

Leave of Absence

Friday, January 27, 1995

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, January 27, 1995

The House met at 1.30 p.m.

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Madam Speaker: I have granted leave of absence from today's sitting to the Member for Tobago East (Mr. A.N.R. Robinson), the Member for San Fernando West (Mr. Ralph Maraj), the Member for Caroni East (Miss Indera Sagewan), and the Member for Couva North (Mr. Basdeo Panday).

ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT BILL

Bill to provide for the management of the environment within Trinidad and Tobago through the establishment and operation of an Environmental Management Authority, an Environmental Trust Fund and an Environmental Commission, to define the powers and duties thereof, and for related matters, brought from the Senate, [*The Minister of Planning and Development*]; read the first time.

PAPERS LAID

1. Report of the Auditor General on the Accounts of the Public Library of Trinidad and Tobago for the year ended December 31, 1988. [*The Minister of Finance (Hon. Wendell Mottley)*]
2. Report of the Auditor General on the Accounts of the Public Library of Trinidad and Tobago for the year ended December 31, 1989. [*Hon. W. Mottley*]

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

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Madam Speaker, of the questions on the Order Paper today, the Government is able to answer questions Nos. 5, 31, 37, 41, 42 47, and 50.

The following questions stood on the Order Paper:

**Mohess Road
(Repairs to)**

11. Will the Minister of Works and Transport indicate what work does his Ministry propose to undertake on the Mohess Road to effect repairs and how soon is this work to be undertaken? (*Mr. S. Hosein*)

Acquisition of Land for Community Centres

16. Would the Minister of Community Development, Culture and Women's Affairs state:
- (a) What is the procedure for the acquisition of land for the purpose of building community centres?
 - (b) Whether the Palmiste Village Council, via Longdenville has applied for the acquisition of land by following such procedure?

If the answer to (b) is in the affirmative, would the Minister state what is the status of such application? (*Mr. R. Palackdharrysingh*)

**Point Lisas Companies
(Safety Precautions)**

33. (a) Could the hon. Minister of Labour and Co-operatives state what protective measures (if any) have been taken and what safeguards (if any) are in place in the operations of the companies at Point Lisas to prevent injury to life and damage to property of residents of Couva and the surrounding areas in the event an emergency arises as a result of the escape of poisonous gases or substances or chemicals or any other matter?
- (b) Could the Minister say whether there is any risk of the escape of any toxic fumes, gases or chemicals from any of the plants at Point Lisas? (*Mr. R. Maharaj*)

**Disaster Preparedness Plan
(Point Lisas Industrial Estate)**

35. Could the Minister of National Security indicate:
- (a) Whether a Committee was appointed by his Government to prepare a Disaster Preparedness Plan for the Point Lisas Industrial Estate and its environs? If it did appoint such a Committee, could the Minister state

whether the Committee submitted a report and give the reasons for the appointment of such a Committee?

- (b) If the Committee reported, could the Minister state to this Honourable House the material findings in the report and could the Minister state whether he would lay the report in the House of Representatives? If the answer to this part of the question is in the negative, could he give reasons for refusing to lay same?
- (c) Could the Minister state what plans (if any) exist to deal with a disaster at Point Lisas? (*Mr. R. Maharaj*)

CARE Programme

38. Would the Minister of Community Development, Culture and Women's Affairs indicate to this House:

- (a) The aims and objectives of the Community Action for Revival and Empowerment (CARE) Programme?
- (b) What is the sum allocated for this Programme for 1994, how much has been disbursed and to whom?
- (c) Who are the advisers and/or consultants attached to the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and Women's Affairs, their qualifications and salaries? (*Mr. S. Hosein*)

Mr. Sudama: Question No. 46 has been on this Order Paper since last year.

Madam Speaker: Let us vote and then you could probably make your complaint. Questions Nos. 11, 16, 33, 35 and 38 are to be deferred for a period of one week.

Questions, by leave, deferred.

Mr. Trevor Sudama (Oropouche): Madam Speaker, question No. 46 has been there since last year and it reads:

Minimum Wages Schedule (Security Guards)

46. Could the Minister state whether the Government intends to establish a Minimum Wages Schedule for security guards employed by private sector firms?

Since October last year and we cannot get an answer. All we have are deferrals week after week in this House.

Mr. Collis: Madam Speaker, that question is answered automatically.

Madam Speaker: Could you kindly give the hon. Member the—

Mr. Sudama: There is no such thing as an automatic answer. You get up in this House and you answer.

Madam Speaker: That is what I am saying. Let it be, then if the hon. Minister has the answer let us, out of courtesy for the Member for Oropouche maybe the answer ought to be repeated.

The Minister of Labour and Co-operatives (Mr. Kenneth Collis): Madam Speaker, the Government has established a Minimum Wages Order for security guards.

Mr. Sudama: Does the Minister recall that on March 05, 1993 he made the following response to this House?

"The Minister of Labour and Co-operatives advises that: The recommendations of the Minimum Wages Board relating to the issuance of guidelines with respect to minimum wages and other conditions of service for private security guards have been received at the Ministry of Labour and Co-operatives. The Board's recommendation have since been evaluated at the Ministry of Labour and Co-operatives and recommendations have been recently made to Cabinet for the publication of a Draft Order for public comment."

This is March 5, 1993 two years ago. Does it take two years for the Cabinet to make a decision on this simple matter? March 5, 1993, and today the Minister cannot even answer a question in this House as to the whereabouts of this Draft Order.

Hon. K. Collis: Madam Speaker, the order that the honourable Member is referring to has been laid in this honourable House.

Mr. Sudama: We had a draft order in February, 1993. A draft order approved by the Cabinet. The question I am asking: Does it take the Cabinet two years to approve a draft? What has happened in the last two years with respect to the Minimum Wages Order for private security guards? It is a simple question I am asking.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Minister is stating that the question has already been answered. Does the Minister have any further answer to the supplemental question?

Hon. K. Collis: No, Madam Speaker.

1.40 p.m.

Madam Speaker: The Member for Naparima. He is not here. Is there any application—

Mr. Sudama: Madam Speaker, something happens when questions are in my name. Question No. 5 to the Minister of Community Development, Culture and Women's Affairs.

Madam Speaker: It is not the Minister's fault. We were dealing with No. 46 because of the problem you were having. All right. The Member for Oropouche. Question No. 5.

**Provision for Repairs
(Debe Community Centre)**

5. Mr. Trevor Sudama (*Oropouche*) asked the Minister of Community Development, Culture and Women's Affairs:

- (a) Could the Minister state whether any provisions have been made in 1994 for repair work on the Debe Community Centre?
- (b) If the answer is in the negative, could the Minister state why not?

The Minister of Community Development, Culture and Women's Affairs (Hon. Joan Yuille-Williams): Madam Speaker, a provision of \$4,000 was made in 1994 for repair work to the plumbing and toilet facilities at the Debe Community Centre. Materials have already been sourced and repair work is in progress. The Debe Community Centre has been earmarked for further repairs under the Community Enhancement Programme of the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and Women's Affairs. Estimates for the repairs, totalling \$35,589 had been developed by officers of the Ministry of Works and Transport. It is projected that work will begin early in 1995.

Mr. Sudama: Supplementary question, Madam Speaker. Could the Minister tell this House what the sum of \$35,589 will incorporate in terms of repairs? What items of work are anticipated?

Hon. J. Yuille-Williams: Madam Speaker, I am not in a position to say. All I can say is that estimates for the repairs have been done by the Ministry of Works and Transport.

Mr. Sudama: Madam Speaker, does the Minister recall that in response to a similar question which was given in the House on March 4, 1994, the Member for Diego Martin Central said:

"Madam Speaker, an estimate has been prepared for the repair of the Debe Community Centre under the Community Enhancement Programme of the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and Women's Affairs, and work is scheduled to begin in mid 1994."

In response to a further question from me as to the amount of the estimates for the centre, the Member for Diego Martin Central stated:

"Madam Speaker, it is about \$70,000."

In 1994, there was an estimate of \$70,000. Suddenly, in 1995, that estimate has been reduced to \$35,000. Would the Minister care to give this House an explanation?

Hon. J. Yuille-Williams: Madam Speaker, I am unable to do that. This information is the latest the Ministry has on the Debe Community Centre and I gave the figures as they stand at the moment.

Mr. Sudama: Madam Speaker, would the Minister care to tell this House from what source did the refurbishment of the Pleasantville Community Centre come to the tune of \$750,000?

Madam Speaker: That is an entirely new question. I will not allow that. Proceed please. No. 31. The Member for Naparima is not here.

Mr. Hosein: Madam Speaker, there is question No. 11 to be answered.

Madam Speaker: No, that question was deferred for a period of one week.

The following question stood on the Order Paper in the name of Mr. Subhas Panday (Naparima):

Buildings Tenanted by the State

31. Can the Prime Minister state:

- (a) The number of buildings which are tenanted by the State?
- (b) The addresses of these buildings?
- (c) The name of the landlords of each building?
- (d) The date of commencement of each tenancy?

- (e) The Ministry and/or Division of each Ministry which is in occupation of each building?
- (f) The monthly rental of each building?

Mr. Krish Jurai (*Nariva*): Madam Speaker, I beg to move that question No. 31 standing in the name of the Member for Naparima be deferred for one week.

Questions, by leave, deferred.

Repairs to Recreational Facilities (Siparia)

37. Mr. Sahid Hosein (*Siparia*) asked the Minister of Works and Transport and Minister of Local Government:

- (a) Is the Minister aware that during the last term of the life of the St. Patrick County Council materials were purchased to undertake the following works:-
 - (i) Completion of the construction of the Pluck Road Recreation Ground?
 - (ii) Completion of the construction of the Sunress Road Recreation Ground?
 - (iii) Construction of the Sammy Trace bridge?
 - (iv) Construction of the Katwaroo Trace bridge?
 - (v) Fencing of the hard surface court at the Scotts Road Recreation Ground?
- (b) Can the Minister indicate:
 - (i) Why these jobs were not completed?
 - (ii) What became of the materials purchased for same?
 - (iii) If all those materials were accounted for?
 - (iv) Who were the Chief Administrative Officer and Chairman of the Council during that period?
- (c) If the materials cannot be accounted for, is the Minister willing to institute an investigation into the whereabouts of the materials purchased for those projects and the continuing irresponsible manner in which the Penal/Debe Regional Corporation is being run since the

advent of that Chief Executive Officer to the helm of the administration?

The Minister of Works and Transport and Minister of Local Government (Hon. Colm Imbert): Madam Speaker, the Minister of Works and Transport and Minister of Local Government is aware that during the last term of the St. Patrick Country Council—1987 to 91—materials were purchased to undertake works on the Pluck Road Recreation Ground, the Sunness Road Recreation Ground, Sammy Trace Bridge, Katwaroo Trace Bridge, and Scotts Road Recreation Ground.

The named projects were not completed mainly because of funding shortfalls and depletion of materials stock through excessive rainfall and flooding; for example, washing away of materials by flood waters, as in the case of the Sammy Trace Bridge and the Katwaroo Trace Bridge projects.

It is to be noted, however, that Katwaroo Trace Bridge is expected to be completed, by contract, in the first quarter of 1995.

Funds in the amount of \$20,000 were released in July, 1994 to continue work on Scotts Road Recreation Ground. The Penal/Debe Corporation recently took a decision to complete funding of the hard surface court at that location. Materials purchased for the projects were distributed to the Penal/Debe and Siparia Regional Corporations and were used in the on-going recurrent works programme.

All materials purchased for the projects in question have been duly accounted for in accordance with prevailing stock control procedures. During the period in question, Mr. David Gene was the Chief Administrative Officer and Mr. Alvin Mahabir was the Chairman of the St. Patrick County Council.

The Minister of Works and Transport and Minister of Local Government is therefore satisfied that, based on available information, all materials are accounted for and the Minister does not agree that the Penal/Debe Corporation is being administered in an irresponsible manner.

Mr. Hosein: Supplementary question, Madam Speaker. Is the Minister saying, firstly, that some of the steel purchased for the construction of these bridges was washed away by floods? Secondly, that the materials purchased for the fencing of Scotts Road Recreation Ground in a similar manner disappeared in the floods?

Hon. C. Imbert: Madam Speaker, based on the information which is available to the Minister of Works and Transport and Minister of Local Government, the Ministry of Local Government is satisfied that all materials have been accounted for.

Mr. Hosein: Madam Speaker, I am not surprised.

**State Companies/Agencies
(Divestment/Privatization)**

41. Mr. Mohammed Haniff (*Princes Town*) asked the Minister of Finance:

Would the Minister state:

- (a) How many state companies/agencies have been divested/privatized since 1992 to date?
- (b) How many more state companies/agencies are currently being divested/privatized?
- (c) How many other state companies/agencies are listed for divestment/privatization?
- (d) What sum of money Government received to date from each state company/agency divested/privatized?
- (e) How is the money being utilized or what proposals are there to utilize same?

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Madam Speaker, Members will be aware that the answers to these questions are included in the report on the divestment programme which was laid in Parliament about two or three weeks ago.

The answer to part (a) of the question—if the Member still wants the answer—

Madam Speaker: That is what I am asking. The answers were included in the report which was laid on—

Mr. Haniff: Yes, Madam Speaker. This question was filed a long time ago. Eventually some information was laid. However, there is need to give answers to parts (d) and (e).

Madam Speaker. All right. Hon. Minister, parts (d) and (e).

Hon. K. Valley: Madam Speaker, this information was also included in the report.

The total amount which Government has received from the completion of the divestment of those seventeen (17) companies is TT 1,154,756,618. The details of

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receipts from Government's divestment programme 1992 to the present can be found in that document. If the Member wishes, I could give him the information.

The proceeds from the divestment programme have been used to assist in the funding of Government's capital expenditure programme and to meet foreign and local debt service payments.

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

**Minister of Social Development
(Matters to be Implemented from 1994 Contribution)**

42. (a) During the budget presentation for the 1994 Appropriation Bill on December 1, 1993, the hon. Minister of Social Development made reference to the following:-
- (i) survey on poverty;
 - (ii) comprehensive report on the codification and compiling of child and family laws in Trinidad and Tobago;
 - (iii) survey which examines the factors affecting probationers;
 - (iv) report on juvenile delinquent and youth crime;
 - (v) report on the needs of the rural elderly;
 - (vi) report and recommendations of the National Committee on Social Rehabilitation; and
 - (vii) survey on the non-mentally ill, homeless and socially displaced in Trinidad and Tobago.

Could the Minister indicate whether these reports will be tabled in Parliament? If so, when?

- (b) Could the Minister indicate whether the formal foster care system which she mentioned in her 1994 budget contribution has been established?

Mr. John Humphrey (*St. Augustine*): Madam Speaker, the Member for Couva South has asked me to receive the answer to this question.

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley) Madam Speaker, that question is not to be answered today. It is not ready. I ask for a deferral of one week.

Question, by leave, deferred.

Mr. Sudama: Madam Speaker, the Member did not answer my supplementary question for No. 46, but I know she is incapable of answering it. We move on to question No. 47 to the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

**Issue of Visas
(Officers of Foreign Governments)**

47. Mr. Trevor Sudama (*Oropouche*) asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs:

Could the Minister state whether the officers of foreign governments responsible for the issue of visas in Trinidad and Tobago to their respective countries are entitled to stamp or write notations or markings of any kind on the passports of Trinidad and Tobago nationals other than the visa certificate itself?

The Minister of Education (Hon. Augustus Ramrekersingh): Madam Speaker, the acting Chief Immigration Officer has advised that it is normal practice for an immigration officer or an officer in a diplomatic mission entrusted with the responsibility of issuing visas to persons desirous of entering the country of which he is the representative either to issue a visa endorsement on a passport or not to issue the endorsement. In fact, passport pages are especially for endorsement by immigration and consular officers. Therefore, in cases where the visa is refused the officer concerned may—and sometimes does, insert a notation or marking in the passport to indicate that a visa was applied for at a particular office. The notation is for observation purposes and the standard procedure by the officer who is so authorized.

1.50 p.m.

The officer is also at liberty not to insert a marking, if he so desires. The notation, or marking, really means that the applicant was examined and submitted an application at the mission, seeking a visa to enter the country. If entry was granted, a visa would be inserted. The mark sometimes means that adequate documentation was not submitted, or that the officer was not fully satisfied after interviewing the applicant. In spite of the mark placed on the passport, a person can re-apply at the same foreign mission at a future date.

