

Oath of Allegiance

Friday, May 27, 1994

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, May 27, 1994

The House met at 1.36 p.m.

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

OATH OF ALLEGIANCE

Mrs. Eulalie James took and subscribed the oath of allegiance as required by law.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, I have granted leave of absence from today's sitting to the Member for Oropouche (Mr. Trevor Sudama).

PAPER LAID

Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the National Lotteries Control Board for the year ended December 31, 1991. [*The Minister of Finance (Hon. Wendell Mottley)*]

To be referred to the Public Accounts Committee.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

**Drug Trade
(Foreign Assistance)**

The following questions stood on the Order Paper in the name of Mr. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj:

- 86.** (1) 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?

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?

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Madam Speaker, the replies to these questions are not ready at this time. We seek a further deferral of one week.

Questions, by leave, deferred.

International Environment Agreements

90. Mr. Basdeo Panday (Couva North) on behalf of the Member for Couva South (Mr. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj) asked the Minister of Planning and Development:

Could the Minister 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 Bio-diversity 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 towards sustainable development of the forests?

The Minister of Planning and Development (Sen. Dr. The Hon. Lenny Saith): Madam Speaker, at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro during June 3 to June 14, 1992, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago signalled its intention to join with the global community in adopting and implementing new approaches to the development that would guarantee a sustainable future. This was done by:

- (i) signing the framework convention on climate change and the convention on bio-diversity. Trinidad and Tobago becomes a party to these conventions by the deposit of its instruments of ratification.
- (ii) adopting the global plan of action on environment developing issues referred to as Agenda 21 which contains a range of practical measures designed to effect sustainable development.
- (iii) adopting the non-legally binding Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, and the authoritative statement of principles for a global consensus on the management of conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests.

In respect of the Climate Change Convention, Government has already agreed to ratify the Convention. Prior to its decision, the Government established a working group to take an in-depth look at its implementation with a view to defining the measures that need to be put in place for meeting the obligations under this Convention.

Members of the House are informed that work related to this Convention was in progress even before the signing in June, 1992. The working group on global

Oral Answers to Questions
[SEN. DR. THE HON. L. SAITH]

Friday, May 27, 1994

warming, climate change and sea level rise established by Cabinet in 1990 has been looking into the implications of global warming, climate change and sea level rise with a view to identifying and implementing appropriate response strategies for Trinidad and Tobago.

In respect of the Bio-diversity Convention, as a follow up to the signing of this convention a working group has been set up to review and advise on its ratification and on the measures to be taken to meet the obligations of the Convention. The working group is finalizing its report for submission to Cabinet within the next three months.

1.45 p.m.

In respect of Agenda 21, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago considers that the most effective approach to undertaking the follow-up activities of the Agenda is by improving the institutional framework for spearheading this activity. In this regard, priority was given to the preparation of legislation for the establishment of an environmental management authority, which will be the focal point for environmental matters in Trinidad and Tobago generally and will, in collaboration with existing agencies and institutions, pursue the activities under Agenda 21.

It is to be noted that the recently concluded Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island States is one of the activities derived from Agenda 21 in which Trinidad and Tobago participated actively. Trinidad and Tobago supported and hosted a regional technical meeting for the Caribbean, Atlantic, and Mediterranean regions in July, 1993 which was a preparatory activity of this conference. It also attended the preparatory meetings of the conference secretariat at which the programme of action adopted at the Barbados conference was negotiated.

In respect of the statement on forest principles, as indicated earlier, this is not legally binding on states which adopted them. However, the principles articulated in this statement reflect those guidelines which have formed the basis for management of state forests in Trinidad and Tobago. Moreover, the draft Forest Resorts and Natural Parks Conservation Bill which has been finalized to replace the Forest Act, Chap. 66, takes into consideration the socio-economic and ecological value of forests and seeks to promote their utilization in a sustainable way.

Thank you.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. Basdeo Panday (*Couva North*): Madam Speaker, the Member for Princes Town wishes to withdraw the Motion which is now engaging the attention of the House.

Mr. Haniff: Yes, Madam Speaker, I wish to withdraw Motion No. 1 on the Order Paper.

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. B. Panday: Madam Speaker, the Opposition has agreed that the Member for Tobago East would proceed with Motion No. 7. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Valley: Madam Speaker, although the Government had not been informed of this before, the Government accedes to the request. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Speaker: Member for Tobago East.

Mr. Valley: Oh Lord, have mercy.

**PRIME MINISTER'S CAR
(INDEPENDENT INQUIRY)**

Mr. A.N.R. Robinson (*Tobago East*): Madam Speaker, may I express my very deep appreciation of the very generous gesture on the part of the Leader of the House and say that I am very grateful indeed to have the opportunity to move this Motion.

Madam Speaker, the Motion which I have the honour to move reads as follows—

Mr. B. Panday: You are not being heard.

Mr. A.N.R. Robinson: The Motion which I have the honour to move reads as follows—

Be it Resolved that this honourable House consider that an independent inquiry should be instituted into all the circumstances in which a motor vehicle was acquired by the Member for San Fernando East, while a Minister of Government and was transferred into the custody, care and control of a person or persons widely reputed to be drug dealers:

And be it Further Resolved that the inquiry should extend to the implications of these events for the reputation and integrity of the Office of Prime Minister and for the promotion of exemplary standards of conduct in public life.

Madam Speaker, this country at this time—

Mr. Sobion: Volume!

Dr. Rowley: I want to hear you.

Mr. A.N.R. Robinson: What has happened? I am speaking in the normal way, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Sobion: Speak up!

Mr. A.N.R. Robinson: Why is it that the sound system suddenly failed? I am using my normal voice. On a previous occasion the lights had failed; on another occasion the police headquarters were blown up!

Madam Speaker: Would the Member proceed with the Motion at hand please.

Mr. A.N.R. Robinson: I am using my—in fact, I am speaking at a higher level than normal.

Mr. Sobion: You are losing your marbles.

Mr. A.N.R. Robinson: I do not control the sound system. May I ask if it is working now?

Dr. Rowley: Use another one.

[Member for Tobago West and Member for Tobago East exchange seats]

Mr. A.N.R. Robinson: I thank the Member for Tobago West. Is it better now?

Mr. B. Panday: They interfered with it before you came.

Mr. A.N.R. Robinson: May I read the Motion once more that I have the honour to move, Madam Speaker—

Be It Resolved that this honourable House consider that an independent inquiry should be instituted into all the circumstances in which a motor vehicle was acquired by the Member for San Fernando East, while a Minister of Government, and was transferred into the custody, care and control of a person or persons widely reputed to be drug dealers:

And be it Further Resolved that the inquiry should extend to the implications of these events for the reputation and integrity of the Office of Prime Minister and for the promotion of exemplary standards of conduct in public life.

Madam Speaker, at this time this country is virtually under a state of siege. We have witnessed an escalation in crime that has caused grave concern to responsible persons all over the country. Citizens at this time are virtually locked into their homes. They cannot venture at will into the streets of the country!

Mr. Valley: And Members opposite vote against the Bill.

Mr. A.N.R. Robinson: What is needed is complete mobilization against the situation that now exists. It is extremely important that this matter of crime and crime control and of standards in public life be treated with the utmost seriousness, particularly in this Parliament. Because it is this Parliament which comprises of the leaders of the country and, in particular, the Government which should be most concerned with the escalation in crime and the loss of discipline and of moral standards in the community; and should set an example and set standards. This is where crime control begins. This is where standards are set, and as the Royal Commission on Standards of Conduct in Public Life under Lord Salmon reported in 1976, and I quote from page 12 of the Report at paragraph 42. That distinguished Commission consisting of very eminent persons in the United Kingdom reported:

"We have borne in mind throughout our work that one of the main safeguards against corruption in any institution is the standard set and required by the management from the top downwards."

If you want to ensure that an organization or a country is in a condition where moral/ethical standards are observed; and if you want to mobilize a community in the fight against crime and the lowering of standards, then it is important that the example be set from the top.

1.55 p.m.

I do not think there can be any dispute about that, and this is why I maintain that in this very serious struggle in which this country is engaged, we, of this Parliament, must first purge ourselves. If action has to be taken, let the action be taken first here, against us. If moral standards are to be maintained, then let us show the way. Let us set those standards. That is why I bring this Motion before this House.

Madam Speaker, the known facts of the matter before us under consideration, insofar as they can be ascertained, are as follows:

Fact 1—While holding the office of Minister of Government, to be exact Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, a very important and powerful ministry—some would say it is among the most important in the country, if not the most important, apart from Prime Minister and Minister of Finance in 1983, the Member for San Fernando East, acting either by himself or his agent, imported a Toyota Royal Saloon car which was assigned the number PAN 1010.

Prime Minister's Car
[MR. ROBINSON]

Friday, May 27, 1994

Fact 2—The Member for San Fernando East, acting by himself or his agent, sought and obtained approval from the Central Bank and the Ministry of Industry and Commerce for remittal of foreign exchange for the purchase of the said vehicle.

In those days, in order to obtain a vehicle of that nature as an importation from abroad, specifically from the country of Japan, one had to have foreign exchange approval, and the foreign exchange restriction was placed as a defence, erected by the country against the outflow of foreign exchange to the detriment of the economy. So this was a Government defence policy to defend the economy against the outflow of foreign exchange. I want to emphasize that point, because the Member was then a member of the Government which had a defence policy to protect the citizens of this country and the economy from the consequences of an outflow of foreign exchange.

Fact 3—Approval was granted to the Member for San Fernando East in his capacity as a Minister of Government for use of the vehicle in the performance of his duties on account of which he received a travelling allowance.

When the application was made for the importation of the vehicle, the applicant had to state the purpose for which the vehicle was to be used and the purpose would have been for use as a Minister of Government in the performance of his duties.

Fact 4—In his statement to the House of Representatives made on February 18, 1994, the Member for San Fernando East affirmed that he purchased the vehicle on November 21, 1983, and decided to sell on December 17, 1983, less than one month later. The Minister of Government using his position as minister and purporting to apply for use of this vehicle as minister, within one month decided to dispose of the vehicle. According to his words, he decided to sell it.

The reason he gave for the decision to sell was an announcement by the Minister of Finance on December 17, of the increase in the price of premium gasoline from 28 cents to 55 cents per litre. The mathematically minded among us can calculate what that meant in terms of money per month for possible cost of travelling and cost of travel fees per month which would not have been so significant in terms of getting involved.

Mr. Imbert: Double!

Mr. Bereaux: Double!

Mr. A.N.R. Robinson: Fact 5—The car which was bought for \$72,000 was sold for \$103,000 to one Sankie Subance, a car dealer—who we are told is reputed to be a drug dealer—on January 24, 1984 at a profit of \$31,000, or over 44 per cent.

So this car which was bought for use in the performance of public duties was, within one month, disposed of—according to the confession of the Prime Minister—for a profit of \$31,000 or 44 per cent. How many citizens of this country are in that fortunate position?

