

Leave of Absence

Friday, March 10, 1995

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, March 10, 1995

The House met at 1.40 p.m.

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, I have granted leave of absence from today's sitting to the Member for Barataria/San Juan (*Hon. Dr. Linda Baboolal*) and the Member for Port of Spain South (*Hon. Jean Pierre*).

PAPERS LAID

1. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Diego Martin Regional Corporation for the period October 1, 1991 to December 31, 1991. [*The Minister of Trade and Industry and the Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley)*]

To be referred to the Public Accounts Committee.

2. Report of the Elections and Boundaries Commission on the Parliamentary Bye-Election for the electoral district of Laventille West held on Monday, May 24, 1994. [*The Minister of Works and Transport and Minister of Local Government (Hon. Colm Imbert)*]
3. Report of the Elections and Boundaries Commission on the Parliamentary Bye-Election for the electoral district of Pointe-a-Pierre held on Monday, May 30, 1994. [*Hon. C. Imbert*]
4. Report of the Elections and Boundaries Commission on the Parliamentary Bye-Election for the electoral district of Caroni East held on Monday, August 22, 1994. [*Hon. C. Imbert*]
5. Annual Report of the Law Commission for the period January 01, 1992 to December 31, 1992. [*Hon. C. Imbert*]

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 asking for a deferral of Nos. 39, 53, 57, 72 and

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74. We are also asking that Question No. 59, which is directed to the Minister of Tourism, be taken at a later stage of the proceedings.

The following questions stood on the Order Paper:

**Advisers/Consultants
(Government Departments)**

39. Would the Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister responsible for Public Administration and Public Information, provide to this honourable House a list of advisers and/or consultants at the various ministries and/or governmental departments, their qualifications and salaries? [*Mr. S. Hosein*]

Road Improvement Programme

53. Could the Minister of Works and Transport and Minister of Local Government provide the House with:

- (a) The names of the contractors employed under the Road Improvement Programme which commenced in 1994 before and after the awards by the Central Tenders Board?
- (b) The respective amounts paid to them and/or owing to date before and after the awards by the Central Tenders Board?
- (c) The quantity of hot mix supplied by each contractor before and after the awards by Central Tenders Board?
- (d) The length of roadway paved by each contractor before and after the awards by the Central Tenders Board? [*Mr. T. Sudama*]

**Selwyn Andrews
(Enquiry)**

57. Could the Minister of National Security state whether the police commissioner conducted an enquiry into the circumstances under which Selwyn Andrews is alleged to have drunk gramaoxone while handcuffed and in police custody at the San Fernando Police Station on August 13, 1994? [*Mr. T. Sudama*]

**Truck-borne Water Supply
(Refund of Payment)**

72. (a) Is the Minister of Public Utilities aware that some consumers of the Water and Sewerage Authority who pay water rates for a pipe-borne supply of water do not get such a supply of water?

- (b) If the Minister is aware that such a situation exists, could he indicate whether his Government intends to refund to persons moneys they pay in those circumstances?
- (c) Is the Minister aware that residents who do not get a supply of water must pay water rates in order for them to get a truck-borne supply of water as they have to produce their water rate receipts in order to get such a truck-borne supply of water. If he is aware of such a problem, could he indicate what his Government intends to do about the matter and whether his Government intends to refund persons the moneys they pay trucks for them to get a supply of water? *[Mr. R. L. Maharaj]*

**Balmain Slope Bridge
(Construction of)**

- 74.** (a) Could the Minister of Works and Transport and Minister of Local Government indicate whether his Government intends, in 1995, to construct the Balmain Slope Bridge?
- (b) If it does, could he indicate when construction work is likely to start?
 - (c) Could the Minister indicate whether his Government intends to provide any temporary relief to the residents, including school children, to facilitate them to have access across the river? *[Mr. R. L. Maharaj]*

Questions, by leave, deferred.

**Tourist Attraction Development
(Tabaquite Constituency)**

- 59.** (a) Could the Minister of Tourism state whether the Tourist Attraction Development in the Tabaquite constituency is still in operation?
- (b) If the answer is in the affirmative, could the Minister state:
 - (i) what is the recurrent annual expenditure for its maintenance?
 - (ii) the number of tourists visiting during the period January 01, 1994 to December 31, 1994?
 - (iii) what revenues were collected over the same period?
 - (c) If the answer is in the negative, could the Minister state what has become of the facilities that have been put in place? *[Dr. C. Singh]*

Question, by leave, deferred to a later stage of the proceedings.

Landfill Sites of Trinidad and Tobago

58. Mr. Trevor Sudama (*Oropouche*) asked the Minister of Local Government:

Could the Minister state:

- (a) The number of official landfill sites in Trinidad and Tobago?
- (b) The names of the contracting firms employed to manage these sites?
- (c) The amount of money paid to these contracting firms for 1992, 1993 and 1994 and sources from which these payments have been made?
- (d) The total fees paid by private firms and individuals for having access to these landfill sites for 1992, 1993 and 1994?

The Minister of Works and Transport and Minister of Local Government (Hon. Colm Imbert): Madam Speaker, the latest survey revealed that there are ten official landfill sites in Trinidad and Tobago; nine in Trinidad and one in Tobago.

Firms and individuals are not employed to manage landfill sites *per se*, but are given specific contracts by some municipal corporations and Solid Waste Management Company Limited to provide certain services associated with the management thereof, such as the supply of earth fill and the use of equipment in order to facilitate the maintenance of sanitary conditions therein.

However, unlike these corporations, that is, Siparia, Point Fortin, Mayaro/Rio Claro, Chaguanas and Sangre Grande, which utilize the services of several different contracting firms and individuals periodically and normally over a short duration, Solid Waste Management Company Limited normally engages contracting firms on an ongoing basis, to ensure the efficient and effective execution of its landfill operations at Beetham Highway, Guanapo, Arima, Forres Park and Claxton Bay. The names of the contracting firms currently engaged on these landfill sites are:

- (1) Ali Meah John & Company Limited
- (2) Peter Rampersad Limited
- (3) General Earthmovers Limited
- (4) Ibis Security Services
- (5) Sure Security Services
- (6) Trinidad and Tobago Police Service.

Total payments to contracted firms/individuals for 1992, 1993 and 1994, the sources of which were corporations' approved budgetary allocations under Sub-head 02 Goods and Services, Item 16 Consulting and Other Contracting Services, 05 Local Health Authority, Item 12 Maintenance and Supplies and 15 Repairs and Maintenance. Solid Waste Management Company Limited's approved budgetary allocations were as follows:

1992	\$6,042,611.25
1993	\$6,157,120.15
1994	\$5,994,428.10

As far as could be ascertained, private firms and individuals are not charged any fees for having access to landfill sites.

1.50 p.m.

**Laying of Contract in House
(Objection to)**

67. Miss Pamela Nicholson (*Tobago West*) asked the Minister of Works and Transport and Minister of Local Government:

Can the Minister state whether his Government has any objections to the laying of the contract between Sun Island Cruises Limited and the Government in this House? If he has, could he give the reasons for the objection?

The Minister of Works and Transport and Minister of Local Government (Hon. Colm Imbert): Madam Speaker, the Minister wishes to advise this honourable House that the agreement for the fast ferry service between the Port Authority of Trinidad and Tobago and Sun Island Cruises Limited is a confidential business document. As such, it is not considered appropriate to lay this document in this House.

Notwithstanding this, the agreement contains certain fundamental requirements and standards with regard to the operation of the service to which Sun Island Cruises Limited must adhere.

Of relevance are the following:

- (i) The service is defined as a fast ferry service with an average estimated time of voyage between Trinidad and Tobago as two and one half hours.

- (ii) The passenger comfort level is prescribed by the ISO safety standard No. 263/3 of 1985 and the vessel is also required to comply with all applicable international and local safety regulations and statutory requirements.

The Port Authority is aware that in December 1994 and January 1995, Sun Island Cruises Limited has not met these standards because of engine breakdowns, among other things, and the Port Authority is keeping the situation under continuous review.

It should be noted that Sun Island Cruises Limited was recently permitted to withdraw its vessel from service for one month in order to carry out the required engine repairs so that it could meet its contractual obligations in the future.

Miss Nicholson: Madam Speaker, for transparency, if there is an institution, as the one we are dealing with, which has not met the conditions, is it not prudent for the Minister to bring the contract before the House because this is something which deals with people's lives?

Madam Speaker: If the hon. Member feels very strongly about that she can, in fact, file a motion to have that matter debated in the House. Hers is not a question.

**Brechin Castle Factory
(Soot and Fly Ash)**

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

- (a) Could the Minister indicate to this honourable House what his Government intends to do to provide relief to residents of Couva and its environs from the emission of soot and fly ash from the Brechin Castle factory?
- (b) In the light of the Minister undertaking to this House on April 29, 1994, that relief in that respect was forthcoming, could he indicate why such relief has not been possible and what his Government intends to do to provide immediate relief?

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Madam Speaker, answering on behalf of the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, Government intends to continue working with Caroni (1975) Limited in accessing funds for overhauling the fly ash arrester and removal systems at Brechin Castle factory. It is to be noted that during the wet season of 1994, the company undertook restorative work

to the fly ash arrester in the boilers. In January 1995, caps were fabricated and installed on the two chimneys to restrict the dispersion of the fly ash to a shorter radius around the factory.