It may be noted, Madam Speaker, that the laws of Trinidad and Tobago are silent on the question of notation in passports, but Trinidad and Tobago is also entitled to make notations in the passports of anyone seeking visas to enter the country. A check with the relevant authorities of India, Jamaica, Brazil, Nigeria, the United Kingdom, Canada and the United States of America have revealed variations in the practice.

The situation is as follows, Madam Speaker:

Nigeria	Insertions are made only in the case of a person who is officially debarred from Nigeria. In such a case a notation will be inserted in the passport informing that the bearer had applied for a visa. The passport application form is used as a record of having applied, but that the visa was refused.
India	There is provision for stamping passports when an applicant is not issued a visa immediately. The stamp states "Visa Applied For". This is done when a definite decision is taken not to issue a visa to the applicant where the applicant decided to withdraw the application before the reply is received, then no stamp is inserted on the passport.
Jamaica:	If a visa is not granted, no notation is inserted in the passport. The passport application form is used as the record of having applied for the visa.
United Kingdom:	A notation is inserted in the passport of the person who applied for the entry permit which was refused.
Canada:	If a visa is not granted, a notation is made at the back of the passport.
Brazil:	If a visa is not granted, a notation is made either at the end of the last entry or at the back of the passport.
United States	Consular officials of the United States of America insert both stamps and notations in passports, whether a visa has been approved or refused.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Victoria East District
(Allocation of Funds)**

50. Mr. Mohammed Haniff asked the Minister of Works and Transport:

Would the Minister state:

- (a) The amount of funds allocated and released as at November 30, 1994 to the Ministry of Works, Victoria East District, for Goods and

Services under Recurrent Services, Highways Division and the Transport Section?

- (b) What is the order of priority of roads to be repaired with the Road Improvement Fund in 1995, in the Victoria East District, Ministry of Works?

The Minister of Works and Transport and Minister of Local Government (Hon. Colm Imbert): Madam Speaker, the funds allocated in 1994 and released as at December 31, 1994 to the Ministry of Works and Transport, Victoria East District for Goods and Services under Recurrent Services, were \$705,000 and \$288,988.43 respectively.

The roads to be repaired in 1995 under the Road Improvement Fund Programme in the Victoria East District, in first order of priority are the Naparima/Mayaro Road, the St. Croix Road and the Moruga Road. Other roads will be added to the Programme, subject to availability of funds.

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Madam Speaker: Before we proceed with the Motion, I had not yet received a letter from Dr. Carl Singh asking for his excuse from today's sitting. I have now received it, and so the Member is excused from today's sitting up to February 10, 1995. He has indicated to us that his wife died and I think we all will extend our sympathies to Dr. Singh and I ask the Clerk to, indeed, convey our condolences to Dr. Singh in that respect.

INDIAN ARRIVAL DAY

[THIRD DAY]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question [October 28 1994]:

Be It Resolved that this House recommend to the Government that May 30 be declared a national public holiday to be known as Indian Arrival Day. [Mr. T. Sudama]

Question again proposed.

Mr. Raymond Palackdharrysingh (Caroni Central): Madam Speaker, would you be kind enough to indicate to me how much more time I have in this debate?

Madam Speaker: One moment, please. Could the Clerk advise me? [Pause] The record is there. You were on the second half of your debate, were you not? That is what I recall. [Interruption] The Member has 10 more minutes.

Mr. R. Palackdharrysingh: Madam Speaker on December 9, 1994, I indicated that the political leader of the People's National Movement, Patrick Manning, indicated that May 30 must be viewed as one of the most important and significant days in the history of Trinidad and Tobago. I wish to indicate that if that was his conviction as well as the People's National Movement's conviction in 1990, I am wondering whether that conviction is still of the same intensity, or whether or not the Prime Minister has now shifted gears.

Madam Speaker, you see it is incumbent upon Government to take some of the pronouncements made seriously, otherwise those pronouncements would merely look like measures to appease the population just before General Elections.

2.00 p.m.

It is significant that as I make my contribution, I have cause to look back at some of the statements and sentiments made by some of the previous persons in government. I consider a statement made by the hon. Member for Tobago East, who was then Prime Minister, to be quite an important statement on Indian Arrival Day. In that statement, he indicated that:

"Indian Arrival Day, celebrated on May 30, represents one of the ritualised 'backward glances' which have assumed tremendous significance for our multi-ethnic population."

Such beautiful words bringing to bear the language of religious doctrine into play—ritualised. It gives the feeling that the Member indeed recognized the tremendous importance of such an occasion. But not only that, he also indicated that the Indian presence in Trinidad and Tobago was a "splendid weave" and "a happy marriage".

"Yet it is interwoven in such a way,"

—that still its distinctive "strands" remained very conspicuous.

I also recognize that there is the acknowledgement of public utterances that Indian Arrival Day is tremendously important to the psychic well-being of Trinidad and Tobago, because it comes from the mouths of a cross-section of our people. Indian Arrival Day is likened to that of self-knowledge, a celebration that is regenerative. Not only that, looking backward at Indian Arrival Day becomes "an act of exorcism". How well that is put. Let me quote from the Supplemental to

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the *Sunday Guardian* of May 27, 1990 on page 8. This is attributed to Mr. A.N.R. Robinson and I quote:

"The very act of looking backwards then becomes an act of exorcism . . . exorcism of the demons of racial denigration, vestiges of which remain to haunt us today. It is also an act of restoration, of pride, dignity and self-knowledge."

Madam Speaker, you see what strong language has been used to describe the Indian presence. Yet, we find that we do not have the political will to give manifestation in a tangible way through the recognition of May 30 as an important public holiday, not merely for East Indians but for all of Trinidad and Tobago.

We can make the analogy that Christmas is observed by everyone in this country and it marks what is called the entry of Christ into the world—incarnation, where the Word was made flesh—and although in the period of witness, there was tremendous hardship and suffering, yet we did not look to the resurrection as the only day to acknowledge the overcoming of the sting of death, so to speak.

Therefore, we say the arrival of East Indians in this country has the same connotation, one that gives us the total expectation of a transformation that, perhaps, would lead to liberation and development.

Madam Speaker, I cannot negate the posturings of members of the PNM. Again, there are situations in this country when we have mass gatherings of East Indians and we are merely contented to take occasion to say let the entire nation mark Indian arrival.

That is not the crux of the matter, not just to mark indian arrival, this thing is becoming more and more politicized, it is becoming more and more of a political football. I quote from page 8 of the *Express* of Thursday, January 19, 1995.

"From an address by Dr. Lenny Saith . . . at the launch of the National Council of Indian Culture celebrations for one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of Indian Arrival Day, at the Divali Nagar Site, Chaguanas on December 31, 1994."

It says:

"Let me assure you, ladies and gentlemen, that the Government is also going to participate. One of the major highlights of our contribution is that we have invited and will be hosting the distinguished President of India who has agreed

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to be with us in time for May 30—the day now widely celebrated as Indian Arrival Day."

Whether the President of India comes or does not come to Trinidad is of no significance to the celebration of East Indians here, because it is a spontaneous movement and nothing will stop that celebration.

What one would have hoped is that such pronouncements would have given a commitment that Indian Arrival Day would find itself on the national agenda as a national public holiday as to give it credence and to stop the hypocrisy that has been practised time and again by several Members of Government, several members in high places, yet when they get to the Parliament to take the action, it is as though a paralysis has taken hold of them and they are not able to accomplish anything but to talk about Indian Arrival Day in such terms.

Madam Speaker: May I remind the Member that there are two minutes left for his contribution.

Mr. R. Palackdharrysingh: Madam Speaker, it is perhaps a little sad that I only had this little time.

Madam Speaker: No. You had 75 minutes.

Mr. R. Palackdharrysingh: But I want to simply say that another minister has indicated he is going to do a play to capture the Indians' struggle on stage. I simply want to say to that minister that he has a ready-made stage here that is of far greater importance to capture that presence and that struggle by merely saying yes to East Indian Arrival Day as a public holiday and to stop the nonsense outside as to the caring of the East Indian presence here.

Sometime ago, the Catholic Church began to move in the direction to recognize East Indian Arrival Day. The 140th Anniversary was celebrated indicating that it was a "historic occasion", and including in its liturgy Indian instruments for playing "devotional songs" and dances depicting the joys and sorrows of thanksgiving. The Catholic Church, in its own way, recognized the authenticity of Indian Arrival Day since 1985 and linked it liturgically and transcendently into an act of worship and thanksgiving.

2.10 p.m.

So, Madam Speaker, we have had the whole society moving in a direction. We have many sectors moving in that direction. It is only at this forum that there is, what is called, the hindrance of that final recognition. Today we have the opportunity, really, to knit this community more cohesively, if only we would give

a tangible effect to our beliefs with respect to Indian Arrival Day, and knit this fabric so well that in the community of communities, we can be proud. I have no doubt in my mind that we have one of the best societies in the world when it comes to a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural society. This society can teach the entire world much from the way it functions, and we have the opportunity to enhance its social and religious structure and cultural processes by doing the things that are right as we give recognition to East Indian Arrival Day. Whether we like it or not, it is a day that is going to be of tremendous importance for all times for all our citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. Let us, therefore, take the opportunity to make our contribution in accepting the opportunity for celebration, one and all, on this occasion, and to give that tangible expression to something that has been developed and will continue to grow.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Krish Jurai (*Nariva*): Madam Speaker, in view of the great significance of this debate before us here today, I would like to read the title of the Motion so everyone can appreciate the subject that we are dealing with here today. The Motion reads:

"Whereas the first group of indentured workers from India arrived in this country on May 30, 1845;

And Whereas the above date heralded the commencement of a long period of immigration from India involving thousands of indentured workers who came to these shores;

And Whereas the vast majority of these indentured workers settled in this country and their descendants today comprise a very large and substantial portion of the population;

And Whereas the above date is of outstanding significance in the historical evolution of this country as a multi-racial, multi-cultural and multi-religious society;

And Whereas the above date is today widely commemorated as a day of great national historical importance:

Be It Resolved that this House recommend to the Government that May 30 be declared a national public holiday to be known as INDIAN ARRIVAL DAY.

Madam Speaker, to my mind, this Motion is very important, in that it deals with this honourable House seeking to have May 30, 1995 and thereafter, be declared as a public holiday in Trinidad and Tobago. It is also of historical

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significance, in that it coincides with the arrival of the first batch of East Indians who came from India 150 years ago, on May 30, 1845. Allow me to quote briefly from the *Port of Spain Gazette* of 1844. It says:

"The news that the East Indians would come brought new hope to the planners in their desperate struggle for economic survival."

One year later, the announcement to the country that the first shipment of East Indians had arrived in Trinidad was made in the local press on Friday, May 10, 1845, and I quote:

"We have much pleasure in announcing the arrival this afternoon, of the long looked for vessel, the "Fatel Rozack", ninety-six days from Calcutta and forty one days from the Cape of Good Hope, with two hundred and seventeen on board, all in good order and condition, as the bills of lading usually have it. There were five deaths on board during the passage, but the general appearance of the people is very healthy..."

The ship bringing these first East Indians who were to help rescue the country from the economic doldrums in which she languished, was unfortunately almost wrecked off the Bocas. Happily, the ship was saved by the Royal Mail Steamer, the "Sturdee", which was at that time passing through the Bocas."

I have here in my hand an artist's conception of the Fatel Rozack that landed here on May 30, 1845 and it lists the names of the indentured workers who came on that vessel. According to the information I have here which says: "...official records in the possession of the Trinidad Government," it shows that we had 171 male, 21 adult female, 15 children (male) and 6 children (female), making it a grand total of 213 on board that vessel.

In view of the great significance of this debate, with your permission, I would like to pass these names to be recorded in the official *Hansard*.

[Document lodged in Parliament Library]

Between 1845 and 1917, a total of about 143,000 East Indians came from India to work first in the sugar plantations and then in the cocoa plantations. Today, with pride, I must say that my grandfather also came on that vessel. My father, who was a young boy at the time, came during the latter years with others who came. Although these indentured workers were entitled to return to India, most of them, after having completed their contract, decided to choose Trinidad and Tobago as their homeland, and today we can see that most of the descendants

who are of East Indian descent in Trinidad and Tobago, came about as a result of off-springs from those who came within the period, 1845/1917.

Today, the Indian population in Trinidad and Tobago accounts for something like 40 per cent of the population which makes them the largest singly ethnic group in Trinidad and Tobago.

You would recall that the intermingling and inter-racial harmony of the peoples of Trinidad and Tobago created an awe-inspiring impression on the mind of Reverend Desmond Tutu when he visited Trinidad and Tobago recently, and he described the people as a rainbow country, meaning that he had seen the free intermingling of the people.

The question I ask is: Why do we have public holidays? Public holidays have come about because of some major historical event in the past. It is commemorated so that people will begin to appreciate and be reminded of the significance of that date and of that historical occasion that took place. Public holidays are, by no means, universal. Because if we take, for example, New Year's Day, which appears to be a common holiday throughout the world, we have exceptions to the rule. Places like Saudi Arabia and Israel, do not celebrate New Year's Day. Madam Speaker, you have lived in England and you would recall some years ago England never celebrated New Year's Day until, perhaps, somewhere in the '60s when they started celebrating it as a holiday.

The point I am making is that there is no universality in holidays. Holidays are developed to commemorate specific occasions.

2.20 p.m.

The year 1962 was of great significance to us, because that was the year we gained independence from England. From June, 1962 onwards, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago had the opportunity to determine when certain holidays would take place. We have seen changes taking place from 1962 onwards where we have had several holidays added to our calendar. However, it appears that in 1962 those who were responsible for granting public holidays were, perhaps, not fully cognizant of the fact that Indian Arrival Day should be included in the calendar of holidays. Today, some 33 years later, and through further historical evidence, awareness and consciousness, and a deep-rooted sense of national pride, the descendants of those who came from India have been absorbed into an immigrant community, and are proud to be an integral part of this community.

This is not to say that there are no other groupings of people who came as immigrants and are full-fledged citizens of Trinidad and Tobago today. Some

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groups are accorded public holidays, while others are also crying for recognition in this respect. On the other hand, some national minority groups will, perhaps, in future, be seeking the recognition of public holidays on their own behalf.

Madam Speaker, the arrival of indentured workers was of major significance, as it marked the major turning point in the history of Trinidad and Tobago. Today, the descendants of these immigrants have emerged into a multi-racial, multi-cultural and multi-ethnic society to make up the peoples of Trinidad and Tobago. We must also not forget that the majority of Indians in Trinidad and Tobago today, as I said earlier, are the descendants of those who initially came from India.

If we, therefore, look at our society today, and see the number of descendants that emerged beginning with the first group of Indians who came here on May 30, 1845, we can begin to appreciate the significance of Indian Arrival Day. The immigrant workers who came were lured into Trinidad by all sorts of promises of a good life that would take place here. Most of them were under the impression they were coming to Trinidad to "chinne chalay", meaning to sift sugar, but when they got here, it was a picture of a different colour.

The temptation to leave India at that time was great because simultaneously, in England, the industrial revolution was taking place and in places such as Manchester and Lancashire the cotton spinning industry was on the rise and this dealt a heavy blow to the hand-weaving of cotton in cottage industries in India. People were thrown on the breadline and the temptation to leave to search for a good life was foremost in their minds—the temptation came for some of them to come to Trinidad.

The Indians saw this as an ideal opportunity to improve themselves financially. They came to Trinidad to work on contracts. On the expiration of their contracts, some returned to India with their wealth. When they returned others thought to themselves that things must be good in Trinidad so they would come. As a result of that, we had this mass exodus coming to Trinidad to work in the sugar and cocoa plantations.

Of those who came, the majority, as I said earlier, chose to stay and make Trinidad their homeland. Today, 150 years later, the commemoration of Indian Arrival Day as a public holiday would, therefore, be of enormous significance in the political, economic and social development of Trinidad and Tobago. This is not to say that we are creating divisiveness in the society by calling for Indian Arrival Day as a holiday. On the contrary, we would bring about greater tolerance, cohesion, understanding and respect among the peoples of Trinidad and Tobago.

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We would see ourselves as coming from various streams into a mainstream to form a united body of peoples which forms this country's rainbow, which is the nation of Trinidad and Tobago. There will be a united people; people would live harmoniously in this little twin-island state called Trinidad and Tobago. This unique harmonious relationship has become enviable to many people across the globe. They stop and ponder: How can a nation of so many mixed races live harmoniously side by side in Trinidad and Tobago? I think we have to congratulate ourselves for that harmonious relationship which exists among the peoples of Trinidad and Tobago.

