

*Leave of Absence**Friday, May 20, 1994***HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

Friday, May 20, 1994

The House met at 1.45 p.m.

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

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, I have granted leave of absence from today's sitting to the Member for St. Augustine (Mr. John Humphrey); the Member for Chaguanas (Miss Hulsie Bhaggan); and the Member for Toco/Manzanilla (Mr. Andrew Casimire); who is on sick leave and has requested a further four-week leave of absence.

Let me clear this up at this point. The medical report from the Mount Hope Medical Complex states:

“Extension of Sick Leave for Mr. Andrew Casimire for four weeks starting May 20, 1994.”

PAPERS LAID

1. Finance contract between the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and European Investment Bank—Loan for the financing of Petrotrin's Refinery Integrated MTBE Facility. [*The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley)*]
2. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of National Gas Company of Trinidad and Tobago Limited for the year ended December 31, 1987. [*Hon. K. Valley*]
3. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of National Gas Company of Trinidad and Tobago Limited for the year ended December 31, 1988. [*Hon. K. Valley*]
4. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of National Gas Company of Trinidad and Tobago Limited for the year ended December 31, 1989. [*Hon. K. Valley*]
5. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of National Gas Company of Trinidad and Tobago Limited for the year ended December 31, 1990. [*Hon. K. Valley*]

6. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of National Gas Company of Trinidad and Tobago Limited for the year ended December 31, 1991.
[Hon. K. Valley]
(Papers 2 to 6 to be referred to the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee)

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

The following questions stood on the Order Paper:

Drug Trade (Foreign Assistance)

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

International Environment Agreements

90. Could the Minister of Planning and Development state:
- (a) If the Government is party to any of the international environment agreements which resulted from the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) or the Earth summit held in Rio in June, 1992?
- (b) If the Government is a party to the said agreements, could the Minister state what measures, if any, it took under the following conventions, agenda and principles:

- (i) The Climate Change Convention to take measures aimed at reducing carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels by the year 2000?
- (ii) The Biodiversity Convention to identify and monitor their genetic resources in terms of plant and animal life and to set up protected areas to safeguard them?
- (iii) Agenda 21—an environmental action plan for action to be taken at international, national and local level to promote sustainable development?
- (iv) A Statement of Principles on Sustainable Forestry Management which outlines ground rules for a country's management of its own forests toward sustainable development of the forests? [*Mr. R. Maharaj*]

Kelvin Subran

(Application for Post of Librarian)

96. (a) Is the Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister responsible for Public Administration and Public Information aware that an application was made by Kelvin Subran of Cumberbatch Street Extension, Chaguanas, to the Teaching Service Commission for the post of school librarian and that such application is pending for about ten years?
- (b) Could the Minister inform this honourable House whether the Government has set up any machinery for it to be informed of this and/or similar matters and, if so, could he inform this honourable House of the date such machinery was set up and give the particulars of such machinery? [*Mr. R. Maharaj*]

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Madam Speaker, we are asking for a deferral of questions Nos. 86, 90 and 96 for a period of one week.

Mr. Sudama: I suggest a deferral of three weeks, Madam Speaker.

Hon. K. Valley: I accept, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: We have a very generous Member for Oropouche this afternoon.

Question, by leave, deferred.

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

100. Mr. Basdeo Panday (*Couva North*) on behalf of the hon. Member for St. Augustine (Mr. John Humphrey) asked the hon. Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs:

- (a) Could the Attorney General give to this honourable House the names of the attorneys-at-law and the sums 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 he state in each case the reason it was necessary for the Government to retain the attorneys-at-law instead of using an attorney employed with the state?

The Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs (Hon. Keith Sobion): Madam Speaker, the particulars requested are as follows—and I will give the response first by reference to the attorneys retained, the matter, the amount paid, and where applicable, the amount outstanding:

Particulars of Payments to Attorneys-at-Law
Period December 16, 1991 to April 25, 1994

Attorneys-at-law	Matter	Amt. Paid	Amt. Owed
Charles Russell & Company	Privy Council Appeal Lennox Phillip and Others vs the Attorney General—Privy Council Appeal Nos. 23 and 27 of 1991	1,440,493.19	
	The State vs The Jamaat Al Muslimeen—Civil Appeal Nos. 140 of 1990 and 161 of 1990	130,714.35	
	Privy Council Appeal Irving Phillips, Victor Baptiste and Rasheed Mohammed vs The Queen—Privy Council		

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Attorneys-at-law	Matter	Amt. Paid	Amt. Owed
Charles Russell & Company	Appeal Nos. 69 of 1988 and 29 of 1986	57,094.51	
	Privy Council Appeal Ashook Dookie vs The Queen—Privy Council Appeal No. 26 of 1987	17,199.54	
	Privy Council Appeal Hon. Justice Richard Crane issue—Privy Council Appeal No. 13 of 1993	167,495.00	438,328.53
Ewart Thorne	Lennox Phillip and Others vs the Attorney General—HCA Nos. 1311 and 3982 of 1990—Privy Council Appeal Nos 23 and 7 of 1991; Civil Appeal Nos. 36, 37 and 114 of 1992	917,194.00	
Neal Bisnath	Hon. Justice Richard Crane issue—High Court Action Nos. 3788 and 3961 of 1990	24,000.00	
Bruce Procope, QC	In the matter of Justice Richard Crane—High Court Action Hos. 3788 and 3961 of 1990	523,289.95	
Sonny Maharaj	In the matter of Justice Richard Crane issue—HCA Nos. 3788 and 3961 of 1990; Civil Appeal Nos. 58 and 59 of 1991	386,650.00	
Emmanuel Annisette	Hon. Justice Richard Crane issue—HCA Nos. 3788 and 3961 of 1990	180,250.00	

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Attorneys-at-law	Matter	Amt. Paid	Amt. Owed
Ms. Lydia Mendonca	Hon. Justice Richard Crane issue—HCA Nos. 3788 and 3961 and 1990	16,000.00	
T. Malcolm Milne & Co.	Hon. Justice Richard Crane issue—HCA Nos. 3788 and 3961 of 1990	2,300.00	
G.R. Annisette & Co.	Hon. Justice Richard Crane issue—HCA Nos. 3788 and 3961 of 1990	4,464.50	
Russell Martineau, SC	Hon. Justice Richard Crane issue—HCA Nos. 3788 and 3961 of 1990; Civil Appeal Hos. 58 and 59 of 1991. Privy Council Appeal No. 13 of 1993	492,727.93	
	High Court Action The Attorney General vs Motilal Moonan Pavers Limited—HCA No. 3534 of 1984	34,500.00	
	High Court Action Colin Vincent, Joseph Charles and Matthew Sandy vs the Attorney General—HCA Nos. 227 of 1992; 420 of 1992 and 228 of 1992	43,125.00	
	High Court Application for Judicial Review with respect to Felix Durity, Senior Magistrate—HCA No.5 of 1993	20,125.00	
	High Court Action Goolochan Jabar and another vs the Attorney General—HCA No. 630 of 1993	115,000.00	

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Attorneys-at-law	Matter	Amt. Paid	Amt. Owed
Russell Martineau, SC	Allan Clovis and another vs the Airports Authority and Others—HCA No. 616 of 1990	5,750.00	23,000.00
	High Court Action Theophilus Barry vs the Attorney General—HCA No. 3529 of 1985		
	High Court Action Brian Wallen and Lincoln Guerra vs the Attorney General and others—HCA Nos. 1043 and 1044 of 1994		72,450.00
	Hon. Justice Richard Crane issue—HCA Nos. 3788 and 3961 of 1990, Privy Council Appeal No. 13 of 1993	892,404.68	
De La Bastide & Jacelon	Lopinot Limestone Ltd. vs the Attorney General—HCA No. 4172 of 1990.	8,912.50	
	Appeal of Bernadette Hood-Caesar—HCA No. 3015 of 1987	2,300.00	
	Design Construct Ltd. vs the Attorney General—HCA No. 3069 of 1988; Civil Appeal No. 123 of 1993	415,725.00	
	Civil Appeal by Gayman Jurisingh, Faxal Mohammed and Peter Matthew—Civil Appeal Nos. 151, 152 and 153 of 1992.	\$122,475.00	

Attorneys-at-Law	Matter	Amt. Paid	Amt. Owed
De La Bastide & Jacelon	Petrolam T'dad Ltd. vs the Minister of Finance and the Attorney General HCA No. 1140 of 1993	\$281,750.00	
	Commissioner of Police vs the Minister of National Security and others Application for Judicial Review—HCA No. 2361 of 1993.	77,625.00	
	Application by Lolita Saroop for a writ of habeas corpus—HCA Nos. 2115, 3040 and 3884 of 1993; 363 of 1994	57,500.00	
	High Court Action Gulf Insurance Co. Ltd, vs the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago—HCA No. 3036 of 1993.	23,000.00	
	Central Steel Mills Ltd. vs the Attorney General—HCA Nos. 195 of 1993	126,500.00	
	High Court Action Yvonne Cross and others vs Chaguarams Development Authority—HCA No. 3604 of 1992		69,000.00
	Caribbean Ispat Ltd. vs the Attorney General, Central Trinidad Steel Ltd., Caribbean Steel Ltd—HCA No. 1024 of 1994		17,250.00

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Attorneys-at-Law	Matter	Amt. Paid	Amdt. Owed
	High Court Action Corporal Holder's application for Judicial Review—HCA No. 2591 of 1993 Hon. Justice Richard Crane issue—Privy Council Appeal No. 13 of 1993	10,420.15	69,000.00
Michael De La Bastide	High Court Action w. Galloway vs Corporal Dyer—Magistrate Appeal No. 235 of 1990 Lopinot Limestone Ltd. vs the Attorney General—HCA No. 4172 of 1990	\$57,500.00 \$17,250.00	
	Extradition proceedings against Lolita Saroop—HCA Nos. 2115, 3040 and 3884 of 1993; 363 of 1994	\$92,000.00	
	Design Construct Ltd. vs the Attorney General—HCA No. 3069 of 1988; Civil Appeal No. 123 of 1993	\$115,000.00	
Martin G. Daly	Hon. Justice Richard Crane issue—Civil Appeal Hos. 58 and 59 of 1991 High Court Action Celia Persad vs the Director of Public Prosecutions—HCA No. 3974 of 1991	\$56,350.00 \$40,250.00	
	High Court Action Florence Hosein vs the Attorney General—HCA No. 1019 of 1991	\$34,500.00	

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Attorneys-at-Law	Matter	Amt. Paid	Amt. Owed
Martin Daly	G. High Court Action A. Douglas, J. Seepersad and L. Franklin vs the Public Service Commission and others—HCA Nos. S 1961 of 1992; S 1917 of 1992; S 1918 of 1992 respectively	\$120,750.00	
	Rosie Blanchfield and others vs the Attorney General—HCA Nos. 2634 of 1992; 3504 of 1992 and 1986 of 1993	\$138,000.00	
	High Court Action Caribbean Ispat Ltd. vs the Attorney General—HCA No. 1024 of 1994		\$34,500.00
	High Court Action Air Caribbean Ltd. vs the Attorney General—HCA Nos. 3743 of 1993 and 895 of 1994		\$17,250.00
	High Court Action Air Caribbean Ltd. vs the Air Transport Licensing Authority—HCA No. 3743 of 1993	\$115,000.00	
	High Court Action Lalchan Deodath vs the Attorney General—HCA No. S 1277 of 1992	\$34,500.00	

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Attorneys-at-Law	Matter	Amt. paid	Amdt. Owed
Stanley John	Commission of inquiry-Camp Omega Explosion	\$7,500.00	
Douglas L. Mendes	La Tinta Commission of enquiry	\$8,000.00	
Peterson, Lambert & Peterson Company	Commission of enquiry in respect of outbreak of diarrhoea at St. Ann's Hospital	\$70,500.00	
Theodore Guerra	Sargeant Frederick vs Farouk Warris—HCA Nos. 3055 of 1988 and 435 of 1991	\$184,000.00	
A.J. Bhagqgan & Co.	Preparation of deed of lease	\$6,412.50	
De Nobriga Inniss & Co	Preparation of deed of lease	\$10,512.23	
Desmond Allum	Matters involving the Scotland Yard officers	\$47,916.67	
Karl Hudson Phillips	High Court Action a. Brewster vs V. Redman—HCA No. 211 of 1991	\$735.79	
George Newman	The Kareem Family vs the Attorney General—HCA No. 4018 of 1986; Civil Appeal No. 71 of 1987	\$9,308.65	

Attorneys-at-Law	Matter	Amt. Paid	Amt. Owed
George Newman	L. Phillip and others vs the Attorney General (Jamaat Matter) – Privy Council Appeal—Nos. 23 and 27 of 1991; Civil Appeal No. 140 of 1990	\$2,206,426.95	
	Total Amount Paid	\$9,969,398.09	
	Total Amount Owed	\$765,219.33	
	Total:	\$10,734,617.42	

Madam Speaker, there are several reasons that attorneys-at-law other than state attorneys were retained in the matters mentioned. The principal reason in the majority of those matters was the fact that Senior Counsel were involved, but junior attorneys from the Solicitor General's Office were also invariably assigned.