Provisions have been made in 1995 for funding capital investment works in Caroni's sugar factories in accordance with the recommendations of the Tripartite Report. It is expected that these would include installation of a more effective and efficient system to alleviate the environmental problems existing at present.

Mr. Sudama: Madam Speaker, I have a supplementary question. Can the Minister inform this House whether there are any plans for Ste Madeleine sugar factory to deal with the soot and fly ash problem?

Hon. K. Valley: Madam Speaker, obviously that is a new question and we would gladly answer if it is filed.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

The following questions were asked by Mr. Sahid Hosein (Siparia):

Penal/Debe Regional Corporation (Contracts Awarded)

- 75.** (a) Would the Minister of Works and Transport and Minister of Local Government indicate to this House how many contracts were awarded by the Penal/Debe Regional Corporation for the past six months?
- (b) Would he indicate what procedures were used to award these contracts?
- (c) To whom were these contracts awarded; for what purpose and at what price?
- (d) Will he provide the technical evaluations supporting these contracts?

Cricket Pitches and Outfields (Procedures)

- 76.** (a) Would the Minister of Works and Transport and Minister of Local Government indicate to this House what procedures were put in place in 1995 for the preparation of cricket pitches and outfields on grounds under the jurisdiction of the Penal/Debe Regional Corporation?
- (b) How much money was allocated for each named ground?
- (c) To whom were these moneys paid and what procedure was used to allocate these moneys?

- (d) Whether there are technical evaluations to justify the sum spent on the repair of each ground?

Madam Speaker: Hon. Member for Siparia, I gather that you have received the replies to Questions Nos. 75 and 76.

Mr. Hosein: Yes, Madam Speaker.

Vide end of sitting for written answers.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Bejucal Road, Chaguanas (Repair Works)

79. Miss Hulsie Bhaggan (*Chaguanas*) asked the Minister of Works and Transport and Minister of Local Government:

Would the Minister state:

- (a) The cost and nature of works carried out on Bejucal Road, Chaguanas?
 (b) Whether he intends to carry out any further works on Bejucal Road?
 (i) If the answer is in the affirmative, would the Minister indicate the nature of those works and the planned commencement date?

The Minister of Works and Transport and Minister of Local Government (Hon. Colm Imbert): Madam Speaker, the nature of the work carried out on Bejucal Road consists of grading and scarifying of the road surface using a backhoe; strengthening of the existing pavement using crushers—that is the road pavement—and placing of an asphalt overlay. The final cost of the work was \$99,995; 549 metres of road was paved.

The Minister of Works and Transport and Minister of Local Government in recognizing the importance of Bejucal Road has proposed its inclusion in the 1995 Road Improvement Fund Programme. The nature of the works to be carried out in 1995 would include regrading, strengthening and paving with hot asphalt mix of approximately 1.4 kilometres of road. It is expected that this work would commence by the end of March, 1995.

Link Road (Bejucal and Warren Roads)

80. Miss Hulsie Bhaggan asked the Minister of Works and Transport and Minister of Local Government:

Would the Minister indicate:

- (a) The length of time the completion of the link road between Bejucal Road and Warren Road has been outstanding?
- (b) The estimated cost of completing this project?
- (c) Whether he intends to complete this project?
 - (i) If the answer is in the affirmative, when is work due to commence?

The Minister of Works and Transport and Minister of Local Government (Hon. Colm Imbert): Madam Speaker, the link road east of the Uriah Butler Highway between Bejucal Road and Warren Road refers to Frontage Road R41. In July, 1983, sections of the contract for the Uriah Butler Highway improvements to dual carriageway standard were deleted, including Frontage Road R41 between Guayamare Village and Monroe Road.

The estimated cost of Frontage Road R41 is \$4 million.

Based on the present level of funding, this work cannot be undertaken in 1995. Consideration will be given, however, to commencing work on Frontage Road R41 in 1996.

Warner Village (Pedestrian Overpass)

81. Miss Hulsie Bhaggan asked the Minister of Works and Transport and Minister of Local Government:

Would the Minister state:

- (a) The length of time the completion of the pedestrian overpass at Warner Village has been outstanding?
- (b) The estimated cost of completing this project?
- (c) Whether he intends to complete this project?
 - (i) If the answer is in the affirmative, when is work due to commence?

The Minister of Works and Transport and Minister of Local Government (Hon. Colm Imbert): Madam Speaker, the construction of the pedestrian overpass at Warner Village was deleted from the contract for the improvement to the Uriah Butler Highway in July, 1983. The estimated cost of completing this project is \$250,000.

As stated previously in this honourable House, completion of outstanding work items on the Uriah Butler Highway is being carried out on a phased basis

subject to the availability of funds. In this regard consideration will be given to commencing this project in 1996.

DEFINITE URGENT MATTER

(Domestic Violence Against Women)

Miss Hulsie Bhaggan (*Chaguanas*): Madam Speaker, in accordance with Standing Order No. 12, this is to seek leave of this honourable House to discuss increasing levels of domestic violence against women as a definite matter of urgent public importance.

This matter is definite because in 1994 four women were brutally murdered as a result of domestic disputes, and in 1995 two women were brutally murdered. In the most recent case, four children were also murdered.

This matter is urgent because hundreds of cases of domestic violence are before the courts and in many homes women are living in violent relationships and are too scared to seek help.

This matter is also urgent because we cannot afford to have the cries of women and children going unheeded, and we cannot afford to have any more of our women and innocent children violently battered and butchered.

This matter is of national importance because this crime cuts across all barriers of class, race, region and religion. It exists throughout Trinidad and Tobago. Victims in 1994 and 1995 lived at Arima, Morvant, Champs Fleurs, Maracas/St. Joseph, San Fernando and Oropouche.

2.00 p.m.

Additionally, the Domestic Violence Act does not have the support mechanisms and systems in place to ensure its effective enforcement. The police stations are not organized and are not prepared to deal with this crime. In all cases of domestic violence between 1994 and 1995, battery led to murder. This has always been the pattern. Batterers are therefore allowed to roam free and to terrorize women, children and their relatives.

Madam Speaker, in view of this, I seek your leave to have the issue of domestic violence debated as a definite matter of urgent public importance.

Madam Speaker: This matter does not qualify for consideration under Standing Order 12 but the hon. Member is advised that it qualifies under Standing Order 11.

**AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT BANK
(AMDT.) BILL**

Bill to amend the Agricultural Development Bank Act, Chap. 79:07[*The Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources*]; read the first time.

FINANCE BILL

Bill to provide for the imposition or variation of certain taxes and duties, for the incorporation of the amendments made by the Provisional Collection of Taxes Order, 1994, to introduce other provisions of a fiscal nature and for related matters, [*The Minister of Finance*]; read the first time.

COMPANIES BILL

Bill to revise and amend the laws relating to companies and to provide for related and consequential matters, [*The Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs*]; read the first time.

SECURITIES INDUSTRY BILL

Bill to repeal and replace the Securities Industry Act, Chap. 83.02 to establish a Securities and Exchange Commission in Trinidad and Tobago, to provide for the regulation of the security market in Trinidad and Tobago and for connected matters [*The Minister of Finance*]; read the first time.

**ELECTIONS AND BOUNDARIES COMMISSION
(LOCAL GOVERNMENT) ORDER**

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

Whereas it is provided by subsection (3) of section 4 of the Elections and Boundaries Commission (Local Government) Act, that as soon as may be after the Elections and Boundaries Commission (hereinafter referred to as "the Commission") has submitted a report under paragraph (a) of subsection (1) of section 4 of the said Act, the Minister to whom responsibility for Local Government is assigned, shall lay before the House of Representatives for its approval the draft of an Order by the President for giving effect, whether with or without modifications, to the recommendations contained in the report;

And Whereas the Commission has submitted a report to the Minister in accordance with the provisions of paragraph (a) of subsection (1) of section 4;

And Whereas the draft of an Order entitled "The Elections and Boundaries Commission (Local Government) Order, 1994" giving effect to the

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recommendations of the Commission was laid before the House of Representatives on the 23rd day of November, 1994:

Be it Resolved that the draft of "The Elections and Boundaries Commission (Local Government) Order, 1994" be approved.

Madam Speaker, the Elections and Boundaries Commission, as my hon. friends on the other side are aware, is a creature of the Constitution, appointed in accordance with section 71 of the Constitution. Section 71(1) states as follows:

"There shall be an Elections and Boundaries Commission for Trinidad and Tobago."

In this particular case the commission has received its authority from section 4(1) of the Elections and Boundaries (Local Government) Act, Chap. 25:50.

If one examines the report before the House, one will see that:

"4(1) The Commission shall define and review the boundaries of the electoral districts into which an electoral area is, or is to be, divided and shall submit to the Minister reports either—

- (a) showing the constituencies into which it recommends that an electoral area should be divided in order to give effect to the Rules set out in the Second Schedule; or
- (b) stating that, in the opinion of the Commission, no alteration is required to the existing number or boundaries of electoral districts in order to give effect to the said Rules."

The reports shall be submitted:

- “(a) in the case of its first report after commencement of the Act, not later than six months after the date of commencement; and
- (b) in the case of any subsequent report, not less than two nor more than three years from the date of submission of its last report."

The report before this House was submitted to the Minister on August 15, 1994 and in accordance with section 4(3) the Minister responsible for Local Government has caused to be prepared a draft of an Order by the President to give effect to the Commission's recommendations.

