

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES***Friday, July 08, 1994*

The House met at 1.45 p.m.

**PRAYERS**[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]**PAPERS LAID**

1. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Chaguaramas Development Authority for the year ended December 31, 1991. [*The Minister of Finance (Hon. Wendell Mottley)*]  
*To be referred to the Public Accounts Committee.*
2. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Trinidad and Tobago Television Company for the year ended December 31, 1993. [*Hon. W. Mottley*]  
*To be referred to the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee.*

**ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS****Drug Trade  
(Foreign Assistance)**

- 86. Mr. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj** (*Couva South*) asked the Minister of National Security:
- (1) Would the Minister 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?

**The Minister of National Security (Sen. The Hon. Russell Huggins):** Madam Speaker, the Minister wishes to advise that offers of assistance in areas within the purview of the Ministry of National Security have been received by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and fall into the following broad categories:

- (a) Security assistance grants in the form of funding and equipment.
- (b) Military assistance and military construction: Under these programmes naval and military exercises have been conducted in collaboration with the armed forces of other Caribbean and Atlantic countries. In the process, military repair work has been undertaken.
- (c) Training: The Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force and the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service and the Office for Strategic Services have benefited from training in counter-narcotics, money laundering and other drug-related fields and military training.

Offers of assistance have been made by the governments of the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Canada, France and Venezuela. In the main, these proposals are designed to enhance this Government's capability to suppress and ultimately eliminate the illicit narcotics trade in Trinidad and Tobago, as well as to halt the export and trans-shipment of narcotics through its territorial waters, thus contributing to the overall promotion of national security in Trinidad and Tobago.

Trinidad and Tobago is also a beneficiary, on a continuing basis, of assistance from specialized agencies of the United Nations and the Organization of American States in promoting law and order, national security and combating crime and the drug trade.

Assistance has also been received by the National Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention Programme in respect of Government's demand-reduction activities over the period 1991 to 1993.

The Minister also wishes to submit a listing of all the offers of assistance received from foreign governments from 1992 to the present time.

Training: From 1992 to the present time, the United States Government has made numerous training offers to the Government of Trinidad and Tobago in

respect of its personnel from the Defence Force, Police Service, the Officer for Strategic Services and the Organized of Crime and Narcotics Unit. In all cases, the offers of training have been accepted, and personnel have been sent on training courses and seminars relating to law enforcement, drug interdiction, money laundering and crime prevention. The United States Government has, however, stipulated that officers who are sent on training should remain in those positions for which they are trained for at least two years. These conditions have been met.

The Government of Canada and the Government of France have offered similar courses which have been accepted, but there are no conditions attached.

Hereunder is a list of training courses offered by foreign governments between 1992 and the present time:

1992

<u>Type of Training</u>		<u>Donor</u>
Basic Maritime Law Enforcement and Training	—	Government of the United States of America
“Train the Trainer” course, designed to enhance teaching skills of Coast Guard personnel	—	" "
Fourth Inter-American Workshop/Seminar for Drug Enforcement Officers	—	Government of Canada
Crime Scene Specialist Course	—	Government of the United States of America
Crime Prevention Course	—	" "
Money-Laundering Seminar	—	" "
Caribbean Money-Laundering Technical Workshop	—	" "

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1993

<u>Type of Training</u>		<u>Donor</u>
Observer Attachment Programme/ National Drug Strategy	—	Government of Canada
Awareness of the Problem of Drug Trafficking	—	Government of France
Refresher Crime Prevention Course	—	Government of the United States of America
Drug Control Training Programme	—	" "
Special Forces Training - Trinidad & Tobago Regiment and Trinidad & Tobago Coast Guard	—	" "
Maritime Law Enforcement and Anti-Narcotic Training	—	" "
Crisis Response Training	—	" "

1994

Commando Training for Defence Force Personnel	—	Government of the United States of America
Training in Commando Operations in Martinique	—	Government of France
Struggle against Trafficking	—	" "
Observer Attachment Programme/ National Drug Strategy	—	Government of Canada
15th Regular Session of the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission	—	Government of the United States of America

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Seminar on the Use of the computerized system for the gathering of statistical information in the area of enforcement.

Donor

— Government of the United States of America

MINISTRY OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, CULTURE AND FAMILY SERVICES  
NATIONAL ALCOHOL AND DRUG ABUSE PREVENTION PROGRAMME

PARTICULARS	ACCEPTED	CONDITIONS OF ASSISTANCE	CONDITIONS SATISFIED
<p>1. Military Information Support Team (MIST) phase I. Assistance to the National Drug Abuse Prevention Public Information Programme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— 10,000 each of 3 sets of coloured stickers</li> <li>— 10,000 alphabet charts</li> <li>— 10,000 bumper stickers</li> <li>— 1 anti-drug jingle for radio</li> <li>— 9 sets of 30-second commercial television spots</li> </ul>	<p>July 7-25, 1993</p>	<p>For distribution to public in support of NADAPP's work on drug abuse awareness education in communities</p>	<p>Distribution completed in November of 1993</p>

PARTICULARS	ACCEPTED	CONDITIONS OF ASSISTANCE	CONDITIONS SATISFIED
<p>These awareness multi-media materials were targeted to the pre-school population and illustrated health lifestyle messages, choices to make about drugs, importance of positive teacher and parent role models and information about NADAPP'S work.</p>			
<p>2. Military Information Support Team (MIST) Phase II</p>	<p>October 5, 1993</p>	<p>For distribution to public in support of NADAPP drug abuse awareness and education initiatives</p>	<p>Distribution is continuing. Evaluation is to be prepared.</p>
<p>3. United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) approved funding for the GOTT'S Demand Reduction Project Initiatives</p>	<p>Agreement signed in June of 1989</p>	<p>Government to provide support staff for implementing the project</p>	<p>Staff was never provided. The UNDCP funds were disbursed as follows: 1991— \$457,466.35TT 1992— \$697,811.59TT 1993— \$179,520.00TT Total Sum= \$1,334,797.94TT</p>

*The following question stood on the Order Paper in the name of Mr. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj (Couva South):*

**Kelvin Subran**  
**(Application for Post of Librarian)**

- 96.** (a) Is the Minister 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, perhaps this is an appropriate time to ask for a deferral of one week for this and other questions on the Order Paper, other than questions Nos. 120, 122 and 125.

**Madam Speaker:** The only questions you would be able to answer are Nos. 120, 122 and 125?

**Hon. K. Valley:** Yes, Madam Speaker.

*Question, by leave, deferred.*

**Mr. Sudama:** Madam Speaker, would the Minister provide an explanation for the continuous deferral of these questions. These have been filed for over three weeks and it is one deferral after another. They are now asking for another deferral. These are not difficult questions to answer. I have question No.118 on this Order Paper for the longest while. The information is the number of footpaths constructed and the cost of them. Do they have ministries which are functioning at all to provide this information? I find it a serious undermining of this parliamentary system to have these continuous requests.

**Madam Speaker:** I think the Member knows that there is nothing that the Speaker can do. I really do not know if it is an administrative or a research problem. At this point, I can only put it to the House. The House has said yes and the matters are deferred.

**Mr. Sudama:** I, too, must take objection to this.

**Madam Speaker:** I note the hon. Member's objection, but that is as much as I can do at this stage.

**Miss Nicholson:** Madam Speaker, I wish to support very strenuously the arguments lodged by the Member for Oropouche.

**Madam Speaker:** Your comments have been noted. Let us proceed with the Order Paper, please.

*[Miss P. Nicholson rose]*

**Hon. Members:** Sit down! Sit down!

**Miss Nicholson:** *[Interruption]* Have manners! Madam Speaker, I am addressing you and I want to be protected in this House.

**Madam Speaker:** I have noted your comment, hon. Member.

**Miss Nicholson:** I want you to protect me in the House.

**Madam Speaker:** There is no need for protection. You have supported the Member and I have noted the comments. It is a matter over which the Speaker has no control. There is another way of addressing this matter. Bring a motion before the House and let it be debated. That is the only control I have over this matter. Please continue.

**Miss Nicholson:** There is no guidance in the place.

*The following questions stood on the Order Paper:*

**Vashti Mungal**  
**(Transfer of Service)**

97. (a) Is the Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister responsible for Public Administration aware that an application made by Vashti Mungal of Balmain Village, Couva, attached to the Port Authority of Trinidad and Tobago, to the Director of Personnel Administration for her services to be transferred from the Port Authority of Trinidad and Tobago to the public service, has been pending for over eight months?



- (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 particulars of such machinery? [Mr. R. L. Maharaj]

**Ministry of Works  
(Vehicles and/or Heavy Equipment)**

**114.** Would the Minister of Works and Transport state:

- (a) How many vehicles and/or heavy equipment are attached to each section of the Ministry of Works at the present time?
- (b) The number of vehicles and/or heavy equipment there are in each section under the various categories?
- (c) How many of these vehicles and/or equipment were on the register in each section during the years 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993?
- (d) How many of these vehicles and/or equipment were licensed in each section during the years 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993 and to date for 1994? [Mr. M. Haniff]

**URP Footpath  
(Debe)**

**118.** Could the Minister of Works and Transport state:

- (a) The date the URP footpath project on the San Fernando-Siparia-Erin Road, Debe near the 4 1/2 mile mark commenced?
- (b) The number of metres of footpath constructed?
- (c) The amount spent to date on the project?
- (d) The number of workers employed since the commencement of the project? [Mr. T. Sudama]

*Questions, by leave, deferred.*

**1.55 p.m.**

**Diplomatic Relations  
(Trinidad and Tobago/Nigeria)**

**120. Mr. A.N.R. Robinson** (*Tobago East*) asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs:

Could the Minister state:

- (a) (i) What is the status of any negotiations and/or agreements entered into by the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago with the Republic of Nigeria?
- (ii) What plans does the Government have to implement any agreements already arrived at?
- (b) What is the status of diplomatic relations between the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and the Government of the Republic of Nigeria?

**The Minister of Education (Hon. Augustus Ramrekersingh):** Madam Speaker, during an official visit by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago to the Federal Republic of Nigeria in October 1991, two agreements were signed by the governments of the two countries, namely, an Agreement on Cultural and Educational Co-operation and an Agreement on Economic, Scientific and Technical Co-operation.

Article 14 of the Agreement on Cultural and Educational Co-operation states, *inter alia*, that the agreement enters into force on the date it is signed, which was October 14, 1991. A sub-committee to implement the provisions of the cultural and educational co-operation agreement was formed and met on two occasions. One of the recommendations—that Nigerians be trained in the art of steelpan tuning—materialized in 1992. The Agreement on Economic, Scientific and Technical Co-operation is at present engaging the attention of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

At a meeting between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Acting High Commissioner for the Nigerian Mission in Port of Spain in December 1993, discussions were held on this agreement in the context of boosting relations between the two countries. Follow-up action was taken on this matter and the Solicitor General advised the ministry, on June 17, 1994, that no constitutional requirements remained to be fulfilled and that the agreement should be concluded through the exchange of diplomatic notes. This matter is in train.

Trinidad and Tobago and Nigeria maintain full diplomatic relations. The two countries established diplomatic relations in 1962 and Trinidad and Tobago appointed a non-resident High Commissioner to Nigeria in 1968. Both countries established resident diplomatic missions in 1973, which continue to exist.

Trinidad and Tobago and Nigeria enjoy very good relations. Manifestations of this were the four official visits to Nigeria by delegations from Trinidad and Tobago, the most recent of which took place in 1991 and to which I earlier referred. Further evidence of the cordial relations is the technical and cultural co-operation and exchange of professionals between Trinidad and Tobago and Nigeria.

In 1993, a team from the Institute of Strategic and Political Studies visited Trinidad and Tobago as part of its course of training. This programme with the institute has been ongoing since the 1970s and the visit takes place approximately every three years.

A technical action group programme of the Nigerian Government, under which skilled Nigerians are employed by the governments of countries which are short of certain skills, has also been operating successfully in Trinidad and Tobago. The highlight of cultural co-operation between the two countries was the successful completion of a project for the training of Nigerians in pan tuning in 1992. As a commitment to fostering this excellent relationship, the two countries signed an economic, scientific and technical co-operation agreement and a cultural and educational co-operation agreement in 1991. These agreements seek to intensify co-operation in the cultural, commercial, scientific, educational and economic fields and specific areas have been targeted for concentration.

The Government has recently decided to restore the status of the Trinidad and Tobago Mission in Nigeria to that of a high commission, and the process is under way to seek agreement for the appointment of a high commissioner.

#### WRITTEN ANSWER TO QUESTION

##### URP Footpath (Siparia-Erin Road)

**122. Mr. Trevor Sudama** (*Oropouche*) asked the Minister of Works and Transport:

Could the Minister provide the names and addresses of the workers employed on the URP project on the San Fernando-Siparia-Erin Road near the 4 1/2 mile post from the inception of that project?

**Madam Speaker:** Has the Member received the written answer?

**Mr. Sudama:** Madam Speaker, for the benefit of the House, I would like to read the written answer. It is very short.

"The Minister of Works and Transport does not consider it appropriate to give the names and addresses of private citizens in respect of this matter to this House."

So, you understand the futility of asking for information in this House, Madam Speaker. It is a private matter—government by privacy.

#### ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

*The following questions stood on the Order Paper:*

#### **MF Panorama**

- 123.** (1) Could the Minister of Works and Transport inform this House of:
- (a) The passenger, cargo and motor vehicle capacity of the *MF Panorama*?
  - (b) The average percentage of the capacity that is utilized when the *MF Panorama* sails between Trinidad and Tobago?
  - (c) Could the Minister please inform this House what is the passenger, cargo and vehicle capacity of the fast ferry service he intends to introduce?
- (2) (a) Is the Minister aware that Port of Spain is the business centre for Tobago and that the *MF Panorama* was specially designed to meet the passenger, cargo and vehicle transport needs of the people of Tobago?
- (b) If the Minister is aware of this situation, could he tell this House what are the reasons for the introduction of a fast ferry service that can only partially handle the passenger capacity?
  - (c) Is the Minister aware that the government shipping service of Trinidad and Tobago is an essential one, particularly for the people of Tobago, hence the reason it was subsidized?
  - (d) Can the Minister tell this House if it is the intention of the central government to dismantle the present functional sea transport service and to privatize and subsidize a "new fast ferry service" that cannot meet the service needs of particularly Tobago?

- (e) If the Minister's concern is "time and money saving", is he aware that the cost of a fast ferry service ticket would be similar to or more than the national airline—British West Indian Airways—overnight return ticket of \$190.00 and that BWIA provides a much faster—12 minutes—service and the comfort level of a BWIA trip between Trinidad and Tobago is incomparable?
- (f) If the Minister is cognizant of the above facts, why is there no effort by his Government to increase the number of BWIA flights between Trinidad and Tobago in the effort to resolve the sea and air transport problems between the two islands? [*Miss P. Nicholson*]

**Radio Station 98.9 FM  
(Lewd Lyrics)**

- 124.** (a) Is the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago aware that the government-owned radio station 98.9 FM broadcasts songs with lewd lyrics on the airwaves?
- (b) If the answer is in the affirmative, would the Prime Minister state whether he intends to have this practice stopped, and if so, how? [*Mr. K. Jurai*]

*Questions, by leave, deferred.*

**Agricultural Chemicals and Fertilizers  
(High Cost)**

- 125. Mr. Krish Jurai** (*Nariva*) asked the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources:
- (a) Is the Minister aware that the high cost of agricultural chemicals and fertilizers is adversely affecting agricultural production in Trinidad and Tobago?
  - (b) If the answer is in the affirmative, would the Minister state whether he will give immediate consideration to the removal of VAT on chemicals and fertilizers used in agriculture to ease the plight of farmers?

