those who advise us to bury our heads in the sand and hold on to the past, and not make the necessary adjustments, are simply advising us to be left behind; and the PNM accepts no such advice.

With the coming of the GATT, the agricultural sector of the world has entered a new era. It was the agricultural considerations and intellectual property that caused the GATT to drag on for so many years. Agriculture worldwide is a different creature, and special arrangements have to be made, are being made, and have been made for it. This country takes its responsibility to the agricultural community very seriously. Our major agricultural enterprise is sugar production, notwithstanding all that you hear.

The question of sugar in the context of these international agreements is something that we have to negotiate very carefully to ensure that that aspect of our national economy, the lands on which we now grow cane, remain in cane; and the markets we have for the sugar we produce, we continue to have access to, because it is an agricultural enterprise which makes a significant contribution to Trinidad and Tobago and I do not know whether Members are aware that we access NAFTA we will meet three major sugar producers in that organization.

7.35 p.m.

We will meet the United States where we now have a quota of just under 9,000 tonnes; we will meet Mexico which is a major producer of low cost sugar; and we will meet Canada which is a major producer of maple sugar. We will all

be in the same market, so we will have to negotiate where our small sugar industry will be placed in this context. I have no doubt that our technical people and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago will seek to come up with the best deal for Trinidad and Tobago as we press on in this matter.

There are some basic difficulties with respect to certain aspects of our agriculture, largely to do with meat and dairy produce. These are areas where we have some activity in Trinidad and Tobago, but, after our best efforts, we are still producing less than a quarter of our needs. And we are really major importers of these products, and, therefore, will not be in a position to use the clauses for excessive protection for these industries because in the scheme of things they are not major activities in Trinidad and Tobago.

The global arrangements permit certain protections for significant local production, but when your production is marginal to the overall scheme of things, one cannot expect to negotiate preferential treatment when one is producing only 20 per cent of your requirements you cannot expect to negotiate preferential treatment. However, having said that, it does not mean that we will not seek to extract every ounce of protection as is permissible under the circumstances for our local farmers, because it is our intention that what we have should survive.

My Friend the Member from Couva North and someone else made the point about what we said about job creation and where we said the jobs were going to come from. I am a little puzzled by that kind of approach. I know Members might feel that that will score political points—if it can be shown that the Government is doing nothing about employment creation. Anything short of the Government creating artificial openings in "make-work" situations, requires that employment be created in the context of economic activity. If one accepts that, I would also submit that nobody goes out there to employ anybody to bring down the unemployment level. Nobody does that!

However, as we talk about economic growth, it seems to have annoyed certain Members on the other side. Economic growth is linked to economic activity and one asks the question: If it is linked to economic activity, who is carrying out this economic activity? Persons from Mars? From Venezuela and Grenada? If there is increased economic activity in Trinidad and Tobago, increased opportunities for employment being created necessarily follows. The figures bear it out.

Even though we still have high unemployment, the number of jobs available has been increasing, but the problem is we are not producing the jobs as fast as we are producing the persons requiring the jobs. That is where the problem lies. It is

not that we are having fewer jobs in the country. Jobs are being created, but we still have a long way to go to fill that gap between what is required and what is being created.

Let us take NAFTA. It is being said in certain quarters that we have no benefits to gain because we have nothing to export. Again, I ask: Where do these people live, the people who make those kinds of statements? How do they think Trinidad and Tobago ended up in a situation where, at one time, we were a major exporter of textiles—shirts in particular? We were a major exporter of shirts to the US market. As a result of our performance, when trade protectionism was the order of the day, the US market was closed to us. We were put on quota, because we were able to compete with others in that market.

What was happening was that a country like Trinidad and Tobago that had little geopolitical importance to the politics of the day, found itself on the receiving end of quota restrictions while other countries like Taiwan, China, Honduras and Guatemala, which served certain regional political interests, had their quotas increased or retained because the US Government wanted to ensure that certain things took place in Honduras, or that China had a certain position, and Taiwan and so forth. They were producing, but before that, we were selling in that market. The US market is a huge one and if we get only a small fraction of that market, then we are in seventh heaven here.

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

Motion made, That the hon. Member's speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [*Hon. K. Valley*]

Question put and agreed to.

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, I wish to thank—

Mr. Jurai: Madam Speaker, just for the record, I wonder if this was the same Member who has, time and time again, called for the curtailment of Members' speaking time in this House?

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: I knew that the Member would take that position. The gist of what I was saying is the curtailment of the speaking time of Members who have nothing to say, like my Friend from Nariva.

We have been facing restrictions on textiles, leather goods and craft. These are areas in which Trinidad and Tobago has a demonstrated ability to do well if given the opportunity to access those markets. What NAFTA means is that access

to that huge market would become more possible. One, we will then be able to enter that market whereas now we are entering through a spigot. It is going to be opened up to us. Secondly, duties that apply to make us uncompetitive will not apply. Can we not see what that means in terms of job creation in this country?

The grouping in this country that is suffering most from unemployment problems is the women of Trinidad and Tobago. These are the persons who had carried the banner at an earlier date when we were producing high-quality textiles for export. As we access NAFTA, we could recreate that climate where our talented young women, designers and others, could put their skill and talent to work to produce the quality goods that would sell in the North American market. We have distinguished ourselves before and I have every confidence that we will do so again. That is where the jobs will come from.

At one time the textile industry of this country employed many thousands of persons. In fact, if my memory serves me right, the figure which was thrown out in the mid-1980s was 14,000. We suffered a significant decline in employment in that sector as a result of quota restrictions in our major market place. NAFTA is going to reverse that.