In the case of the Privy Council appeals, it is usual and necessary to appoint solicitors in the United Kingdom to handle these appeals and to instruct counsel.

Further, in the several matters in which counsel were retained prior to this administration coming into office, it was considered advisable to maintain the existing arrangement.

Thank you.

2.05 p.m.

Mr. Sudama: Madam Speaker, a supplementary question to the Attorney General. Could he inform this House whether the sums involved were budgeted for in the various budgets of this House and if not, how those funds were accessed?

Hon. K. Sobion: Madam Speaker, for the information of the Member for Oropouche and Members of the House, generally, the Ministry of Legal Affairs carries a budgetary vote to cover the professional services which may be required from year to year.

Special Reserve Police (Conditions of Service and Gratuities)

106. Mr. A.N.R. Robinson (*Tobago East*) on behalf of the Member for Tobago West asked the Minister of National Security:

Will the Minister state what is the position with respect to:

- (i) payment of compassionate gratuities to retired members of the Reserve Police and to survivors of those who die in service?
- (ii) Regulations to provide for conditions of service in respect of members of the Special Reserve Police?

The Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs (Hon. Keith Sobion): Madam Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of National Security, Sen. The Hon. R. Huggins, the arrangements in place are that with the approval of Cabinet, compassionate gratuities are being paid to retired members of the Special Reserve Police Force, or the survivors of those members of the Force who die in office. These gratuities are computed on the basis of 12 days' pay for each year of service, in accordance with Regulation 14 (1) of the Pensions Regulations Chap. 23:52. When a decision is taken subsequently on specific retirement benefits for Special Reserve Police Officers, appropriate adjustments will be made to provide for any additional entitlements.

Proposals for the draft regulations to provide for conditions of service in respect of members of the Special Reserve Police have been formulated and are engaging the attention of the Ministry of National Security at this time. Included in these proposals are recommendations for the payment of superannuation benefits to Special Reserve Police Officers. These draft regulations are to be submitted to Cabinet shortly.

Mr. Robinson: Is the Attorney General able to give any time estimate rather than "shortly" What does "shortly" mean—within two weeks, within a month? What should be the reasonable expectation of these people who are now suffering great hardship?

Hon. R. Huggins: Madam Speaker, I would say that a reasonable time period is about three months.

DANGEROUS DRUGS (AMDT.) BILL

[Second Day]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question [May 13, 1994]:

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Question again proposed.

Madam Speaker: Member for St. Joseph.

Mr. B. Panday: The same thing you said on the public platform—say it now!

The Minister of Education (Hon. Augustus Ramrekersingh): Madam Speaker, I join in this debate on the Bill which seeks to amend the legislation of 1991—the amendment having as its main objectives the ratification of the 1988 Vienna Convention, the removal of existing impediments to the effective prosecution of drug offenders and the improvement of the Confiscation and Forfeiture Order procedures.

I am following the contributions of the presenter of the Bill, the Member for Couva North, and the Member for Tobago East. Although it is still early in the debate, I think it is safe to say that Members in this House would like to see the measures effectively implemented. I know that during the course of this debate we may have differences of opinion about clauses, or sentences. That is part of the parliamentary debating tradition, but I think, by and large, we can say that there is commitment to this amendment.

The question of money laundering. The Member for Tobago East raised what is an important concept: the question of economic crime. What we are seeing in the modern world is the emergence of a different kind of crime and it is, therefore, necessary for us to understand the nature of the new kinds of crime and, as best we can, put measures in place to deal with them.

The prosecution of economic crimes and the bringing to justice of people guilty of economic crimes are not easy matters, but we should not be deterred: we simply have to be creative enough to put measures in place that can deal with them. We cannot simply say that they are difficult, they are new, and give up. Money laundering is one of these and, basically, as I understand it, money laundering entails the process of taking money that is dishonestly earned, or unlawfully obtained and making it “clean”, or legitimate.

It is interesting that money laundering is very closely related to the drug trade. It may not be exclusively related to the drug trade, but the connection is extremely strong. Unfortunately, Trinidad and Tobago has for some time been regarded as a transshipment point for drugs coming from the South and Moving to the North. “Crime does not pay,” is an expression, or a sentiment, which all of us were told by our parents when we were very young children.

Mr. B. Panday: Except for the Government. Ask Pindling!

Hon. A. Ramrekersingh: But, when we look at the real world, we begin to have doubts about that when we see certain people amassing wealth, enjoying a

certain kind of lifestyle which, quite clearly, is the result of unlawful activity. We ask the question: Does crime pay? And I take it to the extreme, Madam Speaker. Some years ago, one of the barons in Colombia had the impertinence, because he was so wealthy, to offer to pay off a portion of the Colombian debt! That is the height of impertinence! But it shows the kind of money that we are talking about.

2.15 p.m.

I want to refer to something in the *Trinidad Guardian* of Monday, August 9, 1993 at page 11. The heading of the story is “Governments get tough with money launderers.” The author of the article is Mr. Vernon Khelawan. I take one of two excerpts: “

The Colombian drug cartels have become ‘economic superpowers’ because of the high volume of money—now in the ‘hundreds of billions’ of dollars—that they are laundering, according to authorities in Panama City. Many banks in many countries are seeking to attract these funds in what international bank officials liken to a ‘feeding frenzy’ among sharks.’

A particular country is called. I would not call the country, but the quotation goes on.

“Due to easy banking regulations and investments by money launderers, the banking trade there grew from three institutions in late 1990 to its present state of more than 118 banks.

Many of these banks and financial institutions,... were ‘little more than a smart title and a letterhead,’ and the ‘branch officers,’ were, nothing more than a few documents in a lawyer’s filing cabinet’.”

A particular government revoked the licence of 311 such banks.

I make that reference in order to show the enormity of the problem, to show the amount of money that is involved in money laundering, and some of the methods which are used—setting up banks which are merely fronts for laundering money, and there are many other methods of laundering money.

In some countries—including countries of the Caribbean—in recent years very stringent measures have been put in place to curb the mushrooming of these kinds of institutions. I should add that one of the attractions of certain countries is the fact that they offer tax incentives, tax shelters and virtual secrecy in banking transactions.

Our own banking community has proceeded in a commendable manner, in that there is an “agreement” among the banks that in the case of certain kinds of deposits and certain amounts, certain measures would be taken to at least reduce the ability of some people to launder money.

But, in talking about money laundering and drug trafficking, we need to see it from the demand side and the supply side, and in dealing with drug trafficking, we cannot take a one-dimensional approach; we must be aware of the demand and supply.

I want, for a moment, to talk about the demand side, because my colleague the Member for Barataria/San Juan made a very important point in her contribution. She was looking at the physical and psychological effects of the use of these illicit drugs and she made reference to schools.

We must be honest and admit that there is some drug use in our schools by students. We cannot hide our heads in the sand. There is. And we must take measures to deal with that. Obviously, we must put proper programmes of guidance in place; we must do the necessary curriculum reform; we must instill in our students a sense of moral and spiritual values; and all these things. But we need to see that at one time we have to deal with the symptoms and consequences, and we also have to take the long view and go to it at source in dealing with the demand.

If I may be permitted—I happened to be involved in any activity a little earlier this morning, which takes a long view. I had the pleasure this morning of launching the Council for Early Childhood Care and Education, which has as its vision, early childhood care and education for all within 15 years. But the point I wish to make is, it is the long view because it is at that early age that we hope to inculcate certain values into our children and to orient them in a particular way, so that some of the behaviours which are manifest today in the older ones will be dealt with at source.

In the substantive 1991 legislation which we are amending today, I want to refer to section 6 and I want to relate it to this—subsection (7).

“A person other than a person referred to in subsection (2) found in possession of a dangerous drug or a substance other than a dangerous drug which he represents or holds out to be a dangerous drug on any school premises within one hundred metres thereof is deemed to have a dangerous drug or substance for the purpose of trafficking. Unless the contrary is proved, the burden of proof being on the accused, and such person is guilty of an offence and is liable—

- (a) upon summary conviction to a fine of sixty thousand dollars, or where there is evidence of the street value of the dangerous drug, whichever is greater, and to imprisonment for a term which shall not exceed twelve years but which shall not be less than six years; or
- (b) upon conviction on indictment to imprisonment for life.”

I want to suggest, as we look at the amendment to the substantive legislation that is before us, that we also look at that provision, and not only look at it, but see what we can do, not only look at it, but see what we can do, not only to strengthen it, but also to ensure that those provisions are enforced.

2.25 p.m.

I wonder—and I am not an attorney—whether the sentences for drug trafficking in what is defined as a school compound should not be mandatory at more than six—the upper limit. And more than that: “upon conviction on indictment, to imprisonment for life.”

I would like us to consider the possibility of putting arrangements in place where drug offences—

[Noise in public gallery.]

Madam Speaker: Order!

Hon. A. Ramrekersingh: I wonder whether we can put arrangements in place where people charged with such offences can be expeditiously dealt with, whether it is a drug court, or any similar institution. When I say, “expeditiously dealt with”, I want to be careful; I am not saying that we infringe the rights of people; I am not saying we go for kangaroo trials. The law must be observed, but what we want are measures to make sure that these matters are expeditiously handled and the perpetrators receive their just reward swiftly.

I make this point for stiff sentences, bearing in mind that in normal circumstances my personal approach to punishment stresses more the preventive and the rehabilitative. But that does not mean to say that I would ignore the punitive aspect. We listened to the Member for Barataria/SanJuan on the effects of drugs; we listened to the Member for Tobago East developing the concept and discussing economic crime. Selling drugs to people—children and students in particular—in my opinion, is tantamount to murder, because the consequences are physical harm, emotional, psychological and spiritual destruction, even death! We are destroying people! Imagine that people would be involved in such activity and they are allowed to live off their ill-gotten gains! Is it a world in which “men have lost their reason” and turned to brutish beasts?

Dangerous Drugs (Amdt.) Bill
[HON. A. RAMREKERSINGH]

Friday, May 20, 1994

I want to emphasize that this particular provision, section 6(7) of the Act we should see if we could strengthen and at the same time ensure that it is enforced;

Mr. Maharaj: I wonder whether the hon. Minister would care to tell us whether he is aware that under the existing law since 1991—section 47—there was power to deal with money laundering; that there have been no prosecutions sine 1991 to the present time on money laundering. If provisions existed in the law since 1991 to the present time and there have been no prosecutions, how would this law deal with the problem or present any solution to the problem? Would he care to answer that?

Hon. A. Ramrekersingh: Madam Speaker, I am not in a position at this moment to say whether there were charges laid from 1991 to now on this. I do not deal in these matters. But the point I think he is making—and this is why I started in a particular way, that here we are faced with a problem and we need as a Parliament to seek, in the first instance, to ensure that we have adequate and appropriate measures in place, we need the resolve and the wherewithal to implement.

Mr. B. Panday: How do you ensure that? That is why we talk about the committee.

Mr. A. Ramrekersingh: Madam Speaker, in the first place, this Parliament comprising leaders of the country, must show the example. Secondly, there will be certain measures put in place to allow the protective services to deal with those who are perpetrating such offences. And, thirdly, our approach will be by our system of justice, how we deal with these things when people are arrested.

While I talk about very stiff sentences and in a sense no discretion, in many crimes—and you will know this well—crimes of passion and so on, we can say that there are mitigating circumstances. But where a person trafficks in drugs, especially to young people, I want to suggest that it is a cold, calculated act, having as its only objective, making money. I do not see mitigating circumstances in that. I see it as a cold, calculated act, and we must deal with it as a cold, calculated act, because we cannot allow our young people, our human resource, our future, to be victims of people who have only greed in their minds, who wish to make money and to prosper at the cost of human suffering.

I am a diehard democrat. But I want to say something: Democracy allows us many rights, even the right to destroy the democracy. But surely, democracy should not remain like a “bobolee” and be buffeted. Democracy must have the ability to put certain measures in place to defend itself. This is why I suspect in constitutions—

Mr. Robinson: I am sorry, Madam Speaker, but I cannot allow that statement to go unchallenged. What is the source of the Minister's statement, that democracy allows you the right to destroy democracy?

Hon. A. Ramreakersingh: Perhaps I should put it slightly differently, that some people use the democratic process, or can use it, in order to destroy democracy.

Mr. Robinson: That would be illegal. There is no right about that. That is a wrong, not a right.

Hon. A. Ramreakersingh: That is why I put it differently, that some people abuse the democratic process. Yes, it is unlawful, but I am saying because of the freedom democracy gives, people do all kinds of things.

So this is why in constitutions we cater for abnormal situations where, by special majority, we may abridge certain rights. The world is not a perfect world. So I look at it on that side. But I want to talk a little bit about the supply side.

2.35 p.m.