**The Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources (Dr. The Hon. Keith Rowley):** Madam Speaker, the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources is aware that the cost of agricultural chemicals and fertilizers may adversely affect agricultural production in Trinidad and Tobago. As a

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consequence, agri-chemicals, including fertilizers, are zero-rated under the VAT regime. Additionally, no duties are levied on imported agri-chemicals.

In the light of these well-known facts, part (b) of the question calling on Government to remove the VAT on chemicals and fertilizers does not arise, since these measures are already in place to assist the farming community.

**Mr. Jurai:** Is the Minister aware that some of these agri-chemical shops are charging VAT on these items?

**Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley:** That is a matter which does not fall under my portfolio. It is a matter of law.

### Cocaine Seizure

*The following question stood on the Order Paper in the name of the Member for Nariva (Mr. K. Jurai):*

**126.** Would the Minister of National Security state:

- (a) What steps are being taken by the Government to reduce the amount of cocaine brought or trans-shipped through Trinidad and Tobago?
- (b) What has been the Minister's success rate in terms of seizure of cocaine during the period January 1993 to December 1993 and January 1994 to April 1994?

*Question, by leave, deferred.*

### ORDER OF BUSINESS

**The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley):** Madam Speaker, I beg to move that the House now consider "Bills Second Reading" on page 11 of the Order Paper.

*Leave granted.*

### GREATER MALABAR CHRISTIAN CENTRE BILL

*Question put and agreed to,* That a Bill to provide for the incorporation of the Greater Malabar Christian Centre and matters incidental thereto, be now read a second time.

*Bill accordingly read a second time.*

*Bill referred to a special select committee of the House chosen by the Speaker as follows:*

Mr. Desmond Allum	Chairman
Mr. Jarrette Narine	Member

Mrs. Eulalie James Member

Mr. Raymond Palackdharrysingh Member

**ORDER OF BUSINESS**

**Hon. K. Valley:** Madam Speaker, we had agreed that today be Private Members' Day. I beg to move that we continue with Motion No. 1 on page 8 of the Order Paper, under "Private Business".

*Leave granted.*

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

[SECOND DAY]

*Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question [May 27, 1994]:*

*Be It Resolved* that this honourable House consider that an independent enquiry 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 enquiry 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. [Mr. A.N R. Robinson]

*Question again proposed.*

**2.05 p.m.**

**Mr. Ramesh L. Maharaj** (*Couva South*): Madam Speaker, as you would probably recall I was on my legs when this Motion was adjourned. I am very privileged to support this Motion.

Public enquiries are considered to be an instrument of government, and history shows that from time to time when there are cases concerning rumoured instances of lapses in acceptable standards of public administration and other matters, which caused and continue to cause public concern, and which cannot be dealt with by the ordinary processes of the court, whether civil or criminal, the parliamentary democratic system of government requires investigation in order to allay public anxiety. Therefore, when there is a crisis of public confidence about any particular matter, as far as they affect persons in high places, the public

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naturally would want an investigation, and it is in the interest of the public to have an investigation.

Our laws recognize that there is need for this at times, and under the Commissions of Enquiry Act, Chap. 19:01, it provides that under our form of government, since the President acts on behalf of the Executive and on the instructions of the Executive, unless he is involved in a matter in which it is his absolute discretion, such as the grant of an amnesty, the Government has the power to cause commissions of enquiry to be appointed.

Under section 7 of the Commissions of Enquiry Act, it says that a commission of enquiry so appointed shall conduct a fair and faithful enquiry. Under section 10, one has an opportunity to answer allegations which may be put against any person who is the subject of that enquiry, and one is even entitled to retain an attorney.

We would see from history, even though there is the machinery for an enquiry, one sees that it is important when there is a perception that there is a crisis of confidence—that in those kinds of matters there should be a public enquiry. I am sure what this Motion is talking about is a public enquiry.

One knows that investigations which are conducted in secret will tend to promote suspicion, and however unjustified those suspicions may be, there may be the suspicion that the investigations are not conducted with sufficient vigour and thoroughness, or that something is being hushed up. Publicity in enables the public to see for itself how the investigation is being conducted and/or carried out. That enquiry, by its public nature, would dispel any suspicion.

In circumstances like this which warrant a public enquiry, unless such an enquiry is held in public, it would not achieve the objective of restoring the confidence of the public in the integrity of our public life. Without this confidence it is impossible for our democracy to flourish and it is a serious assault on democracy.

Enquiries are recognized therefore, as a means of providing accountability by the government. It is a means of having that information provided to the population. It is a form of open government. It is a form of having secrecy in government stifled. It is in this context that, unless there is a public enquiry into the matters surrounding this transaction, we believe public confidence in the integrity in public life would be affected.

Madam Speaker, you would recall that in my opening I said that a Motion like this does not find anybody guilty or innocent. What we are concerned about is whether the facts which have emerged merit such an investigation. You would



recall that the Prime Minister in a statement in this House stated that he did not sell or transfer his car to a particular and named person, but instead, he said he sold it to a certain car dealer in South Trinidad.

You would recall also the certified copy of ownership, which is the recognized legal means of determining *prima facie* ownership of a motor vehicle, did not support the Prime Minister in that statement.

Under section 19 of the Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic Act, it imposes a statutory duty for both the registered owner and the new owner, in effecting a transfer, to make a joint application in writing to the Licensing Authority. One sees that it is incumbent in effecting such a transfer, as far back as 1941, that both the owner and the new owner had to sign the transfer form.

The information on the transfer form is reflected on the certified copy and therefore it would appear from the facts which have emerged that the document which is supposed to be filled in does not support what the Prime Minister stated. Under the law it is a summary offence that whoever broke that law is liable to fine and imprisonment for six months. We see that a criminal offence is constituted by contravening the law.

That is not all. The Motor Vehicles and Insurance Act requires that the owner of a motor vehicle take out insurance coverage against third party claims. This is compulsory by law. One sees that the certified copy of ownership showed that the owner of the vehicle was not the person whom the Prime Minister alleged. The insurance coverage was taken out for a period of 11 weeks and the question arises: If the Prime Minister intended to keep that car, why did he take out coverage for 11 weeks?

This is not a simple matter; it is a matter about the granting of an import licence for that motor car, because at that time the ordinary man in the street had great difficulty in getting an import licence. One could not get an import licence to import a foreign car unless one could have shown good cause. It must be presumed that the Minister at the time, now the Prime Minister, got the import licence for that car on the basis that he was a Minister of Government. The question which arises is: Was this import licence granted to facilitate the sale of this car to this known person?

### **2.15 p.m.**

Madam Speaker, history in Trinidad has shown us that one has to be very careful if the Government decides not to appoint an enquiry and, also, if the Government appoints an enquiry, but does not appoint the right kind of enquiry.

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On the issue of the Pegasus transaction, a commission of enquiry was appointed, but it was not a public enquiry. We saw what had happened with that enquiry and its report—there was much public discussion about the report.

In the Scott Drug enquiry, which produced the *Scott Drug Report*—that was an enquiry in which persons were not given an opportunity to be heard; it was an enquiry which was held in secret—we have seen—and I was looking with interest at a statement made at the time by the then Prime Minister, now the Member for Tobago East—that one of the evils of such an enquiry was that names were called. As a matter of fact, I have a list here, six Ministers in the then Government were named in the report, and in effect these persons were not given an opportunity to be heard.

We are asking for an enquiry in which the established rules would apply; that is to say, it would be a public enquiry and persons affected would have an opportunity of knowing what the allegations are and be able to answer those allegations. Therefore, in determining whether one is going to appoint an enquiry, it is important to decide that one needs an open enquiry.

If I may refer to the contribution made by the Prime Minister at the time, the Member for Tobago East, in the debate on the *Scott Drug Report* on February 10, 1987. The point I am trying to establish is that if there are facts and matters which deserve an open enquiry and the Government does not have such an enquiry, great damage can be done to national integrity. There is also the situation where there are facts and circumstances which demand an enquiry, the Government decides to have an enquiry, but then has a secret enquiry when it deserves a public enquiry, great damage can also be done to integrity in public life.

In the contribution of the Member for Tobago East at 10.40 a.m. on February 10, 1987, one saw that in an important area like drugs and its links with the police, and possible links with the Government or professional people or people in public life, how important it was that such an enquiry should have been held in public. There should have been no secret inquiry. Therefore, whatever enquiry, when there is public disquiet, whether it is enquiry by a department, whether it is enquiry by the police, whatever the enquiry is—

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

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

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Mr. R. L. Maharaj:** Thank you, Madam Speaker and Members.

Madam Speaker, the contribution goes on:

"That was two years ago, 25th February, 1985. Not quite, but almost two years ago."

And the Member read from certain sections of the interim report—an interim report on drugs and its use, which was not made available to the country. He stated:

"In the evidence before the Commission, one Minister is known to be a user of cocaine."

Then he went on to say at 10.50 to 11.00 a.m.:

"If there had been decisive and determined action at that time this debate would not have been taking place."

Again, at 10.50 to 11.00 a.m.:

"And now, may I go to the substantive report. The interim report mentioned that one Minister was a known user of cocaine.

In the evidence before the Commission, two Ministers are stated by more than one witness to be known users of cocaine..."

One sees the damage which can be done to persons when there are secret enquiries, because it is so easy for people to make allegations without being able to support them. Because the Government of the day, when it decided that there was need to appoint a commission of enquiry, but appointed a secret commission of enquiry, that action has resulted in many problems in our national life.

As a matter of fact, the problems in the police service, one would say, to a great extent, are a result of the Government's inaction; they are not appointing the right kind of enquiry. To support my argument, I refer to an article in the *Sunday Mirror* of April 10, 1994. It is an interview that Mr. Randolph Burroughs gave to the *Mirror* where he said:

"Six PNM Ministers would have been arrested."

It is interesting to read—he referred to the *Scott Drug Report*, and one saw that when there are secret enquiries in matters like these, how linkages between Government and corrupt police officers and the drug trade can be covered up. Madam Speaker, the article states:

"Former Police Commissioner Randolph Burroughs, leader of the feared Flying Squad of the 1970s, revealed that the US Drug Enforcement Agency

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(DEA) is right on target in criticizing the lack of co-ordination between local law enforcement agencies in fighting the drug trade'."

Then it says;

"But, former Commissioner Burroughs, who fully endorsed the DEA's report, is blaming this lack of co-ordination and inefficiency on the part of the Police Service and on 'political interference and manipulation'.

He told *Sunday Mirror*, 'Successive governments have been guilty of permitting certain linkages between government officials and senior police officers whose friendship, in some cases, went back to their college days'."

He went on to say almost at the end of the article:

"All of this just goes to show why the DEA has concluded that our police service is to blame for the low level of drug seizures in the country.

Dedicated officers are rendered inefficient by political interference, and their attempts to co-ordinate a fight against the drug trade are suppressed by a small controlling group of officers in league with the politicians."

This is Mr. Burroughs giving this interview in 1994.

In the 1970s and 1980s there was much clamour in the country that there were problems in the police service; that there was a certain section of the police service which was doing damage to the population. The Government supported the police, the Government refused to have an open enquiry, and what happened? During that period corruption thrived, mismanagement thrived. One sees what we got as a result of not having an open enquiry and proper accountability.

**2.25 p.m.**

Madam Speaker, may I refer to the final report of Scotland Yard to show what has resulted from not having a proper enquiry into the police service. One saw what the Commissioner of Police said, and one saw the action of the Government—what the Government decided to do was to keep everything in secret. That is exactly what is happening to some extent here now. We do not have accountable Government; even questions they do not want to answer. In the *Scotland Yard Report*, paragraph 6.8.7 says:

"The Scott Drug Report would not be looked at or referred to. There was no wish to be influenced by a document that had been savaged by numerous critics."

At paragraph 9.3.2, let us see what kind of police service we have by refusal to have open enquiry. It says:

"Corruption in the police service can be described as endemic. It permeates all ranks. That is not saying that good honest officers cannot be found. There are lots of them, but the spectre of corruption is quite dominant and the result is a police service that is tarnished as a whole.

Corruption was seen to exist on a number of levels. In its most innocuous form it appeared to consist of income supplements..."

Paragraph 9.3.5 says:

"There were strong allegations that some officers of rank took benefits from the police canteen..."

Paragraph 9.3.8 says:

"Then comes blackmail. Clear evidence was obtained showing cash demanded not to execute arrest warrants, not to charge criminal offences, not to give evidence at court, or not to be able to locate the prosecution papers.

Paragraph 9.3.9 says:

"A particularly sinister level of corruption is the fairly widespread practice of perverting the course of justice. Clear evidence showed investigations being tailored to meet the requirements of suspects who can pay."

I have been a subject of that and I can tell you about that. Paragraph 9.3.10 says:

"Near the top in this progression is taking money to look the other way, to protect illegitimate enterprises from police interference, and to take action against rival enterprises. The protection of whe whe banking ..."

Paragraph 9.3.12 says:

"Whilst a good deal of the corruption unearthed related solely to individuals, or small groups of individual police officers, a more disturbing picture emerged from intelligence gained. Two corrupt groups were identified which stretched from the top to the bottom of the organization. Recruits were drawn in from the junior ranks. Such groups protected and promoted their own members and provided a succession plan or 'career structure...' Anything that makes money is in, although protection of drug dealers and whe whe bankers forms a prominent and regular slice of the income. Using rank to frustrate honest police action and grant concessions is an irregular but repeating occurrence that can generate large bonuses."

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It is because the PNM Government of the day refused to deal effectively with the police service and have an open enquiry the integrity of public life has been damaged.

Madam Speaker, that was not the only incident. You remember the DC9 Mc Donnell Douglas affair? When that came about, there were speeches made even in this House which, in effect, showed that people were trying to hide the facts. That scandal emanated from a report by the Review Committee of the United States Securities and Exchange Commission that the Mc Donnell Douglas Corporation had made questionable payments of US \$575,000 to sell three aircraft to BWIA in 1976 for US \$28 million. That had to be read in the foreign press.

That was not the only matter. The Caroni Racing Complex. Again, there was an attempt to stifle and to have a secret enquiry and then the matter erupted. The Caroni Racing Complex was approved by the Williams Government in 1978 and grew from an original estimate of \$72 million in that year to \$300 million before it was stopped by the former Prime Minister George Chambers in 1981. The management of the Racing Authority was Mr. John O'Halloran who was a Cabinet Minister.