My colleague made the misrepresentation about the condensed milk situation. Our condensed milk can compete with condensed milk in North America. In fact, there are 100,000 Trinidadians and Tobagonians in Brooklyn alone who provide a market for our condensed milk, and we have been trying to supply them; but, of course, under protectionist arrangements, we have been assigned a quota of one half of one container. So it is not quality; it is how much quantity would be allowed into the market place. But again, by preferential arrangements, our major trading partner had entered into arrangements with others outside the hemisphere to give them, as part of the geopolitical play, the condensed milk market, and therefore they had to keep our condensed milk out. NAFTA will change that. That is the kind of thing that would happen.

7.45 p.m.

The point was made about legislation, a very important point. There are a number of pieces of legislation that have to be put in place as we access NAFTA, but it would be wrong to take the position that since they are not all in place, we should not seek to get on track. I want to take this House back to our own experience when Britain joined the Common Market. Britain was in the same position that we are in today vis-a-vis NAFTA, compared to Germany and France, and they did not take the position that "We would wait until everything is ready before we go". In fact, even today, almost 30 years after accession, the British are

still on track complying with regulations which are required in Europe; water quality, work standards, labour relations, and so forth. As you go along, it is a process that you are on to and you have time to put certain things in place. There are deadlines for certain things; some are short deadlines, some are long.

We in the Cabinet, again, in calling the shot right, in anticipating what has come to pass, have taken a number of significant steps to put us in a position to access. With regard to Occupational, Health and Safety Regulations, work is proceeding apace on that. We have sought help, using our own talent and international help, to prepare and have in hand now a draft Environmental Management Agency Bill—my colleague has a copy there—put on track by this Government. We are about to come to Parliament with a Bill to establish in this country [*Interruption*]

I know they have difficulty with good news. They like to get up here and say that nothing has been done and the Government does not know what it is doing. When you provide them with the proof, they start to chatter and try to drown you out. Why do they get on like that? It is good news for Trinidad and Tobago. Let the record show that as part of our preparation, we have in hand a Bill on its way to this Parliament to establish an Environmental Management Agency to comply with the requirements in this direction.

There are a number of bureaucratic reforms which have to take place so as to allow this country to put itself in a position to function in an environment such as NAFTA. We have done more with respect to customs reform in the last 18 months than has been done in, God knows how long, in this country—necessary reforms which ought to have been done; but, of course, it had to wait the arrival of a PNM Government. They would not like to accept that, but that is the fact.

With regard to anti-Dumping legislation—very technical legislation—I can tell you that we are taking steps and we have sought assistance from international talent, and in a few days' time or some time in the near future, an expert on Anti-Dumping legislation is coming here to assist us in our process to create the legislation that is required to comply with the anti-dumping and countervailing duties matters. We are doing all that.

The Member spoke about growth and destitution. We spoke about the economy having growth in the last quarter of 1993 and in the first quarter of 1994, signalling an sustained growth. I should have thought that that would have been good news for every citizen of Trinidad and Tobago who has been, for the last 12 years, under a situation where our national economy showed no growth. Of

course, that has not been so. It has upset some persons to be told that our economy has grown in the last quarter of 1993, has grown in the first quarter of 1994, and indications are it will do so again as we go along.

The point was made that, yes, you can have growth and destitution, that is true, but you can have worse destitution if you have no growth at all. Would they have preferred to hear that we had decline?

Mr. Sudama: Give us an example of worse destitution.

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: In the United States, the same market that we are targetting, that we have agreed we should access for our own growth and advancement, in New York alone, in the face of growth to the extent where they are now taking steps to throttle it back to make sure it is sustainable, there are over 100,000 homeless people. I am not talking about poor people; I am talking about people who do not have a roof over their head. In Los Angeles, there are 80,000.

The point I am making is that one does not take a decision at the bottom; one seeks to create an environment for the wider good and expect to have all our citizens access that environment. So it would be quite wrong to give the impression that the indication of growth in Trinidad and Tobago has no import for alleviating the hardships of our people, because, if we did not have growth, that is when we have no prospect of coming to grips with the root cause of our problems.

SITTING OF THE HOUSE

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Madam Speaker, I beg to move that the House continue in session until the conclusion of the matter before us.

Assent indicated.

Mr. Sudama: Madam Speaker, I should like to get some clarification. For the last two sittings I have had a motion on the adjournment deferred. This is the third time that it is coming up, and I should like to know what is the position with respect to this very important Motion.

Hon. K. Valley: Madam Speaker, if I can assist the House, the Standing Orders seem to be clear that after 8.00 o'clock, any Motion on the adjournment cannot be heard.

Perhaps I should inform Members that the Government's programme is so tight that it may require our sitting beyond 8.00 o'clock on a number of occasions.

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Mr. Sudama: So in other words, you are telling this House, arbitrarily, you have deferred my Motion on the adjournment indefinitely if in the future we go to 8.00 o'clock on debates, and therefore, there is no Motion on the adjournment.
[Interruption]

NORTH AMERICAN FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

Madam Speaker: Proceed, please.

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, I wish to assure you that I have no intention of challenging the Standing Orders of this House. I intend to abide by them.

Let me end on the note that notwithstanding the requirement for skilful and informed negotiations, notwithstanding a recognition of the fact that there are going to be some negatives in some aspects of our economy as we access NAFTA, notwithstanding the fact that there are considerations for our Caricom arrangements which we must seek to put in their proper perspective to ensure that we maintain an ability to work with our regional neighbours as we move into hemispheric considerations, notwithstanding the fact that there are those who would believe that we are moving too quickly, it appears very clear to me that there is consensus in this House that the direction of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to access the North American Free Trade Agreement has the support of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

I close on that note and commend my colleagues on the other side that on this issue—bye-election or no bye-election—let us be seen by the outside world to have closed ranks on this country's attempt to get into the hemispheric trading bloc called NAFTA.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

7.55 p.m.