Quite clearly, the drug trade, or drug trafficking, cannot be dealt with by a single country; by a country on being an island unto itself. There has to be collaboration among countries. The parent legislation, as well as the amendments, anticipates that. Trinidad and Tobago is the centre for a Caribbean Financial Action Task Force, which has as its major objectives, dealing with money laundering on a regional basis, but it must go beyond the regional basis; it is something that calls for collaboration among all nations. Therefore, I am happy that we are putting the necessary amendments in place so that we can be in line with the Vienna Convention.

We are dealing with big business; we are dealing with an unlawful species of international trade. Trinidad and Tobago, by itself, cannot get rid of money laundering or drug trafficking in the world; but nations, by collaboration can, if not abolish or eliminate it—as we would like—at least reduce it considerably. Therefore, it is to be hoped that after these amendments are hopefully passed in this House, and the legislation accords with the demands of the Vienna Convention, we will do everything that is necessary to enforce it.

I take the point that Members of this House make, that there are laws, but they must be enforced. Whenever we pass legislation, and we say we seek to achieve certain objectives, we must have the resolve to implement, otherwise, in the first place, the problem becomes bigger; and in the second place, the question of credibility arises: that you say you are going to do “so-and-so” and you do not pursue it.

Dangerous Drugs (Amdt.) Bill
[HON. A. RAMREKDEERSINGH]

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This is why I want to see these amendments, not as something merely emanating from this side of the House; I invite all of us to show—and this is why I referred to the contributions by Members on the other side—that we are committed to dealing with drug trafficking; that we are committed to dealing with money laundering; that we are determined because we are supposed—we may not always be—to be exemplars and we should show the rest of the country that we are determined that that old adage “Crime does not pay” must once more appear to be true.

I invite Members on the other side; yes, on this particular issue we may have some small differences of opinion, but let us not allow these small differences to be so inflated that we miss the opportunity to strengthen our laws to deal with a menace which, if left unhandled and untouched, can not only subvert the foundations of our society, but can, in fact, destroy our society, if not physically, certainly morally and spiritually. I call upon the Members on the other side to rise above any small differences and give the state the legal mechanisms to deal with drug trafficking and money laundering.

I close by repeating something I said earlier: I should like to see us give serious consideration to very stiff sentences to people involved in drug trafficking or selling drugs to young people. In particular, I am interested in subsection 7(b) of section 6 which says:

“upon conviction on indictment to imprisonment for life”

I want us to look and see what mechanisms are necessary to expedite this. I repeat that, because, yes, we deal with money laundering—we deal with all kinds of things—but we must deal with the trafficking too, and especially among the most vulnerable parts of our population.

There can be no compromise. We are dealing with something that is evil, and evil will triumph only if men of goodwill do nothing. So, I urge adequate mechanisms and resolute enforcement.

Mr. Maharaj: Madam Speaker, before the Minister takes his seat, would he be prepared to support the Opposition for the law to be amended for “life sentence” to mean “life sentence”?

Mr. Manning: Yes.

Mr. Valley: Yes.

Hon. A. Ramrekersingh: Madam Speaker, I think the hon. Member got his answer in a chorus because there was discussion among us earlier about what is the meaning of “life sentence”, whether it is the natural life of the person or a specified period. We do not have a problem with that.

Mr. Trevor Sudama (*Oropouche*): Madam Speaker, I rise to make a small contribution on this very significant—

Dr. Rowley: That would be the day!

Mr. T. Sudama: Madam Speaker, as has been said in this House, things to say about you later on in this debate.

Mr. Valley: Any time!

Mr. T. Sudama: We ought to show example by how we behave in Government.

This Bill touches on a problem, as has been mentioned before, perhaps, one of the most critical issues which face this society. We are dealing with a problem which is multifaceted; we are dealing with a problem which threatens to get out of hand and, in fact, to submerge civilized society as we know it. We are dealing with a problem which threatens the very moral fibre of the society.

We have not come here to score political points.

[Dr. Rowley whistles]

We have come here to look at this matter, and as I proceed in my contribution, Madam Speaker, you will understand that we have come here to deal incisively with this problem as truthfully as possible—

Mr. Maharaj: On a point of information. Are we entitled to whistle? Did it come from a keskidee or a corbeau?

2.45 p.m.

Mr. T. Sudama: Madam Speaker, I am trying to adopt a serious approach to this problem, and there is talk on the other side, about corbeau and whistling—all this foolishness.

Madam Speaker: We are debating a very serious Bill. I am trying to follow the debate. Let us continue.

Mr. T. Sudama: It betrays the attitude of the Government, towards any crisis in the society, and the Prime Minister tells me that there are children in the audience. Maybe, he should tell himself that, and the Members of his Government. They should be told that by their example and by their fruits we shall know them. The children see the behaviour of a Cabinet, Members of a Government, dealing with one of the most critical issues which this society faces at this time. And what is the attitude? Flippancy, total indifference!

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As I said, this problem is multifaceted, and it is an amalgam of two very debilitating sequences in our society. On the one hand there is corruption, and closely allied to that is the brutal violence.

As we debate this Bill—I was reading a novel recently, and one of the characters picked up a stone on the side of the road, and written on it were these words: “Turn me over and read”. So he picked it up and looked on the other side and there was written on the other side: “Why do you seek more knowledge when you pay no heed to what you know already?”

Why do they seek additional laws when there is absolutely no intention to implement existing laws? What? So this debate is not grounded in the reality of our existence in Trinidad and Tobago. We are merely trying to propagandize an issue, to give the impression that something is being done, that we are passing laws but, laws by themselves are not effective measures.

The Member for St. Joseph expressed his concern about the enormity of the problem, with which we all concur. All they are doing on that side is expressing their concerns, false or otherwise. There are concerns about crime; there are concerns about the unemployment situation, and the fact that people cannot get food, so there are soup kitchens. There are concerns about water being cut off while the Prime Minister is in the middle of his bath and is all covered in soap.

The prime Minister goes on the platform to say he is concerned about the inadequacy of the water supply, but mentions no action to relieve the distress and suffering of the population. No measures are in place to deal effectively with the unemployment problem.

All that is coming from the other side are expressions of concern and expressions of helplessness, and they turn around and say that this is the greatest Government Trinidad and Tobago ever had. When one looks at their performance in Government one sees utter uselessness, deception and betrayal of promises made not too long ago.

We have had the Dangerous Drugs Act of 1991. In certain respects, perhaps, a little deficient. What have they done to implement those measures? Where have they failed? What actions have they taken, and what are the deficiencies they have encountered as a result of those actions? If they could get up in this honourable House and make any claim to any serious attempt at prosecution or implementing the provisions of the Dangerous Drugs Act of 1991, if they could do that then that would be a revelation to this society.

We come here and there are protestations of resolve on the other side, but there is no resolve at all; nothing concrete to show for their protestations. What guarantees do we have that when and if we give approval to this measure there will be prosecutions for money laundering, drug trafficking; there will be prosecutions and confiscation of property, forfeiture of estates, implementation of extradition orders?

We talked about this measure having to do with precursor chemicals.

“...the offence of possessing, manufacturing, transporting or distributing precursor chemicals, knowing that they are to be used for the illicit cultivation or manufacture of narcotic drugs...”

To date, has there been any attempt at prosecution in this regard?

Then there is talk about money laundering; we understand the complexity of the problem of money laundering.

Mr. Imbert: We have no law so how are we going to prosecute?

Mr. T. Sudama: You have no law about precursor chemicals?

Mr. Imbert: No.

Mr. T. Sudama: Do you have laws about money laundering?

Mr. Imbert: There is a loophole.

Mr. T. Sudama: There is a loophole. This whole Government is a loophole! The whole bunch of you here! What have you done about money laundering? There is the question of the operation of banks. Is there any supervision with respect to money laundering of the operation of banks in place today? Is there any effective monitoring, and if so, where is the evidence?

2.55 p.m.

As I said previously in this House, one aspect of money laundering that is now coming into prominence is that money launderers are themselves the bankers to so-called legitimate businesses and are financing so-called legitimate businesses in whatever sphere, whether it is in commerce, industry or in services. And the scale on which that is occurring today should alert the Government to the fact that something is amiss.

If the Government is talking about money laundering and there are no procedures and processes to monitor the banks and their operations, and there are no procedures to look at the access to financing of so-called legitimate businesses, then even in your own backyard, you are not even attempting to deal with this

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problem of money laundering. Yet you are passing laws which say that there must be greater penalties to be visited on money launderers.

We are told that the Bill is to insert new provisions for offences on the high seas, when we cannot even have an operational boat here to patrol our coastline to catch persons engaged in the illicit drug trade. "High seas," I take it means in the middle of the ocean.

This legislation that offenders caught on the high seas will be treated in the same manner as offenders caught on land, seems to have an air of unreality about it, and to facilitate their capture, so-called enforcement officers have been given special powers. On land they have powers and they cannot catch anyone; they want to catch them on the high seas?

There is a whole issue of the enforceability of the extradition provisions. While we debate and look at all these nice sounding objectives that are presented in this Bill, I want to talk about the one which says that the Government is removing impediments to effective prosecution of drug offenders. My submission to this House is that the whole Government is an impediment to the effective prosecution of drug offenders and other criminals in the society.

As I said in a previous debate, by their actions, involvements and transactions, the impression is given that this Government is compromised at its very highest level when it comes to drug trafficking in Trinidad and Tobago. It is bringing a Bill to remove impediments when that itself constitutes the impediments. Maybe, we should bring a Bill for the removal of the Government and, therefore, remove the ultimate impediments to the effective prosecution of drug barons.

The Member for St. Joseph spoke about exemplars. He said that we in this House, as leaders in the society, ought to be exemplars, and I agree with him. All of our transactions should be open to the public. Our lives should be open books if we are to be exemplars. So that when there is a situation where a minister of Government transfers his motor car to a known drug dealer, according to the Certificate of Transfer, that is something which ought to be investigated and brought to the attention of the public. Because one cannot say one is an exemplar on the one hand and on the other hand trafficking with a known drug baron. What kind of exemplar are you? If he wants to be an exemplar, he should declare his assets.

I want to tell this House that a few years ago my integrity was attacked by a very shady character in South Trinidad. On that occasion I declared my assets publicly in December, 1990. Do you want to be exemplars and show that you are above board and that whatever you do can bear scrutiny? Declare your assets.

“Sudama Declares His Assets”, *Guardian*, December 28, 1990. “I have nothing to hide.”

Hon. Member: He has nothing to hide. He has nothing—period.

Mr. T. Sudama: In the *Express* of December 29, 1990, “I have nothing to hide” in bold headlines, and listed in there were all the assets, all the property owned by me. So that, if they want to be exemplars, then they should be exemplars in the fullest sense of the term. All of your life and whatever you do when you get into public life ought to be subject to scrutiny. I believe that apart from Dr. Williams, I am the only person in public life who seems to have taken this route. You cannot be a greater exemplar than to put your life, your assets and your work before the public. So that, when we are talking about exemplars, we must act upon it.

Madam Speaker: Does not the Integrity Commission require that of us?

Mr. T. Sudama: That is private, that is not a public declaration. I am asking the prime Minister to make a public declaration about that house in Sumadh Gardens.

Mr. Manning: I have no problem, Madam Speaker. In fact, in addressing my constituency recently, I gave them all the details of whatever little assets my wife and I own. I am prepared to do so publicly, but I would like to find out from the hon. Member for oropouche, whether he would guarantee that the Member for Couva South would do the same.

Mr. T. Sudama: The Member for San Fernando East speaks for himself, the Member for Couva South speaks for himself, and I speak for myself. Since this has become public, I do not know of any townhouse in Sumadh Gardens which sells for \$240,000. The market value of it is \$240,000? There is none. The fact that he can buy one, as he claims, is something for public scrutiny, to put up for investigation.

Mr. B. Panday: Ramgoolie should say why the deed is not registered.

Mr. T. Sudama: And they talk about exemplars!

3.05 p.m.

Madam Speaker, we are on the Dangerous Drugs (Amdt.) Bill. I am responding to issues raised by the Member for St. Joseph, that we in this House ought to be exemplars, and I am giving examples of what it takes to be an exemplar. I challenge them to do that and if there is a public inquiry, we would find out about the sources of some of that money.

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Impediments to effective prosecution. The impression given to people outside is that this Government is taking no action. A Government of inertia and inaction. A Government of indifference towards the drug and crime problem in our country. My authority is none other than the Ambassador of the United States to Trinidad and Tobago. Someone who is a close adviser to the Prime Minister, someone who is sympathetic to the Prime Minister and who is supportive of the PNM Government. Here is what she had to say in the *Express* of February 24, 1994; and we are talking about impediments to the effective prosecution of crime.

“The current crime situation, and the perception that it is spiraling out of control, can severely damage this country’s economic plans.”

You did not need the Ambassador of the United States to come here to tell you that; we have been telling you that day after day in this Parliament, but maybe now that she has said so, you will take some heed.