There was also the Tesoro scandal. That scandal related to payments and gifts to high Government officials.

There was also the purchase and acquisition of the *MV Tobago*. I could understand the lethargy being shown.

Quite recently, there was the issue of the alleged forgiveness of loans to a Government Minister. What did we have? We had nothing. The public is totally ignorant about what is happening and then we read in the newspapers that negotiations are still being conducted for the loans to be forgiven. How can there be integrity in public life when these matters are allowed to be kept in secret?

What defence was there from the other side? There was the defence that, yes, we should not appoint an enquiry because people on this side are also questionable. I do not want to go into that because the relevant matters are the facts which are being disclosed. Do they disclose that the matters deserve enquiry by a government?

One of the defences put forward by the Government was that the Opposition has no basis to talk about these matters because it is irresponsible and reckless. The Member for Diego Martin West said that the Opposition was reckless because it did not vote for the Drug Bill. I want to refer to the conduct of the PNM in 1989 when the Drug Bill came to this House. The position adopted by the PNM

was the same position the United National Congress adopted. I want to read from the contribution of the Leader of the Opposition at the time, Mr. Patrick Manning. That was on June 16, 1989. I am sorry he is not here today.

**Hon. Member:** Purposely!

**Mr. Sudama:** He is staying in Barbados to take a rest.

**Mr. R. L. Maharaj:** Madam Speaker, you would recall that the position of the Opposition was that it believed that the important matter was the enforcement of laws and not the mere passing of laws; that one must not use emotional pieces of legislation to try to hoodwink the population; and the Government must come to the Parliament and say what proposals it has for dealing with crime, not only prosecuting crime, but, in effect, preventing crime relating to drugs, and preventing drug addiction.

Let us hear what the Member for San Fernando East said in 1989, in opposition to the Bill:

"I do not believe, as serious as the situation is—and it is serious and I want to make it clear that we in the PNM understand the seriousness of it and we are prepared to be associated with any reasonable steps that are to be taken to protect our citizens from persons who believe that a way to enrich themselves is by the destruction of sections of the country per se. What we cannot associate ourselves with are steps that, even if they succeed in dealing with the problem, and that is doubtful, might create a problem that is far worse than the drug problem and which the country will not subscribe to...

One of the things they have done—you can check the record of this Parliament—is use legitimate issues to go overboard..."

He was speaking about the Government at the time.

"...in terms of the prescriptions that they wish to apply...but then what about human rights?"

**2.35 p.m.**

I do not believe what I am hearing these days, that even the Opposition in those days were talking about human rights.

"What of the constitutional guarantees that have been carefully negotiated and put in place at the time of the independence of Trinidad and Tobago designed

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to ensure that this country continues to have respect for freedom and democracy? What of those?

So that while a problem is serious it is not that as a country there are unlimited parameters, there are no constraints placed on us as legislators within which we must operate. There are constraints. There is a Constitution. We operate in a society that has a healthy respect for the law and we must take all that into consideration. Our Constitution has been carefully designed with checks and balances to ensure that there is no abuse; that no government gets carried away and seeks to impose laws on this society which this society does not countenance."

Then he goes on:

"But not only that, whereas you would have expected that the solution to the drug problem in the country does not rest exclusively on legislation, but if legislation is considered necessary it must form a part of a comprehensive set of proposals to deal with that serious issue."

Same thing we said, Madam Speaker!

"However, we find that two and a half years later all they have come with is draconian legislation that once again uses a legitimate issue to go overboard..."

He is now accusing the then government of emotional—

**Mr. B. Panday:** That is Panday speaking, not Manning.

**Mr. R. L. Maharaj:** He continues:

"... and abrogate the fundamental rights and freedoms of our citizens which are enshrined in the country's Constitution. It is very dangerous, very dangerous indeed."

Who was reckless and irresponsible at the time—not the PNM? Was the PNM reckless and irresponsible when it said this? Madam Speaker, you remember how they made us sit in the night on the eve of the Pointe-a-Pierre by-election and said that the vote must be taken on the Bill? Well, they were using legitimate issues and that is exactly what the Member for Diego Martin West was trying to do, and it is a dangerous thing when parliamentarians use emotional issues in order to get support for their party.



Madam Speaker, he said:

"There is no comprehensive package. In other words, nobody inside—well, perhaps, there might be some on the other side but I doubt it—or outside this Parliament is able to tell the citizens in the country what is the Government's comprehensive set of proposals for dealing with the eradication of drugs in this country."

Did they come with anything like that in the Bill?

"All we can say is that we are debating in the Parliament today an item of legislation which I hope and pray, because of the seriousness of the problem, will form part of a set of comprehensive proposals... I have reason to believe that no such package exists and that the Government, once again, is acting in a manner that is designed to use a serious issue for political mileage."

It is a dangerous matter for a Government to use a piece of legislation which can generate emotion for political mileage. When that is done, the public interest is not being considered. He continues:

"And they would have you believe that legislation might be necessary; I do not know. What I do know is that in 1987..."

and he talked about a conference. He then quoted a visiting drug expert, Mr. Pete Davis, and said:

"The visiting drug expert said ...

'The laws in Trinidad and Tobago are good, but they need to be enforced.'

This was in 1987. He went on to say:

'It's time to put into effect the arrest, seizure and forfeiture laws'."

Then he adopted what Mr. Davis said, that the problem in Trinidad and Tobago is the enforcement of the legislation and he said:

"Mr. Speaker, there is no question that there are already forfeiture laws on the statute books of this country. I think that is the point that—I almost said Attorney General—the hon. Minister of Justice and National Security is trying to say. But if you compare the forfeiture laws now on the statute books with the forfeiture provisions of the legislation now before this honourable House you would come to the inescapable conclusion that this Government is now taking forfeiture to a fine art."

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Later on, he said:

"What steps has this Government taken to enforce the laws that are now on the statute books? I really would like to know what steps has this Government taken to enforce the laws..."

Madam Speaker, this is interesting because it will have some relevance to what we are doing here I hope. He then said:

"What reference was being made to, Mr. Speaker, is the use of a particular building for drug rehabilitation, a building that is owned by the mother of a slain drug overlord. I make no comment on how that building was acquired by the individual. What may not be clear is that that particular programme to which reference was made in this document, is a joint programme between Servol and the Ministry of Education.

The building you would believe is available free, my information is that it is not and the building does not belong to the state or to Servol; the building belongs to the particular person whose name has been called, and that Government has enhanced that building at state expense. That is what they have done, they have taken state funds to enhance a building owned by the mother of a slain drug overlord, it says here in the newspaper...

That is what they have done, taken the building owned by the mother of a slain drug baron—and we do not know whether that building was obtained from the proceeds of drugs—yet you come with a law today to say any facility that is suspected of being obtained as a consequence of the proceeds of drug money must be confiscated by the state."

Then he said, "Rather than enforce the laws" they come here to ask for more laws. Then he talked about how unreliable the *Scott Drug Report* was and how people were not given names; Ministers and lawyers' names were mentioned without these people being given any opportunity of being heard.

The point I am trying to make, which is relevant in a matter like this, is that we have a situation where the statements made by the Prime Minister do not correspond with the official record of the country, and from reading the newspaper reports, editorials and views of members of the public, one sees that there is the perception that our national integrity—the integrity in public life—is being questioned with respect to the Government.

I would submit that the Government recognizes that this Motion is not to say that anybody is guilty of misconduct. One has to have the enquiry in order to

determine whether there was misconduct. I do not think I can pass without saying that the Member for Diego Martin West also adopted the same position of the Member for San Fernando East in respect of the Narcotics Bill in 1987, and now he is coming, in answer to a Motion like this, to say that we cannot have it, we are reckless, we did not support drug legislation, and there were political contributions.

That is the culture of the PNM. It is not to answer allegations, but to try to smear persons in order to divert attention from the issue before the House. That is why when the former Commissioner of Police said there were linkages between the police and the politicians, it is important that we know and have public enquiries into matters like these, because the police service has been used by the PNM Government to harass people.

As a matter of fact, one knows that if proper, open enquiries are not held into the security services, they can be used by the politicians. And it would seem to me that the Government has a golden opportunity in a matter like this, not only to announce an open enquiry into this matter, but also into the whole police service and its connection with drugs so that everything could come out in the open.

One sees the convenience of the Government in that the Government decided that it was important to respond by reading an editorial. Madam Speaker, you would remember that the Member for Diego Martin West read an editorial of the *Guardian* supporting this PNM Government in its stand on the Drug Bill, and condemned the Opposition—

**2.45 p.m.**

**Mr. B. Panday:** The *Guardian* supports anything against the UNC.

**Mr. R. L. Maharaj:**—for the stand the Opposition took in respect of the Drug Bill. We know the history of the *Guardian*—and we know the history of the *Guardian* as far as the UNC is concerned—but it is passing strange that my friend picked one editorial. I want to read another editorial and I would ask him to use it for this purpose. There was an editorial of September 02, 1917.

**Mr. Valley:** Of 1917?

**Mr. R. L. Maharaj:** I am sorry. May 13, 1994. September 02, 1917 was the day the *Guardian* was established. The heading was "Information, please".

**Mr. B. Panday:** Prostitute of St. Vincent Street.

**Mr. R. L. Maharaj:** "Information, please", Madam Speaker.

"Today we renew our call for a Freedom of Information Act which should be an integral part of our democratic system. It is our view that if the Press is to fulfil its role as an independent arbiter in national affairs, if it is to keep the citizenry fully informed about the disposal of the natural resources that belong to them, then the Press must have unhindered access to information subject, of course, to national security considerations."

Then it says:

"While we respect the Government's elected authority, indeed their responsibility, to dispose of the country's resources in the people's interest, we cannot regard these contracts . . ."

And reference is made to certain contracts which have been entered into by the Government.

". . . the view expressed by Energy Minister Barnes in refusing to give details of the 20-year gas-supply contract made with Amoco . . ."

as a private matter.

"Now we have signed-and-sealed contracts for a number of major projects such as the Liquefied Natural Gas plant, NUCOR's Iron Carbide plant and Enron's 95 percent stake in three SECC gas fields . . ."

They named the gas fields.

". . . the country must welcome such large investments in the development of its gas resources, but the details of these contracts are generally unknown and it still remains largely unclear how and to what extent the people to whom the resources belong will benefit."

If the other side wants to rely on the *Guardian* as its authority, then I would ask the other side, the Government—since the call for this enquiry has to deal with Government making available Government-held information or information which is held by a public official who occupies high office—to make available that information to the public so that whatever crisis of confidence exists, can, in effect, be alleviated—there can be some satisfaction and anxieties and fears can be allayed.

**Madam Speaker:** The Member has two more minutes.

**Mr. R. L. Maharaj:** With respect to the other point that has been raised, I would have thought that instead of the Government condemning the Opposition

or the Member about political contributions—one knows that any political party may get contributions and one does not know where they may come from—that this Government would have said, in the future, since it believes that political parties are important to the democratic process, it would provide legislation as in some other countries, for political parties to receive state financial aid in order to promote democratic principles.

I was reading that in Canada and the United States, there are pieces of legislation which provide state funds in order to support political parties, because by supporting political parties, they are supporting a democratic form of government.

I am very happy to support this Motion and I would ask that the Government consider that this is in the public interest and it should give support to the Motion.

Thank you very much.

**The Minister of Works and Transport and Minister of Local Government (Hon. Colm Imbert):** Madam Speaker, as I join this debate let me indicate up front that I do not support the Motion of the Member for Tobago East.

**Mr. B. Panday:** Tell us something new!

**Hon. C. Imbert:** Madam Speaker, as far as I am concerned there are several issues which need to be addressed in this Motion. One of them is whether, in fact, there is need for this public enquiry that has been called for by the Member for Tobago East. That is an issue that needs to be resolved. In addition, there are some other issues which have been raised during the debate such as the credibility of persons calling for the enquiry.

I would like to address the issues raised by the Member for Tobago East. I refer now to *Hansard* and the presentation of the Member for Tobago East. It reads as follows:

"Madam Speaker, the known facts of the matter before us. . .

Fact 1—By holding the office of Minister of Government, . . . the Member for San Fernando East, acting either by himself or his agent, imported a Toyota Royal Saloon car which was assigned . . ."

a particular number.

The Member for Couva South made a statement that the Member for San Fernando East used his position as a Minister to obtain an import licence to

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import a motor car while ordinary people could not get such a licence to import such a car. That statement is absolutely incorrect.

I have before me a copy of a certificate from the Licensing Authority. The identification number of the car is PAT 3930, registered to one Basdeo Panday, a Royal Saloon, date of purchase 1986, and I shall return to this certificate of registration in a short while. I also have a certificate of registration for car number PAK 8478, a silver Datsun 280ZX, first owner one Selby Wilson, and I shall return to that in a short while.

Let me say that I, as an ordinary private citizen, purchased an imported car in 1980. I purchased it from a registered automobile dealer. I did not apply for an import licence, neither did the many other persons who bought imported cars in the 1980 to 1986 period, because the import licence was applied for and granted to the automobile company which imported a batch of cars, not for any specific person, but for sale in Trinidad and Tobago. That is the standard practice of automobile companies in Trinidad and Tobago and has been the standard practice for countless years.

The fact is that this Royal Saloon purchased by the Member for Couva North was imported by Amar Auto Supplies. The import licence was granted to Amar Auto Supplies and it was subsequently purchased by the Member for Couva North. The former Member for Point Fortin purchased a 280ZX imported by Neal and Massy Motors. The former Member for Point Fortin, former Minister of Finance, did not apply for an import licence, did not apply for foreign exchange—all these things were done by the company.

The point I am making is that the car purchased by the Member for San Fernando East some 10 years ago was imported by Amar Auto Supplies which, applied for the licence and the foreign exchange in the normal way; and the question of the Member for San Fernando East using his position to import a car or get a licence for foreign exchange is completely irrelevant, out of order and has no foundation whatsoever.

It has been done by Members on the other side. Members on the other side have engaged in this standard transaction where a car company brings in a batch of cars and then they purchase a car from the company. So the question of an import licence and using influence is completely out of order, misleading the Parliament.

**2.55 p.m.**

Let me go on to the official record in the Licensing Office with regard to the sale of the motor car which is the subject of this Motion.

The Member for San Fernando East, the hon. Prime Minister, has stated categorically that he sold his motor car to an automobile dealer by the name of Sankie Subance. He indicated that he signed a transfer form, as was the practice at the time, and the car was then sold. The records at the Licensing Office do not indicate the intermediary owner. That is a fact!

I turn to the *Sunday Express* of February 20, 1994, an article by Camini Marajh, headlined "Selby also sold car to Sankie".

"Another political leader has been identified as having done a car deal with Sankie Subance.

Political Leader of the National Alliance for Reconstruction, Selby Wilson, yesterday confirmed that...he sold a Datsun 280ZX to the South-based car dealer."

The article then goes through the circumstances. He said he would sell the car if the price was right; he never knew the man before; he almost had an accident with the man; and then he would accept nothing less than \$72,000, although Mr. Subance said the price was too high.