The law also provides that as soon as may be, as indicated in the resolution itself, in the Preamble, after the Commission has submitted a report, the Minister shall lay before the House of Representatives for its approval, a draft of an Order

by the President giving effect, with or without modification, to the recommendations contained in the report. The draft may also make provision for any matters which may appear to the Minister to be incidental to or consequential upon the other provisions of the draft.

Madam Speaker, it has not been the practice of this honourable House to make amendments to any such order. This is in recognition of the fact that the Elections and Boundaries Commission is an independent commission appointed by the President and is a creature of the Constitution. I simply wish to say this because although there may be some arguments on the other side, it is necessary for people to understand the convention with regard to reports of this nature.

Allow me now to go back to the history of this matter. The local government boundaries and the system of local government in Trinidad and Tobago was changed as a result of the Elections and Boundaries (Local Government) Act, Chap. 25:50 published on September 3, 1991 which arose out of the new Local Government Act of 1990.

In 1991, which saw the first report of the commission after the changing of the local government system in 1990, the following municipal corporations existed: The city of Port of Spain with 133 polling divisions and an electorate in 1991 of 40,164, 12 electoral districts; the city of San Fernando—78 polling divisions, 41,964 electors, nine electoral districts; the borough of Arima—28 polling divisions, 19,343 electors, seven electoral districts; the borough of Point Fortin—25 polling divisions, 12,449 electors, six electoral districts; the borough of Chaguanas—51 pollings divisions, 35,983 electors, eight electoral districts.

It should be noted that with respect to these municipal corporations that I have just read out, the number of electoral districts is fixed by law, so that the commission does not have the power to change the number of electoral districts under existing law in the cities of Port of Spain and San Fernando and the boroughs of Arima, Point Fortin, and Chaguanas.

However, with regard to regional municipalities and regional corporations the commission applies the rules and, therefore, there may or may not be a change in the number of electoral districts after the commission does its work. In fact, if one looks at the document before the House today, one will see that several regional corporations have remained unchanged in terms of the number of electoral districts, but there have been some changes to other regional corporations, and it is in accordance with the rules.

2.10 p.m.

Let me go on. Madam Speaker I hope you would permit me some latitude in terms of reading out figures because I think it is important. This is the information for the year 1991.

Place	No. of Polling Divisions	Electorate	Proposed No. of Electoral Districts
Diego Martin	55	62,543	9
Laventille	52	39,849	7
San Juan	89	64,477	9
Tunapuna	65	48,420	8
Piarco	59	59,762	8
Sangre Grande	63	35,093	7
Couva	73	54,910	8
Tabaquite/ Talparo	65	39,933	7
Rio Claro	26	14,369	5
Siparia	91	54,449	8
Penal/Debe	67	53,076	8
Princes Town	93	59,862	8
Mayaro	14	6,528	5
Cities & Boroughs	315	149,903	42
Total	1,127	743,174	139

In 1992, there were some changes. The present administration, recognizing that the number of municipal corporations was a bit too much and perhaps a bit too unwieldy, took a decision to merge a number of these regional corporations. This is contained in Act No. 7 of 1992 which makes provision for the publication and revision of the list of persons qualified to be electors in the municipal councils election of 1992. Part III of that Act, section 6, Application of the

Elections and Boundaries Commission Local Government Order 1991, states as follows:

"Notwithstanding the merger by the Municipal Corporations (Amendment) Act, 1992 of the Municipal Corporations listed in the Schedule, for the purpose of the Municipal Councils elections of 1992, the Elections and Boundaries Commission (Local Government) Order, 1991 made in pursuance of the Elections and Boundaries (Local Government) Act, shall have effect for all purposes as though the Corporations so listed had not merged."

What was done in 1992 is that the five cities and boroughs were left unchanged, but the 14 regional corporations were merged and the number of regional corporations was reduced. Diego Martin was left intact; Laventille was merged with San Juan; Tunapuna was merged with Piarco; Sangre Grande was left intact; Couva was merged with Tabaquite/Talparo; Rio Claro was merged with Mayaro; Siparia, Penal/Debe and Princes Town were left intact. This required an Act of Parliament to allow it to take place. In effect, there were merged corporations where the rules that were applied in terms of the purposes of the election, were as if the merger had not taken place. Elections were held.

The second report of the Elections and Boundaries Commission dated August 15, 1994 has been laid in this House. One sees there have been some changes. Again, the changes would be only in the regional municipalities because the cities and boroughs are fixed by law, in terms of the number of electors. If one looks at the electorate, for example in Diego Martin, the number of polling divisions has been reduced by one, but the electorate has been increased from 62,543 to 68,887 and the number of electoral districts has remained the same.

This is the case for several of the corporations. In fact, in the commission's report it was indicated that in a number of corporations there should be no change in the number of electoral districts. These corporations are the Diego Martin Corporation, Sangre Grande Corporation, Siparia Corporation and Penal/Debe Corporation. This is because of the application of the rules.

However, the following corporations have had their numbers of electoral districts adjusted. Whereas the merger of Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo resulted in 15 electoral districts, the application of the rules in the prescribed manner has reduced that now to 11. Whereas before the Mayaro/Rio Claro Corporation, when one added the number of electoral districts in the merged corporations, one got 10, there are now six. The San Juan/Laventille Corporation if one looked at the two separately in 1991, there would have been 16 and there are now 12.

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Previously, Tunapuna/Piarco would have had 16; there are now 12. Princes Town previously had eight and because of population increase in that area, it now has nine.

I think it is necessary for people to understand that when the corporations were merged they ended up with a number of electoral districts, which if the present rules were applied, would not necessarily have been the same. It ended with more electoral districts in several corporations because they were simply merged without applying the rules in order to determine the number of electoral districts.

The commission has reported. As I said, it is not the convention to question them and I have no intention of doing that. When one looks at the arithmetic one would see that the rules have been applied properly. There is no question about it. These are the existing rules under law. If it is required, I would ask the Members on the other side to peruse the Elections and Boundaries Commission Local Government Act, Chap. 25:50; Act No. 8 of 1992; the Order of the Elections and Boundaries Commission Act, Chap. 25:50 of 1991 and all other relevant legislation; they would see that the commission has done its job in accordance with the law and the rules.

Thank you.

Question proposed.

Mr. Sahid Hosein (*Siparia*): Madam Speaker, in responding to the Motion, let me first start by complimenting the members and staff of the EBC on an excellent job. I also compliment them on presenting the report to the Minister as mandated by law within the stipulated period. That is like a breath of fresh air, in that it is the exception rather than the norm in a number of instances. We on this side have absolutely no problem with the report because, as the Minister rightly indicated, the members of the EBC are mandated to present this report and they did it in a certain way according to the laws that this Parliament has made.

2.20 p.m.

In order to get a full appreciation of what has taken place and, more importantly, the implications of the recommendations in this report, I would start off by reading extensively from the report itself and explaining the implications of same.

The Minister indicated that the time frame in which they had to report, after the first report, was between the second and third year, and this they did. At the

same time, I want to define what an electoral area is and to make the distinction between an electoral area and a district, for most of us get confused in distinguishing between the two terms. In this case when I refer to an electoral area, I mean a regional or municipal corporation, which is made up of several electoral districts. I should like to clear that up at this time so that when I make the points in that regard, there would be no confusion.

We have heard that by Act No. 15 of 1992 to amend the Municipal Corporations Act, the Government reduced the number of corporations from 13 to nine and they gave certain reasons during the course of that debate why this had to be done. I want to quote from *Hansard* the relevant parts of contributions made by Members on the other side. The rationale for going from 13 to nine, as given by the hon. Member for Diego Martin Central was that:

“We thought that by spreading too thin, as it were, we were, in fact, not doing a service to our citizens.”

He was saying that 13 was spreading resources too thin. This is from *Hansard* dated June 15, 1992.

He went on to explain that financial and human resource constraints would lead to inefficiency in the system if the number was not reduced. He said:

“...if the benefits of local democracy, efficiency and economy are to be achieved, decentralization must be tuned to the demands of modern economy and technology.”

I am sure we will speak about that later on in the debate.

I want to quote from the contribution of the Member for Arouca North, my good friend, from the *Hansard* dated June 15, 1992. He said, among other things:

“Madam Speaker, this Act is merely to do what has been proposed by the Association years ago, 13 councils were too many and they could not have been funded and everyone was in agreement with that.”

Of course, at the time I pointed out that was not true because I was the Vice-Chairman of the Association. My colleague was the Chairman. The case we made then was that there was no need to change the boundaries, or to move from county councils. The problems with local government then, as it is today, was a question of resources. This was the rationale the Member gave. He went on to say:

“The point is we have brought it down to nine and this will, in fact, be more manageable as far as finances are concerned, as far as workers are concerned, as far as managing the resources are concerned.”

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I would like to deal with that, too, at the appropriate time.

The hon. Member for Diego Martin West, in the *Hansard* dated June 24, 1992 asked:

“What did we merge? We merged San Juan and Laventille. It seems pretty obvious that in San Juan and Laventille one could hardly observe a boundary between them. It is a continuous community and it is easy to manage from that standpoint.”

He went on to state:

“We also did not think that we could have Tunapuna as a separate corporation to Piarco. In fact one has difficulty identifying Piarco as a community that warrants the term municipal corporation, so we have merged Piarco with Tunapuna...”

He also gave a rationale for merging Rio Claro with Mayaro when he said:

“We also merged Rio Claro with Mayaro because we have some difficulty in accepting the small community of Mayaro as a corporation.”