“Cowan said investors, whether foreign or domestic, will not put money into countries where they perceive a threat to their own physical security and to the security of their property and capital.”

whether it is drug trafficking, crimes of drug trafficking or otherwise—

“She said, ‘Nowadays, I am told, the crime rate is the first thing potential investors ask about; only secondarily do they inquire about fiscal and monetary policy.’”

only secondarily.

When the Minister of Finance got up in the budget debate and talked about monetary and fiscal policy and how they are putting things in place, he should have also addressed the question of crime, which takes priority. Here is a Minister and a Government so bankrupt of ideas that in the 1994 Budget debate, do you know what they said? That the energy sector and investment in the energy sector cannot deal with the unemployment problem. Do you know how we will deal with the unemployment problem? By expansion of tourism. Tourism now is the great saviour that will come to solve our unemployment problems.

A few days ago two tourists were brutally murdered—and I want to emphasize this—regardless of the circumstances, whether they were involved in drugs or were allegedly involved in drug trafficking or whatever, the headline in the foreign press was, “Tourists brutally murdered in Trinidad and Tobago.”

Hon. Member: Which newspaper?

Mr. T. Sudama: It was there in Miami. My brother called from Miami stating that in Canada there is this perception that Trinidad is not only a drug haven, but is a place where tourists will be callously and brutally murdered. And the Government comes here today to talk about tourist trade, and the expansion of tourist trade, and that the tourist trade is going to solve our economic and unemployment problems. As I said, either they have their heads in the sand or up in the air, to come here to talk about tourism solving our problems. To continue:

“Cowal explained that crime was an emotional issue... ‘It is not just the actual frequency of violent criminal acts measured against the size of the total population. It is also the flagrancy and sheer horror of the nature of many of those crimes;...’”

We have been told in this House that a significant portion of the crimes is related to the illicit drug trade, drug trafficking and money laundering and so forth.

“...the long delays between arrest and eventual prosecution; and equally long delays between prosecution and conviction; and the manner in which the pages of the local newspapers are drenched with the goriest details of the most outrageous of these crimes. These things add up to a perception of a situation that is out of control.”

And that is the point. We are passing laws for effective prosecution. We are passing laws to remove impediments and yet the perception there, inside and outside Trinidad and Tobago, is that things have gone out of control in this country.

“The danger is not just that investors will be put off by the level and nature of crime in this country, although that is serious enough. It is that they may also conclude that the Government, the police and the courts are all pointing their fingers at each other, rather than working together on a common problem.”

How are they addressing that? By bringing a Bill here to strengthen measures, to make more provisions and perhaps to put in place stiffer penalties? Yet in terms of implementation and doing something effective, they are totally deficient.

Ambassador Cowal talked about someone who changed his mind:

“...a businessman who had planned to invest a substantial sum of money in this country, and because of the levels of crime and violence here, became nervous and took his money elsewhere. ‘You can imagine my astonishment when I learned he decided to take his money to Jamaica instead. I pointed out

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that the crime rate was even worse in Jamaica. Yes, he said, but in Jamaica I have the feeling that positive steps are being taken to bring the situation under control.”

And he does not have that feeling or impression about the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. *[Interruption]* The Bill, do something man, do not talk about Bill! Do something with the existing laws you have!

“But, she said, she found it puzzling...”—

and we are talking about impediments to effective prosecution.

“that all the controversy...”

Regarding the police and the upsurge in crime—

“revolved around a proposal to change the way in which the Police Service was disciplined.”

That is their grand proposal.

“She said that though important, discipline was only a minor aspect of the problem and there were many other important factors, including leadership, training, organization, recruitment, equipment, and maintenance.”

We have said that a hundred times in this House. The Ambassador of the United States says the very same thing. But they go out every night to castigate the Opposition as not wanting to support them on the question of crime and the reorganization of the police service, when it is being said here that that is only a minor part of the problem that we face in Trinidad and Tobago—not that discipline is not important; it is important.

3.15 p.m.

Another impediment to which this Government is paying no heed about, is the manner in which the problems of the police service have been addressed—the question of drug trafficking, and the incidence of involvement of the police at all levels in drug trafficking and the protection of drug barons. Merely for the record, I quote again from the final report for the Government on the Scotland Yard Investigation. The Government has had this—this is dated July 1993—almost a year has gone; these are some of the issues that the Scotland Yard officials reported on after their investigation.

“Three of Murray’s allegations have not been completely investigated, and they have been passed on to the local team. They have considerable substance and relate to two very senior officers. They all have a drug connection.”

The Government is passing laws, yet impediments in the police service are not being addressed.

“Two of Murray’s allegations have resulted in reports being submitted which call into question the action of officers. One related to a senior officer, the other a junior officer. The former has an indirect drug connection.

Whatever final opinion is made about the worth or otherwise of the specific allegations made by Rodwell Murray, what he said contained two basic truths. The first was that corruption exists throughout the ranks of the police service.”

to which, I might add, the Government turns a blind eye—

“The second more specific point was that there exists in the police service a clique of corrupt officers who protect drug dealers by the misuse of the discipline and transfer system. Clear evidence of this point was obtained. All four had started to obtain good information about one of the top drug dealers. All four were then suddenly removed from drug investigation.

What does exist is a hard core of corrupt officers who will do anything to get money for themselves regardless of the consequences for others. One method of obtaining money is to provide protection for those engaged in the drug trade. This is where the drug ‘connection’ exists. What emerged was that the same names kept appearing time and time again as being involved in major corrupt practices.”

We ask the question: What is being done? And in fact, not even a minimal step such as identifying these officers and transferring them out of positions of any authority—put them on ice so to speak, until such time—has been taken.

Mr. Sobion: Who does the transferring?

Mr. T. Sudama: Who recommends the transfer? Do the Permanent Secretary and the Minister have any involvement in the recommendation of transfers?

Mr. Sobion: The answer is no.

Mr. T. Sudama: And that would be brought to light, surely, about your involvement. Who appoints the Police Service Commission?

“Corruption in the police service can be described as endemic. It permeates all ranks.”

Finally, I want to note:

“Near the top in this progression is taking money to look the other way, to protect illegitimate enterprises from police interference, and to take action

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against rival enterprises. The protection of the banking turfs is part of this level of corruption, but it also includes the protection of drug dealers, their supplies, and their supply routes. This is where the corrupt core of the police service gets its money.

At the top is direct participation in crime or, more specifically, drug racketeering.”

A Government is in power, it is one year since this report has been issued and we ask the question again: What has been done?

“Some evidence and some good intelligence suggests that police officers have been involved in the importation of cocaine, in growing marijuana, in transporting drugs, and selling them on.”

This is an official investigation, an official drug report.

So if we are talking about impediments to effective prosecution of drug offenders, there are other areas to be looked at, as against merely passing law, which, on the basis of evidence, will never get implemented. The police have to charge somebody in order to implement those laws.

Mr. Sobion: No, you have to implement the laws in order to charge somebody.

Mr. T. Sudama: Let us look at the existing Dangerous Drugs Act, 1991. Is the Minister saying that under that Act the Government has no power whatsoever to charge anybody? If the Government is presiding over this corruption in the police service, how is it ever going to get prosecution in this country? That is not the way to get prosecution.

This is a gross indictment against the Government’s attitude to the drug problem and crime situation. And the Government talks about performance: “We are getting the job done.” Brutal crime is escalating but the Government is getting the job done!

I want to look at this problem from the demand side that was mentioned by the Member for St. Joseph. I would have expected the Member to give this country some detail of how the demand side of the problem was being addressed through the education system; what specific programmes were in place in the primary and secondary school system or in institutions of higher education. What

programmes are there to assess and alert the primary school students? There are instances of drug dealers going to primary schools to push their drugs. If that situation exists, then the question of the security—

Mr. B. Panday: And this Minister of Education cannot prevent it.

Mr. T. Sudama: —of primary school students on the compounds of primary schools is one that has to be addressed. Also, the alerting of teachers and students, at least in the higher classes of the primary school as well as the secondary school, of the dangers and the risks. The Member for St. Joseph has said nothing about that. I thought the Minister's major contribution would have been on that aspect, but he went on to talk about money laundering, an area in which he has very little expertise. I expected him to deal with the demand side.

Mr. Ramrekersingh: Madam Speaker, I want to agree fully with the hon. Member for Oropouche, but to make one amendment: I have no expertise in money laundering because I have never been involved.

Mr. T. Sudama: Madam Speaker, one does not have to be involved in something to have expertise in it—one has to read to know. One has to be involved in legal and forensic work and so forth to have expertise; the Minister has none but his entire contribution was on money laundering. He had nothing to say about what was being done for the school children to shield them from this insidious problem. *[Interruption]* These amendments have nothing to do with school children; the provisions in the Bill are about the demand side, how to prevent the consumption of the drug, prevent people from getting involved in it.

On the supply side the Government admits that it can do nothing about it. There is little police enforcement, they cannot stop the drugs from coming in. This country is a transshipment centre and cannot get help from other people who are offering help to deal with the drug problem. On the supply side there is an admission that the Government is not doing anything, it is incapable of doing anything; but surely on the demand side the Government ought to have greater control of the situation. We have heard about no programme with respect to what the Government proposes to do about the school-age population.

3.25 p.m.

Mr. Ramrekersingh: Madam Speaker, I want to assure the hon. Member that there are programmes not only by the Ministry of Education, but also in conjunction with the Ministries of Social Development, Community Development and so forth. On other occasions I have dealt with that.

Mr. T. Sudama: Madam Speaker, this is a serious issue. We have been hearing in this House about the complexity of the drug problem, and the inability of small governments—even large ones—to do anything effective about it. Utter helplessness on the part of the Government! Inability to do anything about the police! Total disability of the whole Government! If that is the scenario on one side, let us concentrate on the demand side.

Rehabilitative measures, as the Member for Barataria/San Juan has said in this House, are necessary but very costly. It is better that people do not get into the habit rather than when they get into it—while there should be rehabilitative measures in place—for it is difficult and costly for them to get completely out of their addiction. We understand that.

Recreational facilities for youths in this country. I have been making representation after representation for additional recreational facilities. Also, the diversion of funds so that young people in their spare time would be involved in healthy activity and, therefore, that might be a preventive measure as far as their getting involved in the consumption of drugs is concerned. Nothing! No action has been taken! The security of schools and programmes for the schools—we have spoken about that.

There are three areas of influence for the youths in the society; one is the home. How do we deal with educating adults—parents and so forth—and getting them fully alert to the seriousness of this problem? How do we give them guidance as regards their relationship with their children? That is where the comprehensiveness of the programmes come in—the multifaceted nature of an approach to a solution comes in—rather than passing laws which will never be implemented, imposing heavier fines—nobody gets caught and the problem escalates.

What transpires at the schools? We have heard time and again that discipline has broken down in many of our schools, and that particularly at the secondary level, the insidious practice of drug consumption has taken root in very many schools. That is associated with the criminal behaviour of so many young people. Therefore, we ought to take a serious look at our school system—what goes on in there. The capacity of our teachers. Their own example. Their capacity to talk about the drug problem and to try to wean away students from any kind of inclination to get involved in drugs. These are long-term solutions but we have got to start somewhere and we have got to start now.

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. Pakackdharrysingh*]

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. T. Sudama: Madam Speaker, I have talked about the influence of the home, the influence of the school and the influence of the community. The influence of the community on young people and those inclined to get involved in drug consumption. Community awareness, healthy community activity, the promotion of local government activity at the community level, village councils and involvement of young people in the drug trade. While we think that these are not emotional issues, directly a member of our family gets addicted to drugs we understand the enormity of the problem. It has happened at all levels of the society. At all ranks we are seeing families being destroyed; not only individuals.

If this is such a critical problem then I think the Government ought to become a bit serious. The Members opposite cannot do anything serious for the Member for Ortoire/Mayaro, not even when his constituents come up here to demonstrate against him about his absence from the constituency. They cannot get water! Nothing is serious to him! When his campaign is financed by a drug dealer, how could drug trafficking be of any consequence to him?

Hon. Member: —on the platform.

Mr. T. Sudama: I said that in Rio Claro in the local government elections campaign.

Hon. Member: That is the last time you spoke.

Mr. Sobion: Total disregard—

Mr. T. Sudama: “Elephant Walk” financed his campaign in Ortoire/Mayaro. How could he be talking here about example?

Madam Speaker: Senior Member of Parliament, please continue with the debate.

Mr. T. Sudama: Madam Speaker, I was merely responding to the Member for Ortoire/Mayaro. He is the Attorney General! He is bringing laws here for the effective prosecution of drug barons when his campaign is financed—you see the utter hypocrisy of this Government, utter hypocrisy of these people; total contempt for any standard of civilized public life.

You think that you would go out there and “mamaguy” this population, give rum and roti and they will vote you back? We shall see what we shall see! One thing is certain: that majority has gone one by one—possibly two by two. Rum and roti politics and making all kinds of promises and bravado and so forth: how they are performing; they are getting the job done. The job they are getting done

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is the million dollar question this country has to answer. What job is getting done by this Government?