I quote again:

"He said the sale was concluded the very next day."

Madam Speaker, I shall now read into the record the Licensing Office records for the said motor vehicle: PAK 8478; right-hand drive automatic Datsun 280ZX; year of manufacture, 1982; colour, silver. First owner, registered in 1983, Selby Wilson of No. 7 Beaumont Road, Maraval. Second owner, according to the Licensing Office records, Boodlal Radhay Kissoon. Third owner, Jaggernath B. Charran. Fourth owner, Osaka Construction Company Limited. Fifth owner, J. B. Charran Investment.

Nowhere—and I am repeating this for the benefit of the Member for Couva North and the Member for Couva South—nowhere on this document is the name Sankie Subance indicated. However, the political leader of the NAR, the former Minister of Finance, has stated on record that he sold this car to Sankie Subance. It is not recorded as being sold to Sankie Subance.

**Mr. B. Panday:** Let us have an enquiry into that!

**Hon. C. Imbert:** I have not investigated the character and record of the individuals that the prima facie evidence indicates—to use the words of the Member for Couva South—are registered as having bought the car from Mr. Selby Wilson. Who knows? If one checks, one might find that these persons may not have the best records. I do not know.

The point I am making is that this confirms the statement made by the hon. Prime Minister that in 1983—which is the same year in which he sold his car to Sankie Subance—the practice was to sign a blank transfer form and give it to the person buying the car. It confirms that that was the practice, because the only explanation for the name Sankie Subance not appearing on the transfer form of the former Minister of Finance is that he signed a blank transfer form. I put this into the record.

I also put into the record the fact that the car PAT 3930 is registered as being sold on March 04, 1994—that is the car previously belonging to the Member for Couva North.

**Mr. B. Panday:** What is the number of that car?

**Hon. C. Imbert:** I ask today: After that date in March, was the Member still using that car? If he was, and if he is still using the car although it is registered as being transferred to somebody else in March of this year, I would like to know why.

**Mr. B. Panday:** Let us have an enquiry into that!

**Hon. C. Imbert:** Is it a gift? Is it some sort of private arrangement between him and the new owner of the car? I said I would prove that as far as I am concerned there is no need for an enquiry into the sale of the Prime Minister's car. I am sure that the Member for Couva North has a reasonable explanation why he may still be driving a car transferred to somebody else three months ago.

I am sure that the former Member for Point Fortin, and former Minister of Finance, has a reasonable explanation as to why the name Sankie Subance does not appear on the public records of the car he used to own and sold to Mr. Subance in 1983. I am certain they both have reasonable explanations as to why the records and the prima facie evidence do not bear out the facts.

The Member for Tobago East spoke about the reason being given by the Member for San Fernando East—I see the Member for Tobago East has left.



**Miss Nicholson:** He is coming back.

**Hon. C. Imbert:** The Member for Tobago East queried one of the reasons given by the Member for San Fernando East with regard to the price increase in premium gasoline.

The Member for Tobago East himself indicated that gasoline increased from \$0.28 to \$0.55 per litre in December 1983. That was a 100 per cent increase from \$0.28 per litre to \$0.55. The increase in gasoline bills—and in the particular instance, the Member for San Fernando East at that time resided in San Fernando; and as a Minister of Government he was required to travel between San Fernando and Port of Spain every single working day and on weekends, sometimes more than once per day.

I make these points to indicate that the gasoline bill of the Member for San Fernando East at that time was substantial; the distance travelled by the Member for San Fernando East on a monthly basis was substantial, therefore, a 100 per cent increase in gasoline is a reasonable rationale for deciding to opt for a car with a lower cubic capacity.

In fact, the public record shows that the next car owned by the Member for San Fernando East had a cubic capacity of 1.8 litres. The Royal Saloon in question had a cubic capacity of 2.8 litres; the gasoline consumption of the Royal Saloon could be more than 50 per cent higher; it could be twice as much as that of the other car. Therefore, the facts bear out the statement made that one of the reasons for selling the car was the 100 per cent increase in the gasoline price.

I have done some calculations and the difference in gasoline prices that the Member would have had to incur would have run up to several hundreds of dollars per month in 1983, which was a substantial sum in those days.

**3.05 p.m.**

The Member for Tobago East also queried the price of the car and the transaction, but the former Member for Point Fortin obviously finds nothing wrong with selling a car for a good price.

"He informed Subance he would accept nothing less than the \$72,000.00 he had asked for."

He sold the car—if the price was right and at a good price.

Therefore, the former Member for Point Fortin, the former Minister of Finance, exercised good financial management in the sale of his motor vehicle in

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1983 to Sankie Subance. If the former Minister of Finance could demonstrate such financial acumen in 1983 in selling his car for what he considered to be a satisfactory price, I cannot see why the Member for San Fernando East could not also sell his motor car for what he considered to be a satisfactory price, in the same year, 1983. The to-do that has been made by the Member for Tobago East about the Member for San Fernando East selling his car for a profit is quite irrelevant. People buy things and sell them every day. Sometimes they make a profit, sometimes they make a loss and sometimes they break even. It is a fact of life.

The Member for Tobago East went on into a number of areas which I considered to be irrelevant. He read from texts and long passages from books. He also went into areas such as the International Criminal Court and made categorical statements about it being almost impossible to bring heads of state to justice in developing countries.

Right here in the Caribbean—and since we are going into an Association of Caribbean States, I will include Venezuela within the Caribbean countries. The former Prime Minister of Dominica served a jail term because he was found guilty of conspiracy. The President of Venezuela is in jail at present facing serious charges of corruption. In Antigua parliamentarians have faced a similar fate. In Jamaica parliamentarians have also been on the wrong side of the law. I say, therefore, that the insinuations made by the Member for Tobago East are without foundation. If someone has committed an offence, regardless of who he is—and there is evidence in the Caribbean and in neighbouring Venezuela—whether he is captain or cook, bottle washer or Prime Minister, he will go to jail regardless of what insinuations the Member for Tobago East may wish to make on this matter.

The Member for Tobago East went on to bring other issues and also partisan issues into the debate. As far as I am concerned, he insulted the people of Trinidad by claiming that people who reside in a certain part of the country are free from corruption, but Trinidadians are corrupt.

**Mr. A.N.R. Robinson:** May I ask the hon. Member to quote what I said to support the allegations he just made?

**Hon. C. Imbert:** Here it is:

"I have been told time and time again that Trinidad does not care about corruption. If Trinidad does not care about corruption, Tobago cares."

**Miss Nicholson:** Good statement, solid!

**Mr. A.N.R. Robinson:** Why has he left out, "I do not believe that that is so"? Why is he selectively taking passages out and leaving others? That is the culture.

**Hon. C. Imbert:** Madam Speaker, I read a categorical statement of the Member for Tobago East. He said if Trinidad does not care, Tobago cares. That is English. That means if Trinidad does not care about corruption, Tobago cares. It does not mean anything else. A clear implication is that persons in Trinidad as a whole do not care about corruption. We do not have to do an English lesson to determine that.

I believe that I have been able to demonstrate that the allegations and a number of the statements of the Member for Tobago East are not correct. The Member for San Fernando East did not apply for and did not receive an import licence to import a motor car; neither did he use his influence to obtain such a licence. The Member for San Fernando East did not apply for foreign exchange and did not receive foreign exchange to import a motor car; neither did he use his influence to do so.

It is an established fact that automobile companies, from time immemorial, have been importing motor cars into Trinidad and Tobago and selling them to persons who apply to purchase them. So, there is absolutely no question of the Member abusing his office.

In addition, the Member raised the question about the Member for San Fernando East not applying for the concessions. That is incorrect. That also is a false allegation. The Member for San Fernando East did apply in his position as a Minister for certain tax concessions available at the time for the said motor car.

**Mr. Sudama:** Where is the evidence?

**Hon. C. Imbert:** The Member for San Fernando East received these tax concessions from the Comptroller of Accounts—the evidence is available in this Parliament. I will place it into the parliamentary record at the conclusion of my presentation.

**Mr. B. Panday:** We want to cross-examine facts as you—

**Hon. C. Imbert:** As a matter of fact, there are documents—the Attorney General has the file in front of him—which will substantiate that the Member for San Fernando East applied for and received tax concessions for the said motor car on the same day, or the day after he concluded the sale, so that no question arises as to not applying for tax concessions because he knew he was buying the car to make a profit or to sell it to somebody else.

**Mr. A.N.R. Robinson:** Could the hon. Member please repeat what he said?

**Hon. C. Imbert:** The Member received the concessions from the Comptroller of Accounts on the same day, or the day after he concluded the sale of the motorcar to Sankie Subance. He applied for it long before he concluded the sale. I hope that answers the Member's question.

**3.15 p.m.**

Moving on to the various allegations and statements that have absolutely no foundation, I think I have dealt clearly with the relevance of the increase in the price of gasoline. I think I have outlined clearly that the Member for San Fernando East, residing in South Trinidad, and travelling to Port of Spain every day on official business would have had a substantial gasoline bill, far more than another Member residing in another part of Trinidad closer to Port of Spain. Therefore, a 100 per cent increase in the price of gasoline would have had a serious effect on the gasoline bill of someone using a car with a capacity of 2.8 litres.

Subsequent facts bear it out because the Member for San Fernando East subsequently purchased a car with a cubic capacity of 1.8 litres, a Mazda 626, which has a far lower gasoline consumption. I have dealt with that. That is a valid reason as far as I am concerned. I am speaking from my perspective. I am establishing that as far as Members on this side are concerned, and as far as I am concerned, there is no need for an enquiry into this matter.

The other issues raised by the Member for Tobago East have already been dealt with. The person to whom it was alleged the car was sold has indicated in court that he did not buy the car from the Member for San Fernando East. The person to whom the Prime Minister has stated categorically that he sold the car has come on public record and said that he sold the car to him. If the person the car was sold to admitted this, and the person it is alleged he sold the car to says no, he did not sell it to him, then why is there need for an investigation?

Are you going to give these people a polygraph test to determine whether or not they are telling the truth? Is that the purpose of the enquiry? They said it categorically. One said that he did sell the car to him and the other one said that he did not sell the car to him. What other evidence is required? That is all the evidence that is required. If they are cross-examined, what are they going to tell you? Mr. Subance would say, yes, the Prime Minister sold the car to him and the other character would say he did not sell the car to him. It has already been recorded in the court.

*Prime Minister's Car*

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Before I conclude, let me deal with the question of hypocrisy. I have newspaper accounts of a certain matter that took place in October 1991, where a former Minister of Government, who is no longer a Minister wrote a letter of recommendation for a convicted drug mule. I shall read some of the salient aspects of that letter which has not been eventually disputed. I understand it was originally disputed. I am not going to call the names because I do not believe in that sort of thing.

"10th June 1991

To Whom It May Concern

This is to certify that I have known...for the past 16 years."

I would not go into the other aspects because it indicates why.

"The family is well knit with solid Christian principles and a deep sense of welfare for the community....is a hard working businessman who recognizes the virtues of integrity. I have pleasure in recommending the family."

This letter was written by a Minister of Government who served under the Member for Tobago East in his former capacity as Prime Minister of this country. The individual on whose behalf that letter was written was convicted in a Miami court for drug trafficking. There was no public enquiry into this matter. One can only conclude that the Member for Tobago East, in his capacity as Prime Minister at the time, discussed the matter with the former MP for Ortoire/Mayaro, I think. I am not sure what ministry he was in at that time because he was being juggled all over the place at that time. It might have been the Ministry of Health. I am not sure.

A Minister of Government wrote a letter of recommendation for a convicted drug mule. That Member, a sitting Member of his Cabinet, did not see it fit to hold an enquiry. That brings me to the question of hypocrisy. I am not going to say whether there should or should not have been an enquiry. I am not getting into that. I hope that answers the statements made by the Member for Couva South. I am saying that a former Minister of Government wrote a letter of recommendation for a convicted drug mule. That is an established fact—nobody has disputed that fact—and that Member did not hold a public enquiry.

I therefore state that that Member does not have—sorry, the Member for Tobago East. I apologize, Madam Speaker. The former Prime Minister does not have the moral authority to call for an enquiry into anybody in this country.

*Prime Minister's Car*  
[HON. C. IMBERT]

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I also go on to say that the Member for Couva South has been on the receiving end of certain damaging allegations. It has been alleged that he paid somebody to kill a witness in a murder trial. I said it has been alleged. I believe it was in a report of the Scott drug enquiry. I am not saying that there should be an enquiry into this matter. I am merely making the point that serious allegations have been made against the Member for Couva South and there has been no public enquiry. None!

The point that I am making is that the Members on the other side are calling for enquiries under certain circumstances and they themselves have been involved in matters which are far worse, where there is more compelling evidence, and they have not called for an enquiry. I therefore make the point to establish that the Members on the other side are a bunch of hypocrites.

There are numerous examples. If one goes through the records of this country, it has been alleged that one or other of the Members on the other side has been involved in questionable matters, and there has been no public enquiry.

I wish to conclude by stating that, as far as I am concerned, all of the grounds advanced by the Member for Tobago East for a public enquiry into this particular transaction are without any foundation whatsoever. The Prime Minister did not apply for an import licence. He did not apply for foreign exchange. He had a valid reason to change the cubic capacity of his car. He also did not sell the car to any drug dealer or person of that type in 1983. He sold it to Sankie Subance who has admitted publicly that the car was sold to him. The other person who was brought in said the Member for San Fernando East did not sell the car to him.

I therefore ask on what basis are we going to have a public enquiry? Is it to satisfy the ego of the Member for Tobago East, or the mischief of the Member for Couva South, to bring bogus witnesses to put all sorts of false allegations into the public record? That is what would happen. I am merely speculating. I am not accusing anybody of anything. There could be an enquiry and all sorts of persons could come—they could be paid to do so—and put all sorts of false allegations into the public record.

The Member for Couva South represented somebody in a murder trial which had been going on for 10 years. All four prosecution witnesses were murdered. All four! And it is not the first time!

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

The police could not proceed with the case because all the witnesses were dead. But the Member comes here smiling.

I conclude by referring to a newspaper headline of a few weeks ago entitled, I think, "Hulsie blames Ramesh". The clear implication in that article is that certain persons—I am not sure if they were called by name—had to make up their minds about whether they would continue to maintain contact with drug dealers or deal with the people's business. This was the sense of that newspaper article, but I am not calling for an enquiry into that statement. I do not know what it means. All I would say now is that I consider the Motion of the Member for Tobago East to be hypocritical, mischievous, egocentric, frivolous, vexatious, and of no value whatsoever, and I do not support it.

**Miss Pamela Nicholson** (*Tobago West*): Madam Speaker, I rise here today to give solid support to the Member for Tobago East in bringing this very important Motion to this House. I do not see it as vexatious and frivolous because I think that the time has come in Trinidad and Tobago for the Parliament to be cleaned up and that the quality of representatives of the people be at a certain level.

I believe that the moral fibre of all representatives must be such that all individuals in the country would want to emulate them. I believe that we must be role models. The Minister should not see the Member as hypocritical in raising this matter. We should set standards. I recognize that because of the moral fibre of the Government, efforts are made to muzzle people who get up in this House to discuss the moral fabric of the society, and to sweep what they are saying under the carpet.