There are some people in Trinidad and Tobago, who seem to place emphasis on Emancipation Day with respect to emancipation of the indentured labourers, as opposed to Indian Arrival Day, and, somehow, they wish to co-relate it with Emancipation Day which is already a public holiday in Trinidad and Tobago.

Under the system that existed at that time, the Africans were regarded as chattel and subjected to very inhumane conditions. The Indian immigrants were also subjected to those inhumane conditions but there was one difference, they were not regarded as chattel.

The indentured workers had a system of employer/employee relation. They had a system of industrial relations in place so that the question of fighting for emancipation did not arise. On the contrary whereas the Africans were emancipated by the abolition of slavery, the Indians' indentureship expired at different dates as agreed to by both employer and employee upon the expiration of this contractual period.

To even begin to consider Indian Emancipation Day would be impractical because those who came from India had their contracts start and expire on different dates.

Let me just quote briefly from a book called *Calcutta to Caroni* written by John La Guerre of the University of London. He says:

"An 'indenture' means a contract, and the indentured Indians signed a contract before they left India which bound them to accept certain terms.

The laws governing the indenture in Trinidad changed from time to time, but for most of the period the situation was this. On arrival in Trinidad the Indian was assigned to a plantation to which he was indentured for three years. During this time he could not change his employer. After the three years, he had another two years to go to complete his 'industrial residence' of five years'

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actual work in the island. He could then re-indenture himself (to the same plantation, or to another one) for two periods of one year each.

2.30 p.m.

"The various laws laid down the immigrants' wages and hours of work: A basic minimum wage was stipulated in the indenture contract signed in India"

That is before they left India to come to Trinidad.

"This was 25 cents (1s. 1d) a day; this could not legally be reduced. Wages fluctuated according to the area, the period, and the season. Different types of work were paid different wages. Cutting and forking were highly paid, and so was factory work. Work was often assigned on a task basis. In Trinidad this was more usual than payment by the day, and it gave the employer a great deal of power in deciding the length and nature of the task. A task was supposed to be what an able-bodied man could perform in seven hours and the minimum payment per task was 25 cents".

And it went on to say how the work was given to the workers.

Madam Speaker, as you know, and as the Member for Caroni Central said a while ago, in Trinidad and Tobago Emancipation Day is widely celebrated at present. We seek to commemorate this 150th year of Indian arrival by having the Government declare May 30, 1995 and thereafter annually, as a public holiday to mark that very auspicious occasion.

Although at the present time celebration of Indian arrival takes place, there is some ingredient that is still missing. People feel that something is needed to mark this occasion, because, as I said earlier today, in this country about 40 per cent of the population are Indian descendants. If there are other groupings with less than that figure which are able to have holidays to mark certain occasions, then I think it would be a good idea to have May 30, declared a public holiday in Trinidad and Tobago, known as Indian Arrival Day, as this would bring about a cohesiveness in the society, and the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

What we are seeking here, is not something that came about overnight. As you would recall, the Member for Oropouche has had this Motion before this House for about five years; and even before that, Madam Speaker, to this day people have been approaching me, seeking to have Indian Arrival Day declared a public holiday in Trinidad and Tobago. Indian Arrival Day as a public holiday would further unify the people of Trinidad and Tobago, as I said.

We in Trinidad are an immigrant society as a result of people coming from various parts of the world to build this economy. People came to this land from different places under different circumstances, and today, as a unified people, they have all come together to build the nation that is Trinidad and Tobago. Even to this day, Madam Speaker, people continue to come to Trinidad and Tobago to seek to make here their homeland.

The only exception we had recently, Madam Speaker, was when the Prime Minister and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago refused to grant asylum to some Haitians who had arrived here trying to escape the problems in their homeland. It is strange that in Trinidad and Tobago we are preaching about a democratic republic. Perhaps greater democracy exists at the moment, but when the crunch came we refused to assist people in dire need of same.

Mr. Bereaux: Madam Speaker, on a point of order. The Haitians did not apply to the Government of Trinidad and Tobago for political asylum.

Mr. K Jurai: Madam Speaker, I can only go by the newspaper report which I read. I was told that either one or two were allowed to stay, I do not know under what circumstances.

Madam Speaker: It is necessary that you get your facts correctly for the records of the *Hansard*. It helps in the debate and in the future people will be reading these records. Members should, in fact, take some time to do their researches properly so that they get their facts straight. Thank you.

Mr. K Jurai: Madam Speaker, that is the information I have, so I could only go by what I read. But, I thank the Member for giving me the correct version, I certainly accept that.

Indian Arrival Day would bring the people closer together. It would instil and reinforce a sense of belonging. It would further inspire the spirit of patriotism, national unity and national pride in this country. At the moment, however, it appears that there is an argument that if Indian Arrival Day is granted as a holiday in Trinidad and Tobago, other groups in the society may wish to seek same. Madam Speaker, nothing is wrong with some other grouping seeking to have another public holiday, but when that time comes, we can give due consideration to same. At this point in time, however, we are looking at the historical aspect of May 30, 1845 and what that date means to us in Trinidad and Tobago. We must not forget that when the sugar and cocoa industries collapsed, May 30, 1845 marked the turning point for the revival of the sugar and cocoa industries which were the backbone of the country's economy at that time.

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The success of the sugar and cocoa industries is undoubtedly intertwined with those indentured workers who came here on May 30, 1845, and afterwards. Today, five generations later, the descendants of those indentured workers who came to Trinidad are still engaged in the sugar and cocoa industries.

2.40 p.m.

I think they ought to be congratulated as they are doing a marvellous job. Apart from that, although the cocoa and sugar industries are on the wane, they keep a significant number of persons employed, as well as these industries earn foreign exchange as well. In addition, they keeping several factories rolling from day to day.

Another cry against Indian Arrival Day is that this country already has too many public holidays and if we add further holidays, it would erode productivity and undermine the economy. Productivity has nothing to do with public holidays. As a matter of fact, the harder people work the more they produce, the more they would enjoy public holidays by having a break from work to refresh themselves for the next working day. Public holidays are meant to keep people away from their workplace so that when they return to work they would be refreshed and be able to produce more.

Madam Speaker, you would know that productivity has to do with discipline, a conscientious, diligence and commitment to work during working hours. The general work ethic of the society has a bearing on productivity and has nothing to do with public holidays. As a matter of fact, there may not even be public holidays, but the productivity may be low or virtually nil. For example, take Carnival in Trinidad and Tobago. This is not a public holiday, but not much productivity is forthcoming during the two days of celebration, and even before and after that celebration has passed.

I think it was the Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers' Association that gave an estimate some time ago of the loss suffered in this country, as a result of public holidays. The figure was quite impressive, but as I said, productivity has nothing to do with holidays. It has to do with discipline, conscientiousness, diligence, commitment, preparedness to go to the work place, and most of all to produce at maximum output.

I want to go back to those critics who oppose Indian Arrival Day as a public holiday, and are of the view that yet another public holiday would lead to loss of productivity. I would like to take those critics' minds to places such as Japan, Taiwan and Hong Kong. Do you know that Japan has 16 holidays as opposed to

Trinidad and Tobago which has 11? As you know Japan is a giant in the export field. Similarly, Hong Kong has 18 public holidays. This is taken from *Lett's Diary* published in Great Britain. Taiwan, another export giant has 16 holidays per year.

Mr. Manning: I thank the hon. Member for Nariva for giving way. I wonder what point he is really making by that comparison with those countries. Could he be kind enough to clarify?

Mr. K. Jurai: Madam Speaker, I thought that the hon. Member for San Fernando East was listening. I explained that holidays had nothing to do with productivity. If one is determined to work and produce, in spite of the public holidays, one can produce and export.

There are 11 holidays in Trinidad and Tobago

Dr. Baboolal: There are 13 holidays.

Mr. K. Jurai: Perhaps I missed out Eid and Divali in my calculation. Thank you for the correction, Member for San Juan/Barataria.

As I said, those critics who think that loss of productivity is due to public holidays, should re-think their position and re-examine their reasons for low productivity in the work place, as well as reasons for the low productivity from the general workforce in Trinidad and Tobago.

As the Member for Oropouche said in his contribution, we are not really seeking additional public holidays because in principle, I think the leaders of the Anglican and Roman Catholic churches have indicated that they would have no problem in perhaps giving up one of their holidays. I think reference was made to Whit Monday. It is coincidental that Whit Monday falls invariably toward the end of May. As you know, we are seeking to have May 30 declared as Indian Arrival Day, a public holiday in Trinidad and Tobago.

If the leaders of the Anglican and Roman Catholic churches have agreed to give up one of their holidays, I think the church leaders and their members should be highly commended for that tremendous gesture they have made to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. Their willingness to forego one of their Christian holidays in favour of Indian Arrival Day, as a public holiday is highly commendable, because both the Indian and non-Indian Christians acknowledge the historical significance of Indian Arrival Day. It marks the turning point in the history of Trinidad and Tobago, not only in the economic, social and political field, but also in the educational and religious fields. It is coincidental that Whit Monday

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invariably falls close towards the end of May every year. It is, therefore, fitting that Indian Arrival Day which falls on May 30 could easily be substituted for the Whit Monday holiday on the Christian calendar.

May 30, 1995 is fast approaching and this year is of tremendous significance to the people of Trinidad and Tobago, particularly those descendants of Indian origin. This year marks the 150th anniversary of Indian arrival and in my view, I think it is fitting that May 30 be designated annually as a public holiday to mark Indian Arrival Day in Trinidad and Tobago.

2.50 p.m.

Let me read an editorial from the *Express* dated Wednesday, January 4, 1995. It says:

"Indian arrival a big national event

This year marks the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the arrival of the first batch of 225 indentured Indian labourers in Trinidad in 1845.

From the first arrival of the *Fatel Rozack* in May 1845, to the last voyage of the *Ganges* in April 1917, a total of approximately 143,000 Indians left mainly north India for Trinidad to work in sugar and cocoa estates.

Although many of these immigrants were entitled to return passages to India, most chose to remain in Trinidad, thus significantly changing the racial, cultural and economic nature of the society they had adopted. Today the descendants of those intrepid Indians comprise 40.03 per cent of this population, which makes them the single largest racial group.

In recent years the issue has been debated whether Indian Arrival Day should be celebrated as a public holiday as a counterpart to Emancipation Day, August 31. Previous governments have been reluctant to grant another public holiday, perhaps out of concern for productivity, perhaps out of insensitivity. But some holidays do hold less meaning for most citizens than others and could easily be reassigned to Indian Arrival Day.

From within the Indian community, some intellectuals at the university have also argued that the arrival of Indians into the oppressive conditions of indentured servitude is nothing to celebrate. Instead, they argue, the end of indentureship in 1917 is what should be celebrated, by way of analogy to Emancipation Day, which celebrates the ending of African slavery in the British West Indies in 1833.

But there is something profoundly optimistic about the celebration of Indian Arrival Day, which transcends any facile comparison between African slavery and Indian indentureship. For Indo-Trinidadians it is a way of affirming that they are full-fledged Trinidadians, and happily so. This would conclusively put an end to the old idea that Indo-Trinidadians owed allegiance to India before Trinidad and Tobago, where they were merely sojourners.

But a public commemoration of Indian Arrival Day should ideally have meaning for the whole nation, just as non-Christians celebrate Christmas and non-Hindus Diwali. In this regard a celebration of the arrival of Indians in Trinidad by other ethnic groups shows their appreciation of the Indo-Trinidadian presence in this country.

Trinidad and Tobago as it is today would be unthinkable without the contribution of its Indian citizens to every sphere of life, from culture to business, from science to the law, from government to agriculture.

So profound is the Indian contribution to the nation that a mere listing of prominent individuals, no matter how long and comprehensive, would do an injustice; because it must include most importantly the nameless multitude who laboured in the fields, or sweated in the roti shops, or drove the taxis, or merely lived their lives in a quiet and dignified way.

All of Trinidad and Tobago must celebrate those courageous people who made the long, arduous voyage from Calcutta to Nelson Island, because all of Trinidad and Tobago was enriched by their courage and optimism."

So, Madam Speaker, you can see that this article says quite a lot for and on behalf of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

I have another short one, which I think is very relevant to this debate. It is also an editorial. It is from the *Newsday* dated Thursday, January 26, 1995 and it says:

"National celebrations

Today, India celebrates the 45th anniversary of the achievement of its independence. These 45 years have brought both triumphs and difficulties as India sought to function as a full-fledged democracy under its own Constitution.

The anniversary is doubly significant this year when Trinidad and Tobago celebrates the 150th anniversary of the arrival of East Indian immigrants.

It is also the year when the President of India will be visiting Trinidad on May 30, the date now observed as Indian Arrival Day.

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As Dr. Lenny Saith, Minister of Planning and Development observed at the launch of these 150th anniversary celebrations, 'The fact is that in spite of the traumas of indentureship and colonialism, East Indian indentured labourers and their descendants have emerged through sacrifice and resilience to join with other groups in the community to make a very significant and lasting contribution to the development and viability of our country.'

Dr. Saith's grandparents were among the labourers who came in the early 1900s and were assigned to Woodford Lodge Estate in Chaguanas.

His was the East Indian experience, yet he told his audience, he was today a proud national of Trinidad and Tobago and a representative of the Government.

He referred to the achievements of Trinidad and Tobago which is home to all, irrespective of race, colour, creed or religion, a place where people live in harmony despite differences of culture and experience.

As we look around the world there are enough examples of splintering along ethnic lines leading to wars and man's cruelty to man, to warn us against divisiveness and to inspire us to do all we can to forge stronger the ties that bind us.

The celebration of the 150th anniversary of Indian arrival must be a national one as it gives all the opportunity to reflect on the events of the past, the deliberate decisions as well as the accidents of the past that have brought us together to this country and the way we made it our home."

So, Madam Speaker, you can see where the Minister of Planning and Development, in a very subtle way, has indicated that Indian Arrival Day should be declared a public holiday in Trinidad and Tobago.

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. K. Jurai: I thank hon. Members for the extension and I promise I would not be very long.

Having sat in this House during this debate, I got the distinct impression that Members would have no objection to May 30 being a public holiday in Trinidad and Tobago. The Motion brought by the hon. Member for Oropouche is for that

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day to be designated in honour of the arrival of the first Indians who came to work and develop Trinidad and Tobago.

I would like to commend the previous speakers in this debate and we expect that on this 150th anniversary of Indian arrival in Trinidad and Tobago, the Government would consider it appropriate to grant Indian Arrival Day as a holiday.

I, therefore, beg to move that May 30 be declared an annual public holiday, known as Indian Arrival Day in Trinidad and Tobago.

3.00 p.m.

Mr. Chandresh Sharma (*Fyzabad*): Madam Speaker, before I make my contribution, I wish to inform Members of this House that I sit on a committee appointed in part by you, to look at the entire question of public holidays. I want it to be noted, therefore, that nothing I say today would be as a result of my sitting on that committee. [*Applause*]

Mr. Valley: That is a man of integrity. He should be on this side.

Mr. C. Sharma: The Motion moved by the Member for Oropouche, has to be seen in the national context. It is rather unfortunate that in today's sitting only Members on this side are speaking. In this House, all 36 Members represent the national community of Trinidad and Tobago, and Members on both sides should participate in this debate.

The question of Indian Arrival Day must not be seen as an "Indian thing"; holidays here are for the national community. Why Indian Arrival Day versus another name? It is important when one comes and not when one goes.

The first group of Indians came here in 1917. Some came for five-and seven-year periods, so that their contracts would have concluded at different times. I want to establish very clearly the question of Indian Arrival Day, May 30, versus any other day that has been questioned in other quarters.

We have seen many comments in the newspapers and many have been voiced, one of which is the question of productivity. Public holidays are very important to all of us here in Trinidad and Tobago. Holidays give us an opportunity to develop a community spirit. In many communities in Trinidad and Tobago, public holidays allow or give the singular opportunity where the village gets together at the community level, or perhaps, at the national level to have functions: maybe a cricket match, a day of sports, maybe to attend to a community problem.