That, Madam Speaker, was the rationale for the introduction of this Bill into Parliament reducing the number of regional corporations from 13 to nine. It seems to me that this was done without giving full consideration to the implications of what it did, and the subsequent need to amend the associated laws to give meaning to it.

I should like to quote from this report and point out what it will do if the recommendations are accepted. When I looked at the recommendations—this gave me an opportunity to look at the whole situation a second time—it reinforced the fact that the Government, if it has a policy on local government, is not telling us. It seems to me that there is no clearly defined policy on local government.

The EBC is supposed to define the electoral districts on the basis of a certain law and I want to read the relevant part of the law, Chap. 25:50 which states in the Second Schedule:

“Rules for determining the Number of Electors in an Electoral District of an Electoral Area”

The part we are interested in, section 2 states—and this was applicable to the county councils at that time and was subsequently amended, as I shall indicate, in keeping with the move to regional corporations:

- (1) The number of electoral districts in a county electoral area in Trinidad shall be determined as follows:

There shall be in every electoral area a basic number of six electoral districts.”

And they were talking about the county councils. So before they started looking at the electorate, in terms of numbers, they started off with six electoral districts according to that section.

“To this basic number shall be added the number obtained by dividing the electorate of the electoral area by 15,000.”

So now they are taking the total number of the electors in the electoral area and dividing them by 15,000 and coming up with the remaining figures.

Mr. Imbert: I thank the Member for giving way. I just want to point out that the Municipal Corporations Act, 1990 amended that basic number: it reduced it from six to four.

2.30 p.m.

Mr. S. Hosein: The Member is anticipating me, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Imbert: Sorry.

Mr. S. Hosein: It also goes on to say that where in any electoral district the electorate is less than 15,000 there shall be seven electoral districts. This is how he was able to say that—I believe it was Mayaro, where there were 11,000 electors—using the amended rule there were five, even though there were fewer than 15,000 electors. This one says when it was county council, that one started off with six and divided the total electorate by 15, and if there was a surplus then one more was added to the number. Let us say there was something like 92,000 divided by 15 and it was added to the six, one would end up with 13 electoral districts.

This was subsequently amended by Act No. 15 of 1992 to state that instead of six there would be four. The reason for that is that they were giving recognition to the fact that they no longer had seven county councils, but there were 13 regional corporations. So that there was no longer the need to keep the number at six, but to reduce it to make it more manageable. One can understand that because it meant across the board in each regional corporation—all 13—the same rule applied.

With the exception of Mayaro and Rio Claro—and that was reinforced by the figures given by the Member for Diego Martin East—there were regional

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corporations where the average electorate size was virtually the same, with the exception, as I said, of Mayaro/Rio Claro; so it worked well. When those corporations are now merged to make nine, they are going to be affected in several ways. The job of the representative will be much harder, because when the rule is applied he has many more people to represent and the electorate in that area will suffer as a consequence.

With the merging of Couva with Tabaquite/Talparo, instead of having on average, let us say 50,000 people in each, there were 100,000 people and the same rule that is applied for a corporation where there were 50,000 people applied for a corporation where there were 100,000 people, and therein lies the problem. A similar thing happened to San Juan when it was merged with Laventille; Tunapuna when it was merged with Piarco and of course, with Princes Town there was this additional district in keeping with the rules.

Using the report—I have looked at the figures. In Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo in 1994 the electorate was fewer than 100,000, and the number of electoral districts have been reduced from 15 to 11. Therefore, on average there is a situation now where a local government representative will be responsible for between 9,000 and 10,500 people; yet in Diego Martin, for example, the total electorate is only 68,000. Obviously, the local government representative has to deal with fewer people. Siparia, Penal/Debe, Diego Martin—all these areas have a similar figure on average except Mayaro/Rio Claro. Of course one can understand the circumstances of Mayaro and Rio Claro.

Then there is Tunapuna/Piarco, 118,000 persons and again they have been reduced from 16 to 12, placing additional burdens—and I would elaborate, as I move from the report—on the implications of those burdens, the present day reality under which local government representatives have to operate.

One can easily see that moving from six to four where there were 13 regional corporations did not pose much of a problem. Now we have nine regional corporations and to all intents and purposes where we should have started off with a base figure of eight—because of the law—we are now starting off with four. Before the corporations were merged we started off with a base figure of four, and now we have merged them—not amended or adjusted the laws accordingly to suit that reality we now start off with base four.

To my mind, nine and seven are not far apart, so that it should have been very easy to amend the law to move away from four to six. If that was not acceptable in the special circumstances of those four merged corporations, then the law

should have been amended to start with a base figure of eight for those three regional corporations and not put the Elections and Boundaries Commission in this position.

In the same way we have special circumstances for the municipal corporations. The Minister himself also made the point that the rule that applied to county councils is now different from the rule that applies for regional corporations. I do not know, but many of us were not around in those days to understand the rationale for having two different rules. Since there is another rule for arriving at the number of electoral districts in the municipal corporations then we should be enlightened as to the rationale for that. What is so sacrosanct about the numbers, that the numbers of the electoral districts are not changed? Port of Spain has been 12—I believe it has—from day one. The electoral districts of Arima, Chaguanas, San Fernando and Point Fortin have not been tampered with: they are fixed by law. We have an adjustment in terms of the electorate.

I believe that the time has come—and it is in that context that I make the point that if the Government has a policy it is a secret; and if we are serious about local government, and if we want to ensure that local government performs the task that we have assigned to it, then we need to look in a holistic way at the laws and everything else in order to bring them on track with modern day reality.

I find it difficult to understand, unless it is explained rationally to me, why there is one law for the municipal corporations—and there might be very good reasons for that—and another for the regional corporations. There is one law for the municipal corporations and another for the regional corporations, and you place different burdens on the people in the two different areas—the councillor in the municipal corporation and the councillor in the regional corporation.

If we were to go back to this report again and look, for example, at the number of electors, on average the local government representative in the Port of Spain Municipal Corporation is supposed to represent, on average, 3,500; in San Fernando about 4,800 people; Arima about 3,000 persons; Point Fortin about 2,000; Chaguanas about 5,000. Therefore, for several reasons, the burden on him is less, the most obvious one is that far fewer people come knocking on his door asking for various services.

When one goes back to the regional corporations, on average Diego Martin would have 8,000 persons; Sangre Grande, 6,000 persons; Siparia, 7,000 persons; Penal/Debe 7,000 persons; Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo, 9,600 persons; Mayaro/Rio

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Claro which is the exception for particular reasons, 4,000 persons; San Juan/Laventille 10,000 persons; Tunapuna/Piarco similarly, 10,000-plus persons; Princes Town 7,000 persons.

2.40 p.m.

To some of you I am merely trotting out numbers, but to the people in local government, those numbers mean quite a lot. I have made the point in terms of actual numbers of the electorate they have to represent, they are smaller. I want to make the point that in the municipal corporation, the councillor who belongs to that corporation, by and large when one looks at the annual allocation, has greater financial resources at his disposal. It might not be all that is required, but he is certainly better off than his counterpart in the regional corporation. That is the other distinction I want to make.

Then, of course, when one looks at the geographic area in an urban setting, Port of Spain, one could walk through four blocks and that is the electoral district of a municipal councillor. It is merely a matter of blocks.

In the case of a regional councillor the geographic area covers several square miles. Even if there are unused lands, there are bridges, drains and roads that link one community with another two miles away, or five miles away, that have to be serviced, and he has to deal with that reality. So that even if the land is empty, as in the case of Mayaro/Rio Claro, the infrastructure has to be serviced, and that is the responsibility of the local government representative.

Of course, I need not go on to talk about his accessibility to the electorate. In two or three afternoons the representative of the municipal corporation can cover this area if he is on a walkabout. It would take several months for the regional councillor to do the same. So that he is really and truly at a serious disadvantage.

I think the time has come for the Government to articulate to this House what is its policy on local government. For far too long we have seen in this House policy being made on the hoof, on an incremental basis, a little bit today, a little bit tomorrow, and one never gets the whole picture, one never sees the actual vision for local government.

I think the time has come when the Government, which has the responsibility—it is not the responsibility of Members on this side, it is the responsibility of the Government—to take a hard look at local government; look at what has to be done and come up with a policy and present it to this House. Indeed, by doing so you would have presented it to the nation at large. They are at a serious disadvantage.

When one looks at the reality of local government today, even in the municipal corporations, when one looks at resources one has to ask: What are we trying to do with local government? What is the future of local government?

Indeed, what services are envisaged that local government will provide for citizens of Trinidad and Tobago? We know by law there are hosts of services. That is the law, but what is the reality? Very few of these services can be carried out, so that the reality today is that requests for services by citizens to councillors, to Members of Parliament, to various agencies cannot be addressed for several reasons, the chief being lack of financial resources to local government bodies.

I want to ask the question in Parliament today, if we are serious: What exactly are we asking our local government representatives to do? Given the present situation there is very little they can do: there is very little service that they can provide to citizens of this country. In fact, I venture to say that local government representatives are going to become an endangered species because, very often, they are subjected to ridicule by members of the public because of the very fact that they cannot address the needs and concerns that are brought before them.

Yes, we understand fully the scarcity of resources, we understand fully also that the Government has the responsibility—not the Members on this side—to ensure that whatever little resources are available are used efficiently. They have the responsibility to do that, they are in control of the machinery, and if today resources, scarce as they are, are being made available to corporations and they are being squandered away, whom do you blame? *[Interruption]*

Mr. Maharaj: You are paying for water and you cannot get any.