The Motion is very important. If the community sees weaknesses in what took place when the former Prime Minister was a Minister, there is nothing wrong with having committees to investigate us. That is to clear the air. One is not interfering with a personality per se, but one is dealing with the position which people hold in the society. If one does something which is questionable and the whole society is questioning it, then nothing is wrong with having that issue investigated. Law-abiding citizens in the community must follow the law if the society is to function effectively.

In 1983, foreign cars came into this country under special conditions, and people who held certain positions were able to acquire these vehicles in a certain way and were given certain concessions. When one examines the Motion and the statement made by the Prime Minister who was then, I think, Minister of Energy, it is very clear that the Minister was doing business. He did not really purchase the car for job purposes. He purchased the car to sell it. *[Interruption]* Well the time will come when you could do otherwise. The car had one month's or six

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weeks' insurance. As the Minister bought the car, gas prices rose. He is a Minister of Government wishing to purchase a big car, and he did not know that he had to spend a certain amount of money for gas?

Information has come out—I do not know, but I would like that Minister to tell me—that the car was fitted with an LPG tank.

**Mr. Imbert:** Madam Speaker, the Member is misleading the House. The car that the Member for San Fernando East fitted with a CNG, not LPG, tank was a Nissan Laurel, which he purchased many years after he purchased the Royal Saloon.

**Miss P. Nicholson:** Madam Speaker, he cannot answer that question. I was told that the car was fitted with a CNG tank—let me use the correct letters, I have mixed them up. I would like the Prime Minister, who was the Minister of Energy, to answer that question in this House. If it had a CNG tank, I cannot subscribe to the argument of the price of gas. If one is going to purchase a car, one must know whether one can afford a Saloon as opposed to a smaller car. It took him one month to know he must sell this car. It took him one month to insure this car.

If anyone with average intelligence reads this statement of the Prime Minister—he said that the allegation is totally false since he does not know the man. He said that the fact that he might have obtained a vehicle which he owned once had nothing to do with that. He said that:

"The facts are that I purchased a Toyota Royal Saloon vehicle on November 21, 1983 but one month later, on December 17, 1983, when the Minister of Finance in a Budget Speech raised the price of premium gasoline from 28 cents per litre to 55 cents per litre, I decided to sell the vehicle and replace it with a smaller car."

He belonged to the Cabinet. He was the Minister of Energy. They must have had discussions. He must have known what was taking place within the confines of that Cabinet. And insider trading is frowned upon all over the world. He was in Government; he was the Minister of Energy and now he is telling the public of Trinidad and Tobago that one month after they had raised the price of gas, he had decided to sell the car. That was insider trading.

**3.35 p.m.**

He bought the car to sell it within a certain time frame; he bought the car to do business. Even though it was a foreign car and anybody could have bought it from the car dealers, the Government would have had certain conditions under which



its Ministers should function; under which the Government would like to see its parliamentarians function. Those Ministers and parliamentarians could get a foreign car, when thousands of other people were lining up outside and could not get one. It is a special condition under which he got the car. He got the car and he is saying that in one month they raised the price of gas.

He was the Minister of Energy in the Cabinet. Only illiterate people can be fooled by telling them that it was within that time frame when gas was raised from 28 cents to 55 cents he could not afford so he decided to sell and buy another car.

What is coming out very clearly is that the Minister at the time was doing insider trading and no government entertains its Cabinet Ministers behaving in that way. When something happens—remember he will get private knowledge—the Minister is inside, he is hearing what is taking place by his Government; therefore he must know whether they would be raising the price of gas and so forth, why did he continue with the purchase! *[Interruption]* It must be nonsense to you because you cannot appreciate that.

When we are asked to represent people, when we are put in the position of a Minister, it is a sacred trust. Public office is a sacred trust and should not be trifled with. But it was trifled with, Madam Speaker. What took place, leaves questions to be asked about the character of the Minister. What is important about this also is that when one does something like this, 10 or 15 years after one could do similar things, and that is what is being questioned.

As a result, we have said, let us investigate the matter to clear the air so that the population would be clear on what is taking place. If it is the ordinary person, courthouse justice. When we are involved in issues like this we say that there must be transparency and the people must trust us. That is what is being questioned. That is why it is said, let us investigate the matter to clear the air to see that the Minister did not buy the car to make a profit of \$30,000 to \$40,000 in one month; that the Minister is not being untrue to us by trading inside; that the Minister is not linked with drug individuals. That is the issue. That is speaking the truth to the Parliament.

A committee should be set up so that when it is alleged that parliamentarians or Ministers are involved in situations like this, there should be a committee to investigate those individuals. For example, with respect to this issue, if it were in the United States of America and one is questioned, one has to answer. Instead of that, people are coming here to call other people hypocrites.

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I will now go into the area of who are the real hypocrites; who are the deceivers; who are the devious human beings in this House who should not be sitting here. There is a situation where certain people come to the House when issues like these come up and they would not say, well, if we have this problem we think we need committees to be set up to address the issue; no, they come in here just to attack other individuals without reason, and it is allowed.

After the Member for Tobago East raised some valid points on the issue—and I thought he did a very fine job—the Member for Diego Martin West got up in his usual scandalous fashion and attacked the Member for Tobago East. He also went on to attack the party that the Member for Tobago East led and all the representatives of that party, on alleged information.

The Member for Diego Martin West said that before the 1986 national election the National Alliance for Reconstruction accepted funding for the organization and it did not have a particular fund—whether it was called the National Alliance for Reconstruction Fund or whatever, and so forth. That is the point I got from what he was saying—but they asked Mr. Clive Pantin, who was the vice-chairman of the party, to set up a fund in his name and people were told to put their funds there.

**Dr. Rowley:** Madam Speaker, just for the record—as the Member for Diego Martin West referred to by the Member, I said no such thing.

**Miss P. Nicholson:** Madam Speaker, let me quote what the Member said; I was trying to give a summary before. He said here:

"The Member for Tobago East is concerned about the country's image. Do you think any person who is concerned about the 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 this one he has brought..."

He went on:

"It is those who prosecute that particular piece of mischief who will damage and tarnish this country's image, if the country's image is tarnished. It is those who propagate that kind of ridiculous allegation who are responsible.

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 by a million-dollar contribution by an alleged drug dealer..."

The Minister is saying that the party that the Member for Tobago East led got a million-dollar contribution from an alleged drug dealer.

**3.45 p.m.**

Madam Speaker, I spoke to the chairman of the party, and I got a number of documents. This one says:

"Pantin cleared. NAR satisfied he acted honestly in handing donations to party".

"Pantin replies to fund charges".

He said that there was never any reply; the party never said anything.

"Bringing back the lost sheep."

That is another one.

I did this because I felt very upset to hear those statements being made—

**Mr. Robinson:** Do not let them distract you.

**Miss P. Nicholson:** —about the party to which I belong. I feel very strongly about issues like this. There was a press release that was made by the National Alliance for Reconstruction on the same issue. I also received a statement. This is the statement here, Madam Speaker, which I am going to put in the record and I will give the amount of funds. I will not call names, as the Member for Diego Martin does not like to call names. The following statement arose out of what the Member for Diego Martin West was talking about, and this is the release:

"We refer to a number of articles in the local press relating to the collection of donations and expenditure of funds by the National Alliance for Reconstruction during the 1986 general election campaign.

Since these reports have persisted and unfortunately seemed to be an unwarranted attack on a member of our party, we feel that it is necessary to clear the air on this matter. Because of the widespread popularity of the NAR prior..."

I am reading the release:

"... to the 1986 general election and the desire of the population as a whole to remove the then incumbent regime, many of our citizens and local organizations offered financial support to the party. It is important to note that it was made clear to donors that the NAR was not selling favours. This policy continues to this day and will always be maintained.

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As is the norm, it was expected that donations would take the form of bank deposits, cheques and cash payments. The party decided that these transactions will be handled most efficiently, by delegating responsibility for doing so to a trustworthy member of the party.

Fortunately, the NAR has always had a number of individuals whose financial integrity is beyond question. Mr. Clive Pantin is one of these persons and he was readily selected.

The NAR is fully satisfied that Mr. Pantin performed this task efficiently and administered the collection and disbursement of these funds with complete knowledge and approval of the party.

Mr. Pantin's handling of this matter is beyond question, and we feel that the country as a whole is concerned and frowns upon the callous way in which attempts are being made to undermine the character of one of its leading nationals."

This release was on May 03, 1989 when the issue first broke. Mr. Clive Pantin also gave me a list and the amount of funds that was collected by him; total amount of funds: \$553,000; no million dollars as the Member for Diego Martin West stated. The largest amount he ever received at any one time—

**Dr. Rowley:** Madam Speaker, once again, for the record, the Member is misquoting the Member for Diego Martin West. I made no statement about the contents of the accounts of Mr. Clive Pantin or any person; all I quoted were statements by the chairman relating to that account. I made no statement on that matter, and for the record, as long as the Member refers to the Member for Diego Martin West I would prefer if she sticks to what I said.

**Miss P. Nicholson:** Madam Speaker, you saw the sordid attack that was made and it was done twice in this House. He did it on the Dangerous Drugs (Amdt.) Bill and he did it again when he spoke on the Motion raised by the Member for Tobago East.

What is sad about this is the kind of attack on the integrity of certain individuals in this community, people whom this country needs as representatives. And people who should not be sitting here in this House—people who, had this been another country, would not be sitting in this Parliament today—are coming here and attacking these people. And the television station of Trinidad and Tobago hustles the attacks to the public.

Clive Pantin was not only principal of a school which he served well, but he also worked in the community: cricket, football, helping his brother with the great job that Servol is doing. Another brother, Archbishop of Port of Spain—very good job to the people of the country. The Member for Diego Martin West cannot say one single thing that he has done in the community, besides battling to get into this House and to get a position here. The only time that he got any honour was when he came into this House.

It is very sad, you know, to come into the House and to see that that is the Member's trend. If one looks at all his contributions, especially if he is responding to what the Member for Tobago East says, one sees a particular line, a certain trend; you know that he is insecure; you know that there is a sense of rage in him. The same children that you all talked about, he is one of those and, therefore, it is with that sense of rage that he is trying to undermine certain people—very devious character.

**Mr. A.N.R. Robinson:** Take him away!

**Miss P. Nicholson:** Madam Speaker, I do not know about other people but I feel very, very distressed about that, because when people come forward to be politicians it is a great sacrifice that they are making, and our country expects certain types of people to serve them. But Mr. Clive Pantin is attacked when he cannot reply, because he is not here—but his whole character is being tarnished; mud-slinging by the Member for Diego Martin West.

**Dr. Rowley:** Madam Speaker, once again for the record, I have made no attack on the person referred to. I quoted from a paper published in this country, quoting statements made by the chairman of the party in relation to the gentleman. If any attack was made on that gentleman it was by the chairman of the NAR party, and that is for the record, Madam Speaker.

**3.55 p.m.**

**Miss P. Nicholson:** However, Madam Speaker, I read the release that came out. Then, when the issue came in 1990: "Pantin replies to fund charges", why did the Member not use that? He said no reply was ever made. Misleading the population!

**Dr. Rowley:** That is not my problem.

**Miss P. Nicholson:** I read the Atwell statement already and I do not have to waste time with that.

**Dr. Rowley:** That is the Atwell and Pantin story.

**Miss P. Nicholson:** What is painful is the attack on people with the capacity, ability, experience—

**Dr. Rowley:** Of laundering money!

**Miss P. Nicholson:** —and integrity to run Trinidad and Tobago, by insecure individuals who should not be sitting down here, because of their behavioural patterns—and, as I said, if this were another country they would not be sitting in the House. They come here and tarnish and attack the character of these people. I consider that scandalous, devious!

**Dr. Rowley:** Clarify!

**Mr. Robinson:** Shameless!

**Miss P. Nicholson:** He is surrounded by shamelessness.

**Mr. Robinson:** No shame! No shame!

**Dr. Rowley:** Get up and talk for yourself!

**Miss P. Nicholson:** Madam Speaker, this is a small country and there would be a limited number of people who would come forward to serve. When people are attacked in this way, if it is not corrected—as I am doing here today—it goes down in history that these people laundered money. Totally false! The election was in 1986, so at least the contributions came before. The article that the Member for Diego Martin West read from is dated 1990. When funds are collected it is very clear that one would not know where they came from. This happened in 1990, and he said that they laundered the money.

For the 1991 election, a team from the People's National Movement went to Canada to mobilize funds for their campaign. A concerned citizens' group was organized in Canada to raise the funds. When the group asked where they were going to lodge the funds, they were requested to lodge the funds in an account under the name of Kenneth Tilly in Canada.

**Mr. Valley:** The Member got me frightened.

**Miss P. Nicholson:** Madam Speaker, no one from the concerned citizens' group knew who Kenneth Tilly was. Nobody! It was argued here, why Pantin? But why Kenneth Tilly? There were clouds of secrecy surrounding the identity of Kenneth Tilly. After the election, when they questioned certain individuals, there was an arrogant response to them. When they asked who Kenneth Tilly was,

nobody could identify him. Therefore, they decided that they would disband the group. They wrote the People's National Movement and told them that they were going to disband the group and the reason for so doing.

In the People's National Movement, apart from the small donation committee, only the leader and the chairman of the party know anything about their funds. So that an enormous sum of drug money could be in their funds!

**Dr. Rowley:** Connection, girl!

**Mr. Valley:** The Member's logic is amazing!

**Miss P. Nicholson:** Madam Speaker, the people asked all over the country; they were wondering if it was the Member for Diego Martin West who was Kenneth Tilly—

**Dr. Rowley:** What the Member has with me?

**Miss P. Nicholson:** —if it was under him the funding was put. They asked if it was the Member for Diego Martin East. They said that the closest they came was to the Member for Diego Martin Central because one name—

**Mr. Valley:** Madam Speaker, would you kindly tell the Member for Tobago West to leave the Member for Diego Martin Central out of this, please?

**Mr. Imbert:** Madam Speaker, similarly, would she leave me out also?

**Miss P. Nicholson:** Sit down! We sat here quietly and listened.

They wanted to know who Kenneth Tilly was and because they could not answer, the group was disbanded. They were wondering if there were drug people connected with them why they were putting the funds in Kenneth Tilly's name.

I believe, and it is argued, that many of the people who usually donate funds to parties do not like to put the funds in the name of the party; they prefer to put them in the name of an individual. It is against that background that the Deputy Chairman of the National Alliance for Reconstruction became involved. I sought information on this to be able to bring the release, to be able to tell how the People's National Movement got their funding because inside there, there could be drug barons. One cannot blame them because they would not know all the people who would give funding. What is even better with the National Alliance for Reconstruction is that they had it in the name of somebody whom everybody in the country knows. Their own is a myth and a hide-and-seek person.