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One may say that this could easily be done on a Sunday or perhaps on a Saturday. The reality of the matter is that, it cannot, in most instances, take place on a Saturday or a Sunday because community projects require the total participation of people and their resources. For instance, in a community that is hosting a sports day, vehicles might be required—like trucks—to take chairs and stage and what have you. That cannot take place on a working day because the facilities are not available. To get people to prepare the simple refreshments, or to get the supervision of parents with their children, again, a public holiday would lend tremendous support to that. More than that, the entire development of our social life might be affected.

We have seen in many instances where people have met their future husbands or wives or their life partners during engagements on a public holiday. It gives an opportunity for people from different communities to visit the seaside on the same day or to attend a function in one community, so that it lends to the total development. Some quarters have raised the question of a dollar and cents value, and some have estimated it to be \$10 million. But more than that, anything that we can do to bring communities together is worth much more than \$10 million.

Two leaders of our community, one at one time a majority leader—the Member for Tobago East—indicated previously that he shared the opinion that Indian Arrival Day has earned its merit. The minority leader now, and the minority leader then, the Member for San Fernando East, in 1990 also indicated that. So it is clear that there is merit for Indian Arrival Day. The question then arises, why do we play politics with it?

Let us examine it from an academic viewpoint. Emancipation Day. Today few people celebrate Emancipation Day. Why? Very little Emancipation Day celebration takes place in schools in many communities. One reason is that it always falls during the school holidays, so schools are not involved, and one can argue that. But there has been very little input from the Government of today and the Government of yester-year to develop Emancipation day.

Over the years, Indian Arrival Day has gotten very little support from the Government of today and the Government of yester-year, but again, it is emerging. We in Trinidad and Tobago are making attempts to make Port of Spain the financial hub of the Caribbean, to make this the capital city of the Caribbean, and we are going to attract people from all over the world to come here.

This is a rainbow country. We talk about diversity of the people in culture, food and so forth and I can see Indian Arrival Day adding to that. I want to look at

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it from an economic standpoint. We have already brought thousands of visitors to this country for carnival; we bring many thousands of visitors for Eid, Divali, Christmas. Can we now bring thousands of visitors for Indian Arrival Day? The answer is, yes.

In the United States there is already some observation of Indian Arrival Day. While it is not an official holiday there, immigrants from the Caribbean islands—and when I talk about immigrants, I mean immigrants, full stop, because it includes all the people of the Caribbean—celebrate Indian Arrival Day: in Canada, Toronto, Vancouver and London, so that it is reaching out across the waters already.

We have the singular opportunity now to develop it into something national, and it is very important that we examine this Motion by the Member for Oropouche in its total national development, and not just as something representing a group in this country. Certainly, Indian Arrival Day would address firstly, the children of the indentured labourers, but of course, the indentured labourers' children have now gone to every home in this country, so it is no longer an "Indian thing". There are many mixed marriages—in my own case my spouse is a local Chinese. I have asked members of the Chinese community if they are interested in a "Chinese Day", and they have said, no, that their group is very small. I have had communication with other groups and again, they have indicated that there is absolutely no need for that. Statistics have indicated that the Indian population at this point in time is very large.

Madam Speaker, let us look at what we have in this country today. We are in 1995 and we are 1.3 million people. We expect in the year 2010 to have 1.5 million people. But more importantly, 34 per cent of our population is under the age of 15, so that we have 442,000 young people in this country. We need to give them directions, which must come from the national view, not just a singular view. There are about 70,000 people over the age of 65 and 65 per cent of our population is under 35 years, so to a large extent we have a population of consumers. We need to provide for them more and more in terms of work, in terms of food, in terms of values and what have you.

Only a few days ago we saw a crisis on our hands with the increased prices of bread, and many people have already indicated that they might be unable to purchase bread. Madam Speaker, can you imagine homes without bread in 1995? What do we do? The Minister of Consumer Affairs has indicated, "Listen, start baking your own bread". But when one looks at the cost of baking 10 loaves

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versus 10 roti, it is much cheaper to make 10 roti. There is a large contribution to be made in the area of economic development.

As we enter into the global village, NAFTA, the ACS and the Latin American countries, what are we going to sell these people? Can we sell them computers? The answer is, no. Can we sell them motorcars? The answer is, no. We have to sell them locally developed products and services.

3.10 p.m.

Immediately, we can see the export of roti skins. Dhalpourrie is a Trinidad food that is eaten by all our people. There is a market for dhalpourrie outside Trinidad and Tobago. Meetai—all of us consume meetai at different times in our lives; there is a global market for meetai. A number of other local products, for example, amchar, kuchella, what have you again, we can develop an entire market around such products. So that the acceptance of the Motion by the Member for Oropouche would lend support to this kind of thing; immediately there would be economic returns, which is very significant.

Madam Speaker, on the recent trip to Haiti by the Member for San Fernando East and others, of the 100 plus entertainers we saw five or six people going to conduct an Indian dance. Immediately it comes to our mind that this country, because of its diversity can offer much more than Indian dances on the global stage. There is chutney, classical singing, the performance on the sitar and tabla, and the famous dhantal comes to my mind. We are here debating the question of Indian Arrival Day, and as I have indicated, we must move it from a sector of the community to a national debate.

While Indian Arrival Day has been celebrated over the last few years in its informal setting, we should, perhaps, examine what the coming of the Indians has brought to this country and to the Caribbean as a whole, because they did not come only to Trinidad and Tobago, they went throughout the Caribbean. The first group of Indians that came called each other Jahaji, meaning that they made the trip together. I want us to view this debate in the same context of Jahaji, because we are in it together, we are in for the total development of Trinidad and Tobago. We are going to set the pace for the other Caribbean islands. I am not suggesting that the other Caribbean islands should adopt Indian Arrival Day; but they should adopt our ability to discuss and debate as a mature community—as mature Members of Parliament as this concerns every person in Trinidad and Tobago.

It will also convey a very positive message to our nationals outside Trinidad and Tobago and to others who would be looking at the experiences of the Trinidad

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and Tobago Parliament. What comes for debate here—and you were very correct earlier, Madam Speaker, when you said that the records of the *Hansard* should be very crystal clear, if I can use that term.

The culture that the Indians have brought has contributed to the total development of Trinidad and Tobago, in terms of discipline among all our people, in terms of food, dress, and attitude. We have seen, in some cases the influence of the religion that came with the East Indians—the reading of the Ramayan that has influenced so many lives; the reading of the *Quoran*, and to a large extent even in Christianity as well—if you recall, the earlier Christian in Trinidad and Tobago at that time used Hindi. In Trinidad and Tobago at this point in time while the official language is English, there is still a sizeable number of people who speak Hindi, French and Spanish. At one time I suggested the question of developing Trinidad and Tobago as a language lab, where people can come to learn the languages of the Caribbean and to help in our trade with the Latin American countries. We are seeing more and more need for Hindi—and also the same need for Spanish and French—as we are increasing our trade with India from time to time.

One of the desires of all parents in this country—and parents, again, across the board—is to educate their children. We are seeing the increase in tuition fees locally, in the United States, and perhaps, in England and Canada as well, so a number of students are finding it attractive, in terms of cost, to study in India. Some of our local doctors have done studies in India; there have been a number of exchange programmes; and many of our nationals have obtained scholarships to pursue certain disciplines in India.

Again, declaring Indian Arrival Day will contribute to all of this. I view the entire question of a national holiday on May 30 to be of tremendous significance to the people of Trinidad and Tobago in the first instance, and to a large extent, as well as the correct development for our Caribbean neighbours to see how we perform here.

The other area that should be noted is the question of agriculture. 25 per cent of our lands in Trinidad are under agricultural development, 9 per cent of our people are involved in agriculture. The crops we have grown and continue to grow such as sugar cane, cocoa, and citrus have over the years attracted people of East Indian background to a large extent. Certainly, others are involved in the areas for example, of poultry, pig rearing and so forth. Again, that is significant because there are large markets for the export of our products, especially our tropical fruits. I have noted that the world's largest cruise line, the Carnival Cruise of Florida, came to Trinidad looking for our papaws, mangoes, oranges and other

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fruits. We need to encourage that kind of thing so that the exchange programmes out of India would lend support in this regard. There is a cultural link between agriculture and its people—as you know, Madam Speaker, the Indians because of their religious background worship the land; they conduct puja on Mother Earth, and they see the crops as part of the worship to their Gods, so that it would lend them support to develop that.

Some of the crisis we face in this country is due to the question of family life. Again, because of their religious background the East Indians' contribution has been able to maintain a high degree of discipline. If one looks again, from an academic standpoint, at the number of divorces cases in this country, the lowest comes from Hindu homes. The question is: why, and what can we learn from that experience? Simply, that respect for one another, respect for one's culture, the religious background, again, lend tremendous support in that regard.

I have touched on some of the issues. The other area I want to look at very briefly is that before 1962 our holidays were inherited from the colonial masters. After 1962 we had an opportunity, because of Independence and again in 1976 when we became a Republic, to determine for ourselves what is best. If one looks at carnival—the large majority of our people participate in carnival celebrations and observations; but again, some sectors of the community because of religious and other disciplines do not participate in carnival. For Christmas, we will find the same thing; for Eid ul Fitr though largely an Islamic festival, it is a national observation, but mostly the Muslims concentrate on it. Divali is a Hindu festival, but the national community celebrates. Emancipation Day, a national holiday, a sector of the community participates more than the other sectors.

The same thing might be expected of Indian Arrival Day, but it would give us an opportunity, as it already does, for all our people to become involved. It will be more than just the observation and celebration of Indian Arrival Day; it would be the economic development side by side.

3.20 p.m.

There will be the development of food and dress, and that would help small businessmen to get involved. There can be the export of Indian garments and local things that are produced. One may ask: Are some of these things available outside of Trinidad and Tobago? Some of the foods, preservatives, which are prepared here are not available on a commercial basis.

The history of Trinidad and Tobago records that this is an immigrant society; and that says something very important for all of us. We came from different parts of the world. Some came voluntarily; others came through a different medium.

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The point is that we are an immigrant society and there will be certain developments and observations which, to a large extent, can be identified with sectors of the community. That cannot be escaped, and no effort should be made to paint it differently. At the same time, we are, perhaps, one of the most multi-cultural societies in the entire world, and this is something of which we are very proud and we want to maintain that. If the rainbow is to be maintained, certain requirements must be met. One of those requirements is the observation and celebration of Indian Arrival Day. Madam Speaker, I have already indicated to you why May 30. It is the day when the first East Indians came to this country, and as I have indicated, that is a significant day. It does not matter when they left, since they would have left at varying times. The question of national significance has been established very clearly.

Madam Speaker, in any plural and diverse society we must respect the rights and wishes of people. If one sector does not want to participate in any observation or celebration, that sector has the right not to do so. Our responsibility is to encourage, as much as possible, more and more people to get involved, and the Government has a very important role to play. If one looks at the statistics that are available to us over the years, the present Government and the governments of yester-year have given very little to the development of Indian culture, for whatever reason. My argument is not to make a comparison because I am not interested in that. I am interested in the fact that the development of Indian culture is a vehicle to bring our people together to showcase Trinidad and Tobago. It is in that regard that much more effort by the Government in terms of funding and support must be extended.

Madam Speaker, you may recall that in 1992 I had the singular honour of chairing the World Hindu Conference which was hosted in Trinidad and Tobago. We were able to bring people from all over the world here. More importantly, we were able to convey to them the submissions made during the World Hindu Conference. If I recall correctly, we sent the contributions of the speakers to more than 160 countries. So that Trinidad and Tobago is known in many countries for different things. The countries outside will be interested to find out what Trinidad and Tobago has that is different from other parts of the world. Certainly, there is Carnival. My information is that Divali is celebrated in 172 countries. We need to start showing different things. Trinidad and Tobago is one of the few countries which celebrate Emancipation Day; so certainly, that celebration would have to be marketed. Indian Arrival Day will also have to be marketed. Much background work has already gone into it, and having it declared as a national holiday will lend support in that area.

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We cannot help how people feel in this society but we must record how they feel in an effort to address it. Some members of the East Indian community, for whatever reason—it might be because of information; it might be because of education; it might be because of their situation—feel that they have arrived in this country but they are still in immigration; they have not yet cleared customs. That is a very unfortunate development which still exists, and it needs to be addressed. How can it be addressed? By establishing at this level, a sense of national belonging.

I cannot help but refer to today's debate. We have all come here to participate in today's sitting, and speak on this Motion, since before 2.00 o'clock, contributions have been made by Members from this side only. Why? How does this relate to 342,000 people under the age of 15 in this country? What message is it sending to them? It is a very unfortunate development and I hope that my colleagues on the other side will note it. A sense of belonging is extremely important. We are talking about people who worked side by side with all people in the national development of this country. Members who spoke before me have indicated that Indian Arrival Day should not be an added holiday, meaning that there are 13 holidays and there should not be 14. This is a very mature consideration. Efforts were made by those who started the debate in this House and outside of this House. It is very significant to note.

It is significant to note that the Member for Oropouche had this on the Order Paper since 1989. When this Motion was debated on October 28, 1994 it was after he basically had to fight to have it debated. If Members recall, on that particular day another debate was going to take place and it is because he stood his ground and indicated that it should not have been so that we started this debate. Had that not taken place, this debate would not be taking place today. Why is that so? What message is it sending to the national community? The fact that this Motion has been on the Order Paper since 1989 and the Member for Oropouche had to put up a particular fight to have it debated on October 28, 1994 is not conveying the best message.

Madam Speaker, may I use the statistics of the Roman Catholics—32 per cent—and the Anglicans—4 per cent—which totals 46 per cent. Forty-six per cent of the population is saying that it has no objections to Indian Arrival Day. They are prepared to consent to the removal of Whit Monday. Even before the debate starts here, 46 per cent of the national population is saying that they have no objections to Indian Arrival Day. It is unfortunate when a political angle is taken. Why has the Government not seen it fit to declare it? I have no difficulty sitting

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on the committee but why these committees only come about when Indian Arrival Day is to be debated? Why were they not established before? It is saying to the national community that when it comes to the matter of Indian Arrival Day, one avenue is to set up a joint select committee.

Madam Speaker, you would recall that I said we are in this together. I am the parent of four children and they are of mixed background so I do not know if they would celebrate Indian Arrival Day, or if they would choose to celebrate Divali, Eid or Christmas; but I expect them to celebrate and observe all the national holidays in this country. This country has more than 27 per cent mixed marriages in terms of total marriages. We are debating national development and not just an "Indian" thing. That would help us to cement the matter of "a sense of belonging".

3.30 p.m.

1995 is five years from the 21st Century, and it is high time that all our people should feel a sense of belonging to Trinidad and Tobago.

Madam Speaker, as I move on, I wish to make absolutely no comparison with Emancipation Day, because that is a holiday that the national community has earned. It is a holiday for all of us in Trinidad and Tobago. In the same way, I commend Indian Arrival Day as a holiday for all of us. I am not yet finished, Madam Speaker.

There have been some discussions about the possibility of demands by other groups. Some of us may not be in this House, but we will cross that bridge when we get there. That has no relevance to today's debate—whether the Chinese, Portuguese or Syrian groupings in Trinidad would ask for a holiday. We will debate that when the time comes. For the time being there is a Motion in the name of the Member of Oropouche for Indian Arrival Day and that is what is of significance here.

Madam Speaker, we continue to arrest the attention of our international visitors and friends by our unity in diversity and we must continue to keep it there. Very important. We have looked at what happened in South Africa; what has happened in neighbouring Grenada, in Guyana; in Los Angeles; and we are very fortunate in this country that we have not had that kind of experience because there is unity in diversity. It is important that we cultivate it.

How do we cultivate it? There are many ways. The debate today presents one such very significant opportunity and, again, we must do everything within our power to convey to the national community, when we debate in this House, that the debate is of national significance and it is not a debate moved by the Member

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for Oropouche and as a result, contributed to largely by Members on "his" side—if I can use that expression. It must be debated by Members on both sides.

Madam Speaker, I do not wish to get into the plantation experience, only to say that all those who worked on the plantations—those who came from Africa and India—went through extremely difficult periods. I always recall that when the African slaves came to this country, they came as cargo. They did not come here as people—they came as things to be sold. The Indian experience was not very different, but they both came and they have left for us a wonderful culture, a way of life—something of which we can all be proud—how we should live as a people. They left for us foods that cannot be had outside of this country; attitudes that cannot be seen elsewhere; they left for us love, affection and the fellowship of brotherhood, and we must do everything within our power to maintain those things.