Fact 6—The Member for San Fernando East stated that he signed a form to the car dealer Sankie Subance on receipt of payment. However, the Licensing Office records a transfer to one Nankissoon Boodram, otherwise known as Dole Chadee—another reputed drug dealer on several murder charges—on February 7, 1984.

Fact 7—It has been publicly alleged by a police officer that prior to February 7, 1984, the car was discovered by the police in the possession of Dole Chadee in circumstances for which Chadee was charged, convicted and fined for driving offences. It has also been publicly alleged by the same police officer that soon after the commission of the offences, the Member for San Fernando East had been informed by the police of the involvement of the motor vehicle still recorded in his name.

Fact 8—Referring to an article in the *T&T Mirror* of Friday, February 11, 1994, the Member for San Fernando East in his statement indignantly declared:

"This particular article alleges that in 1984, I sold a motor vehicle PAN 1010, a Toyota Royal Saloon, to one Nankissoon Boodram, also known as Dole Chadee.

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

But I shall come to that at a later stage.

The Member made no reference to whether or not he had had prior knowledge from the police of the possession of his car by Nankissoon Boodram before February 7, 1984, and, if he had had such knowledge, with what result. What did he do when he was told by the police soon after the car was transferred that it was in the possession of this reputed drug dealer? There is no reference to that.

Prime Minister's Car
[MR. ROBINSON]

Friday, May 27, 1994

I come now to the Prime Minister's charges. In his statement to the House of Representatives made on February 18, the Member for San Fernando East, now Prime Minister, gave utterance to very strong and emotive language and made very damaging allegations, examples of which are as follows:

- (i) ". . . a number of carefully drafted newspaper articles relating to my private transactions have been appearing in the media."
- (ii) "When unsavory elements in the national community seek to link the Prime Minister . . . to their own shady dealings,"
- (iii) "Clearly, an attempt is being made to destabilize the country."

That is a very, very far-reaching and serious charge—an attempt is being made to destabilize the country.

- (iv) "This strategy to discredit key individuals and institutions is a well worn ploy of the international drug trade."
- (v) "In this instance I have been targeted."
- (vi) "From information available to me as Prime Minister this is only the beginning."

Those are quotations extracted from the statement to this honourable House made by the hon. Prime Minister on Friday, February 11.

2.05 p.m.

I come now to the "Issues Arising" on these facts that I have enumerated and the statements that I have quoted. Such language, couched as it is in blanket terms is, of course, intimidating. It may well be justified in some cases. It may well be that all the Prime Minister has said about attempts to destabilize the country and to target individuals, is justified, having regard to information available to the Prime Minister. But it could also be designed to deter journalists, professionals, parliamentarians and anyone else, from asking questions and probing into the matter and seeking the truth. And what we must be concerned with in Parliament is the truth.

Indeed, some very disturbing issues arise that cannot be swept under the carpet or brushed aside. For example: Can the purchase, by a Minister of Government, of a high-priced motor vehicle with foreign exchange approval, for use in his ministerial capacity, be regarded as an exclusively private transaction?

It cannot be. The purchase, through a concession from the Government of a vehicle, or any other commodity, for use in one's public duties, is not exclusively a private transaction. It has serious and far-reaching public implications. Because the mere fact that a concession is given, indicates it is not given equally to all citizens: it is given to a selected number of citizens who may be considered to qualify be reason of their duties for the concession of the foreign exchange approval for the vehicle.

The second issue which arises: Is such foreign exchange approval not a benefit, concession or other advantage bestowed on him by the state? It is clear that that concession which was granted would have been of benefit, or other advantage, conferred on the recipient by an officer of the state on behalf of the state.

When the Minister sells the vehicle for a profit, how does that profit come about? It comes about because of the act of foreign exchange approval by an officer of the state acting on behalf of the state on behalf of the relevant public body.

If a man comes and offers you an obviously excessive price for a motor car, or any other commodity, should you not, in a position of trust as a Minister of Government, ask yourself, why is this man willing to pay so much for this vehicle? I am saying this on the assumption that what this House was told by the Prime Minister is true. Serious questions arise regarding the veracity of the statement; regarding whether the Prime Minister was candid and truthful as he ought to be to this House, setting an example to the country.

The office of Chief Executive is one of enormous trust. It is an office which requires that an example be set to the country, for when the rot starts it starts at the head, and if the rot is lower down, it cannot be cured if there is rot at the top. This is why I ask these questions.

Was the Minister at that time not a public officer placed in a position of trust—trust by the public, trust by the country that he represented? Did he commit a breach of trust amounting to misconduct in office by the calculated use of this office for private gain?

When you buy a car for \$75,000 and you sell it for \$103,000 by reason of concessions that you have obtained in your office, is that not a calculated use of your office for private gain—within one month?

Prime Minister's Car
[MR. ROBINSON]

Friday, May 27, 1994

When, if at all, did the Minister know that his car was in the possession of Nankissoon Boodram? If he was indeed so informed by the police, what, if anything, did he do about it?

Here you have bought a car with public concessions; you have disposed of it within a month; the police tell you that it is in the possession of a reputed drug dealer, what do you do about it? Do you say, "it has nothing to do with me"? Is that the attitude? If that is the attitude, it shows the utmost moral innocence.

I was one of the founders of the People's National Movement and I know why the letters P-N-M were chosen. P stood for public education; N stood, in those days, for nationhood, and M stood for morality in public affairs. So we saw the importance that the party at that time attributed to morality in public affairs, against the reputation for corruption that Trinidad had. The federal commissioners recommended against the federal capital being put in Trinidad because they said the atmosphere was murky and unhealthy and the federal site should not be in a capital that had that kind of environment and atmosphere.

How, indeed, was the purchase of the vehicle financed by the Minister?

The Minister was poor, apparently. He had to sell. Immediately the price of gas went up, he had to sell. He was wealthy enough to buy a Royal Saloon motor car—imported car—when the lesser ones of us are expected to promote domestic industry and use domestic cars. He was wealthy enough to buy a Royal Saloon, one of the most expensive cars, but he suddenly became poor, as he tells us, when the price of gas went up. So he had to get rid of his big car, but he made sure that he got a profit of 44 per cent. If it were my private business, I would compliment him on his perspicacity, on his shrewdness. But I do not expect, and I do not think any citizen expects, anyone to use his public office in order to achieve such enormous and unconscionable profits for his personal use.

How was the purchase of the vehicle financed by the Minister? We do not know. Was it by cash? Was a receipt given for the money paid? Who issued the receipt? No documentary evidence has been produced. The only evidence we have had is the newspaper article by one Dole Chadee.

You know, a drowning man grasps at straws. And if ever there was a case of straw being used, it is in this matter.

Hon. Member: You are grasping at straws!

Mr. A.N.R. Robinson: Will you keep quiet? I do not expect anything better from you. You know, there is a story about a flock of geese, when one cackles, all the other geese cackle. I do not expect a Government to behave like that.

2.15 p.m.

Is it true, as alleged, that the Minister sought no tax exemptions and no government loan to which he was entitled? Is it true that the vehicle was insured for only three months? If tax concessions had been obtained, and a Government loan used for the financing of the vehicle, it could not have been disposed of—according to the conditions of the rules—within two years. Do these matters not suggest preparation for sale? Indeed it was a sale. The question arises whether sale was intended at all. Or, whether the Minister was not used as a mere conduit to obtain the foreign exchange approval and to have the vehicle brought into the country. These questions arise and they have to be taken seriously.

What was the reason? Did the Prime Minister speak the truth to the Parliament when he said it was about one month after the time of purchase that he decided to sell the vehicle? If he did not obtain tax concessions; if he insured for only three months; if he did not obtain a loan for the purchase of the vehicle, did that not indicate that he was freeing his hand to dispose of the vehicle? And that at the time of the acquisition of the vehicle, he was preparing to dispose of it? Did he at that time know that the price of gas was going up and that is why, at that time—though he said it was a month later—

These are questions about serious issues that arise. If they do not arise in Trinidad, they arise in Tobago, and I represent Tobago. If one thinks that everybody belongs to a culture of "all ah we thief", I want to say I exclude Tobago from that culture. We must deal with issues as they arise!

Is the Member for San Fernando East accountable for the use he makes of his office? A minister is accountable to the population, Parliament and the country for the use he makes of his office. Perhaps, the most fundamental question of all is: Why did the Prime Minister not immediately the matter arose say, "I open myself to scrutiny; I have nothing to hide." Why have we been witnessing this elaborate charade, this attempt to abuse and throw mud over the last few weeks?

Why does the country have to go through this agony when one man can get up and say, as he ought to do, "I open myself to scrutiny; ask what questions you may." That is the example that this country needs today! That is the example this Parliament needs now! That is the example this Parliament should have had from the very beginning!

Prime Minister's Car
[MR. ROBINSON]

Friday, May 27, 1994

Nobody is going to tell me I must remain silent on this. I will never remain silent, not until the issues are agitated and resolved! That is my duty as a representative of Tobago East! My duty as a representative in this Parliament! No intimidation shall stop me! You can blow up police headquarters if you want! You can assault the Parliament building if you want! You can shoot me if you like! What I stand for will live on! The last time issues of this kind were raised, in the middle of the O'Halloran and Tesoro debate, this Parliament was invaded. On an important issue of that kind where hundreds of millions of dollars were taken out of the country—

Mr. Bereaux: You brought Tesoro into this country. You are the man who signed the document!

Mr. A.N.R. Robinson: Listen to the Member now!

Mr. Bereaux: That is true, you brought it up so I—

Mr. A.N.R. Robinson: Do not do me that, you are a professional.

Mr. Bereaux: No, but it is the truth.

Mr. A.N.R. Robinson: Why did the Prime Minister not say from the start, "I have nothing to hide"? I ask now: Why does he not now say "I have nothing to hide. Let us set up an independent inquiry"? You are asking me to sit in this Parliament and accept this state of affairs, Madam Speaker? Never! Never! Never!

Why are the most serious and blanket allegations extended to include everybody, including those who are merely seeking the truth? Let us have the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth!

Mr. Valley: That is original.

Mr. Humphrey: It may be original for you.

Mr. A.N.R. Robinson: Make confession, meekly kneeling upon your knees.

Madam Speaker, was the lure of private profit so great that the Member for San Fernando East has unwittingly—or wittingly, I do not know; I suggest unwittingly—delivered himself into the arms of those who may be disposed to submit the Prime Minister of the country to blackmail? What has happened to date? The Government is producing in this Parliament, a statement made by a person reputed to be a drug dealer on four murder charges in support of its case. Why should a prime minister be in that position? Who has placed him in that position? Is he blaming us for putting him in that position?

Mr. B. Panday: The Opposition! The Opposition is the cause!

Mr. A.N.R. Robinson: Why has he put himself in—Why has the lure of profit—the love of money they say is the root of all evil. Why has the Prime Minister allowed himself to be in that position through a search for private gain? What is the position of Trinidad and Tobago now? Charges are being made against the top executive personality in the country for involvement in improper dealings related to the drug trade, and he is stubbornly refusing an investigation; legislation to fulfil the requirements of an international covenant falls by the board. What are they telling the country? That the Opposition is so corrupt that it will not support the legislation. And, the Opposition is saying that the Prime Minister is so involved that he will not accede to an inquiry; and that is what the outside world is being told.