When I was given this release, "Pantin replies to fund charges" by Mr. Pantin, I could have felt the pain in the man's heart to see that he was being attacked

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somewhere where he could not reply to see that these unfair means were being used to tarnish his character when he was coming forward to make a serious contribution to the country. He named the person in the party—but I will not quote the name—that brought funds from the individual that they are talking about. I quote what Mr. Pantin said:

"I was asked by the NAR to do this because many people did not want to make out cheques to the NAR. I kept the strictest account of all money received and disbursed and after the election, it was all checked and audited and the balance of \$29,532 was deposited to party funds."

**Dr. Rowley:** Where it came from?

**Miss P. Nicholson:** I continue:

"He said the campaign activities in 1986 in all the constituencies benefited from this fund and that two payments were made to ..."

a certain individual, whose name I will not call.

"Pantin said that in 1986 the NAR office followed a rule whereby all donors of funds were told up front while their donations were welcome there could be no strings attached.

'When Mr. Piralli made his donations, he, too, was told this and in response he told me that all he wanted to see was a change in government.'

"After the elections, however, he called me to congratulate me and the NAR. I thanked him for his help. He then said he needed a favour. He wanted a licence to bring in a container of tyres. I reminded him of our conversation to which he replied: 'I thought that was only political old talk.' I told him the most I would do was let the Minister concerned know and that all things being equal his application would be considered in the usual way."

Madam Speaker, this was in the press. It is a press release from a press conference that he had.

**4.05 p.m.**

**Dr. Rowley:** You are embarrassing, to say the least!

**Miss P. Nicholson:** But, Madam Speaker, he gave me this to read in the House.

**Dr. Rowley:** He set you up!



**Miss P. Nicholson:** Because here is where the problem lies. People like the Member for Diego Martin West can only see in one direction.

**Mr. Robinson:** Dishonesty!

**Miss P. Nicholson:** Dishonesty. The Member can only attack and try to destroy character, and I really feel for Mr. Pantin—the kind of contribution that an individual like that makes to the society. But the only time one sees these people like the Member for Diego Martin West is struggling to get into power. The Member tried Tobago. Tobago would never vote for him, never! And they have their reasons.

**Mr. Robinson:** They know him too well!

**Dr. Rowley:** You keep quiet!

**Miss P. Nicholson:** They would never do that, and they demonstrated it to him. And when he gets in here, all he can do is try to attack and tarnish the good name of people. That is all he does. One of the best political leaders we have in the country, and a person who has made the greatest contribution to this country—the Member for Tobago East. Madam Speaker, those characters are devious. Shameless!

**Dr. Rowley:** I put him there!

**Miss P. Nicholson:** When there are statesmen like the Member for Tobago East, people who sacrifice themselves for their country, it is really sad to see charismatic rabble-rousers, just as Hitler—

I was reading a book a month ago, *Verbal Behavior and Politics*—

**Mr. Robinson:** Hear, hear!

**Miss P. Nicholson:** They were talking about charismatic rabble-rousing rhetoric. What they said is that Adolf Hitler had that kind of impact on them. They were talking about a comment that an individual made. [*Interruption*]

**Dr. Rowley:** I thank the Member for giving way.

**Miss P. Nicholson:** No, I am not giving way. Sit down!

**Dr. Rowley:** Just for clarification.

**Miss P. Nicholson:** You spoke already.

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Madam Speaker, what they are saying is that the effects are graphically described by a listener who listened to Adolf Hitler's oratory. This is what the person had to say:

"I do not know how to describe the emotions that swept over me as I heard this man. His words were like a scourge. When he spoke of the disgrace of Germany, I felt ready to spring on any enemy. His appeal to German manhood was like a call to arms, the gospel he preached a sacred truth. He seemed another Luther. I forgot everything but the man; then, glancing around, I saw that his magnetism was holding these thousands as one."

This is how this individual, the Member for Diego Martin West, is being used—the role he is being used to play in this country.

But, Madam Speaker, the people of Trinidad and Tobago would not allow that. Every time the Member for Tobago East speaks, the Member for Diego Martin West rises as the hatchet man.

**Dr. Rowley:** You are the one who says he is easy to beat, you know. You said he "lost his marbles".

**Miss P. Nicholson:** Madam Speaker—what did he say?

**Dr. Rowley:** Has he found them?

**Miss P. Nicholson:** Madam Speaker, the issue is not—

**Mr. Valley:**—whether he has lost his marbles, or not.

**Miss P. Nicholson:**—is not to attack and tarnish the people who come forward to serve the country, especially when they are doing it honestly. If an issue comes up and you are around, nothing is wrong with having that issue investigated.

**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. [*Dr. K. Rowley*]

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Miss P. Nicholson:** Madam Speaker, I am very happy that the Member for Diego Martin West has the strength, but when you are Hitler you can rise at any time.

Many things are happening around us and I only hope that the next time the Member talks in the House, he would apologize to the people whom he has been

attacking—people who have made a great contribution to the country and are still continuing to do so, in spite of statements made by him. The Member must not try to tarnish people's character without using facts. He must not use hearsay and allegations to do that.

They talk about drugs. About three months ago there was a newspaper article which stated that drugs were found in a container assigned by Carib, a company in this country. I would like to know what has happened to that investigation. One is not hearing anything at all about it. I remember that in the article the worker said that when he stacked the stuff in the container he realized that it was not as it should have been, and when he went in, there was a compartment that was constructed near the driver's seat, and on further investigation he recognized cocaine.

**4.15 p.m.**

Since that came out, Madam Speaker, we in the society are listening out for what the Government will be saying. We are listening for action. One tends to ask oneself certain questions: Who owns the institutions? Is it the same individual who owns or almost owns a certain newspaper that is defending? We want to know what is happening. When he talks about drug laundering, let him answer certain questions.

The population wants to know that people associated with this Government function at a certain level and whether their names were called or not—I am not saying that these people did anything—but certain things have happened with their company. Is that the same company which is constructing the NHA building?

I believe we must have moral justice in this country. Do not attack people when nothing can be proved. Do not do that! This is a Government which is surrounded by immorality. There are Members in this Parliament who represent the Government at certain levels. The Government is functioning, using a certain company to lobby for it on government business. It is the funds of the people of Trinidad and Tobago that are involved in that.

An individual who is with that company joins another company. Then there is a Minister of Government getting married to that company individual who shifted from one company to another company. The business of Trinidad and Tobago leaves that company and goes to the company that the person goes to, and there are people in here talking, when corruption and immorality surround them all over.

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There is a stony silence in the country on that matter. A stony silence, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** The hon. Member has been very loud in her comments on the matter. There is not a stony silence.

**Miss P. Nicholson:** Yes, Madam Speaker. I am glad you are observing that. Stony silence in this country.

One asks oneself the question in this country. There is not one comment from the same newspaper that reported. It is suddenly silent.

**Mr. Maharaj:** Tell them why!

**Miss P. Nicholson:** The other major daily newspaper, the following Sunday came out defending. They came out—

**Mr. Casimire:** Make the point!

**Miss P. Nicholson:** The point is very clear. The newspaper came out defending and trying to find reasons why the business left this company for that company. It is the money of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. We want an investigation into that. We want to know—

**Dr. Rowley:** Or into the marriage?

**Miss P. Nicholson:** Madam Speaker, when I read the facts, I am usually told I must not call names. I dealt with that matter already. There was silence. But this individual now works with Holland and Knight. There is a whole immoral, corrupt approach there that needs investigation.

When we talk about investigating the matter about the then Minister, who is now the Prime Minister, it is similar. These are the same people who, every day, are coming out and talking about the country needing exemplars; the country needing role models. The present Prime Minister, on whom we want an investigation into his car deal, is the same Prime Minister about whom we have a new issue where the country's money is being used to lobby a matter. The business shifts to a company and the person who is getting married shifts too. She shifts first, business shifts there. That also needs investigation.

Also, there is a totally immoral and traumatic situation with another Member. The same arguments that the Member for Baratavia/San Juan is making in the country, that children are suffering from “father hunger”—they are developing it. Today, we are not hearing the women in this country saying a word; we are not

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hearing the Church. I am asking myself the questions: Where is the Church? Where are the women in this country? Where are the trade unions? I believe the Member for Couva North might be saying something just now, so I am not going to ask that question, because this is a serious matter, Madam Speaker.

I feel very, very grieved. No comment at all. The only newspaper that said anything on this issue—and it is like they are now afraid to say anything further—was the *Newsday* of Saturday, June 18, 1994. "Mottley must explain". I want to read this into the record.

"If published reports about Minister of Finance, Wendell Mottley are correct then Mr. Mottley owes it to the country to make a statement."

They are correct. It is our money.

"When asked by this newspaper yesterday for his side of the story, he replied: 'No comment.' We are afraid that simply is not good enough, and worse could be an admission that something is wrong.

According to reports, which surfaced two days ago, Minister Mottley is engaged to be married. Another woman, though, has claimed. . ."

**Mr. Casimire:** That is the problem!

**Dr. Rowley:** That is the problem!

**Miss P. Nicholson:** It continues:

". . . that she is the mother of his unborn child.

Mr. Mottley is no ordinary citizen. He is a senior Cabinet Minister in the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and the public is entitled to expect certain standards of the men and women who run the nation's affairs."

Very correct.

"We do not seek to pass public judgment on the Finance Minister . . ."

He is probably the best Minister. It is a pity that he is the individual but we have to stand up to facts when the time comes.

"We do not seek to pass public judgment on the Finance Minister because we are not in possession of all the facts. But we must express our concern.

We call on Prime Minister Manning to intervene."

Just a while ago a statement that the Member for Tobago East made was talked about. One really wonders whether we think about morality in our country.

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When we listen to certain Members—as I said when we do certain analyses on some of them, they should not be here.

**4.25 p.m.**

The Prime Minister is someone who is always talking about youth in need of exemplars and wanting role models. His wife speaks in the same vein. But there is a contradiction at this time. Why is he not taking any action? Why are we not hearing anything about that? Other people who come forward and serve honestly are not here, but they are attacked, tarnished and mud thrown all over their characters in this Parliament. Members opposite find nothing is wrong—when we find there should be a serious enquiry.

It is not only into the sale of the motor car—the issue with the Member for San Fernando East, who is now our Prime Minister—that we need an investigation; there is need for other urgent investigations into what is happening with funds that are being tossed about and used to lobby and the role it plays.

Many of the Members on the other side are not suited to be in here so they do not see anything wrong with that, but when we are asking young people to look for role models, they cannot be looking in that direction.

Madam Speaker, I support the Motion:

*Be it Resolved*, That this honourable House consider that an independent enquiry 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.

We must have transparency in our Government! We must have transparency in our characters! We must be role models! We must be exemplars! We must be bold enough, when immoral issues emerge in our country to take action and not attack people when they cannot defend themselves here; and one knows it is not true.

You are present; our funds are being used to do certain things; certain things have happened in this country which are immoral; there is corruption and I want an investigation, and I will also be coming again on this particular issue. That is why I support this other area. I am not saying to investigate only the Prime Minister. I believe, very strongly, that there is need for a standing committee of the House so that if any issue comes up involving a parliamentarian—any minister of government and so forth—it would be investigated and the Member can come forward to clear the air.

Madam Speaker, I really support this Motion and I feel the time has come for change. Members opposite must not see it only as an attack on a Government Member. The time has come—because we change a number of things as we go along—for change. Members should not be using devious, reckless, shameless means to attack people behind their backs—people with character and fibre, in this society—because we will never get the kind of people to serve the country that the country needs.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

#### ADJOURNMENT

**The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley):** Madam Speaker, I beg to move that the House do now adjourn to Friday, July 15, 1994 at 1.30 p.m.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*[Interruption]*

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Members, I can only go by what the House votes and the ayes have it.

The House is suspended until 5.00 p.m. when we will take the four Motions on the Adjournment.

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

**5.10 p.m.:** *Sitting resumed.*

#### **Princes Town Hospital (Reopening of)**

**Mr. Mohammed Haniff (Princes Town):** Madam Speaker, the subject matter of this Motion is the non-reopening of the Princes Town Hospital after having been closed for repairs since December 1993. This hospital has been in operation for over 100 years and has been serving the needs of a very wide catchment area, which includes areas such as Moruga, La Lune, Marac, Valley-line, Lengua, Rio Claro, Tableland, Cedar Hill and Manahambre—all the areas in and around Princes Town. The present population this hospital is supposed to be catering for is in the vicinity of over 100,000 persons. This hospital, as I said, was closed since December 1993 for repairs.

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When the hospital was closed, workers became very concerned and they called me or came to my office to enquire what was happening, because they were told to report to another institution for a period of one month. I told them that my understanding was that the hospital would have been reopened after the repairs, which were originally due to be completed after one month. During that period I enquired of the hon. Minister of Health whether there were any plans to close down the hospital and the Minister assured me there were no such plans at that time. However, that statement caused some concern and confusion—“no such plans at the time.”

I came to the Parliament and asked the Minister in question form so that his reply would have been made officially. The official reply on February 18, 1994 was that there were no such plans to close the hospital and that it would be reopened after the repairs were done. That reply also said that by the end of February, 1994 the repairs were due to be completed and the hospital would have been reopened.

The repairs were completed some time after the end of February, but before the end of March. Persons around the Princes Town area are concerned and have been calling on me to find out what is happening. As a result, I have done several things. In addition to the question that I asked which elicited the assurance that the hospital would have been reopened after the repairs were completed—and as I said the repairs have been completed—I also wrote to the hon. Minister on April 15, 1994.

I sought to inform the hon. Minister that I had held discussions with members of the Princes Town Regional Corporation, together with the County Medical Officer of Health and other senior officers attached to the Ministry of Health in the South. They gave us a copy of a document consisting of recommendations for the conversion of the Princes Town Hospital into a polyclinic. The confusion is that up to this time, three months after the repairs have been completed, we do not have an official position whether the hospital will be reopened as a hospital; and if it is going to be reopened as a hospital, why it has not been reopened to date and when it will be reopened.

The other aspect of it, however, is the document, a copy of which is in my possession—which given to me by the County Medical Officer of Health. It says:



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"FROM: County Medical Officer of Health, Victoria  
 TO: Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Health  
 Date: 12th April, 1994  
 Subject: Princes Town District Hospital - alternative utilization as a polyclinic.

Deliberations and Recommendations emerging out of this meeting are submitted for your consideration."

One of the recommendations is:

"To discontinue the Maternity and Inpatient Services.

Justification:-

- (a) Over the past 3 years (1991-1993) the average number of patients who delivered at the hospital were 260 per year."

Madam Speaker, I am saying the reason that it was only 260 persons was the inadequate facilities provided at the hospital; not that there was not much more need for use of the hospital. So, a certain number of persons went there, and others were forced to go to San Fernando and elsewhere, where there were more doctors, better equipment and better facilities, and it is in that context that they are making the recommendation to discontinue that kind of service and to change over.

This recommendation went on to say:

"The numbers and categories of staff assigned to the Princes Town District Hospital to man these 24-hour services have been underutilized..."

They are saying that the staff have been underutilized. We are saying the staff have been underutilized for the same argument—because of the lack of facilities. It is not a matter of not having enough cases visiting the hospital, but that when you go to the hospital all they tell you is to go to San Fernando. It is in that kind of situation this question arises as to when the hospital will be reopening. It has created confusion in the minds of those who are affected.