In attempting to maintain them, no politics should be played upon the people. I see the lack of contributions from the other side as part of the politics, because when the media has to report this tomorrow, or whenever, that on January 27, 1995 in the contributions in the House of Representatives, which represents the national community of Trinidad and Tobago, only the Opposition spoke on the question of Indian Arrival Day, to me this would convey the wrong message—one that I would prefer not to be conveyed.

Madam Speaker, it would be very appropriate to mention that some of us have indicated that there are too many holidays in this country. I do not share that view. Thirteen days, to me, is a good number of holidays. I have indicated that the holidays contribute to national development, because this country does not only run on dollars and cents. It runs on much more than that. You need to develop the psychology of the people at all times. You need to give them comfort.

During the summer vacation, for instance, there are no school buses—not even now—to take the children to the beaches, the zoo, or other places of interest. There is no Government support or any assistance during the summer vacation to take children out, for families to get together at the parks or other recreational facilities, limited as they may be. National holidays permit that kind of thing to take place.

During national holidays productivity does not stop, because every poultry vendor is selling, as many people are going to the beaches and other places. There are many social functions, so the taxi and maxi-taxi drivers are earning a living; the roti shops are open; the fast-food outlets are open; there are large, informal

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activities taking place—much more than \$10,000 as has been indicated by one sector of the community.

More than that, Madam Speaker, if we have 13 such days to bring our people together, we should make sure and maintain them. If there is a further opportunity to bring more of our people together, by declaring Indian Arrival Day as a national holiday, I commend such to this House.

I thank you very much.

Mr. Mohammed Haniff (*Princes Town*): Madam Speaker, I rise in support of the Motion moved by the Member for Oropouche, whereby it is hoped that this Parliament will recommend that Government declare May 30 a public holiday, in recognition of the arrival of Indians in this country.

Madam Speaker, in my view Trinidad and Tobago, at present, is struggling for survival in all sorts of ways. We need to examine what is taking place and, hopefully, as a nation and as a people make efforts to improve on what is happening and correct the ills of the society. We would appreciate that those ills, today, are numerous.

In my view, there is one great significance, however, Madam Speaker. On the ground among the population, while we are struggling, there is that feeling of unity and appreciation among our peoples, regardless of our background—whether our fore-parents came from China, Africa, India, or wherever, and that is for the good of Trinidad and Tobago. It is in that context we feel proud, as citizens of this country that we have a background of diversity and, in fact, not very many countries can really boast of that diversity—coming from all over the world.

While I mentioned just Africa, India and a few others, we must recognize that we have citizens whose parents and fore-parents came from all over the world and, as such, we have a very rich cultural background. It is in that context, Madam Speaker, that I wish to join with those who spoke on this Motion before, to compliment them for their contribution and efforts and, in particular, the mover of the Motion, for staying with this idea for a very long period and reaching to the point where it is now being debated.

Madam Speaker, notwithstanding the fact that the Members on the other side, at this point, are not contributing to the debate any further, as a result of what is happening in the country today as far as these celebrations are concerned, the fact that we are in the 150th year since the first arrival of Indians who came to this country as indentured labourers; the fact that a massive celebration is taking place; the fact that, as a result of this very first event, the percentage of Trinidad and

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Tobago's population is very high; and because of the kind of activity taking place in this 150th year, I feel confident that the Government of the day, and all concerned, would see the need to make May 30 a public holiday in recognition of this event—this very special event that took place 150 years ago, because of the historical significance of it.

3.40 p.m.

Madam Speaker, as a result of that very special occasion—of course, we had the African slaves who came to this country and did their part—and because of what was taking place at that time, there was need to look for further labour. It is my understanding that, at that time, the African slaves who came to the country started looking for their freedom, for their dignity and as such, they were rebelling against the lifestyle that was being handed down to them by the English slave masters. Quite naturally so. Wherever we go and wherever we come from, as human beings, we will look for that improvement. The contribution that was made as a result of the Africans coming to this country is tremendous. The fact is that is an era that we must recognize because here is where we belong, here is where we will continue to belong, here is where we will live and our children, grow up and have the development that goes with events like this.

The Indians came as indentured labourers to continue to work in the fields to develop Trinidad and Tobago. First of all, they were coming to improve themselves hopefully and, of course, by their labour to develop Trinidad and Tobago. Some of them hoped to go back; perhaps all of them thought that they would go back; but having come, having worked hard, having seen that there was room for them to stay and continue to live here, there is a historical situation which all of us, every single citizen of this country, if that occasion is looked at, cannot help but recognize as a very significant occasion in the history of this country.

When the Indians came to this country as indentured labourers, just as it happened on previous occasions with others who came, they brought their lifestyles with them, and that, added to what was here already and what came after, makes Trinidad and Tobago a most beautiful place to live. Because as a Trinidadian, each of us has that opportunity to appreciate each other's lifestyle.

If we look at the Syrians who came, they formed a very significant portion of our population because of their lifestyle, their ability to do business and to develop. If we look at the Chinese, we realize that they are different. They have their own lifestyle. They have their own way of doing things and as such we will

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attend all the different functions, fetes and celebrations and have an opportunity to appreciate each other.

As far as the Indians are concerned, when they came they brought with them their traditions and their culture. So beautiful are some aspects of it that we cannot help but recognize that Divali in this country today is no longer just meant for the Hindu community. It is my feeling that every individual in Trinidad and Tobago, and of course, those who visit during that period, appreciate every single aspect of the celebration of Divali. Therefore, this country, without doubt, is proud that Divali is such an occasion when the people of this country, together with visitors perhaps, recognize the very beautiful celebration of Divali, an occasion when it is said that good will prevail over evil because of the effect of the light.

What do we have? We have a national public holiday for Divali and as such, it has lifted the consciousness. It has made every Trinidadian and Tobagonian conscious of the fact that there is a celebration known as Divali of which we are all very proud.

In addition to that, there is so much more. There are the Ram Leela celebrations, not yet a public holiday, but it is recognized by a very high percentage of our people with celebrations. When Ram Leela is taking place one would see people from all cross-sections of the community, rich, poor and of all cultural or religious backgrounds, trying to appreciate and participate as much as possible, in what is taking place.

As such, this nation must recognize and compliment the Hindu community for having come on that occasion, for developing, living and staying with their religious and cultural teachings. We must pay tribute as a nation to the Hindu community having perpetuated their lifestyle, teaching and culture on to this nation. As such, we all feel part of that very special occasion.

The National Council for Indian Culture in Trinidad and Tobago to my mind, has made a very significant contribution to this nation, by the development of the Divali Nagar site in Central Trinidad. When one goes there, one cannot help but recognize every single aspect of what takes place there, the singing and dancing, the booths and the teaching, reading and craft and all that goes with it. This population, as a result, is enriched by what is taking place there. We feel that sense of being part of it because wherever we came from, Trinidad and Tobago is developing its own culture. Divali, Ram Leela and all these celebrations are, of course, part of it and we feel very proud on these occasions to know that each sector, regardless of its background, can come together and show that sense of appreciation for our culture and background.

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Madam Speaker, that Divali Nagar site, to my mind, can be developed. It has scope for development into a real tourist attraction. What takes place there can be developed into a year round activity. I am aware of the fact that Government has contributed towards the development in some way, financially and otherwise, and I dare say that there is need for further input so that it could continue to develop in the interest of our nation, our children and future generations. It is a haven for information. If one wants information as to the background, then one should go to the Nagar.

We must compliment those who are involved in it. I know that they have celebrated other national holidays and that is to the credit of the organization and the people involved. Our Trinidad and Tobago citizens, and all those who come, look at it, appreciate it and come again.

Another interesting public holiday in this country is Eid ul Fitr. I must point out, however, that Eid ul Fitr is not only celebrated by Indians because in the Muslim community in Trinidad and Tobago and throughout the world, there are people across the world of all nationalities who are Muslims. However, it is my information that the majority of Muslims in our country are Indians and Indians came from India so that is the link that I wish to make, recognizing, of course, that it is the right of anyone to belong to whichever religion he or she wishes.

We are debating this here today and the month of fasting will start within a few days, perhaps on Wednesday or Thursday, and this nation recognizes that.

3.50 p.m.

When the Eid celebration takes place there is a very high percentage of our people who would not have known and understood and perhaps, would not have been given the opportunity to understand what Eid means, because of the fact that it is a public holiday. It is my feeling, if not the entire population, the majority of our citizens of Trinidad and Tobago have some simple understanding of what Eid means; what the situation is all about. As such, it is another beautiful occasion in the life and history of Trinidad and Tobago.

We have the Christmas holiday. As a child, notwithstanding the fact that I may belong to a Muslim home, we celebrated Christmas together with our friends. That continues throughout Trinidad and Tobago. To my mind, it has gone so far that we often forget that it is really a Christian holiday, because of what takes place. However, Trinidad and Tobago and the world, come to life when that season comes around. Is it not beautiful to know that people of different religious and ethnic backgrounds join in celebrating Christmas as a people, and extend that

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arm of appreciation to members of the Christian community? That is a beautiful experience.

As such, what happens? As we join with each other and intermingle on these occasions, we get that feeling of appreciation. It is possible that we do not know what the others practise and how very fundamental it is, but having been given that opportunity, then we get to see the light of day, so to speak, and extend that appreciation and recognition to each other.

Celebrations are taking place and have been taking place in Trinidad and Tobago on May 30 for a long time now in recognition of the first arrival of Indians coming to this country. That will continue. If we have ever had the opportunity to attend some of these celebrations, we will recognize that we have people of all different backgrounds attending, and those who are participating, mainly Indians, the children, the young ones, the not so young, the older ones, are bursting with zeal and enthusiasm in recognition and in memory of that very special occasion. It means so much to this country and it is a very important historic occasion.

As such, when we go, we see the people participating and showing joy and appreciation and happiness in commemorating this day, because it means so much to so many of us. By extension, more and more citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, regardless of their background, are now coming to the understanding that this is a very important occasion in the history of this country. They are attending these celebrations and as a result they are getting knowledge with regard to, from whence we came; what it was like in the past; what it has grown into and what it is likely to continue to grow into.

In recognizing that kind of situation, I stand here today, not just because I belong to the Indian community, but recognizing, of course, that I am a Trinidadian, first of all, who has no intention, whatever, of leaving Trinidad and Tobago. I was born here and I recognize Trinidad and Tobago as my home. Not that I am happy with everything that is taking place, but I am happy to be here and to be in a position to contribute to what is happening.

I am very proud to be standing here in this Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago on behalf of the population of this country, making a contribution and calling on the Government to recognize the importance of the history that went before, as far as the arrival of Indians in this country is concerned, and to call on them to join with others, on calling on the Government, through this Parliament, to make May 30 a national public holiday in recognition of that very special event.

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Regardless of what our history might be, we cannot change it, and as such, we might as well make efforts to recognize it and appreciate it. Whether it was good or not so good, when we summarize it we will realize that it was good, is good, and could not have been different because that is how it was. What we must do, in recognizing that some of it was not what we would have liked it to be, make efforts to improve what is happening today.

It is in that kind of situation I join with those who continue to make efforts to call for this public holiday. When we attend these celebrations which are taking place marking May 30 as Indian Arrival Day in this country, if it is taking place by the sea or by the river, or wherever, from a distance we see that boat coming in and we re-live what has happened—the older ones, that is; those of us who can appreciate what is happening and told us what had happened—and we try to imagine for the first time in this country, Indians coming to this country. Like I say, we see them with the big sign on the boat—the craft that went into it; then the zeal, like I said, and the appreciation and enthusiasm, on seeing that boat coming in. You will see the landing of the Indians who came here, and you will see them as they landed. The first thing they did was kneel down and pray in recognition of the fact that they had survived a very tough journey, coming from India by boat.

We have listened to stories and to the history of it, and to see it repeated at least once a year in recognition of this very special event, I get the feeling that every Member in this Parliament appreciates that occasion and will give their support to this Motion, standing in the name of the Member for Oropouche, from speeches by the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister, themselves recognizing that the Prime Minister comes from that background through his grandparents.

We must also pay tribute to every single person and organization which recognize the importance of that very special occasion. In so doing, what comes to mind is the first radio in this country—and if I am not right I stand to be corrected—but I think it is Radio Trinidad. I recall the Mohammed family having a programme on evenings, once per week. I forgot the name of that programme, but we used to have Indian cultural programmes on the radio and Indian songs at 5.30 p.m. You would see people assembling by that single radio in the community, because in those days radios were very few. During that period when I was growing up, when that first radio came in the community, we used to assemble by the 50s or 60s to listen to it.

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4.00 p.m.

As a result, I am saying that Radio Trinidad, the organization and the Mohammed family and a number of other people have contributed in many different ways.

Coming down the road we recognize, more than 20 years now, that the television station, TTT, has been contributing through many programmes, Mastana Bahar in particular; and that continues.

It is not only that we want to know what is happening as far as Indian culture is concerned, we have all the others taking place on the radio and television stations, but for those who are interested, it is in recognition of the fact that the population of this country has a responsibility and a right to pay recognition to all other sectors of the community—every single one, regardless of their background.

Not too long ago—I think it is just beyond a year—a radio station known as 103FM started making waves in this country. Do you know why? It is my feeling that they are playing to the community in this country with the largest population, which is the Indian community. For too long it has been bits and pieces. I am not too sure—I am not here to defend or promote any radio or television station—but it is my feeling that 103FM now gets a listening audience of possibly the highest percentage.

Whether that is so or not, Trinidad and Tobago has evolved. Our culture has grown to a great extent. When we listen to the tassa drums alongside the African drums, we cannot help recognizing where it originated and the sweetness that prevails in the mind.

As I speak, I feel that it is a very special occasion—150 years—which we are debating here today. It is for that reason I do not anticipate a single Member of this Parliament voting against this Motion. A people and a nation will grow and the time would come—perhaps it was not yet right for this to happen. I have listened to the radio on mornings—I think it was on 103FM again—to a person called Carl Mohammed who used to present bits and pieces of information which were very interesting. For those of us who do not know, like other communities, we have a right to know and to make an effort to know our background. Of course, we have a right to choose what we listen to and to participate or not participate.

I want, therefore, to pay tribute by recognizing the contribution, not only of those radio and television stations I that have mentioned—in recent times there have been some beautiful programmes on the other television and radio stations.

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What I am saying here is that more and more, the population of Trinidad and Tobago is recognizing that we belong to different backgrounds; we love different types of music and dances and, of course, whatever the other sector is involved in, we come together when it comes to Trinidad and Tobago's carnival.

I remember seeing an East Indian portrayal of a beautiful mas' of a man riding a horse. We remember Hosay festival; we remember Ram Leela and other occasions. Do you know what is important? When we examine the willingness, the artistry and the craftsmanship, the intelligence and recognition of one's background, we realize that certain aspects of that go into carnival. I am not going to say one thing about the controversy that exists, that is not what I am about. What I am saying is that the craftsmanship—which may come from a different background—could contribute to our carnival.

It is my view, therefore, that even though carnival can go anywhere throughout the world, Trinidad and Tobago's carnival will remain the best in the world! That is my view. That is the reason why it will remain the best; because of the input of others. *[Interruption]* The Minister says he appreciates that; that it was well said. It is a fact, you see. It generates over a period of time, and brings together our cultural experiences and participation; pooling it into carnival makes it the beautiful festival that it is.

I remember a good Indian singer, Drupatee Ramgoonai, who first started singing classical Indian songs, then chutney and now she is singing calypso and adding to the beautiful occasion that is carnival. I do not know that we can really vote against this Motion. I feel very sure about it.

Yes, we have calypso, parang, chutney, classical singing, dances, tassa drumming, the ramayan, the kasida and so forth, all of it contributing to the very beautiful, cultural and religious aspects of Trinidad and Tobago.

As I said, not many countries can really speak about their experience in the diversity of different groups of people coming from different backgrounds like Trinidad and Tobago. Today, we feel proud, that we are continuing to grow as a nation. That sense of appreciation will never cease to exist because in growing up we have all had—in some way or the other and continue to have—the experience of other people's culture and background.

When the Indians came, like I said, they brought their culture, clothes, food and so forth. If a person is going down the road in a sari, bet your life one cannot be sure whether it is an Indian, although that type of style came from India. No longer say that that person must be of Indian background because of the

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continuing development. What a beautiful thing to see ladies outfitting themselves in saris. I remember seeing the Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs on a very special occasion sometime ago, in a sari.

It came as a result of the first indentured Indians who came to this country with their culture, spreading it around and now it is international.