Madam Speaker, the presumption in many quarters is that leaders of developing countries are corrupt. That is the presumption in many quarters in the outside world. That is why the Americans were able to move into Panama to take out Noriega.

2.25 p.m.

“...Charles Shapiro, Chargé d'Affaires at the United States Embassy, said yesterday that further financial assistance to the TT Government to combat the drug menace depended on TT's effects in the on-going war against narcotics.”

Are we now a client state of the United States? We will give you money and monitor how you spend it, and if you do not spend it properly, we will not give you more. I bowed my head in shame when I read that, and all these criticisms of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago for not taking the action that should be taken.

As I said, Trinidad and Tobago is carrying the standard in the world community against the drug trade by its proposal for an International Criminal Jurisdiction. Do you know how that arose? It arose in this way. The motivation for it getting into Caricom and into the nation was this. Firstly, there was a time when the Prime Minister of Jamaica, Mr. Edward Seaga, was being accused in the United States of drug involvement. He was very indignant about it. He reported to a Heads of Government meeting that hooded witnesses were appearing before Congressional committees in the United States, disguised so that you could not identify them, giving evidence and calling his name.

Mr. Seaga was very indignant about it, and we decided that we would write to President Reagan on that matter. I said that we should not only write objecting to this practice in the United States, but we must give them an alternative, and

Prime Minister's Car
[MR. ROBINSON]

Friday, May 27, 1994

proposed to President Reagan that we were willing to join with the United States and other countries to set up an acceptable system by means of which these charges could be evaluated and disposed of. Within that context, we proposed an International Criminal Jurisdiction.

When later I met President Bush—because President Reagan demitted office soon after that—I raised the matter with him and said that the answer to these questions is an International Criminal Jurisdiction. He said that he would look into it. Very soon after that, the United States went into Panama to take a head of government into the United States for trial. If ever there was a travesty of justice, it was that, and the whole world stood by and allowed that to happen. And then we see that has been happening in other countries. Since then, when the proposal for the International Criminal Court was first mooted at the United Nations, it was greeted with cynicism and hostility. Only a few countries supported it. Within three years a dramatic swing, a sea of change in opinion had taken place, and today there are countries like Germany, Japan, Italy, Canada, Australia, Eastern Europe, Russia supporting the proposal for an International Criminal Court; but you do not hear a word from Trinidad and Tobago.

At the last Heads of Government Conference in Cyprus, it was the President of Cyprus who put forward the proposal to the Heads of Government, when Trinidad and Tobago had been leading the standard. It is I who had been proposing. *[Interruption]* This is a fact—that the narcotic trade across international frontiers *[Interruption]* You cannot do me anything more; you cannot do me anything more; you have tried to despoil my character; you have tired everything; you cannot try anything new.

I proposed to the international community that trafficking across national frontiers should be an international crime. It is still being, to some extent, debated, and it seems clear now that one of the countries which have not been in favour is the United States, but it seems now that everybody is coming around to accepting that trafficking in drugs across national frontiers should be an international crime.

We should be in a position to say that the United States should use its vast power to co-operate on a multilateral basis—not a bilateral basis as exists now where they can give you money today and stop it tomorrow if you do not behave yourself. This Government deserves it, but the country does not deserve it. That should not be. We should be urging President Clinton at this stage—because he appears to be faltering—and strengthening his hand in order to support the proposal of an International Criminal Jurisdiction and an International Criminal Court.

With all this talk about international co-operation—we all agree that international co-operation is needed, but you are likely to get the most international co-operation if nations agree that we have a court to which people can be extradited where necessary, or against whom charges can be made if their actions cross national frontiers, and they can be indicted, and if they refuse to turn up to answer to the charge, the indictment stands. So, they are stigmatized until they seek to clear their names by answering the indictment and appearing before the court. It is reasonable and necessary.

It is not easy to bring a head of Government to justice in a Third World country. It is a most difficult thing because the moment you touch him others start to act up. It is no question of everybody is equal in terms of the standards that you apply. There is no question of that at all. We know that. Consequently, it is very important that a beginning be made. As I have always said, if you want my vote—you can go ahead and do whatever you wish—but if you want my vote, I have to exercise my discretion and my best judgement, and I have to do what my conscience tells me I ought to do, and nothing that you can throw at me is going to move me from that.

This is why I say that this is a matter which raises many issues. It cannot be left hanging in the air. This is a matter which involves the person who should be setting an example to the country. This is a matter which should not have reached this stage at all. It should have been disposed of without any waste of parliamentary time. Unfortunately, it is not so. And who is responsible for this incredibly sad state of affairs where Trinidad and Tobago's image abroad is being sullied, where the country is disappointed, where the country is looking forward to the Parliament doing something and the Government doing something effective in its struggle against crime? Who is responsible for this state of affairs? I presume they would say the Opposition, so get rid of the Opposition. The next thing is get rid of the Opposition.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Members' speaking time has expired.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. A. N. R. Robinson: Madam Speaker, I am grateful to this honourable House for the extension.

Prime Minister's Car
[MR. ROBINSON]

Friday, May 27, 1994

Get rid of the Opposition! Well we have had many one-party states in the world and all of them have failed. World experience and democratic experience is that for democracy to work there must be an Opposition. You should welcome an Opposition and seek to work as best you can. If you cannot, that is another matter. No serious effort has ever been made, for example—I think I speak for the Member for Tobago West as well as myself on this—to obtain our votes.

2.35 p.m.

Do you know why? Their object is to polarize the country! But Tobago will not be in that. And when I say Tobago, I speak on behalf of the whole of Tobago in this. Tobago would not be part of any polarization of this sort! We deal with issues as they arise, that has been our training, that has been our background, that has been our aspiration for public life.

I have heard the Member for Diego Martin West making the most violent and acrid charges against the Tobago House of Assembly in the presence of the Prime Minister, on public platforms and elsewhere; now his mouth is shut. The Prime Minister told us that the matter was referred to the Auditor General, when most of the matters did not fall within the purview of any Auditor General. It was just a charade, just throwing wool over people's eyes.

This is a serious matter, and it is fortunate in a sense that this conjuncture of events should have taken place at this time, so that the country is forced to pay attention to fundamental issues of standards of conduct in our Parliament, morality in public affairs and morality in this country.

I have been told time and time again that Trinidad does not care about corruption. I do not believe that at all. If Trinidad does not care about corruption, Tobago cares, and my colleague the Member for Tobago West and I represent Tobago. I have no doubt that Trinidad cares, but as I say, if Trinidad does not care, then Tobago cares. Tobago cares very deeply, because one can see the consequences.

During the oil boom Tobago got virtually nothing, when hundreds of millions were spirited away! We do not exercise any influence in this Parliament. But if one is going to call upon me to exercise my influence, well, let me exercise it in the interest of truth, justice and fairplay.

I have been in public life for 38 years. If they have anything against me, I have told them I open myself fully for any independent inquiry. Let Members on the other side say the same, and let it be truthful, let us have an independent inquiry.

Short of an independent inquiry, with recommendations concerning future conduct in public life in Trinidad and Tobago; short of raising the standards of morality in public affairs; short of raising the standard of setting an example in this Parliament to the country; and short of opening ourselves to whatever scrutiny that will be required, do not expect my vote at all. And may the Lord have mercy on their souls.

Seconded by Miss P. Nicholson.

The Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources (Dr. The Hon. Keith Rowley): Madam Speaker, we are all human and subject to mistakes, but I really am surprised that I am taken for Tobago West.

I came here this afternoon, on Private Member's Day not expecting to participate in the debate before the House, since the last day we left we were in a debate which was quite different from the one which is now engaging our attention. But, as my colleague, the Leader of Government Business has said, we would have no difficulty in acceding to the request of Members on the other side to change course and to engage in this particular debate.

Let me start my contribution by quoting from—

Madam Speaker: If the Member could excuse me for one minute, I have a report from the Sargeant in the Gallery. There is someone there who is not obeying instructions of the police officer. If the person persists in such conduct I would have cause to have him or her removed physically from the Chamber. Please obey the instructions of the police officer whoever you are.

Please proceed, Member for Diego Martin West.

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: Yes, Madam Speaker, I would like to start my contribution in response to the presentation by the Member for Tobago East by quoting from *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*. The details of the edition can be found—I am quoting from page 559, it says:

Hypocrisy: It is derived from the Greek word hypokrisis: act of playing a part on the stage; act on the stage; it also means a feigning to be what one is not or to believe what one does not; it also means: the false assumption of an appearance of virtue or religion. The word "hypocrite" comes immediately after. It says that word means: one who affects virtues or qualities he does not have. Hypocritical means: characterized by hypocrisy, being a hypocrite. Interestingly enough the next word; "hypocycloid" means; the curve traced by a point on the circumference of a circle rolling on the interior of another circle.

Prime Minister's Car
[DR. THE HON. K. ROWLEY]

Friday, May 27, 1994

Having heard the presentation of the Member for Tobago East, I think one would have no difficulty in appreciating his hypocycloid qualities. Because, Madam Speaker, in a significant proportion of the gist of his presentation, one could not help but notice the "I", "I this and I that and I the other".

The Member said, "what I stand for shall prevail", and I was trying to follow what exactly he stands for; I had great difficulty in identifying what exactly he stands for. And I would have been happy if I could have identified what he stands for so that I could have addressed that issue.

I have no doubt whatsoever that the manoeuvre with which we have co-operated with the Opposition today as Government, to allow Motion No. 7 to be debated today ahead of other Motions, is the gasping response of those on the other side, who, I hope, have recognized the error of their ways and are seeking today to address the issue in a hypocycloid way.

The Member started out on an issue of the character of the person who today holds the office of Prime Minister, on an issue where the gist of it is that what we need to identify is the relationship between the current Prime Minister and drug dealers. That is the substance of the Motion. But then, as we proceeded, and the Member got more emotional, the gist shifted to a number of other considerations which mainly had to do with alleged misconduct by the Minister of Energy ten years ago, in respect of the leakage of foreign exchange; the profit margin on the sale of his car; the morality of public officers selling a car on which they had concessions and so forth.

2.45 p.m.

I wish to put this in context, because what we are being asked to do is to adjudicate on the conduct of the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago today on an action which took place 10 years ago; and we, therefore, must see that conduct in the context of the time that the action took place.

What exactly did the Member try to raise? The Member tried to raise the fact that the then Minister of Energy obtained a licence to buy a motor car. But the Member is misinformed, because at that time, motor cars came into Trinidad and Tobago under two arrangements: there were the CKDs that were built up in this country and offered for sale, but in parallel with that, a certain percentage of the local market was satisfied by importation of completely assembled vehicles.

If the Member asks his Attorney General of his last Cabinet what car he drove, he would tell him that he drove a Peugeot which came into this country as

a completely assembled car and sold as such. Car dealers, then, brought in a portion of the completely assembled cars at the market price, and then they would sell them to persons who so desired. In fact, the persons who bought those cars did not get individual licences.