Miss Hulsie Bhaggan (*Chaguanas*): Madam Speaker, I rise to make a brief contribution on the Motion before this House, and in doing so I wish to place NAFTA in the context of what is happening globally, and to make some recommendations.

There is much talk about globalization in the world today, but based on the discussions we have had here this afternoon, it is very clear that what we have is really regionalization. As such, if one is to look at the East, one would see that Japan is today one of the most developed countries in the world, and with other Asian countries, is now forming part of a bloc.

When we look at Japan, we would see that it has been able to get the competitive edge because of a combination of factors, for instance, relatively high wages; they have been using new and advanced technology; and at the same time, they have been able to achieve very high levels of productivity. So, Japan has been able to show that productive and competitive edge.

The four tigers, as we call them—the other Asian countries—which are now developing into industrialized states—have a competitive edge due to their cheap labour, and they have been able to combine this with new and advanced technologies and are able to achieve a high level of productivity.

When one looks at Europe and Germany in particular, one sees that in Germany they have been able to use technology with high wages and high levels of productivity. The question, therefore, we have to ask ourselves, if we are going to enter NAFTA and, as such, put ourselves in the global market place, but at the same time become a part of a regional bloc, is: What will be our competitive edge? What will be our mix in terms of, perhaps, human resources, skills and technology? Would we be able to achieve the levels of productivity which are important giving us that competitive edge?

When we study our accession into NAFTA, firstly, it is very clear that you would not automatically get in and, secondly, your products do not automatically gain access to the market place; you must have what is called a competitive edge. So, my main concern, therefore, is, are we ready for that? Secondly, what is going to be our mix?

Mr. Valley: Our what?

Miss H. Bhaggan: Our mix; mix in terms of technology, human resources, whether we can muster our levels of productivity which could give us that edge, because that is what international marketing is about. We are now entering a more advanced stage of international marketing and we have to look at our products from that point of view.

I have always been speaking in this House about the kind of economic models that some countries have pursued and often questioned what is our model; because, whether we like it or not, there are two major models of economic development which have emerged in the world. Japan and the European countries, especially western Europe, have pursued what is called the socio market economy model. That is a model which combines the economics of development with the social aspect of development; so it is a dual process and strategy.

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When we look at the United States, Canada, Britain we see that they have pursued an Anglo-Saxon model which we call—and is quite accepted in international circles—the neo-liberal model of development. That model is one which stresses the economy and growth. What it says is that you have to grow first—and I heard the Member for Diego Martin West making allusions to that—and then somehow you can distribute; it is the Bush syndrome of trickle down economics. Under that model, the market becomes very important; it drives everything; competition becomes very keen, and the philosophy really is survival of the fittest. We are definitely pursuing that model because once you enter NAFTA you embrace the model upon which NAFTA is based—it is based on the neo-liberal model of capitalism.

I would like the Member for Diego Martin Central to provide me with information to disprove that point, because the literature has been able to substantiate that point of view where it has been seen that NAFTA falls within that scenario and that development context.

I would like to say, therefore, that when we are looking at our development we have to understand certain things. The United States of America conceived the idea of NAFTA, not because it loved Mexico or Canada, but because at that time, in the 1980s for instance, the United States was finding it very difficult to compete in the open market. When it looked at Europe and Asia, it saw that these blocs had a competitive edge. What the United States was looking at, basically, was to find a way to compete, so NAFTA, therefore, emerged out of the United States' interest in terms of survival and, secondly, in terms of being able to form its own kind of blocs, protect itself and superimpose itself as the super power of the world.

Within recent times a book was written by Mr. Reech, the Minister of Labour in the Clinton administration, and he has been looking at the United States' dilemma. One of the points he did make was that there is not only the need to focus on the economics, but be able to merge the economics and the social aspects of development. He is saying that there has been a shortfall in terms of the number of skilled workers in the United States as compared to other countries like Japan and Western Europe.

So, in the short run, what the United States was looking for was the edge based on access to cheap labour, and so it turned to the South. My contention is that when we look at the history of this part of the world and the southern countries, especially of the United States, we see that we are victims of a

stereotype. When, for instance, we look at Europe, the treatment was a little different; more humane, in fact.

We were really considered to be banana republics. As a matter of fact, when we look at the stereotype and the western movies and think of the Mexicans, it was always an *hombre* wearing a *sombrero* drinking *tequillia* and singing his *rancheros*. That was the kind of stereotype the Mexicans had. [Interruption] Those are the kind of songs the Mexicans sing in the movies and so on; a *sombrero* is a hat and they are always wearing a hat, drinking *taquillia* and singing *rancheros* [Interruption]

Madam Speaker: Order! The Member is trying to make her contribution!

Miss H. Bhaggan: Madam Speaker, what I am saying is that Mexico was not really a developed country, but because it had the infrastructure to afford cheap labour, you found that the United States formed this kind of partnership and was able to muster that support for the agreement.

The point I am making, therefore, is that we should be very clear—that NAFTA is about the United States' vital interest; its ability to survive within the regionalization of the world and be able to impose itself as a super power. We must have that mindset when we approach NAFTA to negotiate on member ship.