The other area of concern to me and Members of this side is the influence of the media with respect to the escalating drug trade, violence as regards drugs and so forth. It has been generally known that the excessive violence on television has an impact on young impressionable minds. The media in this country are mindless of their responsibilities—

Hon. Member: No!

Mr. T. Sudama: —to the society at large; supportive of the Government in whatever they do—

Madam Speaker: The Member—

Mr. T. Sudama: I am talking about the role of the media as a preventive mechanism in drug trafficking and drug consumption.

3.35 p.m.

If you pick up a newspaper you see all sorts of trash and irrelevance in about 50 pages; and if you ask them to print something about a problem in your own pages; and if you ask them to print something about a problem in your own constituency, no way is that getting printed. No way! The electronic media import all these programmes—many of them violent and dealing with crimes related to drugs and show them on the television screen. We are getting all sorts of channels here today, and one cannot restrict people's freedom to look at whatever they want, but there are consequences to this. What is this doing to the impressionable minds of our young people?

This is something that is generally known and has been studied in the United Kingdom, and certain conclusions have been reached with regard to the effect of crime and violence shown—the effect on lifestyles with respect to the drug trade—on television, and the consequent influence it has on young people to get involved in drug trafficking or illicit drug consumption.

When we look at the whole gamut of measures that need to be addressed by a concerned government—not merely the passing of laws—we see that there is a very difficult problem on our hands in dealing with this drug issue; and I would not stand here to deny the complexity and the critical nature of the problem and the intensity with which it is affecting society at all levels in our country. But while I acknowledge that, I also have to acknowledge the inability and indifference of the Government to do something, even to put initial steps in place

to try to curb in the short, medium, or long-term this insidious menace affecting our society.

When one looks at the example being set by Members of the Government when it comes to the issues of drug trafficking, money laundering, sale of motor cars and houses and so forth, one sees that there is mass despair as to whether this Government, will take even those first faltering steps to attempt to deal with the problem. When we look at how it deals with the police service, the whole style of government, and the attitude of the Prime Minister who, in order to show example, said yes, there was a problem—he gave some explanation to this House, but it held no water for the public at large. He should have said: yes, let us set up a commission of inquiry to investigate the circumstances in which my motor car was transferred to a known drug dealer.

If this were the United States, the Department of Justice, independent of the President, would have set up a commission of inquiry once that fact was known. But the fact that the Prime Minister is not willing to do that indicates to the population that he has something to hide and, therefore, if he has something to hide—and that is the impression people get on the outside—he is selling a house which, eventually, ends up, I understand, in the hands of the front man for a drug dealer.

Mr. Manning: What? [*Mr. Manning begins to rise*] Okay, all right, Madam Speaker, leave it. [*Sits down*] That is irresponsible!

Mr. B. Panday: Daniel Manickchand.

Mr. T. Sudama: But these things are what people are saying on the outside.

Dr. Rowley: What you are saying—not people on the outside!

Mr. T. Sudama: If he wants to clear his name and say how much above board he is and that his integrity is at stake, let us find out the truth. How will we do that unless he sets up an independent commission of inquiry? Look at the examples being set elsewhere. In Venezuela the former president—what is his name? [*Interruption*] Carlos Andres Perez. Do you know what happened to him? He was arrested and put in jail on charges of corruption. In other words [*Interruption*] we are talking about a political culture.

Mr. Sobion: Take the evidence to the police.

Mr. T. Sudama: It is the same kind of political culture where they do not touch people in high office—

Mr. Valley: Nonsense! Sit down if you have nothing to say.

Mr. T. Sudama: —therefore there is a bank willing to grant debt forgiveness to a person in high office—acting Prime Minister. We are talking about a serious problem of the political culture where people defer to those in authority, regardless of any wrongdoing they may commit.

Mr. Sobion: You are an embarrassment!

Mr. T. Sudama: They do not want to face the truth. You see, the question of drugs has to do with standards in public life; and if anyone is tainted in another practicing democracy, there would be investigations, but not in Trinidad and Tobago. They could be dealing with drug lords and so forth, it does not matter here. The Prime Minister gives an explanation which nobody believes, and they feel that is the end of the matter.

Part of the problem why effective action cannot be taken is the Government and its attitude to governing. The Minister, Member for St. Joseph, talks about providing more serious penalties and so forth. Penalties to be applied to whom I ask. There is the situation where existing laws are not being implemented, but there is this great boast that they want stronger measures to serve as a deterrent. Merely on the books. Part of the problem with crime in our country is that the people involved in criminal activity do not fear prosecution.

They know that they will not be caught and, therefore, not prosecuted; so they go out there and engage in their criminal activity with impunity. That is part of our problem! What difference would it make that you have the death penalty, or life sentences if you do not catch anybody, or charge anybody to bring him under these laws? What difference does it make? They are just a joke of a government. They are an embarrassment as a government, the worst we have ever had in the history of this country.

Here they are coming to pass legislation—not as we have said, we are opposed to measures being passed, but, let us look at the reality—we are passing a measure, nothing has been implemented; there is no hope in hell that something may be implemented effectively, and we ask the reasons why.

Mr. Manning: Do you support the Bill, or not?

Mr. T. Sudama: The Leader of the Opposition has stated that our support of this Bill will have to depend on whether the Prime Minister and Member for San Fernando East is willing to set up an inquiry, I believe—

Mr. B. Panday: And a committee.

Mr. T. Sudama: —and a committee of Parliament. An inquiry into the sale of his motor car to a known drug dealer and a committee of Parliament to monitor the implementation of this and other Bills relating to the question of drug trafficking, drug abuse and money laundering in Trinidad and Tobago. And we say we are all for dealing effectively with the problem. What we know and recognize is that we do not have an effective Government in power. We have a joke for a government.

Therefore we are very skeptical that, even if this measure is passed, anything effective will be done, and that we will be anywhere nearer dealing with the problem of drug trafficking, money laundering and crimes associated with drugs in Trinidad and Tobago.

3.45 p.m.

Madam Speaker, this is our position. This remains our position. I am sure the country supports us in this position that we have taken, that it is more important for them to show example, for the Prime Minister to show example than merely to pass laws which may not be implemented.

Thank you very much, madam Speaker.

The Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources (Dr. The Hon. Keith Rowley): Madam Speaker, I rise to make a short intervention in this debate to support the measure before the House, which is a Bill meant to put Trinidad and Tobago as a country in a position to join the rest of the international community in dealing with certain aspects of the drug trade.

It is not warranted for any Member of the House to spend any significant portion of time seeking to convince anyone that this measure would be a panacea for the drug menace. We know that it is not. But the nature of the problem is such that a variety of efforts in a variety of areas under a variety of circumstances are all required to deal with the single all-embracing menace of the drug trade.

This measure before the House is a second attempt by this country to do something which we agree we must do. We agree that we must ratify that convention and the benefits of its ratification have been outlined by my colleague the Minister of National Security, so there is no debate on that. Yes; we agree that we should ratify it.

A previous administration also had that position and brought before the House the necessary legislative framework to allow the country to accede. However, it was discovered that there were certain shortcomings in that legislation, and

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therefore, all that is required to be done in the face of the agreement that we had a people and as a Parliament, is to rectify those shortcomings and proceed to ratify the international convention. That, in a nutshell is the matter before the House.

It is unfortunate that Members on the other side have indicated that they will find some way, regardless of what that way is, to excuse their action of not supporting the measure.

Mr. B. Panday: We did not say that! We did not say that at all!

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: That would be unfortunate for the people of Trinidad and Tobago, because notwithstanding all that has been said, what is clear to us at this point in the debate is that the other side is looking for an excuse not to provide the votes required to have this measure passed in this House so as to allow Trinidad and Tobago to accede to the convention.

Madam Speaker, that is—

Mr. Robinson: Madam Speaker, when the Minister says the other side, may I ask him to exempt the representatives from Tobago from what he says.

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Tobago East for making that intervention.

Madam Speaker: The Member for Tobago East has indicated that in his contribution.

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, I humbly apologize to the Member for Tobago East and I thank him for the intervention and from here on when I speak of the other side, I speak of the others on the other side.

Mr. Mohammed: What do you mean by that—others on the other side?

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: What do I mean by that? I mean those who have agreed to the extent where, in the other place, they have supported the measure, but in this House have new terms and conditions which have nothing to do with the provisions in the Bill. Because to date I have not heard any objections to any provision in the Bill. I have heard cynical statements as to whether or not the Government will implement, and so forth.

I cannot argue with that. One can be cynical. One can be suspicious of actions but the fact is, the substance of the Bill, what we are trying to do, what we ought to do, what we agree ought to be done, I have not heard any objecting voice on that.

Mr. Robinson: Madam Speaker, lest the Minister misunderstand me, let me make it clear, whatever reasons he is attributing for action, to whomever they may apply to the Members from Tobago. Let me make it clear that my position is that I support the need for an investigation into the matter which is before us, which has arisen since the passing of the original legislation and which involves the chief executive of this country. I support the need for an investigation.

Mr. Mohammed: There is a motion on the Order Paper.

Mr. B. Panday: Withdraw your comment!

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, I am grateful for that intervention, too, because I am going to demonstrate at this point that it is all just a bunch of hypocritical excuse making. The Member for Tobago East more than anyone else should understand what I am talking about.

The argument is that the ex-Minister of Trade, who is now the Prime Minister of this country, had a motor vehicle. He sold it to a dealer.

Mr. Robinson: Madam Speaker, may I—

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, I am not giving way at this point! I have given way twice!

Mr. Robinson: On a point of order.

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, I am not giving way!

Madam Speaker: The Member is not giving way!

Mr. Robinson: On a point of order. I raised no such matter.

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: I am not speaking to you!

Mr. Robinson: The Member is anticipating a matter which is to come before this House next week. On a point of order, he is not to do that.

Madam Speaker: The matter was raised by the Member for Couva North for enquiry. I think this is what he is replying to. Proceed.

Mr. Robinson: In any event, it was out of order then. It is out of order now.

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: Well, sit down! You did not object then!

Madam Speaker, I have a copy of the contribution of my Friend the Member for Couva North. Recently, I listened to the Member for Oropouche and in both

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instances they introduced into the debate a specific action, identifying the Prime Minister and Member for San Fernando East. I am now responding to that.

Mr. Robinson: Madam Speaker, may I be permitted to reply? If the hon. Minister refers to me in this debate specifically on a matter which I did not raise, may I be permitted to reply?

Madam Speaker: With the greatest respect to the hon. Member for Tobago East, the Member for Diego Martin West is saying that he is replying to certain allegations and references made by the Member for Couva North and the Member for Tobago East. I imagine he is going to stick to that in his contribution.

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, the gist of the matter is that the condition being laid down for support of the Bill, which I get the impression we have agreed ought to be assented to as a signatory to the convention—a condition in applied to the support of that Bill. And the condition is that certain actions have—taken place between the Prime Minister and an alleged drug dealer and unless there is an enquiry into that, those on the other side who have spoken from the majority Opposition will not support the measure. I want to address the condition being laid down by simply asking this question: Are there two standards in Trinidad and Tobago, one for the PNM and one for the rest of the country?

Permit me to demonstrate my concern about the double standards and the hypocrisy of Members on the other side by reading into *Hansard* from the *TnT Mirror* of Friday, December 7, 1990. Madam Speaker, I crave your indulgence to read copiously from this article, which to date has not had a rebuttal from an individual or an institution.

3.55 p.m.

The article goes as follows:

“Herbie Atwell explains controversial party funds:

NAR Party Chairman, Herbert Atwell, has said that Clive Pantin was only following instructions when he deposited a million dollars in cheques from an alleged international drug trafficker into his personal bank account.”

Madam Speaker, in case you do not know who Clive Pantin is or was, he was the vice-chairman of the party that stood in government at that time and the Minister of Education, who had only recently resigned to contest the bye-election. The statements I am quoting here, which have not been refuted, come from the

chairman of the party that formed the government and that chairman was a Minister of the government headed by the Member for Tobago East.

Mr. Robinson: May I ask whether the Members of his party who were in Opposition, moved any motion—

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, the Members of the Opposition at the time did what we had to do: we took it to the people of Trinidad and Tobago, to the people of Diego Martin Central, and they dealt with Clive Pantin. *[Interruption]*

Madam Speaker, I crave your protection—

Madam Speaker: Order, please! Continue with your contribution.

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, I crave your protection from the Member for Tobago East. I am simply responding to the position of principle taken by those who spoke on the other side demanding an enquiry into a matter, in lieu of which, if they do not get it, they will not support a Bill to put this country in a position—

Mr. Robinson: Madam Speaker, on a point of order.

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: What is wrong with you?

Mr. Robinson: May I point out that he is in a position to investigate anything he wants to investigate because he is in the Government.

Madam Speaker: That is not a point of order. Please continue with your contribution. Senior parliamentarians must know what is a point of order!