It was the dealers of the franchises who got those licences, because the Ministry of Trade controlled the whole matter and one could access either a foreign vehicle or a locally assembled one. The crime that the Prime Minister who, at that time, was Minister of Energy, is supposed to have committed and which, as we are being told, is causing all this anguish to the population, is that he bought one of those cars.

The next thing we are being told is that having bought the car, he sold it. The argument here is: Why would a person who bought a car want to sell it? In fact, the argument goes even further: The Member for Tobago East is also asking, in his indignation: Where did he get the money to buy the car? I was not aware that the Minister of Energy in Trinidad and Tobago was embargoed from entering banks and finance houses and even his grandmother's piggy-bank! I am not aware that to buy a car in this country, one needs the permission of the Member for Tobago East, or any such "Pontius Pilate". Could that really be a serious question? And we are being told that the national community is suffering anguish.

We are also told that it does not "look right" on two counts: one, that he bought the car and sold it soon after; and two, that he had insured the car for a short period. If I buy a motor car and I live in San Fernando and am travelling to Port of Spain every day to go to work, and the price of gasoline doubles, and I take a decision that I no longer want to incur that expense in fuel—the Member for Tobago East is saying he does not believe that and, therefore, there must be something else to it. I am saying the Member for Tobago East is free not to believe that, and if he can demonstrate otherwise, then do so. But do not tell me that because he does not believe that, there must be something else to it.

Mr. Valley: And there must be an inquiry.

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: And there must be a commission of inquiry into it. That is what we are being told.

We are also being told that there is something sinister about it because the Member did not access the concession that was allowed to him, and if he accessed the concession, the vehicle should not have been sold in a short period. The fact, which has already been made public is that the Member at the time of ordering the car from the local dealer, had applied for the concession which was available to

Prime Minister's Car
[DR. THE HON. K. ROWLEY]

Friday, May 27, 1994

him as a Member of Cabinet. These things are processed over a period; the change in the price of fuel took place in the interim and, the facts are that soon after the car was sold the approval did, in fact, come through.

If it was not accessed there was no consideration of the concession because a private decision was made to dispose of the car. But the Member for Tobago East understands something else; he knows something else. That is how the mind of the "I specialist" works. Do you understand, Madam Speaker? So he is not accepting that!

He is also imputing improper motives to the fact that the vehicle was insured for 12 weeks. Madam Speaker, if that is a crime, as I stand here now, I am guilty. Because my motor car, which is eight years old, was written off in an accident last July. I did not buy a new one until February of this year. When I obtained the car I took out short cover insurance—a cover note for a period of one month—and during that month I asked my broker to shop around for the best terms and conditions, which could be available for insuring my car.

Some companies were offering certain condition; others were not. Some were offering insurance specifically to me and my wife; others were offering something else. Some were asking excesses beyond a certain level, some were offering less. So during that month, which I paid for, I canvassed the market, got the best deal which I presume I am entitled to access and accept, and I hope that in a year or 10 years' time I am not told that I should not have taken that decision.

I have now insured my car for one year, after shopping around for a month, and that has saved me money! As far as I know I broke no law, and I have not behaved immorally. And to the best of my knowledge even companies do that. That is normal. So I fail to see what is this anguish that the national community is going through, because that situation prevailed with my colleague the Member for San Fernando East.

Another thing we are hearing is that he sold the car for a profit. I am very happy to know that the Prime Minister, the then Minister of Energy, knows that when you sell something you must make a profit!

Mr. B. Panday: Except the state enterprises.

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: And I am not the only person—

Mr. B. Panday: Except Natural Gas.

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: You keep quiet! [*Interruption*] Madam Speaker, I am not the only person who is of that view, because an eminent political leader, whom the Member for Tobago East has the honour to follow—

Mr. Manning: *In loco parentis.*

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: —as fast they lose their deposits he follows. That person also had a motor car to sell. I am talking, now, about the leader of the National Alliance for Reconstruction, who was the Minister of Finance under the Member for Tobago East and who, before he became Minister of Finance, an equally powerful position of trust in this country, was coming down the road in Maraval one day, a car almost "lick" him off the road. While he is sweating as a result of the experience, the other driver comes out and says: "You selling that car?" And his immediate response was: "If the price is right." [*Interruption*] And he proceeded to sell the car in a matter of hours. And I hope, for his sake, that he made a substantial profit!

2.55 p.m.

So the issue is not whether the Prime Minister, who was then Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, had a right to sell his car; the question that is being asked—which is causing anguish on the population—is whether he made a big enough profit. How much per cent is it?

Dr. Baboolal: Forty-four.

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: Forty-four per cent. I think the country knows that it is in good hands, because this Prime Minister is a good businessman. [*Desk thumping*] I am not aware that that is an immoral or illegal act.

It is also the work of an educated hypocrite to raise that as a serious issue in this Parliament today, because I want to ask my colleague, the Member for Tobago East: Did he notice that a significant number of his Ministers, in 1991, bought new vehicles, under the same terms and conditions as applied to the then Minister of Energy? Knowing that they were going out of office, or even those who thought they were going to return to office, they bought vehicles with all the concessions.

I want to ask my Friend from Tobago East how many of those persons are still carrying out public duty? How many of them still have the motor vehicles? How many of them sold their vehicles? How many of them sold those vehicles at a loss? And when they sell those vehicles will they incur a loss? If they realize a profit, will he take the same position that he is taking now that if one is a public

Prime Minister's Car
[DR. THE HON. K. ROWLEY]

Friday, May 27, 1994

official and a vehicle is bought under government concession, if it is sold at a profit, the person has committed an immoral act?

Madam Speaker, public servants over the eons have been buying and selling motor vehicles. Are there any public servants in this country who sold a motor car and made a profit in the transaction? What exactly would the Member for Tobago East have us believe? That there is a standard for the then Minister of Energy which is quite separate and apart from that of all other persons in this country, to the extent that the international community is now going to hold us up as something strange in the world because of what he demonstrated this afternoon?

I hope that by now every person who has followed this position, as taken by the Member for Tobago East, will see it for what it is—a straw on which the Member for Tobago East is seeking to clutch as he drowns in the mire of whatever else he is in. It could not be a serious issue with which to come to try to cast aspersions on the character of this Government—we have taken the position that this is bordering on frivolous and vexatious. This arose out of the mischievousness of Members of the Opposition, and because they are reckless, irresponsible and mischievous, does not mean that the Government must accede to their request.

Madam Speaker, you were presiding two Fridays ago, when, in furtherance of this particular mischief which seeks to link the Prime Minister with alleged drug dealers, the Member for Couva North very slickly and cleverly sought to give the impression and, in fact, put in *Hansard*, that he had a photograph showing the Member for San Fernando East in the presence of the said gentleman who he claimed is a drug dealer, and when he was challenged, he had to back off and apologize because he had no such photograph. He then went on to secure the position by saying that he had a photograph of the Member attending the funeral of some other drug dealer.

Hon. Member: Elephant Walk!

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, nothing is further from the truth.

Mr. B. Panday: Did the Attorney General attend the funeral?

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: And you would have heard them from time to time, Madam Speaker, *soto voce* and otherwise, throwing across the floor and telling their friends from the newspapers, whoever else they are, about— It is not only the car! They are making an issue as to whom he sold his house to, and they wanted to make an issue about who bought the house.

Mr. B. Panday: That is the real issue.

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, the said leader of the party to which the Member for Tobago East belongs, in seeking to advance the ridiculous charge and the ridiculous case, made the point that the Prime Minister, ten years ago, had a duty of care to find out whom he was selling his car to, to ensure that the car would not go into the hands of a drug dealer. Also, that the then Minister of Energy, who is now the Prime Minister, in discharging that duty of care, should have done like the previous Prime Minister who, according to the leader of the NAR, was so concerned and careful in his action that he had a house for rent in Eilerslie Park and for five years did not rent the house while he occupied the Prime Minister's residence, for fear that he might rent it to a drug dealer. What utter rubbish!

If it is that we are being told that a person having a house in this country cannot rent it for five years because there is a very good chance, or a better than even chance, that he would rent the house to a drug dealer, then I am saying we are in real serious trouble, having—

Mr. Robinson: May I say, Madam Speaker, I have never said that.

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, I never said he said that!

Mr. Robinson: The Member is saying that somebody said that I said that, so I am saying that I never said that, and I want to make it clear that the reason I did not rent my house was that I had offers from persons who were doing business with the Government.

Madam Speaker: What are we getting to? Please, hon. Member. He is not making any accusations against you. Please, let us continue with the debate.

Mr. Robinson: He is making damaging allegations!

Madam Speaker: This is with respect to a leader of another party, not the present Member.

Mr. Robinson: That is not fair!

Madam Speaker: This is when we bring these decadent things into Parliament.

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, I would not for one minute seek to cast any aspersions on the character of the Member for Tobago East. [*Desk thumping*] I just said—and it can be checked on the record—I never said that the

Prime Minister's Car
[DR. THE HON. K. ROWLEY]

Friday, May 27, 1994

Member said any such thing. I said that the leader of the party to which he belongs said that the Member for San Fernando East should have behaved like the previous Prime Minister, who—in the words of the leader of the NAR today—in discharging his duty of care and doing it properly, did not rent his house. I am saying that that is a very strange development.

However, the point I am making is that an onus is being put on persons of the PNM that if one has a house to rent, one has to ensure that the person it is being rented to is of impeccable character, and if subsequent to renting it, or in selling it to a person, that the person commits an offence, then the person in the PNM who made that transaction is in big trouble.

Could that be a position of reason? If I carried out a transaction now and sometime later the person with whom I have carried out the transaction got into difficulty, the standard being laid down in this discussion by those who advance the cause is that I am responsible.

On this particular matter, it is a question of a sale being made by one person, the person identified; the purchase being made by another person, that person identified; that person sells to a third person, that being identified; and confirmed by all parties concerned. The Member sought to give the impression that the Prime Minister of this country is now bringing to his defence, as though he needs a defence, statements by a person who is now on murder charges and so forth.

3.05 p.m.

That is not what I did last week. When I used an article from the newspaper in this House, it was quoting from a court record of 10 years ago. It was a sworn statement that was given in a court of law in this country 10 years ago to deal with the same motor car, the same individual, and it clarified the position. No one on this side sought to ask anyone to come and say, "Is it true or not?" People have been speaking for themselves. As I said on the last occasion, there are some persons who very conveniently decide to say, "I do not accept that; I do not believe that."

If the person who bought the car from the dealer is not allowed to say that he bought it from the dealer, who is going to confirm that? Somebody else? Of course, if the person had said anything other than that which was damaging to the Prime Minister, then that would have been quite acceptable. The origin of the statement would not have been a bone of contention.

Madam Speaker, what we have been told is that any person who sold a vehicle to anybody must now demonstrate to the national community that the person or

persons, wherever they might be, whoever they might be, were fit and proper persons to end up with your vehicle. As I say, I, myself, am at risk by this standard, because I have had a number of my vehicles bought by persons on whose character I can make no statement. I cannot vouch for their character.