When they came, they brought their lifestyle and foods. We can go on to talk about the beautiful practices as far as the singing, dancing and teaching of the Hindi language are concerned. When I have time I look at Mastana Bahar. Do you know what is happening today? The children are now performing. Do you know what we tell ourselves? Side by side with the other cultural programmes for the children they are now holding their own. I have no doubt since that is introduced we are recognizing that the children are proud of their background because of the opportunity that is being given to them.

One of the most important things to do as far as I am concerned, is for a person to recognize his or her background and appreciate it. Having done that, then one can try to recognize and appreciate other people's background. What comes out of it, I think, is appreciation, love and happiness. I think that is what is important. If we do not know we cannot appreciate, and if we appreciate it then we can demonstrate it by showing our appreciation.

When they came, they brought with them their eating and cooking habits. So what do we have? We have a situation in Trinidad and Tobago where most people—it is my view that a very high percentage, if not all—will at some time or other walk into a roti shop to buy a roti".

4.10 p.m.

Because of that roti has become a staple food in this country. It is no longer a situation where only Indians eat roti. It is generally accepted not only in Trinidad and Tobago as we know, but it is my view that Trinidadians have taken roti outside of this country. There is roti in Canada, America, England and many other places. What a beautiful experience! There are different types of roti such as dhalpourie, parata and sada roti, as it is known. One can go in the shops and enjoy them alongside other national menus.

Mr. S. Panday: "Buss-up-shot."

Mr. M. Haniff: I do not like to describe it as "buss-up-shot". It is parata roti. "Buss-up-shot" is a description which to my mind does not fit very nicely because

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parata must remain parata. We know it is called "buss-up-shot" because of the crumbling of the roti.

When they came, apart from the food they brought certain sweets. When I go to some of the malls, I cannot pass those booths straight, even locals and tourists. When we see them we want to know what they are. Not too long ago, I spent a few minutes at the Long Circular Mall where I saw a beautiful booth of Indian sweets. This is as a result of the knowledge that our parents brought with them. I suggested to the people to put the correct names and explain what they are. "Buss-up-shot" is for those who call it by that name, but parata roti should be put alongside it.

There are sweets such as barafi.

Madam Speaker: Barfi.

Mr. M. Haniff: Thank you very much. It is questionable. Some people say barfi and others say barafi. I would take Madam Speaker's correction because she is supposed to be more knowledgeable than I am as far as the sweets are concerned. In terms of the sweets I would take her guidance. There are sweets such as kurma, gulab jamoon, halwah, mohan bogh, jalebie, and ladoo. When people come to this country, apart from knowing what we have and what came from other cultural backgrounds, they are indeed happy to be part of this.

Mr. Jurai: Also alloo pie and doubles.

Mr. M. Haniff: Of course, I am coming to that! It is my view—

Madam Speaker: This is a debate on Indian Arrival Day as a national holiday. It seems as though we are going into a debate on Indian foods. I have allowed you a lot of leeway. Of course you can say the foods have contributed as a reason, but I do not think there is need to go into the barfi and sadha roti and all those foods. You make your point with respect to food and the drinks and move on. You do not have to go into all those details.

Mr. M. Haniff: Yes, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Valley: Madam Speaker, I just hope that at the tea break, we have some of those sweets in the tea room.

Mr. M. Haniff: Madam Speaker, I take your guidance because I do not think it is your intention to tell me that I should not say it.

However, I am making the point that they brought this knowledge and this nation benefitted tremendously. Today we are enjoying them. It is against that

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background that I am joining with all those who have spoken, and the masses of this population, in calling on this Government to recognize all these contributions and to declare May 30 as a national holiday in recognition of that very special occasion. In my view, it is important to recognize this. There is a high percentage of our people who appreciate and enjoy part of what has been brought here and we have developed on it.

Let me point out briefly a situation which developed as a result of the Indians coming as indentured labourers because of their lifestyle and foods. There is an industry known as the "doubles" or "bara sandwich industry" in Trinidad and Tobago. That will never stop. In my view, that is the cheapest and best food that one can find. I might be wrong as far as others are concerned, but that is my view. If one goes down the road and buys an alloo pie, a catchorie, or a saheena, it costs \$1.00. If one is hungry and cannot afford more than \$1.00 one would get something nourishing and tasty to eat—[*Interruption*—]—compared to bread especially, as it is these days.

I have in my possession, a copy of an obituary from the *Daily Express* dated November 13. This was about Raheman Deen who it is said made the first "doubles" in this country. Unfortunately, she died in November 1994. We would not have known anything about doubles if channa did not come into this country *via* the indentured labourers. This is what has evolved, just as the roti we know. In many parts of Canada, England, America, the Caribbean and even here everyone enjoys a "doubles" at some time. One of my reasons for recognizing "doubles" is that this person came from Princes Town where it started. This is very special and important.

It is my view that such persons who prepared these foods during the time of the strike when work and food were difficult to come by, be recognized and honoured in this country. Then we would be paying tribute to those who went before for their thoughtfulness. If we do not recognize this, then we would not be able to appreciate why there is a call for a national holiday known as Indian Arrival Day. I must add that this argument is complementary to what is happening and not adversarial.

Trinidad and Tobago continues to develop and we must appreciate the culture of each other. I was going to mention the clothes, but I already did a part of it and there is more. I am one of those persons who thought it was the best ruling given concerning the hijab issue, in recognition of the religious rights of other people. This is a free country and that is why I appreciated it.

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Madam Speaker: You are going a little off course. You know that there is no need to mention it.

Mr. M. Haniff: The children and grandchildren of those who came here as indentured labourers belong to all the professions in Trinidad and Tobago; in every profession that one can think about such as politics, Acting Prime Minister at times, medicine, law, accountancy, engineering. They contribute in a very meaningful way in all other sections of the community. We must pay recognition to that because we are fully integrated, but are making an effort to recognize those early events.

4.20 p.m.

Madam Speaker, some 143,000 came, but today as my Friend from Fyzabad said, they have multiplied by so many thousands, making a useful contribution to this nation.

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. M. Haniff: I thank hon. Members for the opportunity.

I must say that it was my intention to be short, nevertheless, as I started speaking about it I got the feeling of the importance of that very historical occasion. It is actually such an essential part of our history, like the others.

Information on those who came is so very difficult to come by, but as a result of certain efforts, I got some particulars of one of those indentured labourers who came to this country. It reads as follows:

"Name:	Badloo Meah
Address:	Realize Road, Princes Town
Origin of Birth Place:	Chackloor, India
Last Residence:	Chackloor—Lucknow"

I think that Chackloor and Lucknow is the same place. I am saying both because I am not sure which one.

"Religion:	Muslim
Occupation:	Labourer in cotton fields—cocoa

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Education:	Unlettered
Left for Trinidad: recorded	1916. 16 years old—but was as 21 years of age.
Other Countries:	None
Travelled by:	Ship
From:	India
To:	Trinidad
Point of Departure:	Calcutta
Point of Arrival:	Port of Spain
Ship's Name:	Cherab"

I wish someone could give me the meaning. I was about to enquire into the meaning of that.

"Type:	Passenger
Passage:	None
Contract:	Yes"

They said volunteer, but as my Friend said, most of the indentured labourers volunteered, but they were of the perception that down here was really honey and sugar—*chaley chihny*, as they said—plain sugar. It is happening today. Some of our people are leaving to look for a better living in other countries. They came for a better living, but while they worked hard, I daresay that they did make an honest living from hard work, under difficult conditions and we are seeing the fruits of their labour.

"Reason for Migration:	To work
First residence in the West Indies:	Moruga, Trinidad
Country of Residence of main family:	India
Reaction in Trinidad:	Ordinary
Contacts in Trinidad:	None
Introduced to W.I.	Lt. Colonel A. De Donfien in Trinidad

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Occupation in T'dad:	Labourer
Where:	San Antonio (Rock) ...
Working days per week:	7 days"
They did not hear about holidays in those days.	
"Pay:	30 cents per day—(Herrera's Latter Days)
Tools:	It was first supplied—then bought their own
Food:	Bought
Work:	Compulsory and regular
Force:	Yes—Men and Women"

Work was seven days a week, whether they were willing or not. Madam Speaker, that applied to men and women.

"Grants	None
Social Activities:	
Visits	None
Letters	Yes a few, not frequent
Retirement Benefits	None
Ex gratia	None"

None whatsoever, Madam Speaker. These form the records of some of those people who came and toiled and today we are reaping the benefits, and we are speaking about it in the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago.

"Would like to return:	Yes—Permanently"
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Some said yes, some said no. This one said yes, he would like to return, but he never returned for several reasons. One was that he could not afford and he was not paid any compensation; no *ex gratia*, no retirement benefits or otherwise. However, they came to this country, worked in the sugar and cocoa estates, brought with them their culture and their lifestyle; developed roads and lagoons to plant rice, with trays on their heads and forks and so forth. That is what we are talking about. In recognition of that effort, we stand today in Parliament

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discussing it, calling on the Government to recognize that effort and grant a public holiday to those who are surviving.

Let me go on to say that this historical record is that of my father, who came from India. He died in 1972, having come here as an indentured labourer. That is why I feel this occasion is important. It is not because I am the child of one who came, but because there are many thousands with similar backgrounds and so many more thousands who would like to understand and appreciate what has happened as a result of that very special occasion.

I am proud to be Trinidadian. I will always be Trinidadian. I have no intention of going anywhere. One of these days I hope to be the prime minister of this country. [*Desk thumping and Laughter*] That is long from now, you know, succeeding other prime ministers.

Madam Speaker: The Member is beginning to tread on some very dangerous ground.

Mr. M. Haniff: When these indentured labourers came, they were generally unlettered. What could my father have taught me? He could not read or write so when we did our lessons, he could not correct them. They could not teach us our lessons. However, first of all, they taught us to be honest, to be disciplined and to respect people. Those were their main qualities. In addition to that, they taught us to plant the cane then cut and market it, all under very difficult conditions; so too, the rice, cocoa and coffee.

I recall, in my early days, I was called to join with the family and neighbours to dance the cocoa on the large tray on which the cocoa beans were laid out to dry. There was a time when they called the children, who enjoyed it, to dance the cocoa. Songs were also sung. This was done to take out the gum from the beans. As a result, this became an important historical event. Those are the things that we remember.

In recent years, we have been producing more and more rice. How essential is that to this country? We must continue to do so because we do not know whether we can continue to buy. Notwithstanding the fact that the price of rice today is not very high, farmers must continue to grow the rice. We were taught that by our forefathers, and we continue to improve on it. It is crucial and important.

4.30 p.m.

As a result of the coming to Trinidad and Tobago of these indentured labourers, the sugar industry has survived and we have sold over 100,000—odd

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tonnes of sugar in 1994. A very important industry in Trinidad and Tobago—all sorts of lands, numerous acres of land, cultivated originally by the African slaves, eventually by the indentured labourers, and now Trinidadians and Tobagonians. An industry that is essential, and is surviving as a result of that very special occasion I spoke about. So you see, Madam Speaker, I am proud to have been given the opportunity to learn to plant rice and to tend the animals and so forth.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, we will take the tea break at this time. The sitting of the House is suspended until 5.00 p.m.

4.31 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.13 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Mr. M. Haniff: Madam Speaker, I wish to point out that I enjoyed the nice roti [*Laughter*] and my Friend from Diego Martin Central says that he also enjoyed it.

Madam Speaker, I tried to recall and point out some of the developments as a result of the arrival of Indians into this country as indentured labourers. Some of the things that happened, some of the culture, food, drink, and clothes, the practices; the hard work on the estates and the development that took place. I tried to relate that with what there was before, and what there is now and to support that May 30 should be made a public holiday in recognition of the coming of the Indians, and the development that took place as a result of the work they did.

As such, it gives me great pleasure to support the Motion standing in the name of the Member for Oropouche and to commend all those who spoke on it, and to emphasize, it is my feeling, recognizing that there is a committee looking at public holidays, that the majority of our population is calling for this. It is also my feeling that having announced this date as a national public holiday, Trinidad and Tobago would be better off in so doing.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Trevor Sudama (Oropouche): Madam Speaker, we have now come to the end of the debate on this Motion. We have heard many arguments which have been advanced, that we ought to have May 30 declared as a public holiday to be named Indian Arrival Day; and the House recommends to Government that this be done.

As has been mentioned before, apart from the Member for Diego Martin East, no other Member on the other side took the trouble to participate in this debate.

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Mr. Valley: Madam Speaker, that is not correct. The hon. Prime Minister participated in this debate. As a matter of fact, the Prime Minister moved an amendment to this Motion which ended the debate as far as we are concerned.

Mr. T. Sudama: Madam Speaker, the intervention of the Member for Diego Martin Central supports what I have said. As far as the other side is concerned this Motion really has no merit. This Motion has been brought for particular purposes. That this Motion could be dismissed merely in a five minute statement from the Member for San Fernando East, demonstrates the attitude which is brought to bear with respect, not only to this Motion, but also to the contribution and the presence of people on the Opposition side.

As I stand here to conclude this Motion, I want to comment in the context in which this Motion is being debated. I am amazed that there is so much equivocation on this issue of having to declare May 30 as a national public holiday. So much equivocation! We have heard people get up in this House—the Member for Diego Martin East—and say that we must be very careful. What must we be very careful about? I have been at pains to emphasize historical arguments, but here we are as a society. We are existing today, in a multi-cultural, multi-racial and multi-religious society of diverse origins. And as we stand here in 1995 and look back at our emergence as a society—where we have come from, the long road we have traveled—there are certain dates and certain events which stand out in that historical evolution.

5.20 p.m.

One of the dates is May 30, 1845 when the first group of indentured workers came from India to this country. History cannot be ignored. We cannot ignore the fact that our ancestors came to this land from different parts of the world and under different circumstances. That is part of our history. The Government and a certain sector of this population wishes to have social amnesia—we must forget our past and exist only today; and all the diversities of our origins should be forgotten. That is the presumption on which we will become an integrated, unified, national community. It is unrealistic, as it is presumptuous, to take that position. Given the interventions from the other side and their attitude, this is the impression I get.

I am grateful for the intervention of the Member for Diego Martin East. I do not agree with him in very many things, particularly, when his Ministry relates to the constituency of Oropouche. From what he said, he appears to support this Motion, that this House ought to recommend to the Government that May 30 be

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declared a public holiday. As he went through, he identified each of the holidays and he made the comment—I suppose he was supporting the submission I made—that we really do not know why we celebrate a number of holidays. They are a historical legacy and are of little relevance to the consciousness of the population at present and, therefore, nothing will be lost if these holidays are replaced by other more relevant events in our history. I believe he supports me on this and I look forward to his support in other spheres, and that when the time comes he would live up to his convictions and support this Motion as the only Member who made any kind of elaborate contribution on the matter.

Madam Speaker, we are here today doing something which need not have been the subject of a motion in this House at all. If the powers that be—the PNM—were conscious of the significance of these days—

Mr. Imbert: Madam Speaker, may I correct the record. I supported the amendment of the Prime Minister.

Mr. T. Sudama: Madam Speaker, the content of his contribution supported statements I made in my opening remarks. Therefore, one ought to conclude that if the Member is true to his convictions, the basis of my submission would also be supported.

The point I am making is that when we looked at this, we saw the agitation, the sentiments expressed by large sections of the population for quite a number of years—it was way back in 1979 that the first organized celebration was held to commemorate May 30. In recognition of those sentiments the then Government should have moved to declare that day a public holiday. The Government did not have to await a motion in this House if they were a Government that was sensitive to the feelings of substantial sectors of the population.

Madam Speaker, to further compound the matter, a motion in this House came in 1989—almost six years ago—and, for one reason or the other, was deferred and was not fully debated. It is symptomatic of that equivocation of which I speak. It is as if this society cannot grow out of its immaturity, especially when it has to do with inter-ethnic relations in Trinidad and Tobago. It seems that we are forever burdened with our own prejudices and we cannot rise above them to look at any issue objectively, particularly one that involves our cultural diversity, inter-ethnic relations and so forth. It is a sad thing, but I suppose that the society would have to mature, develop and deal with these issues in a more practical manner which purges us of our negative consciousness.

I want to dwell on some of the arguments which have been advanced against the declaration of May 30 as Indian Arrival Day. I want to focus on the argument

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of productivity, the strongest case that has been made for not declaring Indian Arrival Day a public holiday and, in fact, for reducing the number of holidays.