We, therefore, cannot say that we will join NAFTA and fold our arms, play a passive role and wait for investors to come in, for things to happen to us. We ought not to do that. What we have to do, as a country, is to have a clear vision as to where we want to go and so when we go to negotiate—while we may not have the same power in terms of position of equals and so forth—we would not find ourselves in a situation where we would have to make so many concessions that in the final analysis we would not have gained from a net point of view.

Also, when we look at the question of competition, there is a new dimension emerging where many countries, like the United States, are trying to gain that competitive edge with cheap labour; and there is a new concept which is called social dumping. Now, we have heard of goods being dumped, one might ask: What is social dumping?

Social dumping is where certain countries have been putting certain conditions in place which will depress wages and working conditions to create a cheap supply of labour and so, those countries are able to compete, not on the basis of their technology and other inputs, but basically because the cost of labour is cheaper.

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We have to be very careful. We have to ensure that social dumping does not become one of the arrangements within NAFTA and in terms of our arrangement with them. So, we are to suggest that there must be social clauses in the agreement that we are going to negotiate, which will prevent that concept of social dumping. The aim of these social clauses will be to guarantee an adequate level of working conditions based on internationally accepted labour standards as agreed by the ILO—and remember the ILO is a tripartite organization which protects the interest of workers and people in general.

8.05 p.m.

While we feel that trade liberalization is a way that the world has to go, we must be very careful that that whole concept be linked to at least at least the minimum ILO standards. We cannot, therefore, have a situation where conditions once more are recreated where a new form of slavery is emerging just for the sake of competition—and for becoming superior in these various regional blocs.

May I suggest that some of the clauses we ought to be looking at, apart from all the general clauses would be matters like the ILO Conventions 87 and 98 which have to do with freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining; the minimum age for employment—Convention 138, and the discrimination on equal remuneration; Conventions 100 and 111. The latter two dealt particularly with women being employed.

If we look at the free zones we would see that they themselves have been created in a kind of sweatshop where women are vastly underpaid. There are many occupational hazards and, basically, they are not protected in the work place. We have to make sure that our Government and other governments which are going to be involved are lobbied so that they will be able to observe the principles embodied in these Conventions regardless of our stage of development.

Another point I should like to make is, in going to this negotiation whenever it comes, we have to be sure we have a sophisticated multidisciplinary team. NAFTA is a very complex and complicated arrangement. For instance, I have read a document published by the Latin American Economic System. That document mentioned that the NAFTA document consists of 22 chapters, hundreds of articles, a bewildering array of annexes, appendices and schedules.

The treaty spoke about provisions in one section of the agreement which are often modified in another, and these in turn may be affected by rules or exceptions that are set out in other documents. You need to have a comprehensive knowledge of what you are going into. Also, references are made

to laws, constitutions and regulations among the partners. These may deal with matters like the federal state and provincial and municipal governmental levels. Those are matters we have to study very carefully.

When we are looking at NAFTA—since we are talking a non-partisan approach; we have had some politicking but, I believe basically we have agreed on this in principle because both parties are looking at the development of the country—I believe that when negotiations are to take place there must be an approach that involves all the partners in the development of the state. Those partners should include the labour movement, the private sector, the various NGOs and the Opposition.

How could you say you are giving the country or the world a united front without including the Opposition in your negotiations? That is important for the sake of continuity. This is not an arrangement we have internally where every five years things are going to be changed. I believe, in the history of this country, it is the first time that we are undertaking a fundamental programme of development.

Whether we like it or not, this arrangement with NAFTA is going to impact on the survival of this nation; it is going to impact on the future. It is going to have the most fundamental impact upon our country. If you are going to have continuity all parties involved in the developmental process—whether at the level of the Parliament or the level of the various other sectors in society—have to come together and agree on these matters.

Let us assume another party was to form the Government in 1996. That party cannot go and say, “I was not part of the arrangement, and I cannot support those terms and conditions.” You can have problems with that. This is one opportunity where I believe there has to be some kind of national consensus because it is going to impact on our development strategy as a nation, and, of course, within the region.

I looked at the impact of NAFTA on Canada and Mexico. I cannot say I have done any in-depth study but from the little I have looked at, the short-term impact is going to be tremendous. Most of it will be negative because, once you go into this kind of arrangement, there is a transitional stage which is likely to have many problems. For instance, at present, in Canada many factories and manufacturing enterprises are moving into Mexico because of the cheap labour and other concessions which are available, and unemployment levels have increased tremendously in Canada. Secondly, the Canadian currency is 140 to 1. Prior to

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the whole NAFTA arrangement it was 80 to 1. Thirdly, Canada has a very good social security system. That system now is under attack through this arrangement.

Finally, Canada is a very sophisticated nation. One of the main reason the Conservative Party lost the election in that country was because the population at large did not feel they would benefit from NAFTA, and it was a vote of no confidence in that party. That is the reality with respect to Canada.

When we look at Mexico, maybe one of the things that come to mind was the uprising of the people in Chiapas, exactly on the day when NAFTA came into being. Those people were saying, among other things, that the interests of the indigenous people were being compromised. Secondly, they felt that their national interest was being undermined.

If the nation does not move with the particular government in charge, you can have conflicts which are perceived as different conflicts of interest. We, therefore, have to educate our population. I heard the Member for Diego Martin West speaking about President Clinton trying to sell his programme. He looked at the debate. That is great for the United States of America; Clinton was selling it from his perspective and his country's point of view.

We cannot buy 'cat in bag.' We cannot only take the propaganda with which we are being bombarded. When you read most of the documents it is propaganda based on interests and the US a powerful nation. If there is one country good at propaganda it is the United States of America, whether you accept that or not. When we enter this we have to be very analytical.