How were transfers done for motor vehicles 10 years ago? I have a car for sale; a person offers something; I accept; the person pays me; usually the person comes with a transfer form; I sign the transfer form. The assumption is that this person who has paid will go to the licensing office and would conclude the transaction without my presence. That was the accepted procedure. I have sold a number of vehicles like that. I have signed transfer forms and the vehicles have been transferred. That procedure was flawed, in that it permitted the first buyer to pass the transfer form to someone else, sell the car to someone else and the transaction would be done. John Public knows that.

So to get up here and say that a vehicle which I have had, being transferred to a third or fourth party unknown to me, is something out of the ordinary, will not convince anybody in this country who is fair-minded that something out of the ordinary has happened. But the self-righteous with a case to prosecute, seeking to tarnish the image and to politically damage the Government, would see something in it.

We have taken the position—and we all live here—that the population will adjudicate on matters of this nature. To seek to use that as a reason for not supporting legislation—we have also taken the position that the population will also adjudicate on that. They will be asked to determine whether or not they take a side—that of the Government, or that of the Members on the other side. That is all. We are entirely in the hands of the population. I agree with the Member for Tobago East that we cannot tell him how to vote. That is entirely up to him. It has always been so.

The issue was the Prime Minister's connection in transactions with drug dealers. When the Prime Minister spoke in this House in defence of himself he indicated that there was a conspiracy to tarnish Members of this Government. Today we hear the Member for Tobago East disparaging that. This issue has since moved from this business of the car, by way of rumour, slander and reckless behaviour by Members of Parliament, to something else.

I was coming here this evening and persons outside who have their own personal issue to bring to the attention of the public were demonstrating outside the Parliament. What were they saying? Members of Parliament are selling drugs.

Prime Minister's Car
[DR. THE HON. K. ROWLEY]

Friday, May 27, 1994

I do not know—so I am selling drugs? As if that could be dismissed, what am I hearing? The chief irresponsible person, the Member for Couva North, asked my colleague, the Member for Barataria/San Juan whether she has now been joined in the general basket of slander as a person who is involved in the drug trade. Because the image of the Government is being tarnished, but fortunately, only by Members of the Opposition.

The Members of the Opposition are hell bent on raising allegations to give the impression that the Government has something to defend. We have absolutely nothing to defend. I say it again. If any of the Pontius Pilates on the other side know of anybody on this side who has done anything wrong, with or without a drug connection, do not get our permission, take it to the authorities and let the law take its course. Let them take action. Do not come to the Parliament and try to tarnish our character. They are irresponsible!

The Member for Tobago East is concerned about the country's image. Do you think any person who is concerned about this country's image, on the basis of the facts that are available on this particular motor car issue, as a former Prime Minister, as a Member of Parliament, would bring a Motion like he has brought and seek to prosecute it, clutching at straws, as he has done?

But for the record, to give the international community the impression that the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago somehow has some case to answer with respect to his connection with drug dealers, I can tell you, the people of Trinidad and Tobago are of no such opinion, and we stand by that. It is those who prosecute that particular piece of mischief who will damage and tarnish this country's image, if this country's image is tarnished. It is those who propagate that kind of ridiculous allegation who are the ones responsible.

Worse than that, when we bring a Bill to the Parliament and it fails because they refuse to vote for it, a Bill that is meant to treat seriously and effectively with some aspects of the drug trade, if this country's image is damaged, it is not as a result of anything done by Members on this side. That must be put squarely at the doorstep of irresponsible and reckless people who happen to have the title of Members of the other side.

They fool no one. The very last person in this House who should seek to prosecute any such Motion is the Member for Tobago East, because he presided over a Cabinet, on the admission of the chairman of his party, that was elected with the assistance of a million-dollar contribution from an alleged drug dealer

who was fighting extradition. That does not bother his conscience. Let me remind the Member, for the second time, what the chairman of his party said about this particular issue, because the last time he did not hear me.

3.15 p.m.

Madam Speaker, for the benefit of my colleague, the Member for Tobago East, who postured here on the stage this afternoon about his personal connection in creating the International Criminal Court and so forth. I want to read what the chairman of his party said about the involvement of his Minister of Education in a matter of money laundering in Trinidad and Tobago. I quote from the *TT Mirror* dated December 7, 1990, one year before the Member for Tobago East demitted office as prime minister. I was accused by my colleague, the Member for Tobago West of spreading rumours; I am not spreading rumours, I am simply quoting what the chairman of their party said about their own behaviour—and it is not too late to have it refuted.

"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."

Atwell admitted

"...to knowing where the money came from, and stated that it was for this reason that the former Senator and Minister was asked to deposit the cheques into his personal account rather than into the official party account.

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

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,..."

The party chairman said:

"...you must understand, ladies and gentlemen, that certain monies cannot be put into certain...accounts for certain reasons.

'Clive spoke and kept on speaking to certain people, and he put the money in 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."

Prime Minister's Car
[DR. THE HON. K. ROWLEY]

Friday, May 27, 1994

Madam Speaker, I want you to square that with the preening and posturing of the Member for Tobago East. How does that square with his concern for the image of this country? He was the leader of a party that is alleged to have done this; he is now talking about the population going through anguish, but this was brought to the attention of the public in 1990, and the Member had one year in office as Prime Minister, and never said a word! He had pip, he could not talk. *[Laughter]* All of a sudden he can talk; and can come here with some ridiculous accusations against a person of impeccable character. *[Desk thumping]*.

The Member for San Fernando East has served this country in public life for 23 years and it will take more than the behaviour, or expectation of the Member of Parliament for Tobago East to interfere with the public's perception of the character of my leader, the Member for San Fernando East. *[Desk thumping]*.

We are prepared, at any time of day or night, to go to the public and have them adjudicate on their perception of the character of the Member of Parliament for San Fernando East who, today, has served this country as Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago. I cannot say the same for the Member of Parliament for Tobago East because after this exposé when the population had an opportunity to adjudicate on him, the score was zip.

Madam Speaker, to the extent that others are being held responsible for that, it may be a good thing for the Member for Tobago East to examine what contribution this made. Because, I can tell you, in the 1992 by-election, we took this issue to the people of Diego Martin Central, and they adjudicated on this and it cost the Member for Tobago East his Minister of Education.

I talk about the hypocritical behaviour of the Member for Tobago East. He knows what we know about the record of his own government and comes here this evening and takes the position of priest. In making his call for the inquiry he said it is because the system, the Government or the country is rotting from the head down. I wonder where the country was rotting from when he sat in office as Prime Minister and this money laundering accusation was made, implicating—not any one person—the entire party, confirmed by the chairman who was appointed to the post of Minister of National Security; and God alone knows what files disappeared during that period! We do not know! But having made this admission, he was put in charge of the country's national security. Does one want to ask about implication of actions? And he tells us that he feels bad about it for the country.

This is not the only instance. If this was a one-off, one could have said it was accidental. The Member for Tobago East was the Prime Minister of this country

when a Member of his Cabinet was shown to have written a letter of recommendation to permit a convicted drug trafficker to have his sentence ameliorated in a foreign country, and he talks about international consideration and criminal court? And did absolutely nothing about it! And comes here today and postures!

Madam Speaker, we took that issue to the people in 1991 and they removed that minister from office. The Member for Tobago East could not do it! The people did it! A sitting minister under him admitted to knowing that a person was convicted of drug trafficking and wrote a recommendation of good character to get the court in a foreign country to reduce the sentence and retained his Cabinet position under this Member who, today, would have us believe that he has pangs of conscience.

Mr. Robinson: Madam Speaker, there is no truth in that. What the minister at the time said was that he had written the recommendation before, and when he got to know the facts he—

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, one thing I can say for the Member for Tobago East is that he is very consistent in his behaviour. All one has to do is to talk to him and "every little thing gonna be all right". Remember the Rambachan issue? He talked to him and it was okay. He is now saying that the Member said—and I want to say to you again—if the person holding high office in his administration at that time wrote that recommendation and simply talked to him and he accepted his word, what problem does he have in accepting the word of a better man? What problem does he have with that? Clearly he has no problem, therefore the Motion is mischievous.

The Member for Tobago East has the unmitigated gall to get up in this Parliament this evening and ask the question: Is the Member for San Fernando East speaking the truth? Is he serious, Madam Speaker? This is a former prime minister who came to this House and said he had a letter in which the names of PNM ministers involved in drugs were mentioned. And, when he was asked to produce the letter he came back to the House and said he could not find the letter. I ask him today: Have you found the letter as yet?

Mr. Robinson: Madam Speaker, for the information of the hon. Member, I found the letter and informed the Prime Minister—who at the time was the Member for San Fernando East in Opposition. When he heard that I had found the letter, he dropped the matter.

Mr. Manning: Madam Speaker, I really want to stay out of this debate this afternoon, but I think I must intervene to say that what the hon. Member for Tobago East has just said bears no relation to the truth.

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, I will stay out of that. Talk about a pattern of behaviour!

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. [*Hon. K. Valley*]

Question put and agreed to.

3.25 p.m.

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, I do not think that I should provide any evidence to confirm that if one has difficulty in believing the Member for San Fernando East—whom I would believe—I would not want to advance any support for my own position in that matter, but suffice it to say that the establishment of truth and fact on another person's part in the Cabinet of the former Prime Minister, the Member for Tobago East did not come about as a result of any commission of inquiry. That is a fact. But he is now laying down a standard that the truth and the fact of a 10-year old matter, which relates to the Member for San Fernando East, can only be established on the basis of a commission of inquiry. I leave that, Madam Speaker, for you to adjudicate on.

He talks about being ashamed of what Mr. Shapiro of the US Embassy said about Trinidad and Tobago. This Government, in fact no person in this Parliament, including the Member for Tobago East, has any control over what Mr. Shapiro says or does not say. He can say what he wants. What should concern us are the facts in relation to the matter spoken about by Mr. Shapiro. To the extent of the Member being ashamed, I think that there must have been a time when the Member did not know the meaning of the word, but now that he knows it he thinks that it should apply at this time. If he feels that way, I cannot help him with that feeling, but I can tell you, Madam Speaker, that this is not the time when the people of this country are ashamed of their Prime Minister. There may have been such a time, but not now.

The Member made a big play about something called an International Criminal Court. That reminds me of a contribution by my colleague, the Member for Naparima, when he spoke about people boarding aircraft in international air space. I have no problem with the hobby-horse of the Member for Tobago East

with respect to this thing called an International Criminal Court. In fact, when I was in high school, the Lions Club of Tobago had an essay competition which I won and got a prize of \$150.00. The essay was on a world government. I put the International Criminal Court in the same ballpark as the world government which, at the time, was an issue being raised by certain eccentric persons, and poor me in school, got caught up in it and I wrote an essay about the benefits of a world government.

Of course, I am talking about 1967. One knows how far that has advanced. It is the same thing with the International Criminal Court. The Member is giving the impression that something called the International Criminal Court would have far-reaching consequences with respect to dealing with the international drug trade. So, on the one hand he mentions his personal involvement in seeding the idea—nurturing it and so forth—and from time to time we see him going off into other parts of the world, meeting his colleagues and discussing this idea.