Mr. S. Hosein: So that today the local government representative, as I said, is an object of scorn and derision. He has absolutely no respect in his community and you are going to add to his burden if you follow the recommendations of this report by increasing the number of people, by increasing the area that he has to service. You are sending him to do a job without any tools. I mentioned this when I spoke about the maximum usage of scarce resources and all of us on this side are very, very concerned with the manner in which resources are utilized in this country.

It is not that we want to blame Members on the other side personally but, after all in the final analysis they have the responsibility; they are in control of what takes place, and so the final responsibility if moneys are wasted in any regional corporation, or any ministry, the Minister—and, ultimately, the Government—has the final responsibility. It pains me when we stand up in this Parliament and raise

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matters of concern, especially matters of unethical practices—be it local government, be it Ministry of Works—Members on the other side get up and jeer. I think we have far too many things to do—Members on this side—than to come into this House to make wild and spurious allegations against members of the public.

So that I make that comment in the sense that they have the responsibility to ensure maximum usage of resources, and if anyone on this side comes here, or if any member of the public brings to the attention of the Government, or a particular Minister, that so-and-so is taking place, they have a responsibility, they are in duty bound to explain, to investigate, to ensure that the State resources, especially scarce financial resources, are utilized to the maximum benefit of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. But that is not the case.

2.50 p.m.

Too often we come to this Parliament and hear that the workers employed with the Ministry of Local Government are not working. If I were a worker employed with the Ministry of Local Government, and I could have done nothing and got paid for it, I would have done nothing. I venture to say that any worker anywhere in the world would do the same thing. Of course, there would be the exceptions who are very national conscious, patriotic. The problem with the Ministry of Local Government has to do with supervision. Supervision is not the responsibility of the Members on this side; it is the responsibility of the Members on the other side. It is our duty to bring it to their attention.

Today, there is a serious problem in terms of how scarce resources are utilized in the Ministry of Local Government. Supervision from the highest level to the lowest level is lacking, and so the workers simply do not work. How can a worker say that he is working when he is going back home at 8.00 o'clock in the morning? It seems to me that there are no systems in place to ensure that the workers perform, so that the results which we want can be obtained. Obviously, there should have been systems in place—whether it is through the service commissions—whereby a recalcitrant worker could be dealt with.

If the supervisor is not doing his job, then obviously the worker would not do his job. If the Chief Executive Officer is not doing his job, then obviously the supervisor and the worker will not do theirs. That is the problem in the Ministry of Local Government, as in a number of other ministries. We have been hearing much about public sector reform. I am not aware that public sector reform has started in the Ministry of Local Government. If it has, it has been a complete and

utter failure. There has been no change to date. One administration took over from another and, instead of an improvement in attitude towards work and productivity in the Ministry of Local Government, there has been absolutely no change.

I agree, as a country, we have a serious problem with work attitude, work ethics and productivity. We, as citizens of this country, seem to think it applies to foreigners and other people. Productivity does not apply to the majority of Trinidadians and Tobagonians. As politicians, we have to share some of the blame because we tend to foster the impression that we do not have to produce, in order to win votes and elections. We must realistically share some of the blame for that attitude.

As I said, it seems to me that we have to start all over with the Ministry of Local Government. We have to sit down, call all the parties together and have meaningful discussions and, at the end of the day, come up with a system which is best suited to the citizens of this country; a system which is guaranteed to maximize the usage of resources. At the same time, it should be a system in which performers will be rewarded and malcontents and miscreants be dealt with. That is the problem in this country.

We do not set examples. We do not deal with people who are not performing. Invariably, because of one reason or the other—political connection or otherwise—they are promoted or moved to create problems in another area. Until, we, as politicians, deal with that hard reality head-on, Trinidad and Tobago, as a country, will not be going anywhere.

Hon. Member: Very good contribution.

Madam Speaker: We are dealing with the draft of the Elections and Boundaries Commission (Local Government) Order. Please get back to the debate.

Mr. S. Hosein: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am fully aware. The Member introduced it. What would happen to the local government representatives based on the recommendations of this report? I am not surprised that the Ministry of Local Government is in such shambles. The Ministry of Local Government and the Ministry of Works and Transport are very important ministries. Those are the two primary ministries geared to delivering services to people, and with which citizens interact most on a daily basis. Those two difficult ministries have been put into the hands of a Member who—I do not want to be uncharitable to him but I must say it—in any other administration would be hard-pressed to be a parliamentary secretary.

Madam Speaker: The Member said that he did not want to be insulting but—

Mr. S. Hosein: That is my good Friend, Madam Speaker. I alone am not saying that. May I remind Members—and this time I will be uncharitable—that he ran last in the polls.

Mr. Valley: Listen to rumour.

Mr. S. Hosein: There is need to seriously examine the recommendations of this report.

Mr. Maharaj: What are the criteria for the poll? If you want to move them do so, but do not bring a poll.

Madam Speaker: The Member for Siparia seems to be having problems.

Mr. S. Hosein: Madam Speaker, instead of making policy on an incremental basis, think out the situation clearly, look at the problems and try to ensure that there is proper usage of scarce resources. I would be the last person to get up in this House and tell the Minister that 20 more backhoes and tractors are needed in the Ministry of Local Government if we cannot be assured that those will be efficiently used and it would not be the case where two years after none of the equipment will be working.

There is need to set up a system in the Ministry of Local Government whereby people would be accountable. I understand that this is a new administration and some Members are new to the positions they hold and it would have taken them some time to get their feet wet, but this administration has been in office for over three years and, as I said, there is still policy on an incremental basis. We have seen on the divestment policy that one thing was said initially, and the next month something else, and the whole country was confused. That, to a certain extent, has been cleared up. The Government has to define its policies clearly and decide which services it can realistically offer at the Ministry of Local Government and, on that basis, put a system in place to ensure that those services are provided.

Even though we have been told by the Minister that it is not the convention to amend these reports, I recommend to this House that the recommendations not be accepted. To accept the recommendations is to create total chaos in a large part of the country. *[Interruption]* I am reminded by my colleague that the recommendations should not be accepted pending a review of the law, which should be amended to take care of the special circumstances of the merged regional corporations, because we do not have a problem with the others. It is

only where the regional corporations have been merged that the law falls down. We ask that these recommendations be withheld until the law is amended accordingly.

Madam Speaker, I thank you.

3.00 p.m.

Mr. Subhas Panday (*Naparima*): Madam Speaker, as one looks at this report one could come to the conclusion that there is not even method in its madness. In certain parts of the report it strives for equality but in other parts it creates inequality. In order to understand this report which, I am certain, my colleague the Member for Diego Martin East has not understood at all, one needs to look at the history of these reports.

We must first look at Chap. 25:50, the Elections and Boundaries Commission (Local Government) Act. Madam Speaker, in the First Schedule the report enumerated the electoral areas of county councils. It named St. George East; St. George West; St. Andrew/St. David; Mayaro; Caroni, Victoria, St. Patrick. It said that there is the city of Port of Spain; boroughs of San Fernando, Arima and Point Fortin.

I want to reiterate the problem which was initiated in that piece of legislation, which created two different criteria for determining the number of persons to the electoral districts in the country. What it did, as the hon. Member for Siparia indicated, was to say: "You see the city council and the borough council? Well, we do not want to find out what method or mechanism was used to determine the number of electoral districts in that area, but we hold that Port of Spain will be 12, San Fernando will be nine; the borough of Arima, seven; and the borough of Point Fortin, six". So the number of councillors who were to serve those municipalities was defined in law, without any relationship to the number of persons the councillors have to serve.

In that same piece of legislation it said that in the case of the county councils, as they were then, the number of electoral districts—and let us say for convenience, an electoral district is one which is represented by a councillor—the number of councillors in every electoral area—which at that time meant every county council—in Trinidad shall be as follows:

"There shall be in every county council a basic number of six councillors."

So the councils I called out, St. George East, St. George West, Victoria and so forth—those county councils started with six councillors. But after that it said—

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we shall take the number of electors in each county or electoral district at that time, and we shall divide it by 15,000 and when we do that, then you will get the additional councillors. I wonder what was the rationale for that. But in any event what happened was—let us take Victoria—they started with six and assuming there were 60,000 electors, they divide 60,000 by 15,000 and got four. So Victoria, then, would have 10 councillors. They used six as a basic figure and then they divided by 15.

But even at that stage in the legislation, what one found was that in Port of Spain it was 12, fixed by law; San Fernando, 9, fixed by law; Arima, 7, fixed by law; Point Fortin 6, fixed by law. What criteria were used to have these numbers fixed; and why did they use another formula for the county councils? This is what we find very disconcerting.

When one looks at the Municipal Corporations Act, No. 21 of 1990, one would see the Port of Spain Act—I think, was 39:07—the Arima Borough Council Act, the San Fernando Borough Council Act, the Point Fortin Borough Council Act, all were repealed and the municipal and regional corporations were brought within the ambit of Act 21 of 1990. So what they were trying to do was create uniformity between the various local government bodies, hence that Act. When that happened, the basic problem we had was, as my colleague the Member for Siparia indicated, this dichotomy which was creating inequality between the county councils and the city councils. So one would have thought that when Act 21 of 1990 came into being, we would have dealt with this.