For instance, I would have liked the Member for Diego Martin Central to tell us whether or not we did any internal study to determine the impact of NAFTA on our country. I did not hear him mention that. I think we ought to have had such a document. So that there could have been a rational view behind our going to access NAFTA. We cannot do that just because we have read it in the newspapers. There must be rational thinking behind it.

Also, we are worried on this side because we are moving in this direction, so far we have not had an energy policy, an agricultural policy nor an industrialization policy being passed. We have been having different pieces of development coming through, but as a policy we have not been having them. In the absence of these things, we are very vulnerable as a country. It means we cannot really be clear as to what we want and where we stand on certain issues. To go around a table and negotiate without those things being very clear we would be placed in a very serious disadvantage. The internal preparation requires

that we specify the various policies of the Government so that we could have a vision of where our country is going.

Also, I believe that people ought to be consulted in this country. I really cannot say with any great degree of confidence that the wider population has been consulted on this issue. I know in Europe when they were looking at their own arrangement there were referenda in the various countries. I do not know whether we should have had a referendum in this country before applying to accede NAFTA.

These are issues we have to deal with.

8.15 p.m.

I was in another Caribbean island at the time when I heard the Member for Diego Martin Central announcing the intention, and I was very surprised because I felt that such a big decision was being taken and yet the Parliament was not informed. We did not have a chance to debate the issue. I felt that was so fundamental that Parliament had to have a chance to critique it as we are doing today, but the application is already in and we are now debating it. Too often, many of our international—

Mr. Valley: Madam Speaker, may I just say that perhaps we need referendum when we are not clear on an issue, but on an issue like this where the Government and the Opposition are of one mind, I do not know what useful purpose a referendum would serve.

Miss H. Bhaggan: Madam Speaker, I am saying that in order to get support, sometimes you must get the participation of the people. We are representatives of the people, but this is also a political matter. When we speak about political will, and there is agreement, that is not taking us far enough, because this particular issue is too fundamental for the population not to have a direct say. They would have supported it too, but give them that chance to know that they were able to participate in the process.

Dr. Griffith: Just a question for my own enlightenment. Could the hon. Member say whether any or all of the three players in NAFTA held a referendum before they made the decision to enter?

Miss H. Bhaggan: They did not hold any referendum, but I do not believe that we should be copycats. I believe that we in the Caribbean have to forge our own way of doing things, and while we are following the model as proposed by NAFTA, Europe has always been more sophisticated in terms of its democratic

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process, and I believe that is where we should go, especially when we have looked at the West Indian Commission's Report. One of the main findings of that commission was that people felt alienated from the processes of development. So we have to be able to address that.

I was about to ask a question: In the context of all that is taking place now, what is happening to the Manning Initiative? Where does the Manning Initiative fall in this whole scenario? Secondly, at one time I heard about the Association of Caribbean States coming together to negotiate entry into NAFTA. I would like an update on that. I know that Caricom has met and made a decision on individual states entering, but what would be the role of the Association of Caribbean States, if such a fundamental decision is being taken and this particular association is not in place.

Another area has to do with the question of sustainable development. At a conference in Barbados where the topic of discussion was sustainable development, I had the chance to do an interview on that. *[Interruption]* It was on CNN, Madam Speaker. One of the points I made then was that I felt, in looking at sustainable development, that much of it had to do with the way you deal with your human resource, and one of the concerns I raised was the issue of drugs.

I felt that drugs were destroying our human resource, and one of the problems we were experiencing or were about to experience was that many people who were ruling our country and holding very high positions might be people who were recovering addicts or who have been addicts at some point in their lives. To me that is a very dangerous thing, and when you look at sustainable development, drugs and the whole concept of the human ecology—which is basically looking after human and social living conditions—in our negotiations, therefore, we have to bring to bear all the issues of sustainable development. The environment is one in particular.

The Member for Diego Martin West spoke about the environmental management agency; I have been hearing that for a long time now, but when you look at the industrialization process in the country, you will see where the environment is being degraded very heavily and we do not have any control. We are bringing legislation to the House, but the question is: Do we have the will, machinery and resources to enforce the various pieces of legislation that have been brought to prepare the country for accession to NAFTA?

So, the emphasis ought not to be one that is legalistic; for every piece of legislation which comes into this House, there must be serious steps taken

towards putting the infrastructure in place to enforce the legislation. That is an area where as a country we have fallen very short. From time to time many laws have been passed, but there is no real enforcement. That is an area of weakness in our country, and we have to be very careful, therefore, to look at that aspect.

Finally, I want to stress that the social aspect must be an integral part of any negotiations in our efforts in accession to NAFTA. I think that the United Nations has actually recognized the whole concept of the usefulness of the social aspect, and in March 1995 there will be a world summit on social development. I am sure that as a country we will have to take certain positions and steps towards preparation for that conference. As such we ought not just to have that as a conference document, but whatever we do in terms of these international organizations and conferences, there must be a linkage between the documents we prepare in terms of speeches, what we bring to this House as legislation and what is enforced.

We see getting into NAFTA as a progressive step and we support that idea. We are saying, however, that there are certain things which we have to do in preparation. One of the things we are stressing is having a negotiation team which will be strong because we are not negotiating with an equal partner. Our preparedness and the skill of our team will be able to get the best deal for us. Secondly, we have to undertake a serious programme of putting into place the infrastructure to be able to ensure that we are not vulnerable.

We shall have many problems in the transitional stages. When the agreement comes into effect and the market is opened up, we will be very vulnerable and, as such, many of our small industries will be very much affected, and whatever concessions we can get to protect the vital interests of our nation state, those must be bargained for very hard. We have to ensure therefore that we look after the future of our country.

I thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Madam Speaker, I would like to start this winding-up by thanking Members on both sides of the House for their contributions to this debate.

To summarize, what has been said is that everyone thinks that the Government is making the right move by attempting to access NAFTA, at the same times they are sending a warning signal: they are saying that there are hurdles along the way that we ought to watch out for. We take that point.

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Because of the lateness of the evening, I do not think I need to go into a number of the areas that I wanted to. Let me assure Members however that we take the point. Some of the things they have spoken about, we have already dealt with. For example, in terms of legislation, my colleague mentioned that very shortly we would have a consultant here looking at the anti-dumping legislation. The Environmental Bill is there. The Bureau of Standards is in fact doing an excellent job. Yes, it needs strengthening. If you ask the used-tyre dealers, they would tell you that.

We know that negotiations are going to be critical as we attempt to access NAFTA. We do not expect to be in NAFTA in 1994. We expect to be on the list and to have our Bilateral Investment Treaty finalized. We expect to have our Intellectual Property Rights Agreement in place. We expect that we would have NAFTA parity, and within the period, starting perhaps in 1995, we would start negotiations with a view to becoming a full member of NAFTA in 1996 or thereabouts.

Given the importance of this initiative, the Government proposes to have a parliamentary committee to oversee the negotiations with respect to NAFTA. We already have a negotiating committee that involves public servants, members of the private sector, members of the Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers' Association. We take the point that we should include persons with knowledge in agriculture, persons from the Chamber of Commerce and, perhaps, other chambers, and there would be a parliamentary committee overseeing the total negotiations for this important move forward for our country, Trinidad and Tobago.

8.25 p.m.

All it leaves me to do now, Madam Speaker, is to thank all my colleagues on both sides of the House most sincerely for the support for this initiative. As we go forward we know, we are making a crossing. Yes, there are going to be pitfalls, but knowing that we have the support of all Members of the House, I think we can do it and do it for our country. This can start a type of pride in our country, Trinidad and Tobago.

I thank you most sincerely.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That this House take note of the statement by the hon. Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance on Trinidad and Tobago's

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decision to declare formally its interest to access the North-American Free Trade Agreement made in the House of Representatives on Friday, April 8, 1994.

Motion made, That the House do now adjourn to Monday, May 2, 1994 at 1.30 p.m. [Hon. K. Valley]

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 8.27 p.m.

WRITTEN ANSWER TO QUESTION

URP Projects

The following question was asked by Mr. Subhas Panday (Naparima):

104. Could the Minister state:

- (a) How many URP Project 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?

The following reply was circulated to Member for the House of Representatives:

- (a) There are 318 projects in Trinidad.
- (b) + (c) See list of projects below
- (d) + (e) Projects are programmed by regions and not by constituencies.

The exact locations of all projects are however given in respect; to (b).

LOCATION AND TYPE OF PROJECTS

Project	Location	Type
About Circular	Region #1	Drain
Africa Drain John John	Region #2	Boxdrain, Bridges
Africa Playground	Region #2	Recreational Facilities

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Project	Location	Type
Alma Trace	Region #8	Road resurfacing
Almond Drive	Region #2	Basketball Court
Apparicio Circular Drain	Region #3	Boxdrain
Grand Curucaye	Region #3	Retaining Wall
Ariapita Road	Region #1	Renovation
Arouca Police Station	Region #4	Renovation
Bamboo Community Centre	Region #7	Renovation
Bamboo Village	Region #8	Boxdrain
Roadworks		
Barataria Oval Bridge	Region #3	Drain
Basilon Street	Region #2	Retaining Wall
Construction		
Bassterre Footpath	Region #5	Footpath & Boxdrain
Beecham Cocoa	Region #2	Boxdrain
Beetham Entrance	Region #2	Boxdrain
Beetham Estate	Region #2	Boxdrain, Bridges
Beetham Hard Court	Region #2	Basketball Court
Beetham Phase (V)	Region #2	Construction
Belle Vue	Region #1	Boxdrain
Benedictine Street	Region #1	Boxdrain
Beverly Hill	Region #2	Boxdrain
Biche Community Centre	Region #5	Construction
Bird Street	Region #1	Drain
Blanchisseuse Drainage	Region #4	Drain
Boissier Lane	Region #1	Retaining Wall
Bon air Hardcourt	Region #4	Hard Court

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Project	Location	Type
Bonne Aventure Footpath	Region #5	Footpath
Buenos Ayres Community Centre	Region #8	Construction
Bushe Street Sidewalk	Region #4	Pavement
Byron Street, La Romain Roadworks	Region #8	Boxdrain
California Community Centre	Region #5	Renovation
Carapichima Footpath	Region #6	Footpath & Boxdrain
Carapo Drainage and Sidewalk	Region #4	Drain
Caratal Road Footpath	Region #7	Boxdrain & Footpath
Caroni Savannah Road	Region #6	Footpath & Boxdrain
Caurita Bridge Construction Acono Road	Region #3	Bridge
Centeno Street Box Drain	Region #7	Boxdrain
Chaconia Avenue Retaining Wall	Region #7	Retaining Wall
Chatham Footpath	Region #8	Footpath, Drain
China Town	Region #2	Boxdrain
Chinapoo Drain	Region #2	Retaining Wall
Chin Fung Alley/Sobo Road Works	Region #8	Drain
Chinnette Alley	Region #2	Fence
Clarke Road Box Drain	Region #8	Boxdrain
Clifton Hill/Annisette Street	Region #2	Footpath
Clovis Street	Region #1	Footbridge
Cochrane Footpath	Region #8	Footpath, Boxdrain