However, to the best of my knowledge, nothing substantial exists with respect to this. If my memory serves me right, the last comment which came out of that administration on this matter was one which was politely dismissive of it. So, there we had a crusader fighting for the International Criminal Court, who permitted his Cabinet member to intervene by writing to a foreign court to get a drug dealer to evade his just dues, but right here in the Parliament, on Wednesday, did not stay to cast his vote to pass a Bill for this country to ratify an international treaty, specifically to deal with drugs and drug-related matters.

We ask ourselves: "What do we have here? It must be Jekyll and Hyde." In one breath, he is concerned about the creation of an International Criminal Court—and I am not even prepared to spend my time discussing the merits and demerits of that—but I am saying that to the extent the Member is advancing that and the failure of this Government's interest in embracing that as a major initiative on the drug problem, causes us to wonder what the priorities are.

Clearly, there must be a higher priority on signing and ratifying the current international treaty which has been arrived at as the mechanism by which the international community will deal with drug traffickers. There must be something tangible to be gained from that. In fact, his own administration accepted that that was the thing to do at that time. Maybe in 10, 15 or 20 years we would get an International Criminal Court, which might be something better and at that time you take it on. But as it was in 1989, when he was Prime Minister, the government then agreed that the thing to do, in terms of dealing with the international aspect

Prime Minister's Car
[DR. THE HON. K. ROWLEY]

Friday, May 27, 1994

of drug dealing, was to sign and ratify the Vienna Convention which all countries of the world have agreed is the way to go.

Having agreed to that when he was Prime Minister in 1989, and the fact that there is a loophole in that law, we have come here to plug that loophole and expand that same initiative; but he goes home early—does not vote. Yet he comes here 48 hours after and is prosecuting a Motion that has absolutely no basis, and wants to give the impression that this Government is falling short of acceptable standards of public behaviour. That approach embodied in that Motion is clearly a figment of the imagination of those who would wish to see this Government tarnished. All I can say is that they have to come better.

The Member for Tobago East talks about a commission of inquiry. Different governments have different styles and the style of this Government is not to parade commissions of inquiry in front of the country. Once a commission of inquiry is set up, the Government of the day should have very little influence over it. In fact, it is a presidential inquiry. There was a situation in Trinidad and Tobago in 1987, and there was a the commission of inquiry into—to put it loosely—the corruption or the excesses of the PNM's years between 1956 and 1986.

3.35 p.m.

Remember the Alexander Commission of Inquiry set up by the Member for Tobago East when he was Prime Minister? That inquiry was supposed to have been the catharsis for all that had gone down in those periods. Needless to say, notwithstanding all that was said and done, and impressions being given that it was only a matter of time before the myriad of perpetrators be brought to justice, at the end of the day, you know what happened? Not as a result of anything that this Government did, but as a result of lack of evidence and want of prosecution, that commission of inquiry virtually had to come to nought.

If one had listened to what was being said and had observed the questions at the time the inquiry was set up, one would have thought that clearly there must have been some “cocoa in the sun” somewhere. Of course, that cocoa was not found. At the end of the day, it did cost us a few cocoa beans.

In 1989, we had a football match at the National Stadium. Persons known or persons unknown overloaded the National Stadium, by their own admission, by thousands of persons for substantial considerations. The Government of the day, under the same administration of the Member for Tobago East set up a commission of inquiry into what happened on November 19, 1989. Madam Speaker, to the best of my knowledge we are still inquiring at substantial cost to the country.

I am not making the point that commissions of inquiry have no role to play, I am simply drawing to your attention the fact that the Member for Tobago East has had his opportunities to put commissions of inquiry in place, and in terms of dealing with what appeared to have been there to be dealt with, I am not aware that we are any better off. The Member for Tobago East has a quixotic facet to his character: he has spent a substantial portion of his presentation and his life, chasing after windmills.

One heard him this afternoon making reference to the Tesoro situation. One must remember that it was the style of the previous government to come to this Parliament and prosecute cases with very little basis. I refer specifically to the prosecution of the Drug Report, where with great fanfare, drums and saxophone—53 policemen were suspended and a number of people, guilty and innocent, had their reputation tarnished. Then the band stopped playing, empty as the stage on which they played.

Worse than that, typical of the style—which they thought should be followed by others—the same Member for Tobago East, former Prime Minister, came to this House, trumpeted to the country that his Government had prosecuted the O'Halloran corruption cases and had successfully completed prosecutions and had got monetary returns; out-of-court settlement. Madam Speaker, what were the facts? Typical style: slander, tar everybody, accuse everybody, create the impression that everybody was guilty and that they would have been dealt with.

Trinidad and Tobago prosecuted a matter against O'Halloran and other parties at Tesoro and got an out-of-court settlement which was held up in this country as some major achievement. That a deal with Tesoro Corporation made all the shareholders very happy. What was the deal?

Trinidad and Tobago agreed to accept from Tesoro Corporation, I think it was, \$12 million as full and final settlement of all claims with respect to some purported action that was taken by Tesoro in Trinidad and Tobago. We were told that this was accompanied by a letter of apology. No such letter of apology has ever been made public in this country, where the Tesoro Corporation was shown to have acknowledged corruption in Trinidad and Tobago. But the then Government of Trinidad and Tobago accepted a \$12 million settlement, and strangely enough, that \$12 million had a condition to it. The condition was something that had absolutely nothing to do with O'Halloran and bribery. In keeping with the offer of that \$12 million, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago also had to accept the liability which might accrue to Tesoro Corporation for an arbitration matter which had been going on for years.

Prime Minister's Car
[DR. THE HON. K. ROWLEY]

Friday, May 27, 1994

At the time when the Government agreed to accept that liability in return for the \$12 million, the other party, W. R. Grace had already refused a \$40 million settlement. The Government knew at that point that it was getting \$12 million from Tesoro, but it had to pay out at least \$40 million to release Tesoro from a legal liability in a matter between Tesoro Corporation and W. R. Grace.

That is the famous Tesoro settlement. We got \$12 million and we ended up having to pay out, the final settlement was about \$78 million. We got \$12 million—the famous \$7 million for Pan Trinbago was supposed to have come from that \$12 million. But to get the \$12 million, we had to pay out, on behalf of Tesoro Corporation, to W. R. Grace \$78 million. And you understand why there was a difficulty with the Prime Minister selling a car for a profit? *[Laughter]* You understand.

The Prime Minister sold a car for a profit and that somehow bothers the Member for Tobago East immensely. When one examines his record, he sold the country at a loss, *[Laughter]* simply to be able to come here and parade on the national stage that we got a Tesoro settlement on O'Halloran corruption, but at the end of the day the people of Trinidad and Tobago were umpteen million dollars poorer and the shareholders of the said criminal Tesoro were millions of dollars richer. Madam Speaker, those are the facts on public record and I defy the Member for Tobago East to get up here now or any time and say that is not so.

One wonders why such a senior and seasoned parliamentarian would seek to come to this House to use parliamentary time to prosecute a non-case, seeking to give the impression that there is something that we should worry about.

3.45 p.m.

Mr. Humphrey: Have the inquiry!

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, what are we being asked to do? We are being asked to set up an inquiry every time a Member of the Opposition makes an allegation against a Member of the Government. Because the allegation is made, to satisfy what they call, public disquiet, we must set up a commission of inquiry. Right now, quite a few commissions are required, because I have heard it being said from the other side that I have done something in Tobago which should debar me from sitting in Parliament. I would love to find out what that is, and, for the benefit of Members on the other side, do not tell me inside here, I want you to tell me, in the presence of witnesses, outside the Parliament. *[Laughter]*

I have also heard it said by my colleague, the Member for Couva South, that I have had millions of dollars written off in some bank in Port of Spain. Madam

Speaker, that requires an inquiry. [*Chuckles*] I think a commission of inquiry should be set up, because we cannot have a Minister of Government who borrowed no money from the bank, received no money, probably received it in cash and is having it written off! I mean, that requires an inquiry. We must have an inquiry. But I need a seconder for the Motion and I hope that my friend from Couva South would second that Motion.

Mr. B. Panday: He will.

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: I have also heard it said, seriously, that the Government in its divestment programme has entered into all kinds of underhand deals with the corporations and international agencies that are assisting the Government in the divestment programme. Madam Speaker, that requires an inquiry. And I have also heard it said that Members on this side do not always sleep in their own beds. [*Laughter*] That requires an inquiry.

Mr. B. Panday: Tell me about it—I did not know that one!

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, I close by saying that the acceleration of this Motion today has one purpose only, and that is to dissect the sentiment of the country that is recorded in the editorial page of the *Trinidad Guardian*.

Mr. Maharaj: Read the *Guardian* editorial for them.

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: There are those who believe that the person who wrote this is a drug dealer. Free country.

Hon. Member: Commission of inquiry for that.

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: Yes, commission of inquiry. But whether there are persons who believe that or not, I ought, for the benefit of those on the other side who are inclined to prosecute this non-case, to excuse their reprehensible behaviour. Let me tell them how the country sees the substantial issue of the drug Bill—

Sen. Dr. Saith: Those fellows have interest in protecting drug lords.

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: And I am saying that the sentiment in this country is embodied in this article; and for the benefit of those on the other side, hear ye, and listen well. Madam Speaker, it says, and I quote:

"Torpedoing Drugs Bill

The parliamentary Opposition savaged the decent people of this country Wednesday evening by refusing to give their support to the Dangerous Drugs Bill when the time came in the House...to vote on it."

Mr. B. Panday: Oh yes, we are so happy.

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: The article says that Members—

"did not dare openly oppose the Bill by saying 'no'.

But they conveniently took the coward's way out by abstaining, knowing full well—"

Mr. B. Panday: Who wrote that, Mansoor?

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: "—that without their positive support the Bill would fail—"

Mr. B. Panday: He was the chairman of that company?

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: "—for want of the necessary majority to make it law."

"No more irresponsible act has been committed in the House of Representatives in the 32 years since Independence."

Mr. B. Panday: Since Mansoor.

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, the article goes on to say what the Bill was meant to do, and it goes on to say:

"The Bill was designed to plug loopholes in the existing Dangerous Drugs Act by creating offences for possessing certain chemicals and, more importantly, by expanding the offence of money laundering and by making provisions for the confiscation of property. These provisions are prerequisite to our ratification of the U.N. Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (The Vienna Convention).

Last February, the Bill was passed unanimously in the Senate after full and frank debate, including amendments arising out of recommendations made by all sides, including Opposition and Independents. Therefore the Bill was expected to enjoy a similar passage through the Lower House. But that was not to be, as the obstructionist instincts of the Opposition prevailed upon all good sense, resulting in a virtual torpedo of the Bill by abstention after a lengthy debate and genuine attempts by the Government to compromise.

They filibustered, calling at first for an investigation into the nonsensical charge that Mr. Manning had sold his car to a drug dealer ten years ago. They planted red herrings by introducing amendment after amendment and, finally,

produced their own bill out of the blue as the ultimate reason why they could not support the Government's measures.