Madam Speaker when, as my Friend the Member for Diego Martin Central said, these councils were amalgamated by Act 50 of 1992, one would have thought that this problem would have been taken into consideration but no. The PNM, in its incompetence and shortsightedness, did not even go back to this law. All the Member for Diego Martin Central said was: just let us amend. When they tell him, let us have a complete review of local government; let us modernize local government, the Member for Diego Martin Central said: Forget that; let us try to have this amendment in 1992 and when the Elections and Boundaries Commission reports, we will debate it and modernize local government.

Mr. Palackdharrysingh: True. He said that.

Mr. S. Panday: What do we have today? They are holding on. They bring this report to the House and yet they have not looked at local government with a view to modernizing local government. This is where we stand with the PNM today. These are the confusion and problems in which they have found

themselves today, and that Member for Diego Martin East is asking us to accept this report. I want to say that I speak for the poor councillors in the Diego Martin Regional Corporation; the poor councillors in Laventille, Tunapuna, Piarco, because it is my view that this does not smack of any sort of discrimination—it is a mere act of incompetence by this Government.

This piece of legislation should have been amended. The Member for Diego Martin East comes to this House and says—you know Madam Speaker, the Elections and Boundaries Commission is a creation of the statutes and has its role in the Constitution. What the Member is trying to do is shun the blame and push it on somebody else. But what the Government should have done, really, was to amend the law and then ask the Elections and Boundaries Commission to come up with a report. But the Elections and Boundaries Commission brings a report according to an old law, which is not relevant to the circumstances, and I shall show how this is so.

Before 1990, I think there were seven county councils. The former regime had discussions and there were several reports on local government. The PNM participated, along with us, to produce all these reports on local government reform. Eventually, the former regime came up with a document—*The Decentralization Process—Regional Administration and Regional Development in Trinidad and Tobago*. What the former regime had indicated was that the county councils were too large and unmanageable. As such, what they did was to create 13 regional corporations and a new borough in place of the county councils.

3.10 p.m.

As the Member for Siparia rightly said, they created 13 regional councils. So by creating 13 regional councils they said, look, when we had seven, we started with a base figure of six. So we started in the county councils with 42 councillors. It seems to me their thinking was, when you had 13—13 by 6—if you had maintained six you would have started with 78 instead of 42.

So what the regime did, they tried to reduce it from six to four. So 13 by 4 would have been 42 and 7 by 6 would have—

Hon. Member: It is 52!

Mr. S. Panday: Sorry—52. You see, this is what the PNM harps upon. They look for little things, but the real important things which affect the lives of people and of local government, they do not care about. They think that is a laughing matter.

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So what the former regime had worked out when they came to that figure, they thought that the base figure would have been as close as possible. When they came with the amendment and they reduced the number of regions from 13 to 9, instead of taking the figure back up to 6, so you would have 9×6 equals 54, what they did was leave it at 4 and they went down to 9. So from 42, the base figure has now gone down to 36. This is the problem.

Mr. Valley: Madam Speaker, I wonder whether the hon. Member realizes that 36 is closer to 42 than 52 is to 42.

Mr. S. Panday: Yes, Madam Speaker, but it is less, and that is the point. Because it is less it is causing county councillors to have to serve more electors. That is why I say that when that Minister of Local Government came to this House and said we would be having local government reform, he was really fooling the House; the report is in the mode of the old law.

But this is the basic problem that we have. In a few minutes I shall show you how this has led to this problem which the Member for Diego Martin takes as a joke. In the report one would see that a county councillor in Port of Spain has about 3,400 electors in his electoral district. The Member for Siparia made a very salient point, that those electors are concentrated in a small area.

In Port of Spain the figure is 3,400, but in Arima, a councillor has only 3,000 electors to serve. When one looks at Point Fortin, every county councillor has an average of 2,000 electors. So in Port of Spain it is 3,000; Point Fortin, 2,000, Arima, 3,000.

He smiled and tried to be facetious when he wondered whether this Member realizes that 36 is closer to 42 than 52 is to 42. But I want to quote the figures to show him. In Chaguanas, there are 5,000. But in Diego Martin, for example—whereas Arima and Point Fortin have 2,000 and 3,000—each councillor there has about 7,600 electors to serve. And he is laughing! He said 36 is nearer to 42. But look at what he has done to those poor councillors in Diego Martin. We shall tell them that when we tried to explain to him, he smiled.

In Siparia, there were 7,200 electors. While Port of Spain has 3,000; Point Fortin 2,000, the average number of electors in Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo is 9,200. That is average. But if one really looks at the figures, one would see that Felicity/Calcutta/Mc Bean has 10,175 electors which each councillor has to service. In Edinburgh/Freeport the figure is 9,851; in Perseverance/St. Mary's, 9,800. And he smiles and wonders whether I am aware that 36 is closer to 42 than 52 is to 42.

While Point Fortin is only 2,000, the average number of electors per councillor is 9,800; almost 10,000 in Tunapuna/Piarco. In Blanchisseuse/Santa Rosa/Wallerfield, there are 9,364. The point that the Member for Siparia was making is that not only are the smaller numbers in the municipality, but the geographical area as well.

But look at what happens to this poor councillor for Blanchisseuse/Santa Rosa/Wallerfield. He starts from Blanchisseuse, going down to Santa Rosa, coming into Wallerfield, and he has 9,364 electors to serve. This is the inequity. This is what we are speaking about. Is this the vision of the PNM?

Let us take Caura/Five Rivers/Tacarigua—9,800. What does the Member for Arouca North have to say? Curepe/Spring Village/St. Augustine South—9,600. La Florissante/Cleaver/Lopinot—9,380. But Pasea/Trincity West, 10,257. Mausica/Maloney, 9,948. St. Helena/Warrenville, 10,363. Piarco/La Horquetta, 10,398.

This Minister did not read this report before he came to the House. There is representation of local government in some places of 2,000 and in other places it goes up to 10,000. Why the inequity? Why can we not work out a formula to ensure that there is equity in local government so that this disparity can be erased?

Before I come back to that point I want to say that this PNM is an ad hoc Government, a Government without vision, a Government without, one would say—I do not want to be harsh with them—any intentions; a Government that does not do its homework. This Government is incompetent. Because when the former regime said that they were going to change from seven county councils to 30 regional councils—you may quarrel with them; I did not agree with the former regime—but they had a vision. I should like to read from a draft, *The Decentralization Process, Regional Administration and Regional Development in Trinidad and Tobago, Proposal for Reform*. In their minds they had genuine proposals for reform, for the modernization of local government. It states:

"An integral part of the decentralization process is the restructuring of the system of subdivision of the territory of Local Government Boundaries and the adoption of a uniform system of regional definition to serve...

the planning, development and administrative

“needs of the several major agencies of Central and Local Government. It is necessary that each such region of the country be associated with a particular development focus...”

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I want to repeat that:

“It is necessary that each such region of the country be associated with a particular development focus...”

I continue:

“...suited to the characteristic of the physical area and the interest and outlook of the residents, if the process of development is itself to be decentralized and its benefits felt throughout the country.”

That was a vision. I go to section 4.2—

"This section accordingly presents the new system of regional stratification, the associated regional characteristics and a summary of the developmental priorities identified for each region to be implemented."

What they are saying is that we have seven and in that seven there are different focuses and functions. So, what are we trying to do? We would like to further subdivide and create regions so that certain areas would have a particular focus and can develop their particular characteristics. I wonder if the Member for Diego Martin found this.

3.20 p.m.

It goes on:

"The island of Trinidad is governed at the local level by four Municipal and seven County Councils, while the Tobago House of Assembly (THA) is responsible ... the island of Tobago."

It goes on to say that there are thirteen regions, each of which would be administered by an appropriate council under the provisions outlined.

They created these areas, Diego Martin, Laventille, San Juan, Piarco, Sangre Grande, Couva, Tabaquite/Talparo—Couva separate from Tabaquite/Talparo—Debe/Penal, Siparia and Princes Town. Tunapuna and Piarco and San Juan/Laventille were separated.

The way they tried to organize it was to say that Diego Martin would take certain communities as hubs. What they tried to do was to locate hubs of communities. Diego Martin/Carenage; Diego Martin/Maraval; Laventille/East Port of Spain, Laventille/Morvant; San Juan/Barataria/Mount Hope; Piarco/Arouca, Maturita/Blanchisseuse, San Rafael/Sangre Grande. Couva, Freeport, Claxton Bay and Marabella—I shall come to that in a minute—Rio Claro/Manzanilla, Biche and Rio Claro.

Under the heading "Regional Identity" on page 18 of this report it states—

"It is anticipated that, with the coming into being of the new uniform system of regional stratification in Trinidad, a greater sense of regional identity and regional cohesion will be experienced by citizens. In addition to regional planning and administration, sporting and cultural events may be promoted on a regional basis."

So there was a vision for the regions to work in consonance, or their activities would be dovetailed with certain ministries in Central Government.

Madam Speaker, I would now tell why certain regions were in the state in which they were. For example, it says Diego Martin...

"Consists of several suburban towns north..."

and as such—

"Administrative and cultural centers... are to be developed... in the Diego Martin Valley. Commercial activities are dispersed."

The one I would like to look at is the Couva region as distinct from Talparo. The reason they had Couva as a separate region is that Couva is a—

"dominant heavy industrial zone..."

The reason for creating a regional body in Couva is—remember it was said different focuses at different regional development so there can be general efficiency in the country—that it is the dominant industrial zone in Trinidad.