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, let me start over, since I was disturbed. The *Mirror* stated:

“NAR Party Chairman, Herbert Atwell, has said that Clive Pantin was only following instructions when he deposited a million dollars in cheques from an alleged international drug trafficker into his personal bank account.

The Chairman made these bold statements to some of the party faithful at a meeting at the NAR Diego Martin Central constituency headquarters Tuesday night.

He told NAR activists that the meeting was called partly to tell them how to answer specific questions that had been cropping up...

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The cheques were donated to the NAR for its 1986 election campaign, by a man who was almost extradited to London to face drug trafficking charges there...”

Madam Speaker, this is the chairman of the party—

Hon. Member: And who was the political leader?

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: The party which had a political leader who is spending the evening interrupting me. The speaker, as chairman, was also a member of the Cabinet and a Minister of National Security of Trinidad and Tobago. He is saying that the cheques were donated to the NAR for its 1986 election campaign by a man who was almost extradited to London to face drug trafficking charges there. It goes on:

“ ‘...to put them into his personal (bank) account’, Atwell said,

‘And, being the good and faithful servant he is, he obeyed instructions.

We authorized Clive to put the cheques into his account, and his account was properly taken care of.

He disbursed the funds when they were required with integrity.

I, as Party Chairman, knew about the cheques,’ Atwell said.”

He went on:

“...you must understand, ladies and gentlemen, that certain monies cannot be put into certain (bank) accounts for certain reasons.

Clive spoke and kept on speaking to certain people, and he put the money into his personal account.’

Atwell made no bones about the fact that the NAR took the million dollars from the alleged drug trafficker.

But he made no attempts to explain why the NAR accepted the donation, knowing the questionable nature of the source of the funds.

His statements indicated that the party hierarchy knew that questions could have risen about the source of the funds, hence its decision to have the cheques put into a personal account, rather than the party account.”

I end the quotation there. If I go down the party hierarchy then it would be Atwell, who was the chairman of the party and he got instructions. In a

hierarchical arrangement in a political party you have the political leader, the chairman, vice chairman, and so forth.

I am saying today that this is the closest that Trinidad and Tobago has come in identifying, beyond the shadow of a doubt, what money laundering is all about, because those who are taking the money—

Mr. Robinson: May I say, Madam Speaker, that I am open to any investigation this Government wants to set up—

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: Point of order, Madam Speaker?

Madam Speaker: That is not a point of order. I really do not think that there is need for this interruption.

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, I crave your protection, please—

Mr. Robinson: I am open to any investigation. Let the Member for San Fernando East get up and say that!

Madam Speaker: Will the Member for Tobago East please be seated and let the Member continue.

Mr. Robinson: I have to say it because aspersions are being cast on my character.

Madam Speaker: That is not a point of order, hon. Member: neither is it a point of clarification—

Mr. Robinson: I am open to investigation by him or anybody else!

Hon. Member: Cool yourself.

Madam Speaker: I ask the hon. Member to continue with his contribution, please.

Mr. Robinson: Investigate!

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: He is getting on like Pontius Pilate. This was published on December 7, 1990. The Prime Minister never responded; the party never responded, and there was no enquiry. But I quoted this simply to demonstrate how money laundering operates. The “dirty” money is coming from a certain source which is known by the receiver. The receiver puts the dirty money in a so-called clean place—

Hon. Member: In a laundry.

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: —A laundry, and then the receiver of the money goes there, gets the money and uses it as if it is clean money.

I am saying that the PNM did not write this; they did not say this; this was the chairman of the party himself telling the country how the NAR campaign of 1986 was funded. [*Interruption*]

The question then arises in a situation like this: Who could have instructed the vice-chairman to do a thing like that? It is my point of view that the only person who could have instructed the party chairman to do a thing like this was the political leader.

Mr. Robinson: That is absolutely mischievous! You have the power to investigate! Set up an independent commission of enquiry and investigate!

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, I take that back. It might be reasonable to assume that the only person who could have instructed the chairman to do a thing like that was the watchman at Albion Street. The watchman at Albion Street instructed the chairman to carry out an operation like this, not the political leader. I exonerate him.

Hon. Member: Not the deputy either!

4.05 p.m.

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: A fleeting organization funds itself like this and elects into officer certain persons in this House—the Member for Oropouche, today; the Member for Couva North, today; the Member for St. Augustine, today; and Members for Tobago East and West.

Miss Nicholson: Chief, I never heard about that! Do not bring me into that!

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, on the say-so of the Member for Tobago West, I take that back, because I assume that the Member for Tobago West was elected to Parliament in 1986 as a member of the NAR party: she is now telling me otherwise.

Miss Nicholson: Do not let me have to deal with you! You know why you cannot run for a seat in Tobago!

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, you see the position? At that time when this was made public, I did not hear a single comment from any of those Members in this House who were elected in this manner, calling for an enquiry into how these funds came to be handled in this manner and what it meant for the security of Trinidad and Tobago.

But they are the same people who are in here today, holding up flags of principle telling the country that they will not vote for this Bill unless they get an inquiry into the actions of the Member for San Fernando East and the sale of a car to a drug dealer. All I want to ask the Members is: When did they become of that position? What could have happened in the interim, to have converted them from beneficiaries of such largesse to Pontius Pilate filing Motions in this House that they want certain enquiries for their votes, which the people of the constituencies have entrusted in them? All of a sudden terms and conditions; apples for oranges; sugar cakes for sweetbread.

If anything, my friend the Member for Couva North said he is so embarrassed when he goes anywhere and people keep asking him, “What kind of prime minister all yuh have?” I want to ask him: Did anybody know him in the period 1986 to 1991 to ask him “What kind of party all yuh have? What kind of prime minister all yuh have? What kind of government all yuh have that take money from a drug dealer who was to be extradited to London and you all laundered it and portrayed yourselves as Pontius Pilates?” Apparently, nobody knew him then, so nobody was asking him anything!

The hypocrisy of Members on the other side does not end there! This is only a small facet of the whole story! I am simply saying that we on this side have a certain number of votes that we can cast in an effort to get this Bill passed to allow Trinidad and Tobago to ratify the convention; those on the other side have a number of votes that they can cast, and they may do as they please. We have implored them; we have shown them the evil of their ways, and if at voting time they choose not to vote for the measure, all that it means is that this will not be passed and the interests of the people of Trinidad and Tobago will not be served and we [*Interruption*]

Madam Speaker, but they come here and take positions of so-called principle, to accuse Members on this side, without a shred of evidence. If I go back to the contribution of my Friend the Member for Couva North, he has labelled the entire Cabinet and more specifically, the Prime Minister. He is calling for an investigation into money laundering by Members of the Cabinet. He has accused the Editor of the Trinidad Guardian of being—

Mr. B. Panday: Please, calling for an enquiry is accusing you? I did not know that.

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: Members of the Cabinet! In case the Member forgot what he said, let me refresh his memory and quote from *Hansard* of May 13, 1994:

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“Precedent to our support of this Bill...”

he said,

“is the agreement of the Government to set up an enquiry into the possible involvement of Members of the Cabinet with drug people.”

What is the basis for that? All of a sudden the Member for Couva North is concerned about the association of Members of Parliament with drug people, an individual who was elected, by the admission of his superior in the party—having been elected and being deputy political leader of the party—he was acting Prime Minister at the time—had no interest then in any investigation.

Hon. Member: How much money?

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: One million dollars! All of a sudden, he has a touch of conscience. *[Interruption]* No, the only time they have principles is to apply them to the PNM.

On this question of the Prime Minister’s sale of a car to an individual— one of their friends—the circumstances have been explained. The Prime Minister has said, as we do in this country—all of us, including myself—I sold six or seven cars in this country—when one sells a car one signs a transfer form and gives it to the person. The system permitted that person with the transfer form to go and sell the car to somebody else and then make a transfer to the third, fourth or even the fifth party! I know a person where the transfer form went to the fourth party! I know that! My now deceased father-in-law got a summons one day to go to court because his car was involved in an accident; he had sold the car to an individual who had sold it twice after.

The Prime Minister came to the House and gave an explanation. The position of Members on the other side is that “Notwithstanding what you say, we do not believe you. Notwithstanding what you say, we believe we should go out and tell the country that you are involved with drug dealers and we want an enquiry.” All of a sudden what one says in one’s defence is not sufficient for those on the other side; they want an enquiry. The same ones *[Interruption]* He wants an enquiry into everything; he said so; if a man has a big house and a big business, enquire into it. The Member for Couva North said that! I want to know how many enquiries we would have!

Let me show how they could not be serious! This same issue of the drug problem was the subject of a Presidential enquiry in this country. Whatever we may think of the findings in the report, the fact is there was a report that came to

this country as a result of a Presidential enquiry. The Member for Tobago East laid great store by the contents of that report that he brought it to Parliament, and proceeded to have a week-long debate on it; and to treat it in the most serious manner—I presume because it was being handled by the Parliament and one assumes that the Parliament treats with serious business.

In that report a certain gentleman was named for some measure of misconduct.

Mr. Maharaj: Who was he? Name the gentleman!

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: The gentleman in question was a certain Mr. Rambachan. He was named in the report for misconduct. But even as the Member for Tobago East was putting the report to the Parliament as one that we should take seriously, he was appointing the said gentleman to Cabinet office in his government.

Mr. Valley: Without any commission of enquiry!

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: When the question was asked “How can you do that?” There was no call for any enquiry.

Mr. Maharaj: Madam Speaker, on a point of order. That gentleman’s name was mentioned in the report, that he and the Member for Couva South were involved. [*Uproar*]

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: Do not jump the gun!

Mr. Maharaj: No, no, Madam Speaker. That was the subject of a prosecution which was dismissed and in which it was held that the police officer—and the Prime Minister knows; he got up in this House and said that he knew it was not true—Mr. Taylor involved!

Madam Speaker: There was no mention of the Member for Couva South; proceed, please.

4.15 p.m.

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, I am in no position to discuss the merits or demerits of the charges made in the report. I am saying that in a Presidential enquiry an individual was listed for misconduct. I did not say what the misconduct was. In the report the Commissioner saw it fit to name the individual as having been said by others to have done certain things.

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There was a Presidential enquiry identifying an individual—allegation of course—as having done so-and so; the Prime Minister, who was prosecuting and guiding the report through Parliament and bringing down fire and brimstone on all persons, including the 53 policemen who were sent home on vacation leave, did not see it fit then to have even a smattering of an enquiry into that. Do you know how he dealt with that?

We filed a question in the Parliament asking how could this individual named in a Presidential report be elevated to ambassadorial status—which was a simple question—he was made ambassador to the country where coke comes from. There was no enquiry into that. The Prime Minister of the day responded by saying, “I have spoken to Mr. Rambachan and I am satisfied that he was innocent, and I exonerated him.”

In other words, what Mr. Rambachan said in his defence was sufficient to exonerate him from allegations in the drug report. But what Patrick Manning says in his defence is not enough. They want public enquiry. You understand the two-facedness, the hypocrisy!? In fact, there has been no presidential identification of misconduct on the part of the Member for San Fernando East. What we have are allegations from Members on the other side.

If this principle was one of long standing of other Members at the time, one would have had an enquiry then, and today we would have all known what we do not know.

The same approach was adopted with my friend the Member for Couva South, where the Presidential enquiry report contained in its pages allegations that the person who is now the Member for Couva South paid a man to kill a man. I do not know about the facts. I am simply saying those things were in the document. I know of no enquiry then. In fact, as my Friend the Member for Couva North has just reminded me, when the then Prime Minister appointed Mr. Rambachan to fill the slack left by his exit from the Government, the Member for Couva North took the position that Mr. Rambachan was not a fit and proper person to be made ambassador because he had that problem in the Drug Report.

But lo and behold, come 1991, he had no problem with selecting another person who was mentioned in the same Drug Report.

Mr. Maharaj: Madam Speaker, on a point of order. If the Member is mentioning that, he should state that the matters which were mentioned there were even before the release of the report which was on the subject of the prosecution of Mr. Taylor, who has been investigated by Scotland Yard. Scotland Yard got

evidence that it was Taylor, and it was a manufactured prosecution. The prosecution was dismissed and the Government has done nothing about Mr. Taylor, but in effect has sent him home honourably. That is the subject of a prosecution which was dismissed.

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, to the best of my knowledge, I am in no position to carry out any courthouse work. I am confining my argument to the principle of whether in fact, one should or should not accept drug money, because, to come and talk about matters being dismissed—my knowledge of that situation is that it never came to trial. The witness happened to enter a particular supermarket and a policeman or somebody was passing, happened to see him doing something—

Mr. Maharaj: On a point of order. That matter went to court and the magistrate dismissed the case after the prosecutor was not able to adduce evidence to support the case. *[Interruption]*

Madam Speaker: Please be relevant and stick to the debate.

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, I have no intention of going into the merits or demerits of that case. I do not know why the Member for Couva South is so agitated.