The most oburgation has been made by the Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Commerce, but when one looks at the arguments one would understand that this goes beyond the question of productivity and profit-making. When one tries to decipher the thinking of those who hold sway in the Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Industry and Commerce, one would understand what I mean. The Chamber of Commerce is making a case to reduce the number of holidays and certainly not to create any additional holidays. In 1995 the Chamber of Commerce is lamenting the fact that we have Saturdays and Sundays off. Listen to what the Chamber said in a newspaper article dated January 11, 1995:

"Most people in the public and private sectors have 104 days off per year as a consequence of Saturday and Sunday not being considered working days."

Is the Chamber saying that we should go back to the 7-day work week? The Member for Princes Town said that his father came here as an indentured labourer and had to work seven days out of seven days. Is this what the Chamber is saying in support of its contention? The article goes on:

"Most employees in the public and private sectors are entitled to paid vacation every year as a right. This can amount to 28 working days per year which would bring the running total of days off to 134. There is also an allocation of an average of 14 days sick leave which makes the total 148."

Is the Chamber seriously advocating that vacation leave, sick leave and Saturdays and Sundays should be done away with? When one looks at it in that context, one would see that the Chamber is complaining and lamenting. It goes on:

"To be added to this total that consists of days off, paid vacation and sick leave, are no less than 13 public holidays.

The running total of 148 days off from work would therefore stand at 161."

It is not true to say that everybody has these days off. On certain Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays people work. Does this Chamber want to take us back to the nineteenth century in terms of industrial relations, in terms of the benefits which workers in this country enjoy? Why else would one want to raise such an argument, when in most countries of the world workers do not work on Saturdays and Sundays and there is paid vacation leave? I cannot understand this

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argument that giving people so many days off would reduce productivity in Trinidad and Tobago. It goes on:

"Statistically, this means that out of 365 days for the year most people in Trinidad and Tobago do not work for 44.93 per cent of any year."

5.30 p.m.

That is true of Trinidad and Tobago, but it is also true of most other countries of the world. Why this lament by this oligarchy which seems to take us back into 19th Century conditions of labour? I am amazed, Madam Speaker. Then they go on to make a strong recommendation to the committee that—

"the number of public holidays should be reduced from 13 to 10" and

"Under no circumstances should any further holidays be declared in Trinidad and Tobago"

Regardless of the case made here, regardless of our history; and regardless of the fact that one cannot simply look at these issues in terms of dollars and cents. When one is looking at social and cultural issues, one cannot talk about loss of productivity in terms of the number of days, and so forth. So that, as far as I am concerned, the Chamber is trapped in its own prejudices, and we know what those are, when it comes to dealing with the wider population of Trinidad and Tobago.

I have made the point, in my opening remarks, about the lack of relationship between holidays on the one hand and productivity on the other—totally unrelated issues. Productivity has to do with how much you produce under what circumstances, your attitude to work, discipline and so forth, when you go to work. The case has been emphasized by the Member for Nariva that in Japan—one of the countries with the highest productivity in the world—there are 16 holidays for the year! We have only 13. Hong Kong, one of the tigers of the Far East, has—

Mr. Sobion: Increased holidays—increased productivity?

Mr. T. Sudama: Why are you so dotish? I am trying to make the argument that the correlation does not exist

Madam Speaker: The Member must know that the Standing Orders do not permit the use of insulting language. Maybe the Member can be a little more temperate.

Mr. T. Sudama: Given his remarks, I do not think that is insulting language at all.

Mr. Palackdharrysingh: The Member walked into that.

Mr. T. Sudama: I am trying to make the point that there is no correlation between productivity and the number of holidays, and I am trying to make the case of so many countries in the world which have very high rates of productivity yet, at the same time, they have more holidays than Trinidad and Tobago. In Hong Kong, for example, which has a very high GNP per capita, they have 18 public holidays for the year; and in Taiwan, which is, again, one of the tigers of the Pacific they have 16 holidays per year.

Madam Speaker, on this question of production and productivity—it is only when this Motion came on the Order Paper for public debate—people suddenly recognized that productivity is a problem in Trinidad and Tobago, because the Member for Oropouche had a Motion to declare Indian Arrival Day a public holiday. Suddenly, we become conscious of productivity. Madam Speaker, again, it has to do with something more than productivity. It has to do with our latent prejudices; the way we look at the society and group relationships in Trinidad and Tobago.

The Roman Catholic Archbishop, Anthony Pantin, has said clearly that Trinidad and Tobago does not have too many holidays. He has made that point. He said he does not think we have too many religious holidays but it is the private ones that should be looked at—where people just do not go to work for one reason or the other. That has to do with the question of productivity; and here we are trying to draw a red herring. But, in any case, as I said, I have not advocated an addition to the total number of holidays and I have made the point, in introducing this Motion, that both the Anglican and Roman Catholic church leaders said they had no objection to giving up Whit Monday as a public holiday, if the Government so decides. No objection—as a result of representations I made way back in 1989 and they had said so categorically, unequivocally. They have no objection. From where is the objection really coming, then?

Mr. Maharaj: They are waiting until the month of May.

Mr. T. Sudama: Madam Speaker, there are also some rather misguided journalists in this country. There is one who wrote in the *Sunday Guardian* of January 15, 1995. Without making any argument or investigation, she says:

"The problem seems to be that there are already too many holidays for a little island,"

Now what does "too many holidays" have to do with the size of a country? We have—

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"too many holidays for a little island; another one will just create havoc with the annual work schedule and productivity."

One of these "parrot" journalists that we have, maybe, instructed by the Chamber of Commerce and the hierarchy of the *Trinidad Guardian*, to put this nonsense as journalism. Then she says raising this issue is synonymous with controversy—

"it seems to me that we can do a lot better than make Indian Arrival Day synonymous with controversy"

Who is making the controversy, Madam Speaker? This is a valid case that I am putting forward. But in the mind of these misguided--and while she makes that comment, this silly journalist, Madam Speaker, says—and I raised this issue to show how the press is dealing with it in a way to draw red herrings across the debate:

"When the first 225 Indians came off the *Fatel Rozack* in 1845 they had neither holiday nor celebration."

And this seems to be an argument why we should not have a holiday and celebration in 1995. Then she goes on to say:

"I can tell the stories of African slavery, learned from the history lessons of high school and university. I know nothing but the dates and numbers of Indian indentureship."

This is exactly what we are trying to correct, Madam Speaker, by giving due recognition to that date, then one will research that event and look at the developments over the period of time and this goodly journalist from the *Sunday Guardian* would have been better informed and able to write a better piece, had that day, in fact, been declared a public holiday.

Madam Speaker, my colleagues have dealt with the question that if this day is declared a public holiday, it will raise claims by other groups to have their arrival here declared as a public holiday. Madam Speaker, we are talking about things of real historical significance. When one looks back at May 30, 1845 one will see that date stands out. The other groups who have come here made a contribution—very small numerical numbers—Chinese, Syrians and so forth—but their coming did not have the same historical significance, especially as the history, up until recently, was really the history of sugar. While they may make a claim that could be considered in due course, I cannot see that in terms of according priority, any of these other demands has the same merit.

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Madam Speaker, let me also deal with a piece of foolishness written by M.F. Rahaman. He keeps writing all the time in the *Guardian*. He has a certain perspective. If I may say so he is one of the "believers", Madam Speaker. He contorts everything into a religious or race issue.

5.40 p.m.

Mr. Imbert: Ramesh!

Mr. T. Sudama: M.F. Rahaman.

Mr. Valley: Do you not know that is his pen name?

Mr. T. Sudama: Do you have some bone to pick with the Member for Couva South?

Mr. Maharaj: He would not pick any bones in my constituency.

Mr. T. Sudama: A historic occasion—regardless of the circumstances in which people came, they came here, the majority of them stayed and they made their contribution to Trinidad and Tobago. Hear what this believer, M.F. Rahaman, has to say.

"Together with an assortment of rodents, roaches and assorted rations, some miserable souls fled the dominion of the Raj with the latter's duplicity and their own despair, trading their helplessness for sequestering indentureship, to arrive by boat as replacements for earlier slaves."

This is M.F. Rahaman, intellectual of some faith. One could see where he is coming from.

Hon. Member: Where?

Mr. T. Sudama: We could see where he is coming from.

"What an irony that political ambition to obligate a race now seeks to repaint a day of ignominy to one of celebration . . ."

We can understand the thinking of some of these characters who have commented on this issue. There is no question—

Madam Speaker: The only difficulty I have with your debate—I was trying to follow your contribution. Remember, you are answering and that really—

Mr. T. Sudama: I am answering.

Madam Speaker: But that was not a point.

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Mr. T. Sudama: No, but what I am saying is that these—

Madam Speaker: What others outside may think, we have to—

Mr. T. Sudama: Madam Speaker, this influences or seeks to influence public opinion outside of which the Government—

Mr. Imbert: That is our argument!

Mr. Valley: That is our argument!

Mr. T. Sudama: They never raised an argument. I have nothing to answer from the other side.

Mr. Imbert: Exactly.

Madam Speaker: That is why I am saying what I am.

Mr. T. Sudama: I have nothing to answer as argument. What I am trying to do is to look at what is reported in the press to seek to influence the thinking of the committee.

Mr. Imbert: No! No!

Mr. T. Sudama: It seeks to influence the thinking of the wider public.

Madam Speaker: I am sure you have faith in the chairman of the committee, a person who is very—

Mr. T. Sudama: I have faith in everybody until it comes to declaring this public holiday. Until it comes to making a definitive declaration, I have faith in everybody. What I am saying—

Madam Speaker: Really and truly, hon. Member, I feel—

Mr. T. Sudama: Madam Speaker, I am sure you understand this argument.

Madam Speaker: I know, but remember, according to our rules of debate, you are answering, winding up your debate and what you ought to be doing is answering points made by Government. If you mention *en passant* that citizens of this country feel so and so, you hope that the committee will not be influenced, that is all well and good. But to just go into all the details of it.

Mr. T. Sudama: Madam Speaker, this is the purpose of that I am stating this in the House. Because when somebody writes in the press, why do you think they write? Because they love to write? They are writing to try to influence the general public and those who have authority and power in the society.

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Mr. Imbert: No.

Mr. Valley: No.

Madam Speaker: No.

Mr. T. Sudama: Why else do they write?

Madam Speaker: If it were that, you should have done that in the beginning, in your opening statements.

Mr. T. Sudama: The other argument which has been raised, of course, not by them, they are incapable of raising any arguments. The argument that is being raised—

Mr. Valley: You have no argument to answer then.

Mr. T. Sudama: Why do you not shut up?

Madam Speaker: You were very sound in the beginning and I thought that maybe all this could have come in your opening statement.

Mr. T. Sudama: Madam Speaker, I am trying to support the case that I have proposed here, to have this Motion declared as a public holiday. I am trying to answer all the critics.

Mr. Maharaj: And why there should not be amendment.

Mr. T. Sudama: And the reasoning behind these criticisms. I have dealt with political ambition. One of the arguments is that we on this side are politicizing the issue.

Mr. Valley: Who raised that argument?

Mr. T. Sudama: Madam Speaker, their own ideologue—Selwyn Ryan, professor at the University.

Mr. Valley: Oh!

Mr. Imbert: Oh!

Mr. T. Sudama: So they do not answer in this House—

Madam Speaker: The Member for Oropouche is too experienced and too good a debater.

Mr. T. Sudama: No. Madam Speaker, you understand the issue. Do you understand how people are trying to influence public opinion?

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Madam Speaker: You are too good a debater for that.

Mr. T. Sudama: Listen to this. Their own ideologue. They do not answer in the House here.

Mr. Valley: Madam Speaker, I really must object.

Madam Speaker: Objection sustained.

Mr. T. Sudama: Madam Speaker, if you wish me not to speak, I will curtail myself.

Madam Speaker: No. No.

Mr. T. Sudama: He has no grounds for an objection. He has not even heard what I am going to say.

Madam Speaker: You are referring to things that were not mentioned in the House.

Mr. T. Sudama: Madam Speaker, if I confine a debate in this House only to what has been mentioned or to Members here, nobody would debate anything.

Madam Speaker: No. No. That is not what I am saying hon. Member. What I am saying is that you realize that you may have discovered some things that ought to have come in your opening contribution to support the entire Motion that you are putting before the House. Unfortunately, we have gone through the debate and the other side has answered—

Mr. T. Sudama: Madam Speaker, since I spoke here in October—

Madam Speaker: —and the position is—

Mr. T. Sudama: Madam Speaker, if you do not want me to talk, I would not talk in the debate!

Madam Speaker: No. Not at all. What I am asking the hon. Member to do is to concentrate on what the Government has proposed in the Motion and see if he cannot find a case to answer on that, not with the newspaper.

Mr. T. Sudama: Madam Speaker, the Government has proposed nothing. The Government has not argued my Motion.

Mr. Valley: Well, great!

Mr. T. Sudama: All the Government has said is that they want to put it to a committee. I am arguing the case—

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Mr. Maharaj: Why there should not be a committee.

Mr. T. Sudama: —why this day should be declared a public holiday, committee or no committee. This is the case I am arguing.

Madam Speaker: All right. Proceed. Do you mean you are concentrating on the amendment now, the second aspect?

Mr. Maharaj: That there should not be a committee. You are responding to that.

Mr. T. Sudama: I am saying that the committee is not relevant to this. That is what I am saying. This is my case.

Mr. Humphrey: Go to a committee with a clear mandate from this House.

Madam Speaker: All right. Proceed. Remember we are dealing with both the Motion and the amendment. Proceed.

Mr. T. Sudama: Madam Speaker, a number of people are trying to influence the thinking in the country generally and possibly, the thinking of the committee. These reports that we are getting in the press came after I spoke here in October.

Madam Speaker: I think, hon. Members, that the Member has a point because we amended this Motion after the hon. Member had made his contribution so the amendment now forms part of the entire Motion, and I think I will allow the Member to proceed with this.

Mr. T. Sudama: Madam Speaker, what I am trying to alert this House, the committee and the general public to, is that we ought not to be politicizing. We are not politicizing on this issue. But when one reads the comments of certain people—*Sunday Express*—trying to influence public opinion—"Beware the drums of Indian arrival". What is he trying to do? He is trying to invoke latent feelings and sentiments with respect to inter-ethnic relations in this society. It is despicable to have this matter reduced to this level where we are appealing to the fears and anxieties of the public, especially on an ethnic basis. "Beware the drums of Indian arrival".

Do you see the connotation, Madam Speaker? Do you see what is trying to be relayed here? If that sort of thinking pervades the thinking of the general population and, indeed, Members of this House and the Members of the Committee, then one can understand how, being swayed in that direction, my Motion here would get short shrift. I am trying to deal with these things—the subtle means whereby people who are opposed to this recognition of May 30 as a

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public holiday—come out to try to invoke all the fears and anxieties in the society, and try to exacerbate relations in this country.

We have taken pains in this House to talk about the question of an attempt to develop an integrated society recognizing the diversity of our region.

5.50 p.m.

There are people trying to whip up racial fears in the society. I think we should take strong objection to that, particularly when such a person is an ideologue of the other side, as I said. But if you look at the pattern of what Ryan writes, you will see a thread in it.

In the *Trinidad Guardian* of March 2, 1994:

"Ryan was delivering a paper yesterday at the conference on 'The Nature of Community and its impact on Interstate relations at the end of the twentieth century'."

Listen to the theme. But do you know what Ryan chose to talk about?

"Indian party may rule TT."

You could see the total unrelatedness of the theme of this conference to what Ryan had to say.

"Power for Indians in 10 years."

I am just trying to put Ryan's views in some sort of perspective, particularly as they relate to this Motion and where Ryan is coming from.

The question of support which has been given, the question of the equivocation on this issue, and how some politicians have dealt with it, you will find that over the years, in order, I suppose, to ingratiate themselves with Trinidad citizens of East Indian descent, certain statements have been made, which, when you look at them objectively, you will tend to agree, but statements which do not accord with the actions taken on this particular issue.

My Friend from Caroni Central quoted the former Prime Minister and Member for Tobago East who was giving greetings in 1990 on the occasion of Indian Arrival Day. Listen to what he had to say. He was the Prime Minister who had the authority, if he so wished, to have had the day declared a public holiday. He is talking about the historic occasion. He says, and I quote:

"Indian Arrival Day celebrated on May 30, represents one of the ritualised 'backward glances' which have assumed tremendous significance for our

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multi-ethnic population. I use the term 'ritualised' because I believe that this and similar celebrations which have emerged spontaneously from the hearts of the people are valuable for the spiritual healing and well-being of the entire community."