"This region contains the Pt. Lisas Industrial Park, the largest industrial zone in the country ... which is being further expanded at this time."

The nation's only cement factory and steel mill are also present, and manufacturers of construction materials abound. Lifestyles vary from that of the industrial residential community to that of the agricultural village. The town of Couva is to be developed in keeping with an Area Plan for the Couva/Pt Lisas area. Administration, recreational and service facilities are urgently needed and are to be developed to serve the needs of this fast-growing industrial region."

The reason they would not put Couva with Tabaquite and Talparo is that Talparo has a different vision and focus.

"TABAQUITE/TALPARO REGION—Central Range Agricultural zone of Trinidad. This region consists of numerous agricultural villages and small

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towns, with no clear centre of focus. The town of Tabaquite is to be developed as the administration centre, and internal transportation linkages are to be upgraded, with urgent attention being given to the main road linkages into and out of Tabaquite, and linking Tabaquite in the South to Talparo in the North."

The Member for Tabaquite has been crying and moaning in this House about those road conditions in his constituency.

"Emphasis will also be placed on water management, especially drainage and irrigation in the Caparo river system."

The Member for Caroni Central is still screaming about the river system in Caparo.

"The development of state-owned agricultural estates in Talparo, Caparo, and Tabaquite will be undertaken to give further impetus to agricultural expansion in this region."

The vision in the creation of 30 regions was with Couva being seen as an industrial residential area while Tabaquite/Talparo was seen as an agricultural area. Suddenly—and I do not agree with them—they had a vision. When the present Government came into power they amended the law and did not only create the *faux pas* by [Interruption] What did I hear Dole Chadee say? Or, Dole Chadee's acquaintance? [Interruption] Another car to sell.

Mr. Manning: Ask Sudama.

Mr. S. Panday: Madam Speaker, when the amendment came to this House, the Member for Siparia said they merely said it was unmanageable and they decided to merge. I do not know what criteria they used. They merged Tabaquite/Talparo with Couva, an industrial area with a different focus, and merely put them together for convenience. "Ad hocism!"

When we speak about local government, we speak about local government reform. What this Government has done today is merely come to this House to adopt a report which is onerous on the local government bodies and which perpetuates inequality in local government. They are asking this House to adopt this report without any sort of serious arguments.

In addition to what the Member for Siparia said, this report should not be accepted. We warn the Government today that if this report is accepted we are going to Diego Martin, Laventille and Tunapuna/Piarco to inform the councillors what the Government is going to do with them.

I am certain that having given some light to the Member for Diego Martin East, wisdom, common sense and good judgment would prevail and he would withdraw this report or keep it in abeyance. We should really go back to the initial stages of the Elections and Boundaries Commission (Local Government) Act, Chap. 25:50 and try to amend this legislation. We on this side of the House are saying that we are willing to assist, because we know that the Government has no common sense, no vision. We are willing to work out a formula and give it to the Government, so there would be equality and equity in local government.

Until then, I humbly submit that this *[Interruption]* The same thing the Member said about Mohess Road Hindu School. *[Interruption]* The Member cannot disturb me; he is not intelligent enough to do that.

We are saying that this is merely perpetuating inequality. It would be creating problems and this report cannot be recommended or endorsed. What we must do is to give directions to the Elections and Boundaries Commission. We must amend the law and then give them. *[Interruption]* No way, but we are doing our duty.

Mr. Manning: Did your leader approve that statement?

3.30 p.m.

Mr. S. Panday: We say, amend the legislation. We do not want to interfere with the workings of the Elections and Boundaries Commission. It seems the Member for San Fernando East does not read; he has not read the report. He apparently is too busy to read and I find it very wrong for him to jump into a debate he knows nothing about. If he had read the first page of the recommendations of the report he would have seen where it says:

"The Hon. Colm Imbert,
Minister of Works and Transport
and Local Government,
Salvatori Building,
Frederick Street,
Port of Spain.

The Second Report as titled above is submitted in compliance with section 4 of the Elections and Boundaries Commission (Local Government) Act Chap. 25:50..."

They are working in accordance with the Act. We are saying amend the Act, and by merely amending the Act the Elections and Boundaries Commission would

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then report in accordance with proper legislation. It seems to me the Member for San Fernando East—I do not know if what is happening with the Minister of National Security and the Member for Diego Martin East is making him thin-skinned—at every statement he jumps—prison or no prison!

The Elections and Boundaries Commission has been given very little discretion under this Act. What it has been doing, as the Member for Siparia said, is merely acting in accordance with the Act. As a Parliament, we are saying we have a duty to amend the law to ensure that there is proper government.

In those circumstances I suggest that this report be not accepted.

Miss Hulsie Bhaggan (*Chaguanas*): Madam Speaker, we can stand here all afternoon and discuss this report before us, yet, if we do not look at the fundamental question of the local government system, we would have wasted our time.

Both the Member for Siparia and the Member for Naparima have made some very valid points on the report. I want to suggest to this honourable House, however, that the state of local government reflects the state of ones' democracy. If we look at the state of local government today we would realize that that particular system is in a sorry state.

Our democracy, therefore, is in deep trouble. It is the only system which really brings people close to the system of government, as far as I am concerned. It is a system which allows smaller groups of people to interact with members who are able to look after their welfare. If one analyses the system today, one would realize that it is in a state of serious collapse and crisis.

This Government has gone on record from time to time speaking about a global city; about a vision of a world economy, a world which is now moving in a more sophisticated direction—yet there are parts of this country which are so underdeveloped that I am wondering whether this Government is really serious about what is happening.

For instance, when the Member spoke about the number of people who are to be serviced under these various municipal corporations and that these numbers were too large, in effect, he was saying that because of the state of underdevelopment of these various communities, the citizens who live there would not be able to get the kind of service that they deserve as taxpayers of this country.

I am very unhappy, therefore, about the state of affairs of the local government system. I am also unhappy with the approach of this Government,

that after three years it can only present a report without the Minister giving some kind of vision and direction as to what this Government stands for with respect to local government.

I have had, almost on a daily basis, to interact with that system. I am sure that many Members of Parliament in this House especially on this side, can say that they are merely glorified councillors. They are not really Members of Parliament because many of the problems which are being addressed today cannot be addressed under the present system. However, as Members of Parliament we have to try to get some kind of resolution of these problems.

One of the problems with respect to these particular divisions and boundaries, is that sometimes, as Members of Parliament representing a constituency, we have to relate to three and four regional or municipal corporations. To give an example. For the constituency of Chaguanas I have to be able to relate to and liaise with the San Juan/Laventille Corporation, the Tunapuna Regional Corporation and also with the borough of Chaguanas. That is too cumbersome for any individual to be able to relate to the system. It means one has to be able to relate to councillors from different regions who are faced with different problems. Therefore I am saying there must be some kind of consultation with respect to how this system works.

I am also saying that with respect to the laws which govern the particular formulation of this report, we also have to rethink them because many of the laws on our books do not reflect the kind of changes that we want in the governance of this country.

I am particularly concerned about the policies of the PNM Government that have led to underdeveloped and uneven development of this country, and there seems to be a lack of sensitivity with respect to the way people are being serviced. I want to give a simple example. It relates to the number of people who are being expected to be serviced under these various divisions, and recommendations in this report.

With the merger of several of these corporations, we have found that the level of equipment available is insufficient for the functions to be carried out. For instance, about one week ago I visited the Tunapuna Corporation and I was told that about nine constituencies were being serviced by that particular corporation, which had only one piece of machinery to cut playgrounds. That piece of machinery was in storage because it was under repair. Secondly, I was told there was only one truck. How could the Government, therefore, speak about

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boundaries and this kind of arrangement without, at the same time, giving some idea as to how it intends to allocate resources to make the system work?

We are not here in just a simple academic exercise. We are here to make legislation and to make provisions work in the interest of the people. This is why I made the point that our democracy is in danger from the point of view that the people are far removed from the system which is available to them. Local government, therefore, is extremely important; it gives the people the feeling that they belong to this country and that they have rights to the services of this country.

We are speaking, for instance, of increasing rates in the various corporations, yet the services are not available. People do not receive value for the money they are paying, neither do they receive value for the taxes they are paying. There is a lack of co-ordination between all the agencies.

For instance, at present there is a situation that we speak about all the time but we do not do anything about it, and the Government has a responsibility to do something about it. That is, where roads are being paved continually and are being dug up by the Water and Sewerage Authority, yet, within these corporations there are supposed to be what are called agency meetings. There is a situation where the ministries participate, but there is no sense of responsibility towards local government.

There is also the situation with T&TEC. I have been told that within recent times T&TEC has refused to install or to repair lights because the Government owes them \$32 million. Therefore, there are people today who are faced with serious problems—they are being held up, robbed and beaten—simply because T&TEC says the Government owes them; therefore it cannot fix or install any new lights.

Those are some of the real problems the people are faced with. We may stand here and talk in sophisticated terms about the laws and regulations, but the local government system is not really working.

As Members of Parliament we have to raise these small matters because they relate to the system, but somehow they are not being addressed. There is also a situation where a basic thing like the naming of streets is not being done. There is a situation, as the Member for Naparima pointed out, where each area has its own special needs, so the developmental policies ought to have been geared to those needs.

Agricultural access roads ought to have been a part of that programme of the local government bodies also, at least, the co-ordination of the development of these roads. The drainage system. All these are matters which affect the people.