Mr. Mohammed: Let us have a—

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: To the best of my knowledge the reason no evidence was adduced in the matter was that the file disappeared. I do not want to go into that. I am confining my argument to the “principled” position being taken today, that they will not support this measure.

Back to the basis of the decision that they will not support the measure. The Member for San Fernando East said whom he sold the car to. The person said, “Yes, I bought the car from the Member from San Fernando East.” I have seen in today’s *Express* the person whom they claimed the Prime Minister transacted business with; that person is on record—the *Express* is claiming to have some statement from the court. I want to read it for their benefit. The headline reads:

“Chadee: I did not buy car from Manning”

“Dole Chadee, in a sworn statements in September 1984 to the Couva...”

[Interruption]

Mr. Robinson: It is obvious what has happened. They have embraced Dole Chadee.

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, to the extent that we embrace Dole Chadee others will have to give way to his bosom for us to get an embrace. What has been put in *Hansard* by my Friend the Member for Couva North is that the Prime Minister sold a car to Dole Chadee.

Mr. Maharaj: Madam Speaker, on a point of order. That is a very narrow view of it. What was being asked: Did the Prime Minister buy that car for the drug dealer or for himself? Where did he get the money to pay for the car? That is what we want to find out.

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, they could turn the interpretation as much as they like now. What has been put on the record and what is being fought is an argument that the prime Minister is involved with drug dealers. [Interruption] This is our interpretation, is and the proof of that they say, is that he entered into transactions, and in fact the Member for Couva North went as far as to put in *Hansard* that he had the prime Minister's picture in some gathering with Dole Chadee. Do you remember that story? When he was challenged he had to withdraw because he had no such picture. He put in *Hansard* that the Prime Minister also attended—

Mr. B. Panday: I apologize; it was at another function.

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: In seeking to prosecute their mischievous case, the Member fro Couva North put in *Hansard* that the Prime Minister attended the funeral of “Elephant Walk” who he claims was a drug dealer. None of those allegations are true. But it was part of the support for the case that the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago is closely involved socially and otherwise with people who are believed to be involved in the drug trade. That is why they have been taking the position and making the statement that drug dealers have got to the highest echelons of the Government.

But here we have the Express quoting from a court document of ten years ago. So, they cannot say that this has to do with any bailout at that time. Ten years ago in the courts of this country, the person with whom they are alleging the Prime Minister had a transaction made a sworn statement. Here is the newspaper report:

“Dole Chadee, in a sworn statement in September 1984 to the Couva Magistrates' Court admitted that he never had any transaction with Prime Minister Patrick Manning (then Trade Minister).

Manning has maintained that he sold the car to car dealer Sankey Subance who always supported this claim.”

4.25 p.m.

So the person who bought the car says: I bought the car from the man. The person to whom he sold the car, says Yes, he sold the car to me. The Opposition do not believe that. They want an enquiry

People believe what they want to believe. There is no law in this country which says you must believe what I want you to believe. There can be no such law!

They are free not to believe. But when it suited them to believe that Rambachan was innocent, they accepted his word. When it suited my Friend the Member for Couva North to believe that his Friend the Member for Couva South was innocent, he believed. But when anyone on our side says anything, they do not want to believe. We cannot fight that! They do not believe it. But the country will have to make its own decision as to whether it believes that the Prime Minister was involved in drugs or whether it believes that the entire Opposition, Tobago East and all, is, in effect, a bunch of two-faced hypocrites.

I agree with my Friend the Member for Oropouche for once, when he says that criminals know that they will not be caught and penalized. He knows what he is talking about. Because there are those in this country who make a life out of ensuring that criminals do not get penalized, and if today my Friend the Member for Oropouche is correct in his assertion, that cannot be put at the doorstep of the PNM.

Mr. Sudama: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I said that criminals know that they would not even be caught, let alone be prosecuted.

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: I do not want to deal with that part because that is an extreme. The Member for Oropouche is an extremist. He swings from one end to the other. How can criminals know that they will not be caught when every day the courthouse is filled with people going to face charges.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Member, in two more minutes your 45 minutes will be up and the Leader of Government Business will move accordingly.

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

All I am saying is that to the extent that criminals feel that they can do whatever they want and there will not be a day when the crime and the punishment are married, that cannot be placed at the doorstep of the Government.

This country's administration is divided into areas of responsibility. There are those of the state who are charged with the power and the authority to intervene

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when crimes are committed and, in some instances, before. The Government as such, meaning the Cabinet, does not have a role in that. When a person has been identified as having committed a crime and is taken to a place of trial, the Government is not really involved in that. There is another arm of the state that sees that fair and free trials take place and that punishment fits crime.

To the extent that persons are exonerated or jailed, the Government has very little influence, as we know. When the court says that you go free—as my Friend the Member for Couva South would know—the Government cannot say go back to jail, otherwise, left to the Government alone, many persons who are now on the street would be inside.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Member's speaking time has expired.

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

Question put and agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion made, That the House do now adjourn to Friday, May 27, 1994 at 1.30 p.m. [*Hon. K. Valley*]

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. Maharaj: Madam Speaker, we have two Motions on the Adjournment.

Madam Speaker: I thought we were going to have those Motions on the Adjournment deferred. Those motions will be dealt with after the teabreak.

4.30 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.05 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: We have two Motions on the Adjournment but I think the Leader of the House would like to—

Mr. Valley: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I ask for a five-minute recess to allow Members to take their seats.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: All right, we will recess for five minutes.

Mr. Palackdharrysingh: There is a quorum, there is no need to recess.

5.06 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.11 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Motion made, That the House do now adjourn to Wednesday, May 25, 1994 at 1.30 p.m. [*Hon. K. Valley*]

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: We have two Motions on the Adjournment; we will take the Member for Tabaquite's first.

Environmental Pollution

Dr. Carl Singh (*Tabaquite*): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Standing in my name is a Motion concerning environmental pollution both internally and externally. Environmental pollution continues, both externally and within buildings, to escalate unabatedly, exposing our citizens to preventable conditions. Many of the illnesses are preventable and should be so treated and taken care of.

The PNM in its 1991 manifesto, promised to establish an environmental protection authority recognizing the inadequacy of the existing agency to deal with the ever-growing pollution problem. Today, two and a half years later, very little has been done in this regard. The pollution problem is a universal one. However, we must take care of our environment, by taking the right decisions at the appropriate time. There must be the monitoring of our airports and marine areas, the discharge of waste in our water, the transport of toxic materials in our waters.

The waterways: We must protect the Caroni River from industrial waste; the Couva River from the Brechin Castle Factory; the Guaracara River from waste material from the Pointe-a-Pierre Refinery; and the Ciperio River, again from the Usine Ste. Madeleine Factory. Persistent over the years is the soot problem in Central Trinidad with very little truly being done to alleviate the problem, year after year.

We have also the lead poisoning problem, in which a whole village was affected. This could have been avoided if initial steps were taken to stop the dumping of waste material in the Wallerfield area. The long-lasting effect of such poisoning, lead particularly, affects the young people. An investigation should have been instituted. We have had about 35 to 40 students who were hospitalized for lead poisoning, yet to date very little has been done to rectify this problem; only promises of having the residents removed.

Many of these children are exposed, especially in the high density traffic areas, to pollution from lead by emissions from exhaust pipes, which affects these

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children. One would find that a child is doing quite well and then suddenly starts to drop back. It may also affect the kidneys and the brain. The result is low IQs; epileptic fits; damage to peripheral nerves. But very little has been done to investigate these children.

My contribution today mainly concerns pollution from asbestos. I have an article here, page 6 of the *Express* dated Friday, April 1, 1994, where we see:

“Consultant refuses cleaning job.”

Subsequent to the appearance of this article is a rebuttal on page 3 of the *Trinidad Guardian* dated April 7, 1994, and I will read a couple lines of this article:

“The consultants gave the assurance that ‘only asbestos-free materials were specified in the Hall of Justice.’”

Even though asbestos-free materials were specified, were the materials tested to ascertain whether they were really so? The same rebuttal continues:

“If there is any doubt, the owners of the building ought to commission an independent testing agency to carry out chemical analysis to determine whether there is in fact any evidence of asbestos contamination.”

This is a rebuttal in the press; nothing has come from Government.

With our trade liberalization programme, a tremendous amount of goods would be dumped in our country. We have a couple of letters here again the problem of DDT in mosquito coils. These are brought into our country *carte blanche*, are sold cheaper than the locally produced ones and, without any type of testing. Do we have the mechanism in place to make sure that when we accept goods from abroad they are tested? According to this article here in the *Trinidad Guardian* dated Monday, April 18, 1994, page 9:

“DDT has little value due to its disuse by the developed countries thus rendering a low cost to these imported DDT coils which are dumped into third world countries that are very lax with their environment and their people. As a corporate citizen of Trinidad and Tobago, we will not put DDT in our coils.”

What the article further said was that certain indications on the label of these things are saying that they do not have DDT, while in truth and in fact this is the agent in them used. We are not testing, we are not doing anything, we are just saying, bring whatever you want to sell in Trinidad and Tobago *carte blanche*.

The ECA has raised its support for an investigation of this particular aspect of the asbestos problem in the Hall of Justice. NIPDEC supports an investigation, but nothing is really being done.

When asbestos was first introduced in the building industry, it was found that it was a boom, in that there was low friction, flexibility of material and more importantly, heat resistance. As a result it has found a place in over 3,000 different articles used. In the building field particularly, we have had asbestos roofing materials. We have lagging of steel pipes. We have had walls, boards and ceiling boards. All these use a certain amount of asbestos, and without the proper maintenance and cleaning of these, our citizens are exposed to this dust.

As I said before, these are largely preventable conditions and we must go all out to eliminate them. You will appreciate that exposure to asbestos particularly, causes irritation to the eyelids, the eyes, the nose, the throat; more importantly, the bronchial tray is affected by these irritations, resulting in asbestosis, malignancy both of the pleura, the pericardium, the peritoneum; and these do not appear immediately. If you are exposed for a short period and you are removed from that particular environment 15 to 20 years later there is full radiographical evidence of this pollution and the effect on the human being.

5.20 p.m.

This then would open a scenario for litigation, because it would be considered an industrial preventable condition, like pneumoconiosis which affects coal miners in the United Kingdom.

Some of the measures that should be put in place are not really being addressed at the moment, nor do I see any steps being considered, like investigating all government buildings in which this type of material has been used in the past.

Check all plans; buildings that are in progress and buildings that are to be built should be checked. Institute safety measures such as suction exhaust fittings in these buildings. Clothing—especially in areas where persons are exposed to heavily contaminated dust; chest X-rays should be instituted as an initial measure so that one can chart what happens over a period. These are all preventive measures.

Showers: Quite importantly, a person who is exposed to asbestos dust in any type of environment, if he goes home with the same clothing, the family at home can be affected, and quite often that is the case. And it has been shown that these people who are affected at home suffer more from the type of a peritoneal and other type of asbestosis resulting in malignancy.

So my reason really for raising this matter is to find out what Government is doing. Is it prepared to do anything or just sit by and wait? The Government has

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not really taken any positive step, except one rebuttal in the press in the form of a press report.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Minister of Planning and Development (Sen. Dr. The Hon. Lenny Saith): Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Motion on the Adjournment deals with the continuous indoor and outdoor pollution, and what it terms the refusal of the Government to treat with it. The mover, the hon. Member for Tabaquite, has cited a particular instance in the case of asbestos. The Government certainly agrees that the environmental status of the country as a whole needs upgrading. There is no doubt about that, and therefore, the Government has sought to approach the problem in a more holistic manner: First of all, identify why this is so and then try to deal with the issue.

We believe that the reason for the present state of the environment basically can be broken down into five factors:

- (1) a legislative framework that is weak and in need of modernization;
- (2) an institutional framework that is fragmented, where there are 28 agencies which deal with some aspect of environmental management, and even there the responsibilities are ill-defined; they overlap and coordination is inadequate;
- (3) the level of public awareness of the linkages between how they behave and environmental health is inadequate;
- (4) the unplanned development of our physical resources leading to degradation of the resource;
- (5) the industrial community not being sufficiently committed or sensitive to the importance of maintaining sound environmental practices.

That is the diagnosis of the situation. As a consequence, the Government has sought to respond to it by a number of measures.

First of all, how do we strengthen the legislation? We have sought to go the way of creating an Environmental Management Agency, which will by legislative fiat have the power to co-ordinate and enforce environmental management. The legislation will provide for the establishment of the EMA which would have the responsibility and authority to:

- co-ordinate all environmental functions in Trinidad and Tobago;

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- establish appropriate national environmental standards and programmes;
- develop regulations;
- monitor compliance with environmental standards and programmes and to take appropriate action for the prevention and control of pollution;
- promote educational and public awareness; and
- establish linkages locally, regionally and internationally in the area of the environment.

The legislation for the creation of the Environmental Management Agency is now complete. It was approved by Cabinet a few weeks ago and it is the intention of the Government to bring it to Parliament very shortly. That would deal with the legislative framework.