Now if he came to that conclusion, what objections did he have in declaring that day a public holiday? That is an example of that equivocation of which I speak. When you do such things and you look back, it is a question of acquiring self-knowledge. Listen to what he says:

"It is significant that when Naipaul addressed the first conference on the East Indian in the Caribbean held a decade and a half ago, he said, 'I stress the value of self-knowledge because I think that for us in a small society, there can be no intellectual growth without self-knowledge'."

All we are asking here is to promote that self-knowledge by this acknowledgement and recognition. It continues:

"He also noted that 'the last thing that self-knowledge should do is to make us provincial or narrow'."

In other words, self-knowledge is a liberating exercise. The Motion I have moved is in that context, that you know more about yourself; you recognize your history, where you have come from. It adds to the quantum of self-knowledge; it is a liberating force, the less you become provincial and narrow in your perspectives.

He goes on in very eloquent words:

"Indian Arrival Day is about self-knowledge. Its celebration is regenerative because it is impossible to look backwards without examining afresh the systematic defamation of character based on race which was part of the process by which colonial administration justified the injustices of both Indian indentureship and African slavery."

A very, very rare instance of such rhetoric and eloquence. I told him in this House that I supported him in the statements he made on that occasion in May, 1990. He goes on to state:

"It also fortifies us for the future. The very qualities of courage, creative resistance and diligence which enabled us to throw off the shackles of indentureship and slavery are the ones that we will draw upon in the face of the challenges of 1992 and beyond. They are the qualities which will ensure that we will never again be reduced to hewers of wood and drawers of water."

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As this Government is so consistently trying to reduce the population, to be "hewers of wood and drawers of water," it continues:

"Indian Arrival Day and similar celebrations rehearse the fact that we have been victorious in the past. They foreshadow the certainty of our triumph in the future."

I want to commend this eloquent statement of the Member for Tobago East to the House, to the population and to the parliamentary committee that will be viewing this matter.

I come to another newspaper clipping, this time from the Member for San Fernando East. It is from the *Trinidad Guardian* of May 30, 1991. I am on this theme of where people speak with forked tongues. They say something now but they do not support it by their actions. I quote:

"People's National Movement (PNM) has extended greetings to the Indian community on Indian Arrival Day, which PNM has described as an occasion that celebrates a most vital part of the nation's history..."

Hon. Member: And we agree with that.

Mr. Sudama: You agree with that? Then what objection do you have to declaring a public holiday?

Hon. Member: No objection.

Mr. Sudama: Madam Speaker, when the Member for San Fernando East got up to move the amendment, he could have given this House the assurance that May 30 would be declared a public holiday and that he will so recommend, in addition to other changes that the parliamentary committee may wish to make. But he did not say so. They play games all the time. He says:

"Together it is difficult to imagine our country devoid of the East Indian presence because of the many contributions they have made in every sphere of life. They have been a driving force in weaving the social, economic and political fabric of the nation.

Among the many riches they brought to this country was their exotic yet sacred world of culture and tradition, the preservation of which has been a most fitting tribute to their ancestry...

Today the East Indian presence in the national community is a key link in the strong chain that binds our nation together."

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Are these merely words, or did the Member for San Fernando East really believe what he was saying? If he so believed in what he was saying, then I think that he should have said, without any hesitation—if he wants to recommend a committee—"we will set up a parliamentary committee but we will advise that committee that it is our view that Indian Arrival Day should be declared a public holiday, in addition to whatever else the committee may want to take into consideration."

6.00 p.m.

I am saying that words are cheap. The Member may get up and say anything, but a man is known by his actions not by his words; his integrity and conviction are known by what he does rather than by what he says. And, today we would have expected the Member for San Fernando East to so positively recommend to this House or any committee.

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. T. Sudama: Madam Speaker, I know that when I get a reaction from the other side, I am reaching home.

Madam Speaker: I think the Member has done very well in his reply.

Mr. T. Sudama: Madam Speaker, I just want to address something from one of the deputy leaders, a very erudite and learned man, the Member for St. Joseph who, by what he has said, I believe, further supports the contention in my Motion. He said:

"Conflicts arising out of Trinidad and Tobago's cultural diversity could be reduced with greater mingling of the diverse groups, ... Success in living side by side creates a platform for further success."

All we are saying is that we are living side by side, let us recognize the historical evolution of that.

"The Minister said, 'The country needed to recognize, nurture, strengthen and develop its cultural diversity in order to create something that is ennobling.'"

I fully support that. Would you support me in having Indian Arrival Day declared as a public holiday?

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"From the perspective of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, Ramrekersingh said,..." *[Interruption]*

Madam Speaker, what I have said is that the committee would be better informed as a result of the debate in this House; their deliberations would be much sounder.

He said, Madam Speaker—and here he is speaking for his Government:

"From the perspective of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago," Ramrekersingh said, "I can state that we are committed to a policy of cultural pluralism . . . to creating unity out of diversity."

That is the Member for St. Joseph, but he does not want to support my Motion here today.

"He said that while cultural diversity could lead to conflict, it could also be a source of strength and could enhance the quality of our civilization." *[Desk thumping]*

Very well said. Now, having said that, I hope that he would support this Motion when it comes to the declaration of Indian Arrival Day. *[Interruption]* *[Laughter]* The Member wants to go home. Like the Member for Diego Martin Central, the Member for Arouca South wants to go home. This House is a humbug. If he did not have to bring RHA to this House, we would have had regional health authorities implemented long time now! This House is a humbug to him! Why he is here? I do not know!

This Parliament is about addressing issues and airing views. As far as the Government is concerned, all that should be happening here is that they come and whatever bills they bring, they say "the ayes have it" and we go home. These sittings would not last more than five minutes, if the Member for Diego Martin Central had his way.

What I am saying here today is that I am happy that even the *Daily Express* has come around to accept the view, and that has taken a long time. The *Daily Express* supports the view, and I just want to quote—the article is talking about the loss of productivity and loss of revenue, which supports my case:

"While this is an important consideration in any plan to change the number of public holidays, such an analysis ignores the real purpose of marking particular dates by making them public holidays; to wit, to give a specific group a sense of belonging to our multi-ethnic nation.

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The social benefits of this are worth far more than the earnings which we might gain from not marking certain days. Public holidays are an effective way of recognizing the different ethnic groups in our society.

That is why many Indo-Trinidadians would like to see Indian Arrival Day declared an official holiday."

When one looks at all the arguments and the equivocation—I believe the Government wants to make political mileage out of this—one can see that the Members on the other side have really said nothing in the debate. If anything, the Member for Diego Martin East supported the contentions in my opening statement. The Member for San Fernando East, forever playing political games, wants this matter to go before a parliamentary committee and as I said before, if all the views which he expressed were true to his convictions he would have so recommended that this parliamentary committee consider the question of Indian Arrival Day, that the House recommends that, as well as other matters in the amplitude of its deliberations.

As I stand here today, I am not so sanguine that, given the assurances of people who have spoken outside of this House, the Member for San Fernando East and; the Member for Diego Martin East, who spoke in this House that the other side really supports this Motion. Therefore, as I end this debate, I would be calling for a division on this matter, so that if Members are true to what they say, let us see how they vote in that division.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Jurai: Madam Speaker, before you go any further, I wish to have a ruling from the Chair on a matter which I raised earlier. You would recall that in my contribution earlier, I asked that the list of names be included in the official *Hansard*. I did not realize that I had to go through every name. Can you kindly give a ruling as to whether these names, because of the historical significance of same, can be included in the official records of *Hansard*?

Madam Speaker: Really, *Hansard* is a record of the verbatim proceedings. I recall that you said you wanted this to be laid in Parliament. What you can do is probably make it available to the library, but *Hansard* is really a record of what is actually said in the House. I do not think we can actually include that in the records, it would have been stated that you made reference to that document. So, I would strongly advise that the document be lodged in the library for record purposes.

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All right, we are now on the Motion. I am having a bit of a difficulty, hon. Members on this matter, because from what I am seeing here, the committee has already been appointed. *[Interruption]* No, therefore, delete the resolution; this is the resolution here:

"Be it resolved that this House recommend to the Government that May 30 be declared a national public holiday to be known as Indian Arrival Day."

Now, the Motion was to delete the resolution and substitute the following, and Members voted on that and as a result of that vote, we had the appointment of this committee.

Mr. Valley: Madam Speaker, the committee which was established, really, is the re-introduction of a committee that was there in the last session, so the amendment which reads as follows, still has to be put:

"And whereas it is desirable that the rationalization of national holidays in Trinidad and Tobago be examined.

Be it Resolved that the whole question of the rationalization of public holidays be referred to a Joint Select Committee of Parliament."

Question, on amendment, put and agreed to.

Mr. Sudama: We vote against this because we want this as an amendment on the Motion.

Madam Speaker: No, that is very unparliamentary.

Mr. Sudama: Madam Speaker, I want your ruling on this. An amendment has been moved to my Motion and the House has voted. Is my original Motion still there to be voted upon? This is what I am asking.

6.10 p.m.

Mr. Maharaj: Madam Speaker, we have voted on the amendment, but on the substantive motion.

Madam Speaker: No, it is very contradictory and we must—*[Interruption]*.

Mr. Sudama: Madam Speaker, my Motion did not talk about committee and so forth. My Motion says this House recommends to the Government that May 30 be declared as a national public holiday.

Mr. Humphrey: You cannot properly amend that. An amendment may be proposed to the motion if it is relevant thereto. That is not relevant.

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Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, we have to be very careful. Remember this is a very strict procedure. What has happened is as a result of the hon. Prime Minister's intervention. The position was that we delete the resolution in the Motion, so we had the body—and the House voted on it. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Sudama: There is no motion.

Madam Speaker: No, it was deleted and substituted. *[Interruption]* No.

Mr. Sudama: The resolution is the motion.

Madam Speaker: No, deleted and substituted *[Interruption]*. No, Member for Oropouche, it was substituted. I have the records before me, this is what the records show.

Mr. Humphrey: Yes. Standing Order No. 32(1) states that they cannot move an amendment, if it is not relevant to the motion.

Madam Speaker: It is not the entire body, it is just the resolution.

Mr. Sudama: There is an amendment of—

Madam Speaker: Unfortunately, Members have already voted. Members must be a little more careful when voting. You have already voted on the deletion and substitution.

Mr. Sudama: No, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Yes. My ruling will have to stand on this, because this is what the records show. I have the records before me and this is what the records show.

Mr. Humphrey: Madam Speaker, the House is completely out of order in this exercise. Standing Order No. 32(1) is absolutely clear. One cannot move an amendment if it is not relevant to the motion. *[Interruption]* No, it is not relevant to the Motion.

Madam Speaker: Unfortunately, Member for St Augustine, that ought to have been taken when the amendment was being made. We have already done that.

Mr. Maharaj: Madam Speaker, I want to put on the record that what you are saying is, any motion that the Opposition files, that all that can happen, because an amendment has been filed is to nullify the Motion. That is exactly what you have ruled. And in effect that is contrary to the practice of this House.

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Madam Speaker: The House is doing it, do not put the blame on the Speaker. What have I done?

Mr. Maharaj: No. What you have done is give a ruling which is totally unprecedented. You are changing the Standing Orders of this House. It is purely academic now, but you are creating a precedent whereby you are saying that all the Government has to do with any motion is file an amendment, and therefore, the Motion is nullified.

Madam Speaker: It is the House that did it. Hon. Members, with the greatest of respect, the Chair has no authority to do such a thing. The Chair can only put to the House, that which is put by Members and whether or not the House votes on it.

Mr. Valley: Madam Speaker, may I suggest that we take perhaps a five-minute break for consultation.

Madam Speaker: It is in *Hansard* now. You have done it already. The sitting of the House is suspended for five minutes.

6.16 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

6.20 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Mr. Maharaj: Madam Speaker, with the greatest respect, I think there is a misconception here. It has nothing to do with the voting because in the voting in this House, there would most likely be the Government voting for an amendment if it proposes, and the Opposition may not vote for it.

I think the Chair is dealing with it on the basis of an amended statement. It is not like that. For example, we had motions during the time I have been here—I mentioned it to the Leader of Government Business and one always put the amended motion and the original motion. The Member for Oropouche and the Member for St. Augustine have been here for a long time; I have been here and that is how it has been done. If it is that you are ruling that this is how it is done, we would put it on the records, but I think it is a ruling which we would have to look at very carefully.

Madam Speaker: On the last occasion—this is why I was very concerned—I wondered why that was being taken at that point. In *Hansard*, it has specifically, the vote was taken; delete the resolution, the House was now going to consider the entire question of public holidays when this whole idea would have been brought into play.

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Whereas a group of indentured workers...

Whereas vast majority of Indian workers...

Be it now resolved that the entire question of public holidays..

All of this would have been taken into consideration when the matter was—but the House has voted.

Mr. Sudama: My Motion was specific to May 30. If you delete the resolution you have in effect nullified my Motion. There was nothing to debate. That is the case.

Madam Speaker: It is unfortunate that you are saying the Chair—if you delete it. Remember this was something moved from the floor; put to the House and voted on. The Chair has absolutely no power to do any such thing.

Mr. Sudama: I think the House should have been guided on this issue. As far as I know, you move an amendment, vote on it and come back to the substantive motion and have a division on it.

Madam Speaker: The question was open.

Mr. Sudama: If an amendment deletes, destroys and nullifies a motion, then the whole debate would come to an end.

Mr. Sharma: Madam Speaker, for my own clarification, after the amendment was moved by the Member for San Fernando East, what have we been debating since?

Madam Speaker: The amended Motion.

Mr. Maharaj: That is why the records would show that the Member for Tobago East indicated to the House that the procedure we had followed was possibly a wrong one, that since there were two motions, the substantive Motion and the amendment, in effect, what we were debating was an amendment and the Motion. That is why the vote has to be taken on the two.

Madam Speaker: You had just voted that the Motion be amended.

Mr. Valley: Madam Speaker, we did not take any vote on the amendment at that time. An amendment was moved by the hon. Prime Minister and it was seconded. From that point on we were debating the original Motion and the amended Motion. At the time of the vote, I am convinced, having looked at the Standing Order, that the procedure you followed was quite correct. First of all the

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amendment was put; the House agreed on it and these amendments took place and now all that needs to be done is for the amended Motion to be put to the House.

Madam Speaker: This is according to the procedure.

Mr. Humphrey: Read Standing Order No 32 (4).

Mr. Sudama: The amended Motion takes no concerted obligation over the original Motion.

Mr. Humphrey: It is clear that an amendment is to take out words and put in words. It is not to nullify. It is to change something but not to remove it.

Mr. Sudama: You cannot delete a resolution. There is no Motion then.

Madam Speaker: I recall very specifically this question was put. The debate was open and we are now going to vote for the amendment.

Mr. Sharma: Earlier today, after the Member for Caroni Central spoke, the Member for Nariva started his contribution by reading the Motion as presented by the Member for Oropouche.

Madam Speaker: We had already gone through the amendment.

Mr. Sobion: It seems to me that there may be a deficiency in the Standing Order, but we can only act on the Standing Order as it now stands. If one looks at Standing Order No. 32 (3) it states:

"An amendment to a motion may be moved and seconded at any time after the question upon the motion has been proposed by the Speaker or Chairman and before it has been put by the Speaker or Chairman at the conclusion of the debate..."

This is the relevant part.

"upon the motion when all amendments have been disposed of the Speaker shall then put the question on the original Motion or the Motion as amended as the case may require."

What we have done is dealt with the amended Motion and that is the end of the matter, according to the existing Standing Order.

Madam Speaker: Unfortunately, hon. Members I can only be guided by the Standing Orders and by the record in *Hansard*. Hon. Members, the Chair has done no such thing; it is the House that has done it.

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Whereas it is desirable that the rationalization of national holidays in Trinidad and Tobago be examined

Be it resolved that the whole question of the rationalization of public holidays be referred to a joint select committee of Parliament.

Question put and agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): I beg to move that the House do now adjourn to Friday, February 3, 1995, at 1.30 p.m. We would take the Motion on the Adjournment at that time.

Madam Speaker: We have a Motion on the Adjournment before I move the House.

Hon. K. Valley: We have agreed that we would do that Motion on the Adjournment on February 3, 1995.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 6.30 p.m.