By this failure, Trinidad and Tobago's reputation has been tarnished in the international arena. We are still unable to ratify the Vienna Convention which would empower us to co-operate effectively with competent authorities abroad to confiscate property derived from drug trafficking or used in the commission of money laundering offences....

The Government, having failed in Parliament, must now make a case in the court of public opinion, taking full advantage of the..."

opportunities available, I should say.

Madam Speaker, the article goes on to say—

"The Opposition has a responsibility,..."

Mr. B. Panday: Who wrote that?

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: "...one not just to oppose for the sake of opposition, but to put the national interest always ahead of politics."

Mr. B. Panday: As they do; as the *Guardian* does all the time.

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, it closes by saying—

"The UNC Opposition..."

And I dare say, for my own benefit, the "rump" of the NAR [*Laughter*] has

"let this country down very badly on Wednesday night. The law-abiding people of our country..."

Mr. B. Panday: They want protection from the Government.

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: "should let Panday and his cohorts feel, in no uncertain way, their deep dissatisfaction with the party's reprehensible (behaviour) "

Madam Speaker, that is the view of the *Guardian* editorial.

Mr. B. Panday: Yes. *Guardian* 'PNM' editorial. Do not forget the inverted commas. Is Mansoor connected with the company in any way?

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, I would leave that to be adjudicated upon by others. I know that there are those who believe that the PNM has infinite power in this country. But I can assure you, Madam Speaker, the PNM never writes the editorial of any newspaper in this country.

Mr. B. Panday: They used the same word as the Prime Minister—obstructionist.

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: If it is that the editorial sees it fit to place in context the behaviour of the Opposition in this way, all we can do is to say we concur with that. That is all we can do on this side. We agree with that.

Mr. B. Panday: And they concur with you.

3.55 p.m.

Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley: I say that this Motion, as moved by the Member for Tobago East, is nothing more than frivolous, vexatious, null and void, and it will have no effect.

Madam Speaker, I would close by telling the Member for Tobago East that he spoke about what he stood for, and to the extent that he can stand, I would advise him when he winds up this debate, to clarify for the national community and I dare say the international community, exactly what he stands for. I have great difficulty in sitting here time and time again and being lectured to in the most sanctimonious way by the person who should be the last person in Trinidad and Tobago to seek to establish standards for anybody with respect to public behaviour, particularly with matters relating to drug trafficking, drug dealing and behaviour in public office.

To the extent that there are records in this country, the records will show that at a time in Trinidad and Tobago there were a significant number of members of a cabinet, who, knowingly, accessed money from persons who were under more than suspicion in the drug trade, and that government was the NAR Government, led by the Member for Tobago East. That is the fact. And the deputy leader, the Member for Couva North, is still here with us today, and I trust that he will be with us for a long time.

To the extent that they will get up one by one and use the Parliament Chamber to cast aspersions on the character of people throughout the country, people who are not in a position sometimes to respond as we are, as to the extent that they choose to do that, all we can say to them is that they convince no one in this country that their posturings or their platitudes are of any substance, and anything but empty political rhetoric seeking to get benefit from tarnishing the image of a Government that today can stand up here and say that none of that statement or any similar statement could be taken seriously by the decent, law-abiding, self-respecting people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Madam Speaker, I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Ramesh L. Maharaj (*Couva South*): Madam Speaker, it is sad that in an important debate like this, the hon. Member for Diego Martin West could try to bring in all sorts of matters with which he wants to cloud the issue which is before this Parliament. The issue before us is not whether one believes one or the other. The issue before us is not what stand the Opposition took on the Dangerous Drugs (Amdt.) Bill. Those matters have been laid and we will deal with them. But the issue before this Parliament is whether the public welfare demands that an inquiry be conducted.

Madam Speaker, under the Commission of Inquiry Act, section 2 says that:

"The President can appoint a commission of inquiry where in the opinion of the President it is for the public welfare."

[Noise in Public Gallery.]

Madam Speaker: Silence please! Why is there so much noise in the public gallery? Officers, could you please attend to that noise.

Mr. B. Panday: The PNM contingent is leaving.

Mr. R. L. Maharaj: Madam Speaker, it is no defence by a government against such an inquiry being held for it to be said that during the regime of a previous government there were allegations made against that government. It is also no defence for a government to say it is not going to have an inquiry in the public welfare because the other side did not do things, or there are people on the other side who would need inquiring, into, too. That is no defence.

Dr. Rowley: Who said that?

Mr. R. L. Maharaj: It is no defence to say, "Well, all right, people would want to know which Minister sleeps in his bed and which Minister does not". That is no defence. The question which arises is: Have the facts and circumstances of this matter demonstrated that a government properly directed should have a commission of inquiry?

I would have thought that having regard to the Motion which has been filed, and having regard to the amount of concern which has been expressed by the public and the political parties about this matter, it was quite clear to anyone that any government which had the public welfare at heart would set up an inquiry.

Setting up an inquiry does not mean that any officer has committed any wrong. As a matter of fact, it is no admission that any officer has committed any wrong. An inquiry is in order to vindicate public interest in any matter which

Prime Minister's Car
[MR. MAHARAJ]

Friday, May 27, 1994

involves the standard of conduct or criticism of the standard of conduct in public life which, to such an extent, can cause public disquiet or public concern. It is not a favour that the Government is doing. It is an obligation which the Government has—setting up an inquiry to preserve the national image and integrity of the country.

So that I would still like to appeal to the other side, appeal to the Prime Minister. Under our system of government, the President acts on the advice of the Cabinet, and under the Commission of Inquiry Act, the President would act on the advice of the Executive. It would seem to me that the circumstances surrounding the sale of this car and what has emerged about the matter—nobody is saying that the Prime Minister, the Member for San Fernando East, is guilty of anything. What has happened is the facts and circumstances have raised certain matters which have caused disquiet amongst the population.

Madam Speaker, when this matter was raised in this House and I made an explanation, there were certain questions which I raised that clearly arose and which would remain unanswered unless these matters are investigated. I refer to a statement made by me in this House on February 25, 1994.

- "(1) Whether the Prime Minister used his moneys to purchase the motor car.
- (2) Whether the sale of the motor car as described in the certified copy to Nankissoon Boodram, or, as the Prime Minister alleged, to Sankey Subance, was a genuine one.
- (3) The amount the Prime Minister paid for the car and the amount for which he sold it?
- (4) Whether on the fifth day of February, 1984, whilst the car was registered in his name, it was driven by Nankissoon Boodram? Did the police stop the car? Was the matter drawn to the attention of the Prime Minister? Was the car then transferred to Nankissoon Boodram as recorded in the Certified Copy of Ownership?
- (5) Why the Prime Minister, on becoming the owner of the car, took out an insurance coverage for the car for a period of 11 weeks, from November 21, 1983 to February 16, 1984 instead of coverage for one year."

Madam Speaker, this is to illustrate that the revelation of these facts surrounding the sale of this car created certain unanswered questions. Therefore, I would have thought that these are matters in which the Government should not

have waited for a request. It should have, on its own volition, on its own motion, decided that it was going to set up such an inquiry.

4.05 p.m.

There was, in the United States of America, an instance in which the President decided that having regard to the insinuations, allegations, inferences, and criticisms, that emerged surrounding his business transactions—although that system provides for a special council through which there could be an independent investigation—he was prepared to have a full inquiry into the matter, which was being investigated. It is as if the President of the United States was prepared to put himself under a political microscope in order to have his property dealings investigated. What was it about? If I may quote from the *US News*:

" The Clintons had become partners in Whitewater Development Co. Inc. with McDougal and his wife in 1978. The way McDougal remembers it, he ran into the Clintons at a restaurant, and he broached the idea of buying and developing some land in the Ozarks. 'It was just a casual, social thing.' In the years to come, there would be personal and campaign loans to the Clintons from friendly banks and a fund-raiser to retire a campaign debt for which the Clintons were personally liable.

Now, however, investigators must determine whether McDougal's failed Madison Guaranty Savings & Loan improperly diverted depositor funds to Clinton's...campaign and whether Clinton, by appointing friendly regulators, kept a failing institution in business when it should have been declared insolvent. "

Madam Speaker, one sees that when one is in public life, one has a certain responsibility, not to oneself, but to the country which one serves. This inquiry is not to serve the interest of the Opposition or the interest of the Government; it would be an inquiry to serve the interest of the population of Trinidad and Tobago, and to preserve its national integrity. It is in that context I should have thought that this did not need a debate.

We operate under a very secret system: There is no right of information; there is no freedom of information. The point has been made that one of the defences for not having an inquiry is that the previous administration was selling this country at a loss. The same allegation can be made about this Government: There is the allegation that the natural gas of Trinidad and Tobago is being subsidized by the people of Trinidad and Tobago for the benefit of multinational corporations. What more evidence do you need that the country is being sold at a

Prime Minister's Car
[MR. MAHARAJ]

Friday, May 27, 1994

loss? We have had instances where the documents were read on the public platform. The Government has not denied it. There have been instances where we have requested that document and we have been refused, but we had it on the public platform. That goes to show the secrecy under which we operate and the need for openness.

It is in that context that I think we should examine this situation. I can stay here and throw many allegations across the floor. As a matter of fact, we have a document in which, if we go to that, we could make many allegations against the Government. My friend spoke about money owing to a bank. Yes, we have information. It may not be right information, but we have information. The question is that if we had machinery we would have been able to determine whether that is so or not. So this Motion has resulted because there is a lack of machinery to get information, for accountability, for transparency, and there is a lack of commitment by the Government to ensure that national integrity is preserved.

We have had the history in this country of the McDonnell Douglas Affair. I remember that the Member for San Fernando East, in a different capacity, got up in this House and made speeches, trying, in other words, to defend the situation, when it all turned out; it blew up—

Dr. Rowley: Just on a point of clarification, Madam Speaker. Did I hear the Member say that he had information that I was owing money and he wanted some machinery to find out? Is the Member wanting to find out what I owe or what I do not owe?

Mr. R. L. Maharaj: Madam Speaker, I did not call this Member's name. I spoke generally. I do not know if he has a guilty conscience.

Hon. Member: Cocoa in the sun; looking out for rain!

Mr. R. L. Maharaj: There is a time and place for everything, and I want him not to worry. Maybe it is a good thing that sometimes we keep the information long enough for people to feel tortured a little bit.

I remember in this House—and I have the proceedings—the statement made by the hon. Patrick Manning, Minister in the Ministry of the Prime Minister, in the House of Representatives on Friday, 17th October, 1980 on the McDonnell Douglas Affair. When one reads the history of this country, one would see that all attempts have always been made to cover up these matters. Then what happens? It is exposed in the foreign press.

I would have thought that it is better we investigate matters; show that our public officials can subject themselves to public scrutiny; that we have nothing to hide, and let the national integrity of the country be preserved.