The Government also has sought to ratify international conventions which have an impact on the environment, and which create the mechanisms by which Framework Convention on Climate Change; the Montreal Protocol on Substances that deplete the ozone layer; the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movement of Hazardous Waste and Their Disposal, the question of importation of hazardous waste. It has also signed the Convention on Biological Diversity and is soon to ratify that convention.

By ratification, we commit ourselves to taking action on each of these conventions, and the creation of the EMA will be the vehicle by which action will be taken by the Government to ensure that its obligations under these conventions are fulfilled.

The Government is also undertaking baseline research studies, baseline data collection to enable it to build up the database which will give us information to begin to deal with the environment. Programmes to collect environmental data in three areas are soon to be started in southwest Tobago, Point Lisas, and Chaguaramas, and this would be the first step in a programme to map the environmental situation in the country. Ultimately, all this data will form part of the database to enable us to develop standards and to monitor what is happening.

We also need to have the human resource trained to deal with the environment, and the Ministry of Planning and Development, under the Planning Project Cycle Management Programme, has a module dealing with environmental impact assessment, where personnel from the public service are being trained on a regular basis on Environmental Impact Assessment evaluation. And soon, from a

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World Bank loan, the ministry intends to provide training to people to evaluate Environmental Impact Assessment statements.

If an industry is asked to give an EIA of what it is doing, unless there are people in the public service who are able to evaluate that report, then, in fact you are not getting anywhere on the matter. So the human resource has to be trained, and that programme is in hand.

5.30 p.m.

We have also, in collaboration with the Japanese International Cooperation Agency, commenced a study on pollution prevention and control in the petroleum sector, which, as you know, has the potential for serious effects on the environment if not properly monitored. It is expected that by December of this year a master plan for pollution prevention and control at Pointe-a-Pierre—the refinery, offshore petroleum fields, petroleum storage facilities and pipelines—will be prepared. We have tackled that and people are working on it.

Finally, arising out of the Rio conference in Brazil last year, Agenda 21, which is a series of actions which nations have committed themselves to getting involved in, was accepted. One of the matters that come under Agenda 21 is the preparation of a national environment action plan which countries must prepare, to set out how they will deal with the whole question of the management of the very fragile resources we have available to us.

The Government is about to start a process whereby that national environmental action plan will be prepared and on completion we would have not only a clear idea of what we want to do; also it will enable us to access resources which are going to be made available under the global environmental facility—a \$2 billion fund which has been set up under the World Bank to deal with some of these problems.

The Government is not refusing to treat with the problem, but it has identified that this has to be dealt with in a holistic manner; there must be a systematic approach to it; the legislative framework has to be put in; the institutions must be set up under the World Bank to deal with some of these problems.

The Government is not refusing to treat with the problem, but it has identified that this has to be dealt with in a holistic manner; there must be a systematic approach to it. The legislative framework has to be put in; the institutions must be set up; the human resources have to be trained; data has to be collected; standards have to be developed and also financial resources would be needed; and the country has to be in a position to access these resources.

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Mr. Deputy Speaker, far from refusing to deal with the problem, I think the Government is dealing with it in a manner that has the potential for the long-term continuance of a sustainable effort to protect and maintain our environment.

Thank you.

Fishing Facilities (Claxton Bay)

Mr. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj (*Couva South*): Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Motion deals with the urgent need for Government to take immediate steps to build a jetty or to dig a channel at Claxton Bay to facilitate fishermen to earn their livelihood.

The plight of the fishermen at Claxton Bay demonstrates the contempt with which the Government holds agriculture and fishing. The fishermen at Claxton Bay, whenever the tide is low, have to anchor their boats almost about 1200 feet offshore; leave them there unattended, where engines and equipment are liable to be stolen; and they have to walk ashore in mud and slush—one knows of all the environmental damage done in the Point Lisas area—and through all sorts of sharp objects, in order to take their catch to shore. Because of the hardships which these people have been experiencing for some time, the fishing industry is, obviously, adversely affected in Claxton bay and, in effect, in Trinidad and Tobago as a whole.

There are about 100 fishermen involved. The number of boats affected is about 35 to 40. The average quantity of fish caught on a weekly basis is about 10,000 pounds. The weekly value of the fish caught, before deducting expenses, amounts to about \$25,000. The number of families whose livelihood is directly affected by the condition of the port is about 100. The number of persons who are indirectly affected would be about 500.

It seems to me that this problem which has been existing for some time is one which the Government should treat with some priority. The recurring answer is no resources, no money. The hon. Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources became aware of this problem through me about a year ago and we asked him, would the Government indicate what it intends to do about this matter?

The plight of these fishermen attracted one of the newspapers in Trinidad and Tobago and, since we have been quoting much from newspapers this afternoon, may I be permitted to quote an article from the *Newsday* of January 23, 1994, headed: "Making life miserable for Claxton Bay Fishermen – Village Watch by Susan Gosine". It states:

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“Fishing is a way of life for thousands of families in Central and South Trinidad...”

I do not know whether the hon. Minister read this report.

For centuries, families have survived off the richness of the sea.

For residents of Claxton Bay, fishing is a part of the culture of the village. For as long as one can remember, fishermen have been displaying their bountiful catch on the roadside—tables and stalls from the Claxton Bay Junction to the Flower Pot Restaurant and Bar at the base of the Pointe-a-Pierre Hill.

Claxton Bay fishermen are but a small bunch of dedicated family men and youngsters who toil from the wee hours of the morning in the ‘biting’ wind to late into the night to eke out a living from the Gulf of Paria.”

No question of dealing in drugs! Honest living!

“The fishermen at Claxton Bay turn out some 5,000 to 20,000 pounds of fish per week. The day begins from about 5.00 a.m. and ends at 7.00 p.m.

For years the fishermen conducted their trade without grief or grouse, until some ten years ago when silt and mud from the river bank began to form a thick carpet over the sand along the shore.”

It has been in the newspaper and we have had no definite response from the Minister or from the Government as to what will be done about it. I continue:

“Within months the red sand was covered with knee-high black mud. Thus began what has now turned into a nightmare for the fisher folks. The thick build up of mud now covers an expanse of more than a quarter mile into the sea from the shoreline.

This has made the already hard task of fishing a burden on the shoulders of some one hundred fishermen who trek through the sticky mud back and forth each day, sometimes three times per day to make their catches.

Ever since the problem of the mud surfaced, the fishermen have been appealing to the Local Government Representative and other political sources to have the burden eased. They felt dredging would not solve the problem since mud cannot be controlled in the sea.

After much pondering they finally decided that the construction of a jetty stretching from the pier, across the muddy area, into the sea where boats and fishermen could unload their catch without having to ‘drag baskets, nets and

hundreds of fishes through the mud' to the Co-operative Building, was the only answer to the problem."

The article goes on, Mr. Deputy Speaker:

I would hope that even before it was raised by me he would have been aware of the problem and I feel sure that he was aware of it. If I could recollect what he did say, I think he was aware of it. The fact of the matter is that time has passed and there has been no indication from the Government either in this House, through correspondence or through the fishermen, as to what it is going to do and when it is going to do it. We see right around the country that the Government is finding money to deal with, whether it is the Ciperó River or other matters which, in effect, facilitate other matters.

What we are asking is that the Government, as the expert facilitator, facilitate the Claxton Bay fishermen to ensure that they get some measure of relief. The fishermen obviously have voiced their opinion as to whether a channel ought to be dug or a jetty ought to be built. Whatever the technical people say, whatever the Government feels ought to be done, we are asking for something to be done to alleviate the suffering and plight of the fishermen of Claxton Bay.

Thank you.

5.40 p.m.

The Minister of Agriculture, Land and marine Resources (Dr. The Hon. Keith Rowley): Mr. Deputy Speaker, the ministry is aware of the circumstances that prevail at this location. But let me say, Sir, that contrary to the comment made by the Member for Couva South that the circumstances have to do with criminal negligence on the part of the Government, the fact is that that section of the coastline, is what we call a grading coastline, it is the outfall for the sediment from the rest of the country, especially from the Northern Range, and the Caroni basin.

And, again, contrary to what has been stated in the newspaper article, of which I am aware, that has been a recent development of sedimentation. In fact, the very presence of the Caroni Swamp and the mangrove growth, and so forth, is a result of the degradation of that coastline and silt accumulation.

There is a problem where the coastline water comes up at high tide inland for a certain distance. At low tide that level drops and, therefore, automatically an expanse of mud is left. That problem really is that people fish out of this area where there is not a natural harbour. Elsewhere in the country there is an opposite

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situation where there is a hard coastline, deep water close to shore and they do not have that problem.

So the question: How do fishermen access the sea in a situation where the natural coastline varies in terms of depth of mud, distance to the waterline, and so forth, is that one should dig a channel to allow deep water to come close to shore and that shown that this is not a feasible approach because as soon as the channel is dug, it will silt up again because the area is a silt trap, more or less—it is a geographic silt trap. Therefore the other approach is to create access by another route. And I can tell you—the record will show that previous governments, in fact, have been aware of the problem and have taken some action to bring about some kind of alleviation. That is not permanent. The situation changes.

With respect to the onshore facilities, in 1982 construction began on an onshore facility which was completed sometime after. In 1991 it was handed over to the local fishing association and whatever action to alleviate the problem one agrees upon, requires finance. As everyone knows, including the Member who was the minister in 1991, there is a problem with finance and some of the work that was started had to be stopped in 1991 because of a shortage of funds. Work was resumed on the onshore facility—the fish processing unit—in May 1994—

Mr. Haniff: No priorities

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: —where a petty contract was awarded for the completion of the facility, and progress is being monitored by the southern office of the ministry. So we have got some funds and the first thing we did was to use those funds to do the onshore facility which, again, needed urgent treatment.

With respect to the question of dredging or putting in a floating jetty, some consideration is being given to an engineering assessment as to what is required. In fact, the Ministry has looked at possible situations of floating jetties being used elsewhere in the world. Some engineering work has to be done to see whether it can work. We have to get some hydrographic data and so forth, so it is not right to say that nothing is being done. The bottom line is, if Members recall what has been approved in the Parliament, we have had an allocation from the Ministry of Finance—a very small amount of money for this particular kind of expenditure. One can say—okay, priorities.

Mr. Maharaj: Ten million dollars.

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: To the extent that the funds are not available—

Mr. Haniff: Make it a URP project.

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: —what we would like to do cannot be done. Arguments are being made that preferential treatment is being given to other areas—that is not so at all. If one has limited resources, one would apportion them appropriately. And one has to consider that we have many centres around the country; some money from the allocation is being spent in this district, as I mentioned, and there are four areas where this kind of problem exists—Claxton Bay, Otaheite, Moruga and Carenage.

We have not had funds to do any work in Carenage, where the pier was destroyed many years ago and has not been replaced and fishermen are experiencing hardship. And as you will understand, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as Member of Parliament for the area and Minister responsible, what I have to face from the Carenage fishermen when we cannot find funds to build a jetty in Carenage! So it is not really accurate to say that it is fishermen in the constituency of Couva South who are somehow not getting their priorities pushed up in the order.

It is a national concern with respect to the things to be done and the unavailability of funds; and insofar as we have limited funding, much as we would like to do some of these things—as the Minister responsible I can only work with the allocation apportioned by the Ministry of Finance and, of course, you see what comes to Parliament and what the allocations are on, and I do not have a solution with respect to obtaining additional funds. What we do, we programme work to take—

Mr. Haniff: No consultation.

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: Adjustments, wages, and so forth are not matters for my ministry. My ministry is entrusted with managing the allocation, and we do get a small allocation for beach upgrading. We can only use it [*Interruptions*] The heading under the development programme for this kind of matter—well, we call it beach upgrading, because basically—

Miss Nicholson: You must have an interest.

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: The point is, much as we would like to do these things, we do not have the funds to do them at this time. We are using the allocation as we go along, and right now some expenditure is taking place at Claxton Bay on upgrading the onshore facilities, whereas there are other fishing areas where there is no action taking place because we do not have the funds. I anticipate that as we get additional funds we would, step by step [*Interruption*] improve the circumstances. It has nothing to do with any election; it has to do with demands on limited resources.

Mr. Haniff: What is happening with the URP projects?

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I cannot give the Member any commitment since the resources are not available. But we are looking to see what is the best engineering solution to the problem and when—

Mr. Maharaj: They have resources for other things.

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: —the funds become available and we identify these projects as the next projects to be done, we would know exactly what to do to solve the problem. I can say no more at this stage. If, in fact, the Member is saying that we should spend the money that we are spending on other areas, I cannot argue with that. This year we have spent \$11 million on legal fees. Maybe we should reduce that amount; and I am in agreement with that. If we had not spent that \$11 million—

Mr. Mohammed: Boy, you do not like lawyers at all!

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: Only one. If we had not had to spend \$11 million on frivolous appeals, we might have found some money to fix beaches.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 5.50 p.m.