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Project	Location	Type
Cocoa Road	Region #2	Retaining Wall
Coconut Drive Bridge	Region #7	Bridge
Cocorite River	Region #1	Drain
Cocoyea Village/Forrest Avenue/Mosset Vale Box Drain	Region #7	Footpath, Boxdrain
Community Centre (Upper 7 th Avenue)	Region #2	Construction
Cordettes Pan Theatre	Region #5	Construction
Covigne Extension	Region #1	Drain
Cumuto Footpath	Region #5	Boxdrain, Footpath
Dass Trace Bridge	Region #6	Bridge
De Freitas Street	Region #2	Pavement
Diamond Vale Hard Court/Secondary School	Region #1	Basketball Court
Diamond Village Basketball Court	Region #6	Basketball Court
Dinsley Drainage & Road Work	Region #4	Bridge
Don Miguel Road Construction	Region #3	Sidewalk/Boxdrain
Drain of Hololo Road	Region #1	Boxdrain
Duncan Street Construction	Region #2	Wall
Duncan Village Recreation Ground	Region #7	Bleachers
Dundonald Hill	Region #1	Walkway
Edward Street Footpath	Region #7	Boxdrain, Footpath
Eleanor St./Jack St. Boxdrain	Region #7	Boxdrain
El Socorro South Extension	Region #3	Boxdrain
Eight Avenue Construction	Region #3	Pavement

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Project	Location	Type
Embacadere Deveopment	Region #7	Footpath
Escallieer Terrace	Region #1	Roadway
Factory Road/Tara Drive	Region #1	Boxdrain
Fatima Trace	Region #2	Boxdrain
Ferrari Drain Construction	Region #3	Drain
First Caledonia	Region #2	Boxdrain
Five Rivers Hard Court/Sidewalk	Region #4	Basketball Court
Flanagin Box Drain/Footpath	Region #6	Retaining Wall
Floster Street Construction	Region #2	Retaining Wall
Gran Couva Box Drain	Region #6	Boxdrain
Grant Trace Footpath	Region #8	Footpath
Gonzales Quarry	Region #2	Boxdrain, Bridge
Gonzales Water Course	Region #2	Boxdrain
Government Quarters	Region #5	Renovation
Hamlet Trace	Region #2	Boxdrain
Harmony Hall Footpath	Region #7	Footpath
Hassarath Trace Box Drain	Region #6	Boxdrain
Henry Street Drainage	Region #4	Construction
Herrera Lands Roadworks	Region #8	Boxdrain
Hislop Trace Independence Avenue	Region #1	Retaining Wall
Retaining Wall	Region #7	Retaining Wall
Indian Trail community Centre	Region #6	Renovation
John Street	Region #2	Boxdrain, Bridge
Johnson's Community Centre	Region #7	Construction

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Project	Location	Type
La Brea Pre-School Learning Centre	Region #8	Renovation
La Fillette Drainage	Region #4	Drain
La Hoe Development	Region #3	Retaining Wall
La Horquetta Post Office Centre	Region #4	Construction
Lall Beharry Trace Box Drain	Region #7	Boxdrain
La Lune Footpath	Region #5	Footpath
La Mango Hardcourt and Development	Region #3	Basketball Court
La Romain Footpath	Region #7	Footpath, Boxdrain
Lendore Village Box Drain	Region #6	Boxdrain, Footpath
Lengua Footpath/Kansammy Footpath Moonan Avenue	Region #7	Footpath/Boxdrain
Lenore Lane	Region #2	Boxdrain, Bridge
Leon & Dorata Streets (Laventille/Success)	Region #2	Retaining Wall
Lluengo Main Drain-Maracas, St. Joseph	Region #3	Boxdrain, Sidewalk
Longden Street Drainage	Region #4	Stone Wall
Lopinot Community Centre	Region #4	Construction
Los Bajos Playfield	Region #8	Basketball Court
Los Charos Community Centre and Learning Centre	Region #8	Renovation
Lower Seventh Avenue	Region #2	Retaining Wall
Lum Track Hill Roadworks	Region #8	Boxdrain
Macaulay Footpath Community Centre	Region #7	Footpath
Maingot Road Development	Region #3	Wall, roadway

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Project	Location	Type
Mallagual Development	Region #3	Retaining wall
Malabar Trainline Drainage	Region #4	Drain
Maloney Post Office	Region #4	Construction
Marac	Region #5	Bridge
Marabella Recreation Ground	Region #7	Construction
Mausica Road Sidewalk	Region #4	Drains, Pavement
Mausica Road Sidewalk (South)	Region #4	Drain and Sidewalk
Mentor Alley	Region #2	Boxdrain
Monkey Town Bridge & Road	Region #5	Bridge
Mon Repos Community Centre	Region #7	Construction
Monroe Road Development	Region #3	Boxdrain
Monsanto Lane	Region #1	Roadway & Steps
Mt. Dor Hardcourt	Region #3	Boxdrain, wall
Mt. Lamber Hardcourt	Region #3	Sidewalk
Mount Zion	Region #1	Drain
Naparima Mayaro Road Drainage	Region #5	Boxdrain
North Manzanilla Fishing Project	Region #5	Construction
Nairn Avenue Infrastructure	Region #7	Boxdrain
Orange Sidewalk	Region #4	Sidewalk, Drain
Oropouche Harris Village Footpath	Region #8	Footpath & Wall
Pamberi Pan Theatre	Region #3	Construction
Paramin	Region #1	Construction
Patna/River Estate Comm. Centre	Region #1	Construction