I need not point out the area, but it is a large area and, as such, people have been raising these questions. I have asked questions and the reply was that the hospital will be reopened. Unfortunately, I have not received a reply from the hon. Minister concerning my letter to him. In those circumstances I raise it here today with a view to finding out from the hon. Minister when the hospital would be reopened.

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Madam Speaker, there is a Princes Town Hospital Improvement Committee. This committee applied for permission from the Ministry of Health to render certain services, and it is in collaboration with the Rotary Club of Princes Town. A number of items have been sought from a firm in Canada, original initial approval having been granted. That application was made on January 07, 1993. A reply from the Trinto-Can Development Foundation of Canada dated April 28, 1993 states that the listing that was given—let me give an idea of the listing: heavy-duty sewing machine and heavy-duty washing machine and so forth, including an ambulance—I do not want to go into the details, but the letter states that the 34 items listed have been approved and are lying in a warehouse in Canada awaiting formal approval by this Government. I understand recently that formal approval has been granted but the matter is now referred to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

**5.20 p.m.**

Time is going. It seems as though the attention of the Minister of Foreign Affairs has not yet been drawn to it. Lying there is valuable equipment including an ambulance, and to date, more than one year later, there has been no formal approval. The residents and the concerned people of Princes Town and surrounding areas called me to a meeting yesterday at the hospital. The authorities told them that they were not allowed on the compound.

I want to find out from the hon. Minister of Health, whether a decision has been made to reopen the hospital, and if so, when it would be reopened. If that decision has not been made, what then is the position? Is it going to be a polyclinic? Why has there been no response to my letter calling for dialogue with those concerned groups and citizens of Princes Town so that we can discuss the implications of what is likely to happen and what is happening at present, in terms of the suffering?

Let me inform you, Madam Speaker, and this House that during these seven months, from December to date, there has been no accident and emergency unit in Princes Town. There is just a health centre with very few services. When any accidents occur, whether minor or major, the people have to go to the San Fernando Hospital. Most people, and the Minister of Health in particular, would know that the San Fernando Hospital is congested and it is time-consuming. My information is that if one is warded there, in many cases, one has to provide one's medication.

Princes Town is a very useful area. It is a central catchment area and we want to know if a decision has been taken to open the polyclinic. If that is so, what are the services that are likely to be offered and when would they come on stream?

I think I have said enough without wanting to consume too much time in the light of our having four motions. I have a number of details that I would have liked to bring forward. I have said that the concern is that the hospital has been closed for so long; the repairs were completed before the end of March. Three months has passed and we have not heard officially what the position is in Princes Town.

As such, I would appreciate very much a reply from the hon. Minister stating what the situation is. It is very strange that I have not received a reply from the hon. Minister. I did expect to receive one. I do not know if it is that the decision has not yet been taken. In the circumstances, I am saying that if the hospital is not being reopened urgently, then there is need for discussion and dialogue so that those concerned and those who are affected would know what is likely to happen and why certain things are not happening.

I emphasize the need for an accident and emergency unit. None has been in existence for the last seven months. There are many schools in Princes Town and other reasons why there is need for such services. It is urgent and important that we hear what is happening about the Princes Town Hospital.

Thank you very much.

**The Minister of Health (Hon. John Eckstein):** Madam Speaker, the Member for Princes Town has asked about the reopening of the Princes Town Hospital. I want to provide some information about that hospital, which has existed for 100-odd years, in terms of its utilization during 1993.

There are several departments. For example, in the maternity department, occupancy during 1993 was 13.8 per cent. In the children's area, the nursery, occupancy was 7.7 per cent. In other words, on an average, there was one child per day at the hospital. There was less than one person giving birth per day in that hospital during 1993.

When the Member talks about the suffering that is being inflicted on the population as a consequence of this closure, this is the extent of the suffering of which he speaks. When the facility was available, that is how it was utilized.

**Mr. Palackdharrysingh:** Madam Speaker—

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**Mr. Valley:** Madam Speaker, on a point of order. [*Interruption*] Let him go ahead. We give way.

**Mr. Palackdharrysingh:** Madam Speaker, I would like the hon. Minister to indicate the trend over the past five or 10 years, because to take one particular year after the establishment of an institution, over 100 years ago, is to give a skewed account of what really happens at the Princes Town District Hospital.

**Madam Speaker:** You have raised a Motion on the Adjournment. The Minister is replying. If the reply is not satisfactory, I am sure the Member would take it up at some other forum.

**Hon. J. Eckstein:** Madam Speaker, let me give you an idea of the establishment at the hospital when it was operated.

Doctors	1 (Registrar/Senior Doctor)
Pharmacists	2
Clerks	2
Head Nurse	1
Nurses	16
Nursing Assistants	7
Midwives	5
Five midwives to deliver one child.	
Nurse's Aide	1
Hospital Attendants	5
Wardsmaids	4
Seamstress	1
Motor Vehicle Driver	1
Laundresses	2
Cooks	3
Meal Labourers	3

This was for a 7 per cent occupancy. In respect of the maternity facility, there was 13.8 per cent occupancy.

In respect of the adults, this is what the comment is. The in-patient admissions to the hospital were on the average of 700 cases per year and these were all chronic patients, such as diabetics and hypertension cases who could have been managed in an ambulatory setting or at home.

When I visited the hospital there were four patients, four social cases. It is an extreme statement, but the hospital was not being used by the people in the area for the reasons that the representative himself has identified. A total of 54 members of staff, costing the country millions of dollars and providing virtually no service. To suggest that because the facility is closed it is now causing this severe suffering is inaccurate.

**Dr. Singh:** Could the Minister state what was the use of the casualty area in that hospital? As the Member mentioned, it is a drawing area for this type of service.

**Hon. J. Eckstein:** I am not aware that there was a specific dedicated casualty department in the hospital. There is a health centre in the area that offers accident and emergency services. If there are extreme cases, they are referred to the San Fernando General Hospital.

### **5.30 p.m.**

This is just one instance where the ministry and the Government are wasting tremendous resources in facilities that really are not serving the needs of the people of the country. We understand that there is a need to provide proper health care in that area. My technical staff has been meeting with the representative, who has a copy of the correspondence, from which he quoted. These are not politicians; they are the County Medical Officer of Health, the Medical Officer of Health in the area, the County Health Visitor, the Registrar of Princes Town, the doctor—all senior medical people. These people have suggested that the maternity services be discontinued, but that we should construct, furnish and equip a new type of medical facility in the Princes Town area. There is desperate need for such a facility, not what we had there. What we had was simply a drain on the Treasury without any significant benefit to the people of the Princes Town area.

What is being suggested by the technical staff of the ministry is that we establish a 24-hour accident and emergency service in the area. It might not be possible to do it immediately, but they say that should be the ultimate goal. Establish primary health care and preventative services; well, we already have some degree of that. Offer specialized clinical sessions in general medicine, pediatrics, obstetrics and gynaecology, ophthalmology, ENT, psychiatry and

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psychotherapy. These sessions will be offered, our technical advisors say, by an appointment system, once per week, utilizing resource persons from the San Fernando General Hospital.

You see, this is part of the whole concept of regionalisation, where we will be drawing from the San Fernando General Hospital staff, who will all be employees of the Southern Regional Health Authority. This we cannot do under the present system. We cannot take a doctor from San Fernando and send him to do a clinic in the Princes Town Hospital. Under the decentralized system, when there is the Southern Regional Health Authority, he will be an employee of the Regional Health Authority. He is now an employee of the San Fernando Hospital and you cannot tell a doctor to do a clinic in Princes Town. It is not going to work. But if they are members of the authority, they can then be distributed to function throughout the region, assigned to different institutions on different days to hold clinic sessions.

We want to introduce in that area support laboratory services—for example, blood tests, X-rays, ultrasound, ECGs. These are the services we are planning for Princes Town, not the ridiculous facility that was there which was draining Government's money and making little or no contribution to the health and welfare of the people of the Princes Town area. The Member has this correspondence; he has been meeting with the technical staff of the ministry.

We wanted to be sure of the structural integrity of the building to ensure that there was no further deterioration; so we have fixed the hospital up to a point. We now have to do quite a bit of work on that hospital before it is converted into the type of facility which can serve the needs of the Princes Town community and the wider community of 100,000 of which he speaks. Much serious work is going on within the ministry on this matter.

At present, the planning and designs for the necessary modifications to the building to enable it to be adapted to provide the services described are being done. We need to identify the necessary funding, but we are working on that. Full primary care services are being provided for the people of the area, and that has to be seen within the context of the resources that are available to the Ministry of Health. The Member made a remark about the San Fernando General Hospital, which I accept; it is not properly equipped. We just do not have the financial resources, but, as I say, that is an example of the stringent financial situation which the country faces.

Patients who need hospitalization for serious cases are referred to the San Fernando General Hospital. There is overcrowding, but there is nothing we can do

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in the present circumstances. The Member is also aware that we are extending the San Fernando General Hospital at a cost of \$90 million to provide an additional 200 beds. In due course we are hoping that that situation in the southern area will be resolved.

I agree entirely with the Member for Princes Town; I have no argument on the need to improve and provide better health care for the people of Princes Town: I do not, however, agree when he suggests that this hospital was doing such a fantastic job and that its closure has inflicted tremendous suffering.

The figures do not support that. It was not doing much, if anything at all. And these are not the comments of the Minister or any politician; these are the comments of the technical officers working in the Ministry of Health in that particular area, with whom he has been in constant contact, and with whom I invite him to continue to dialogue. In the Ministry of Health whatever we do is driven, not by the Princes Town Corporation, but by the senior technical officers in the Ministry of Health, advised by the various county people.

The ministry is trying its best to improve the level of health care for the people of Princes Town and its environs.

**Mr. Haniff:** When are you going [*Inaudible*]

**Hon. J. Eckstein:** I cannot tell you when the design consultants will finish their designs. The building has to be modified. As I said, the architectural consultants are working on that, then the construction has to take place. We are not going to reopen what we had there. We are just not going to do it. We will provide something of which you, as the representative, can be proud, and which can serve the needs of the people of the area. What was there before was doing absolutely nothing, and the Member is aware of that.

**Mr. Haniff:** I say, why? Because the facilities were run down.

**Hon. J. Eckstein:** Well, we are trying our best to fix it and we hope that it will meet with the Member's satisfaction when it is completed.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

### **Mosquito Invasion**

**Mr. Krish Jurai** (*Nariva*): Madam Speaker, I gave notice earlier to raise this matter today. It deals with the invasion of mosquitoes which has led to very serious consequences for the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

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This country has always had a history of mosquitoes, but not to the extent that we have seen in recent times. Throughout the country, at this time people are reeling under the pressure of mosquitoes. The onset of the rainy season has brought about the prolific breeding of mosquitoes. Let me remind the Minister of Health and the Government that the mosquito problem does not exist only in Caroni, Princes Town and Nariva, but throughout Trinidad and Tobago. It is true to say that it is a plague in some parts of the country more than in other parts, but let me remind the Government that when the plague starts to spread it will affect everyone throughout the length and breadth of this country.

**5.40 p.m.**

As a matter of fact, it has already started because, according to the reports that I have had, it is affecting schoolchildren, both at home and at school: children cannot study in peace. It is affecting everybody. I have been told that some office workers have to walk with their own aerosol spray to prevent mosquito bites. As a matter of fact, recently we saw a young boy on television, who was covered with festering sores as a result of mosquito bites, and that is but one example. This is something that we are seeing throughout the country. Maybe that does not affect the area of the Minister of Works and Transport, so he can smile.

Normally, I would have singled out the Nariva area as one of the major areas that are affected by this problem, but as I said earlier, this problem is greater in certain low-lying areas but it is affecting the country as a whole. I am, therefore, calling on the Government to act immediately to eradicate the mosquito problem. The problem with this Government is that it cannot kill little mosquitoes but it wants to go to fight in Haiti. This is a serious problem here and we have reached a crisis situation. Let me quote some figures to show the magnitude of the problem in this country with respect to dengue fever.

This is a report which was done by Helen McKnight and published in the *Trinidad Guardian* dated January 08, 1994. It says:

"The number of cases of dengue fever reported in the first 10 months of 1993 was three and a half times the number in 1992 and nine and a half times the number reported in 1991."

**Mr. Eckstein:** What year was that?

**Mr. K. Jurai:** In 1991.

"A report on the occurrence of dengue fever in Trinidad and Tobago over the last three years originating from the Public Health Laboratory (PHL) stated



that the number of cases reported in 1993 up to October 30 rose to 2,269, up from 642 in 1992 and 238 in 1991."

One can see that there has been a dramatic increase in the number of cases of dengue fever in this country.

The figures I quoted are only for dengue fever, but we must not forget that this country also has the problem of yellow fever. At this point I do not have the statistics. Probably the Minister would have some figures to give us, but I know that yellow fever is also on the rise.

May I also remind the Minister that if things go unchecked, malaria would likely return to affect the people of this country. As you know, Madam Speaker, dengue fever, yellow fever and malaria are serious killers in this country, so there is need for the Government to take immediate action to prevent the spread of these types of fever. I am again calling on the Government to act immediately.

At the moment the Insect Vector Control Division does not have the insecticide, nor the granules for spraying stagnant water. The workers do not have the spray cans and so forth. As a result they go around to people's homes and advise them to get rid of stagnant water. What I find strange is that in some instances, particularly in my constituency where we do not have a pipe-borne water supply, these Vector Control officers are telling the people to get rid of their barrel water, because of the larvae. But the Government is not providing water for the people, and when they collect their precious water supply they are being told to get rid of it. It is an ironical situation and if the Government is really concerned, I think it should get down to doing the job properly by eradicating the mosquitoes that are affecting the people of this country.

Apart from the Minister of Health, the Minister of Works and Transport stands guilty because if his ministry had been clearing the drains and watercourses, we would not have had water stagnation resulting in mosquitoes being able to breed as they are doing today. In addition, he is also the Minister of Local Government, but what is he doing to assist the regional corporations? The Government is not providing the funds for the workers in these corporations to clear the drains to get rid of the mosquitoes.

I know it is a major problem; it is a serious problem, and I hope that with the concerted action of the Government, the Minister of Health, the Minister of Works and Transport and Minister of Local Government, they would act immediately to get rid of this serious problem that is plaguing this country.

**The Minister of Health, (Hon. John Eckstein):** Madam Speaker, the monitoring activities of the Insect Vector Control Division show—as the Member for Nariva has reported—an increase in the incidence of mosquitoes throughout Trinidad and Tobago. There has been an upsurge in the mosquito population and it is related to the onset of the rainy season, combined with environmental conditions that are favourable for mosquito breeding such as:

- (i) blocked watercourses;
- (ii) increasing acreage used in rice cultivation;
- (iii) wetland ecosystems;
- (iv) discarded containers likely to hold water on individual premises.