Before I go to a matter—and I want to refer to the Salmon Report on the Standards of Conduct in Public Life—I would like to deal with two matters which the hon. Member for Diego Martin West raised. The first matter is the editorial in the *Guardian*. We have no problem with that. Persons are entitled to express their opinion; the media are entitled to express their views. The problem we have is that if they are expressing their views and they do not express them based on all the facts, it demonstrates that they are biased in the expression of their views and that they have an interest to protect, apart from the public interest. *[Applause]* I would have thought that the *Guardian* would have read the editorial in the *Newsday*. If they did that, they would have seen what objective analysis is.

I want to put it on the record, since it has been raised in this House, that the Government, in that debate on the Drug Bill, knew from the time that the matter was raised in the Senate, that there was need for infrastructure and machinery to be put in place for the Bill to be effective. Opposition support was based on the fact that it was hopeful that the machinery would be put in place. Time passed. They came to this House. Whilst the Bill was laid in Parliament, it was expected that a government which wanted to implement the Bill, wanted to make the Bill work, would have put the machinery in place. But they did not.

What the Government wants us to do is to pass a Bill which would not have any teeth, would not be able to be enforced, and which, instead of arresting the drug trade, would facilitate it. We cannot be part and parcel of a conspiracy with the Government to facilitate this. We have seen what has happened with Mr. Pindling in the Bahamas, that everything was to protect the Prime Minister and his concerns with respect to drugs, but he wanted to get everybody else.

Nobody has accused the Prime Minister of being involved in drugs. As a matter of fact, the accusation is that the circumstances which have emerged could give the impression that there is something unusual in the transaction which needs public vindication, which needs public scrutiny. In America there even is freer speech. They accused President Clinton, but most of the criticism was not that he was dishonest, but that the facts and circumstances were such that would not breed confidence in public officials, and, therefore, it demanded an inquiry for it to be ventilated.

Prime Minister's Car
[MR. MAHARAJ]

Friday, May 27, 1994

4.15 p.m.

Madam Speaker, my friend mentioned the *Scott Drug Report* and the publication of that report. Whatever may be said about that report—whether it was right or wrong to publish it—maybe it was a good thing it was published. Be that as it may, the fact of the matter is of what significance is that? If any allegations were made against anybody, there is an answer to what we are talking about. If one is going to rely on the *Scott Drug Report* as an answer, then one would have to question that in the interim report, Ministers of Government were named as being involved in drugs. As a matter of fact, even one of those persons whose name was mentioned in the drug report is now a minister in the present Government.

It is either to be accepted or not accepted. The point is that I can stand in this Parliament and know what it is that a Government can use to harass people when it has coercive and corrosive machinery. I know how much power the Government has and how much it can smear, because I was the subject of that. I know what it is like. I know how difficult it must be for the Member for San Fernando East, but when one is in public office one must be able to withstand that kind of scrutiny.

Apart from the *Trinidad Guardian*, the stand which the United National Congress took on that Drug Bill by abstaining from voting, is very significant. The significance of abstaining was to demonstrate and put pressure upon the Government to come with legislation which would have teeth.

Today, my political leader, the Member for Couva North, issued a statement in relation to our stand in that matter and I would like to put it in the record in answer to the editorials and comments made by the Member for Diego Martin West about the Opposition's stand on the Dangerous Drugs (Amdt.) Bill:

"The Opposition categorically refutes the charge of the Government that the Opposition is obstructionist, and condemns..."

their act of desperation—

"...it as an attempt to hood-wink the population and divert attention away from the glaring evidence that it is the most incompetent government this country has seen since our independence.

From the very outset the Opposition had indicated its intention to support the direction of the Bill, but had always maintained that the Bill did not go far enough and that it fell far short of the provisions of the Vienna Convention.

During the debate in the Upper House our members made this point quite clear during their contributions. Even though the Government ignored their contributions and suggestions, they chose to vote in favour of the passage of the Bill.

We the elected members of the Opposition, do not regard this fact as forever debarring us from seeking to amend the Bill when it came before the elected Lower House. In fact, it is precisely for this reason that our Constitution has provided for a bicameral legislature, so that one House may review the work of the other. It was never intended that one House must slavishly follow the decisions of the other. Quite to the contrary, the Standing Orders of the House specifically provide that what is said in one House should not even be mentioned if the intention is to influence the debate.

Indeed, the Government should be condemned for its attempted sleight of hand by introducing legislation with such far-reaching consequences in the nominated chamber as opposed to the elected House of Representatives.

During the debate the Opposition was at pains to point out that the major constraint in dealing with the problem of crime, including the notorious drug trade, was that the laws which are already on the statute books were not being enforced.

Many people do not know that there have been in existence, since 1991, laws in this country against money laundering. Yet there has not been a single prosecution, as far as we know, of a single person being prosecuted for money laundering. The problem, clearly, is not merely the passing of laws, but the enforcement of them.

It is for this reason that the Opposition sought to introduce several amendments to the Bill, which would have provided mechanisms for monitoring the implementation and enforcement of the new legislation, and also provide the machinery for back-up services for up-dating the legislation and making recommendations for dealing with wider issues of rehabilitation of drug users.

The Government rejected every single one of our proposals in this regard; they even refused to give serious consideration to them complaining that the Opposition had brought these amendments at the eleventh hour. It is difficult to understand what they meant by that comment. There can only be an eleventh hour if someone has an irrevocable deadline. Why was Wednesday,

Prime Minister's Car
[MR. MAHARAJ]

Friday, May 27, 1994

May 25, 1994 at eleven o'clock in the night a deadline for the Government? They did not say."

Probably because the Prime Minister had to go to Pointe-a-Pierre the next day.

"Was it Mr. Robinson's Motion that is due to be debated in the House this afternoon? Or was it the by-election which is scheduled for Monday, May 30? We do not know.

What we do know is that Mr. Manning went on record in the House on Wednesday night as saying that he prefers that the Bill fails, than that the Government should give in to the Opposition's demands for machinery to monitor the Government on its implementation of this law. We ask: Why is the government so adamant in refusing to be monitored on this question of drugs?

It is also a matter of grave concern to us that while the Government is trying to give the public the impression that it is doing something about drugs, it refuses to deal with the most serious allegations against top members of the Government relating to their association and transactions with persons known to be involved in the drug trade."

Well, if they think we on this side are involved too, include us in the inquiry! *[Desk thumping]* The Government also has the prosecuting machinery—and no matter they have paid witnesses already; they have paid them to lie—and if it thinks that the Members on this side are involved, we are prepared to be investigated. We want to be investigated. *[Desk thumping]* It is no reason to say that there are allegations against the Opposition, the previous government, and you do not want to investigate yourself.

4.25 p.m.

"There is the allegation of the Prime Minister's House and motor car ending up in the possession of such persons. No government that is serious about dealing with the drug and crime problem would so consistently refuse the demand for an independent inquiry into the involvement of government in the drug business and money laundering. We believe that the Government's determination to push the Bill through on Wednesday night, even at the risk of having it fail, was to avoid having to answer the Motion which is on the Order Paper today. If that be the case, then this is the most flagrant act of irresponsibility and deceit being perpetrated upon the population, and we shall be no part of it.

We are mindful of what took place in the Bahamas, where the Government piously enacted the most draconian legislation against drug pushers and money launderers and then went on to be the biggest drug pushers and money launderers in the country. A former Prime Minister of that country is even now under investigation for his part in these criminal activities. Is that what we want for our country? The opposition answers with an emphatic—No!

We serve notice on the Government that we do not intend to let this matter rest here. We intend to take this issue of Government's accountability to the people by the holding of public meetings throughout the country, and by our own publications. We shall carry this campaign internationally, if we have to. In so doing, we shall not only expose the Government for its hypocrisy, but all those— particularly the editors of a certain Daily Newspaper— who, for a long time has been using that paper to defend those involved (directly and indirectly) in the illicit drug trade and money laundering. We know that the Prime Minister is in daily contact with them. The statement of the Commissioner of Police to the (gas station owners) Tunapuna Chamber of Commerce confirms our worst suspicions about the involvement of big people in the crime business. We shall not be terrorised by them or their editorials.

Having said that, we wish to reiterate our position. We support the introduction of legislation which will conduce to victory in the battle against criminals and drug lords. If the Government is prepared to meet our demands for monitoring machinery, we are prepared to join with them in a Motion to suspend the Standing Orders, so that the Bill may be reintroduced into the Parliament, but with the amendments we propose (modified if need be) and we shall, of course, insist upon the establishment of mechanisms for monitoring the activities of the government".

One sees how important inquiries are. There was the Royal Commission on the Standard of Conduct in Public Life. That Commission was headed by Lord Salmon, a person I have had the distinguished pleasure of knowing. On page 5 of that report, one sees how other people act when these matters happen:

"11. The main reason for our appointment was, no doubt, public anxiety aroused by the Poulson affair."

One sees that a government, when there is public anxiety, disquiet and concern, holds an inquiry in the interest of the public welfare. It has nothing to do with if "X" or "Y" is guilty, or with "X" or "Y" allegations. If you wish, embrace them in

Prime Minister's Car
[MR. MAHARAJ]

Friday, May 27, 1994

the inquiry, but that is no defence. That is trying to divert the attention from the issue which is before the House.

"Although this conspiracy is only one of the cases we have considered, it is particularly important because of its geographical spread and the number of people involved in it who held prominent positions in a variety of public bodies. Public interest in it has remained active, and police investigations into its ramifications were going on throughout the period that we were sitting. Many of our conclusions are derived from this affair. We now give a brief account of it.

12. Mr. J G L Poulson set himself up in practice as an architect in 1932. In September 1942 he was elected a licentiate member of the Royal Institute of British Architects. By the late 1960s, Mr. Poulson owned and controlled what was claimed—perhaps justifiably—to be the largest architectural practice in Europe, employing a staff of some 750 people. The main selling point of the service that he offered was that his organization combined under one roof expertise in architecture and related professions such as engineering and surveying; he claimed to provide an integrated service that was capable of undertaking the most complex work at low cost and high speed. A large part of his organization's work was in the public sector—local authority housing, hospitals and municipal works of one kind or another."

What then happened?

"In 1961 he came into contact with Mr. T Dan Smith, who was at that time leader of the majority Labour group and chairman of the planning and housing committees ..."

The report goes on to show what happens when a person, who is very influential in business, associates with politicians who occupy public office. What happened then was that there were many local authorities, government officials and ministers involved which created a scandal in England. Some of the people were prosecuted before, but when they appointed the commission of inquiry, it went into the whole matter and it exonerated persons who were not involved and dealt with those who were involved.

We are not making any allegations that anyone is dishonest and involved in the drug trade. We are saying that the matters which have come about have raised public disquiet and need open and public investigation.

Madam Speaker: It is time for the tea break. I have gathered there is an agreement on both sides of the House with respect to the Adjournment.

Prime Minister's Car

Friday, May 27, 1994

Mr. Valley: Yes, Madam Speaker. Although this is very good, we do have some business at Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. B. Panday: You have to lose.

Mr. Valley: That is you. We have to win.

Motion made, That the House do now adjourn to Friday, June 10, 1994 at 1.30 p.m. [Hon. K. Valley]

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 4.31 p.m.