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Project	Location	Type
Perseverance Box Drain	Region #6	Wall & pavement
Phase II Pan Groove	Region #2	Construction
Piarco Drainage	Region #4	Side walk, drain
Picton Branch Road	Region #2	Drain
Picton Footpath	Region #8	Footpath & Wall
Pinto Road Sidewalk Drainage	Region #4	Sidewalk & Drain
Piqueiteville	Region #2	Road surfacing
Pleasantville Community Centre	Region #7	Renovation
Pleasantville Sporting Facility	Region #7	Construction
Poinsetta Extension	Region #2	Boxdrain
Point Ligoure Community Centre	Region #8	Renovation
Point Fortin Area Project (Guava Road)	Region #8	Footpath, Boxdrain
Power Road	Region #5	Boxdrain and Wall
Preysal Pavilion	Region #6	Construction
Prince Lewis Avenue Construction	Region #3	Boxdrain
Princes Town Community Centre	Region #7	Construction
Prizar Lands	Region #2	Drain
Providence Street Project	Region #5	Boxdrain
Quarry Street Wall	Region #1	Retaining Wall
Quash Trace Project	Region #5	Drain and Footpath
Quinam Road Ritoville Basketball	Region #8	Construction

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Project	Location	Type
Rat Hole	Region #1	Drain
Red Hill Hard Court	Region #4	Construction
Reform Road Footpath	Region #7	Drain and Footpath
Region (3) Office Building	Region #3	Construction
Rio Claro Box Drain	Region #5	Boxdrain
Ritoville Hard Court	Region #8	Basketball Court
Rock City	Region #2	Boxdrain
Ross Land Hard Court	Region #1	Construction
Roving Maintenance Gang For Road	Region #3	Drain
Saddle Road	Region #3	Boxdrain, Sidewalk
Samaroo Road Works and Drainage	Region #4	Drain
Sangamon Bridge	Region #1	Bridge
San Juan Side Walk	Region #3	Sidewalk
Scorpion	Region #1	Wall and Bridge
Sea Lots East Construction	Region #2	Drain
Sea Lots West Construction	Region #2	Wall, Boxdrain
Sea Trace	Region #1	Road Improvement
Second Avenue Construction	Region #3	Sidewalk, boxdrain
Second Caledonia	Region #2	Boxdrain
Senora Park	Region #1	Boxdrain
Shakir Trace Construction	Region #3	Construction
Shende Street (Malick Shende Street)	Region #2	Boxdrain
Sherwood Park Sidewalk Siparia Drainage	Region #4	Pavement

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Project	Location	Type
Siparia Community Centre	Region #8	Renovation
Snake Valley	Region #2	Retaining wall
Sogren Trace	Region #2	Boxdrain
Solomon Street	Region #5	Resurfacing
Solomon Street Box Drain/Second Avenue, Maharaj Lands	Region #7	Boxdrain
Sooknan Street Bridge	Region #7	Retaining wall
St. Anthony's	Region #1	Wall and Pavement
St. Charles Footpath /Barrackpore Junior Sec. Ball Court, Madingo Road	Region #7	Footpath and Boxdrain
St. Croix Footpath, Duff Road	Region #7	Footpath, boxdrain & wall
St. Henena Sidewalk	Region #4	Sidewalk/Drainage
St. John Road Development	Region #3	Pavement
St. John's Street Wall	Region #1	Retaining Wall
St. Joseph Development	Region #3	Drain, sidewalk
St. Joseph Road Construction	Region #2	Construction
Ste. Madeleine Settlement	Region #7	Footpath/boxdrain
Ste. Madeleine Infrastructure	Region #7	Footpath/boxdrain
St. Margaret's Box Drain/ Footpath	Region #7	Boxdrain and Footpath
St. Mary's Box Drain	Region #6	Construction
S.S. Erin Road Footpath	Region #8	Footpath & Retaining Wall
Tacarigua Development	Region #3	Boxdrain
Talparo Community Centre	Region #4	Refurbishing
Techier Pan Theatre	Region #8	Construction
Third Street	Region #1	Boxdrain

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Project	Location	Type
Thomas Street Construction	Region #3	Boxdrain
Tokyo Pan Yard	Region #2	Constructing building
Tumpuna Road, Arima	Region #4	Drain and side walk
Tunapuna Development	Region #3	Renovation'
Union/Vessigny Roadway and Slipper Drain	Region #8	Drain
Unity Springs	Region #1	Drain
Upper Fairley Street	Region #3	Retaining wall, boxdrain
Upper St. Barb's Road	Region #2	Retaining wall, boxdrain
Valencia Community Centre	5	Renovaiton
Valsayn North – Mayfield Bridge	Region #4	Bridge
Vegas Drain	Region #2	Boxdrain
Wharf Trace Community Centre	Region #3	Renovation
N.B.:	Region #1	Boundary – Chaguaramas to St. Ann's
	Region #2	Boundary – Port of Spain Environ.
	Region #3	Boundary – Tunapuna to San Juan.
	Region #4	Boundary – Curepe – Wallerfield – Blanchisseuse – Talparo.
	Region #5	Boundary – Toco to Marac.
	Region #6	Boundary – Enterprise to bon Adventure.
	Region #7	Boundary – Boarding Phillipine, La Romain – New Grant, Boarding Tabaquite, Boarding Moruga Rochard Douglas Road, Penal.

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Region #8

La Romain – Icacos – 8 mile mark, Penal
Rock Road, Monkey Town Barackpore –
Friendship Village Diamon then back to
La Romain. Commas