As I said before, the monitoring activities of the division reveal significant increases in particular species such as the anopheles, culex and mansonias mosquitoes. These species are not normally associated with disease transmission in Trinidad and Tobago, since diseases related to these vectors are not, at this time, present in this country. The diseases associated with those particular vectors—yellow fever and malaria—are not present in Trinidad and Tobago. I am asking the Member not to overstate the case. There is a serious problem but the Member should not say that we have problems here in Trinidad and Tobago with yellow fever and malaria.

#### **5.50 p.m.**

The *aedes aegypti* mosquito is the vector of dengue and yellow fever. Since there exists a high level of immunization against yellow fever in Trinidad and Tobago, the main disease threat comes from dengue fever and its complications.

The Insect Vector Control Division of the Ministry of Health has had very limited success in eradicating the *aedes aegypti*, and I think that it is important that we understand the breeding habits of this mosquito. It is the most dangerous mosquito in Trinidad and Tobago, because it is responsible for dengue fever. It is a domestic mosquito: it lives in close association with man. You do not find it outside human habitation. It infests man-made or natural containers found in or near human dwellings. One would not get it in river courses. It is in and around the home of man that it breeds.

The *aedes aegypti* mosquito is rarely found, if ever at all, more than 100 metres from a home. Householders, therefore, have an important role to play, and that is why you find officers coming around to households. I really do not see why in this day and age we have to pay people to go into private yards to empty and spray containers. *[Interruption]*

I am not talking about spraying containers where you have drinking water. In fact, Cariri has said that you can keep a fish in a barrel and the fish will effectively control the larvae population. The fish does not interfere with the potability of the water. It is a legacy of a past era where a man has to go around your house and tell you that stagnant water is a threat to you and your children. We should be responsible enough as a society, by now, to look around our yards and get rid of all these containers. The containers that you need for drinking purposes could be covered and secured, but the old tyres, bottles and so forth must be got rid of—but, we continue to have to pay people to do this.

**Mr. Jurai:** This is fine for around the house, but what about when you have these containers on the roadsides, and drains, what do you do about this?

**Hon. J. Eckstein:** If there is a disused container whether it is inside or just outside my house, I would get rid of it. Householders, therefore, have an important role to play in this eradication effort by removing or destroying discarded containers and covering water storage containers on their premises. This will result in the elimination of the breeding sources without insecticide contamination. One of the problems in spraying is insecticide contamination of potable water. As I said, we can get rid of the containers; then we would not have the mosquitoes.

The regional corporations, as well as the Ministry of Works and Transport have responsibilities related to the cleaning and draining of watercourses to prevent the accumulation of stagnant water, which can result in an increase of the other types of mosquitoes—the anopheles and culex. The corporations are also responsible for the application of oil to drains to prevent mosquito breeding.

In addition, the increasing acreage under rice cultivation contributes to the proliferation of the anopheles and the mansonias types of mosquito. A policy for the management of this problem has to be developed by Caroni Limited and the other relevant agencies. I have been informed that the bulk of the rice cultivation is done by Caroni Limited. It is incumbent on that company to develop some system for dealing with this.

As a result of this seasonal increase in the mosquito population, the Insect Vector Control Division of the Ministry of Health has intensified its spraying programme. I cannot deny that there are serious financial constraints. There are about 800 people in that division and the allocation is consumed, to a significant extent, by the manpower that we have, and the division would like to have some more money, but that is another matter.

The intensified programme involves space spraying, intra- and extra-domiciliary, as well as perifocal, residual spraying, and the focal treatment of infested containers. Priority is, however, given to areas in which exist high *aedes aegypti* indices, or where there is increased infestation of other species. The Insect Vector Control Division's activities are primarily aimed at destroying the *aedes aegypti* mosquito, and the ministry invites the support of the national community; because it does not matter what is done at the level of the Ministry of Health and at the Insect Vector Control Division—unless the full support of the individual in his home is obtained, we are not going to achieve anything.

**Mr. Mohammed Haniff** (*Princes Town*): Madam Speaker, thank you very much for this honour. Do you know what is one of the main causes of the problem also? Local government instituted a charge in recent times for taking up all utensils, pots, pans, refrigerators and what have you. They are not taking it up freely; people have to pay. The fact is, people are not paying and they are forming heaps and heaps of garbage by the road. They are picking up the normal household garbage, but that type of rubbish is not being attended to. For the Minister's sake and for our own sake—the Member for Arouca North will know—it needs to be attended to urgently. Thank you very much.

**6.00 p.m.**

**Hon. J. Eckstein:** Madam Speaker, thanks to the Member for Princes Town.

In order to achieve and maintain a mosquito-free environment, a concerted effort is needed from all individuals throughout the country. In this regard, greater collaboration between the Ministry of Health and other related agencies is essential in order to alleviate the breeding of mosquitoes in all major water courses and water bodies. For example, there must be the cleaning and grading of drains and rivers; clearing of water heads; repairs to malfunctioning sluice gates.

Local communities must be actively involved in vector control programmes and promote proper environmental sanitation on individual premises. Of course, we need the support of the Members of the Opposition. This does not require them voting for the Government, so I suppose it can be supported. It would not violate any of their policy positions.

Pursuant to this integrated effort, a pilot project on Integrated Vector Control with Community Participation is presently being embarked upon by the Insect Vector Control Division, Ministry of Health, in the Curepe district. This is being conducted through funding from Caribbean Co-operation in Health—an Italian

Government-funded project—and this is expected to be a guide for future vector control programmes, including mosquitoes.

The Member is quite right. There is a serious problem. The ministry invites the support of the entire community. The ministry is putting the resources it has into it and I hope that the other agencies of government that share this responsibility would join us to ensure that the problem is dealt with.

### **Maxi-taxi Operators (Harassment)**

**Mr. Trevor Sudama** (*Oropouche*): Madam Speaker, I just want to bring to the attention of the House and the authorities concerned a problem which is affecting maxi-taxi operators, in that they are being harassed by the police, particularly those people who do not own and operate maxi-taxis. This has come about because the ministry concerned has been tardy in getting the regulations in place in order to give effect to Act No. 6 of 1994, that is, An Act to amend the Maxi-taxi Act, 1992.

As a result of this harassment of people who have in the past worked merely as operators of maxi-taxis with the permission of the owner—I understand that once their name appears on the insurance certificate, they need not be the owner; the owner then gives permission to the operator to operate the maxi-taxi. That, of course, meant that more people could have been employed in the maxi-taxi transport business.

In the past there was no separate licence granted to operators. Under the current law, a separate licence is required. It says here in section 5 (3) that a person who is desirous of operating a maxi-taxi may apply to the Authority for a permit to do so. An application under subsection (3) shall be in the prescribed form and shall be accompanied by a certificate of good character.

Even the form has not been prepared, let alone the regulations. So that the person who is desirous of applying to operate a maxi-taxi cannot do so in the present situation. He was earning a livelihood under the previous system and he is now debarred from earning that livelihood. And it is causing serious stress on the families and all concerned. In many cases, people who own maxi-taxis bought them as an investment and, therefore, they themselves were not drivers and were not keen on driving the maxi-taxis. There is a great deterrent and people are afraid to go out there and operate maxi-taxis for fear of being charged and prosecuted. This is causing serious economic distress, both to the owners and to the operators.

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[MR. SUDAMA]

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Section 8 is very clear, and this is apparently what the police are basing their harassment on. It says:

"A person who operates a maxi-taxi without a valid permit to do so commits an offence and is liable on summary conviction to a fine of five thousand dollars."

Reports have come to me from San Fernando, Penal and those areas that policemen are threatening the operators that once they are engaged in such an operation without a valid permit they will be liable to a fine of \$5,000.00. One can imagine the deterrent effect that would have on these operators. Then it says:

"An owner of a maxi-taxi who employs or allows a person ..."

the operator himself is liable to a fine—

"not being the holder of a valid permit, to operate the maxi-taxi, commits an offence and is liable ... to a fine of five thousand dollars."

These offences carry heavy fines and yet the machinery is not in place to permit a person to have an operator's licence. I would have thought that in the meantime, since what is going on is beyond the control of the persons interested in obtaining an operator's licence—it is due to the tardiness of the government department—some instructions would have gone out that, look here, these laws would not be enforced for the time being until regulations are put in place and the facilities made available for people to apply and be given an operator's licence.

It seems to me that if the Ministry of Works and Transport is negligent in the performance of its duties, maybe it should inform the Ministry of National Security to use its discretion in the matter. It is a case of the left hand not knowing what the right hand is doing, and both of them seem to be doing the wrong things.

I thought I would bring this matter to the attention of the Minister and the House and, perhaps, he could use his good offices as Minister of Works and Transport—he is not in the habit of doing this—to alleviate the problems in the society and the distress currently occasioned by the police taking this very strong action against the operators.

**The Minister of Works and Transport and Minister of Local Government (Hon. Colm Imbert):** Madam Speaker, as I have said on so many occasions before, I always have the misfortune to respond to the misrepresentations and the incorrect statements of the Member for Oropouche, in particular. I have the

misfortune to come in this House, Friday after Friday, and listen to the Member for Oropouche make statements that are totally incorrect and out of context, but so it is!

**Hon. Member:** Well, resign!

**Mr. Sudama:** Madam Speaker, on a point of order.

**Hon. C. Imbert:** I am not giving way.

**Mr. Sudama:** The Member is misrepresenting to the House what I have said. I am making a complaint that people are being harassed by the police. Where does the misrepresentation come in there? This is what has been reported to me.

**Hon. C. Imbert:** I would tell you if you would sit. Madam Speaker, the Member for Oropouche made the following statements. *[Interruption]* No, no, I did not give way.

**Mr. Sudama:** It is a point of order.

**Hon. C. Imbert:** The Member has no point of order. He made a statement that persons were earning a livelihood under the previous system; persons had purchased maxi-taxis as an investment, and persons who were not owners were driving the maxi-taxis and they are now being deprived of their livelihood and so forth.

It has been illegal in this country, for at least the last 15 years, for persons to drive maxi-taxis if they are not the registered owners. So it is incorrect, and a misrepresentation, for the Member for Oropouche to make the statement that under the previous system people were earning a livelihood; they were driving maxi-taxis and were not the owner.

**Mr. Sudama:** Could you answer a question?

**Hon. C. Imbert:** I am not giving way. I am not giving way.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Member, could you let the hon. Minister reply to the Motion.

**Mr. Sudama:** How many persons are operators of those maxi-taxis? You are permitting an illegality and you are coming here to say—

**Hon. C. Imbert:** Madam Speaker, for 15 years it was illegal—

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Minister, I think the Member's complaint is the harassment by the police.

**Hon. C. Imbert:** I am coming to that. For 15 years it was illegal for persons who did not own maxi-taxis to operate them.

**Hon. Member:** You are condoning the illegality.

**6.10 p.m.**

**Hon. C. Imbert:** We have passed a law in this country, Madam Speaker, an amendment to the Maxi-Taxi Act, which now permits persons who are not owners to operate maxi-taxis, once they comply with certain procedures.

**Mr. Sudama:** Where are the procedures?

**Hon. C. Imbert:** Therefore, Madam Speaker, it is incorrect to state that there is a situation where persons are being deprived, as in the past they were earning a livelihood. Nothing has changed. The people who were driving illegally before, are driving illegally now. There is nothing different about that—nobody is being deprived of anything. They were breaking the law before.

I go on to say that recognizing that it was advisable to allow persons who are not owners to be drivers, we made suitable amendments to the Act. There will be accompanying regulations and when we presented the Bill in this honourable House some time ago, we had already drafted and had approved certain regulations that would deal with the amendments to the Bill.

But, arising out of the debate in this House and in the other place, several pertinent matters were raised by the Member for Oropouche and other persons, which caused us to reconsider those regulations which we had already drafted and we have now taken into account many of the suggestions of Members, such as the Member for Oropouche, and have strengthened our draft regulations, which are now with the Chief Parliamentary Counsel.

We could have immediately laid regulations in this House and, for the benefit of the Member—because I have come to the conclusion that his knowledge of the law is virtually non-existent, and it is a pity because there are distinguished lawyers on that side—they really should educate him. He asked about the application forms, but if he had looked at the previous law—he may have a copy—he would have seen that the form of application is part of the regulations and there will be no form of application until the regulations are presented and passed in both Houses of Parliament. [*Interruption*]

Madam Speaker, I hear talk about two years. We amended the Maxi-Taxi Act just a few months ago this year, so those statements are out of context. In respect



of the strengthened regulations, they are with the Chief Parliamentary Counsel and I do not anticipate that they will take very long. They will be introduced in Parliament very shortly.

**Mr. Maharaj:** Next year?

**Hon C. Imbert:** No, no, they will be introduced in Parliament in 1994, Madam Speaker, and I certainly hope they will be introduced within the next few months. I am confident they will be, but in the intervening period some other issues have arisen.

We have recently opened a stand for the Petit Valley/Diego Martin maxi-taxis on South Quay, and we have discovered that a number of the more indisciplined maxi-taxi drivers—and there are many of them—have declined to use the maxi-taxi stand provided in accordance with the law and regulations. Instead of queuing up and dropping off and picking up people within the designated areas as is required, we have found a feature of the maxi-taxi culture is dropping off people in the middle of Wrightson Road, on South Quay, stopping suddenly at traffic lights, when the lights are green, and engaging in several infringements of the law.

The police have been requested to try to ensure that these maxi-taxi operators comply, at least, with some form of discipline; and have tried as best they can, to get maxi-taxi operators to use the stand that has been provided for them and stop creating havoc in the Wrightson Road and South Quay areas. It has been discovered that some of the more delinquent drivers have not maintained their maxi-taxis in accordance with the various regulations. They have smooth tyres, no proper brake lights; there are numerous defects in the vehicles; they do not have insurance; some of the persons driving them do not have permits—even the simple taxi badge and driver's permit, Madam Speaker.

It is in the context of that drive that the police have been cracking down on the owners and operators of maxi-taxis. My information is that the police have not been enforcing the provisions of the original Maxi-Taxi Act, 1978, which has been in effect for over 15 years. They have been "easing up" the drivers in respect of the operator provision. They have been taking action against drivers for no insurance, having smooth tyres, stopping suddenly at traffic lights when the lights are green, and stopping on the wrong side of the road and, generally, driving in an unsafe manner.

The maxi-taxi operators have used this drive by the police—to ensure that they comply with the regulations—to raise issues, such as this, which are not relevant. My understanding is that the police are not charging people for not being

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in possession of the relevant operator's permit, but instead are seeking to enforce other aspects of the law; and the few delinquent maxi-taxi operators have brought up this issue as a smoke screen and a red herring to confuse the issue. I am not perfect, Madam Speaker—

**Mr. Maharaj:** You have come a long way.

**Hon. C. Imbert:** My understanding is that the police are not enforcing that aspect of the law, on the understanding that when the regulations come in, persons who are not owners will be able to be operators. Therefore, for yet another time, the Member for Oropouche has come to this House with misrepresentation and inaccurate statements and a classic misunderstanding of the law and society of Trinidad and Tobago today.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*House adjourned accordingly*

*Adjourned at 6.17 p.m.*