Health. Health is part of the responsibility of the Government of this country but the local government system has a link with that. We are speaking about a threat of dengue or malaria, yet we do not have the medicines and chemicals to deal with a simple problem of mosquitoes.

3.40 p.m.

There are communities today where people have to live indoors from 6.00 p.m. They cannot come out from their homes. There are children who are suffering from skin diseases. If you check the doctors now they would tell you that more and more people are coming to them with all kinds of flus, viruses and fever. They are all related to the state of the physical environment, most of which has to do with the local government system.

The question of dumping is an issue. We have just passed the Environmental Management Bill in this House, yet dumping is not being addressed in the manner it ought to be addressed and the local government system is not geared to handle that problem. I can go on and on about the whole question of local government. I do not intend to repeat the points raised before. All I can say is that as Members of Parliament, especially on this side, we are like glorified councillors. We come and say that we are supposed to deal with national matters, but we end up in our functions on a daily basis dealing with matters for which councillors should be responsible.

At present the system is not attracting the right calibre of local government officers simply because there is no dignity in the office. There is a lot of abuse, as the Member mentioned before, and those members do not have the resources and the facilities to carry out their functions. I know of local government councillors who are actually afraid to revisit their areas because of the abuse of the citizens. The citizens are taking out their frustration and anger on the little person who is before them, as opposed to taking it out on this Government that sits there; makes jokes and laughs and does not really look at the system of local government.

For instance, the Government has just merged Works and Local Government. I suspect the intention was for better co-ordination, but that ends up being a super ministry which is not delivering the kind of services, in the manner you would expect in Trinidad and Tobago.

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Therefore, how can we speak about a globalized economy? How can we speak about developing our country to compete with a world which is fast moving? There are people in this country who do not have water in their taps; no electricity; roads in a total state of disrepair, and their children cannot go to school because there is no public transportation. As far as the delivery of services to the citizens of this country is concerned, the system has collapsed. It is in a state of crisis. I believe if we stay in this House and sit down, we are just going to pretend that everything is fine, but it is not so.

I am therefore calling on this Government to go back out there and listen to the voices of the people. That is the first thing. Secondly, when the Members on this side speak, we are not doing so because we want to be mean to the hon. Members on the other side. All we are saying is that many of the areas which we represent are underdeveloped. We all know that much of it has to do with political patronage, because the local government system which has to do with the allocation of resources, has always been skewed in the direction of the ruling party. Whether we like it or not, that is the way the system has been.

I am saying that for democracy in this country to be real and meaningful to the people, there must be equity in the system. At present many parts of the country are in a state of total underdevelopment. I would not even say undeveloped. There is a place called Rabine Sable in this country. You would believe that it is somewhere in Pakistan, Bangladesh or Africa because of the state of underdevelopment in that community. Many of our constituencies, especially those in central, south and east, are in a total state of neglect. I am therefore calling on this Government to stop playing politics with the local government system and deliver the moneys that belong to the people of this country, in a way that there would be equity in the treatment.

I am also saying, let us once more restore dignity to the local government system. There is no point in speaking about figures and all the things which happened in the past. I am saying that this system was designed to make sure that the quality of life of our people would improve, and would be at a level where people would feel comfortable, feel that they belong to this country. The way it has been, there are some communities that are more developed than others. It has led to a situation now where certain communities are pitted against others. For some political parties, that may serve their purpose.

I am saying that is part of the old political culture. We have to introduce now a new kind of politics in this country where people must come first and the local government system depoliticized. There cannot be a situation where, because a

particular corporation might be controlled by the ruling party, it should be given resources which are far in excess of those given to another corporation. There is a situation with the Unemployment Relief Programme where the projects are not being distributed in a way which is a function of unemployment, and also under-development of the various communities.

I do not intend to go very long. My final point is that the local government system must be reformed to ensure there is a management approach towards the allocation of resources, and the enforcement of the various rules and regulations and carrying out of programmes. There must be accountability; proper training for people who are foremen and those at the level of middle management—if you want to call it that—in the public service. There must not be a situation where people go and sit on jobs; there is no kind of co-ordination with respect to the delivery of materials, the unavailability of equipment.

New skills must be introduced even if it means having to retrain workers. I am not suggesting here that we go and take on private persons on a contract basis. I am saying that this Government has a responsibility to reform the system, to use a more managerial approach; to ensure there is more accountability so that the money of the taxpayers in this country would be properly spent, so that value could be received by the taxpayers.

Thank you.

Mr. Raymond Palackdharrysingh (*Caroni Central*): Madam Speaker, it is extremely immoral on the part of the Government to come this afternoon and ask this Parliament to adopt this report. What is important in local government? Is it adopting a report because the Elections and Boundaries Commission had a duty to perform, and performed it within the statutory period; or is it not of greater importance for the Government to live up to its obligations, and ensure that local government was structured in such a way as to make it functional and effective in producing the goods and services required for the citizens of this country?

This afternoon, the Government chose to hide behind this report. One recalls very well that the last time the Member for Diego Martin Central spoke about putting structures into local government, he gave an undertaking that certain things would be done, but, today, we have a report that goes behind the legalistic approach of the Elections and Boundaries Commission. What it says is that the Government is prepared to use the Elections and Boundaries Commission as a shield for its lack of political will, to do what is required in strengthening local government in this country. As a matter of fact, local government has grown

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weaker under this PNM administration because they have absolutely no commitment whatsoever to it.

3.50 p.m.

Today, when one looks at how readily gullible they are to accept what the EBC has done because they did not have a choice, it shows that the PNM are not committed to improving local government. So, if they have gone behind what is called the legality of the provisions, the spirit of enhancing local government has not been there and it clearly states to the nation at large that the PNM lacks the political will to do anything to improve the common lot of our citizens.

This communication to the hon. Minister Colm Imbert says:

“The Second Report as titled above is submitted in compliance with section 4 of the Elections and Boundaries Commission (Local Government) Act, Chap. 25:50 ... the relevant provisions of which state as follows:

- 4.(1) The Commission shall define and review the boundaries of the electoral districts into which an electoral area is, or is to be, divided and shall submit to the Minister reports either -
- (a) showing the constituencies into which it recommends that an electoral area should be divided in order to give effect to the Rules set out in the Second Schedule, or
 - (b) stating that, in the opinion of the Commission, no alteration is required to the existing number of boundaries of electoral districts in order to give effect to the said Rules.”

This communication continues.

“Reports under subsection (i) shall be submitted to the Commission:

- (a) in case of its first report after the commencement of this Act not later than six months after the date of commencement; and
- (b) in the case of any subsequent report, not less than two nor more than three years from the date of submission of the last report.”

Again, it states that:

- “(a) all electoral areas are fixed by law that is to say by section 3 of the Boundaries Act (as amended). As to electoral districts see subparagraph (d);”

That says:

“(d) while the number of electoral districts into which the cities and boroughs are divided is also fixed by law, the number of electoral districts into which the Regional Corporations are to be divided is not so fixed. This latter number is determined according to the formula set out in Rule 2 of the Second Schedule to the Boundaries Act as amended by the Municipal Corporations Act, 1990;”

In this respect, the submissions made by my colleague, the Member for Naparima, are extremely pertinent because Members opposite are prepared to hide behind this piece of legislation that has become obsolete and has to be reviewed. If this had been reviewed before, the Elections and Boundaries Commission would not have been placed in the position where it had to submit a report like this.

This must be understood, because one will see, from a comparison with its last report, from 1991 to the present, there were certain developments which do not seem to work in enhancing local government. Even though the number of electoral districts was not changed in the cities and the boroughs, there has been a slight growth of electors in the electoral districts, boroughs and municipalities.

When one looks at the average in 1991, one sees that in the boroughs and in the cities there will be 3,569 approximately and in that three-year period there was only a slight increase to 3,796. When one looks at the numbers in the municipal and regional corporations, one sees that there was a more than proportionate increase, that is to say, whereas in 1991 one could have looked at an average of 5,346 in an electoral district, in 1995 this report presented in 1994 showed an average of 6,428, that is to say, more than 1,000 electors on the average in an electoral district in the regional corporations.

That is significant. It has implications for servicing the citizens. That would mean that when there are more electors, there must be the accessing of funding for running the corporations; there must be in a sense, greater commitment by those who carry the office and as a consequence their own efforts must be looked at in terms of giving some incentives to people who are involved and also, when the geographical size of the regional corporations has been increased, apart from the increase per head in each electoral district, there is also an increase in the infrastructural facilities required.

Madam Speaker, is it not troubling to you to recognize, today, that in many instances local government representatives would be called upon to represent, in

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some instances, over 9,000 persons and in others up to 10,000? That is a significant point to note, but there is no concern about this coming from the other side.

What therefore were some of the considerations in bringing into being the regional and municipal corporations? Of course, one would have had the experience of working with and serving the various local government bodies under the county council system that functioned for years, and though not a perfect system, was able over the decades to institutionalize itself in a certain pattern.

Today one can safely say, by comparing what happened to local government under the county councils with what happened to local government under the present system, that much more happened under the former system. Why can the present system not get into the development and maintenance of public roads and watercourses assigned to them? Is this Government saying that it is satisfied with this performance? Even in the present Act, so many portions of it have not been proclaimed to make it effective.

4.00 p.m.

Today the Members opposite are coming here for us to accept a report that would merely perpetuate the same sort of inefficiencies of local government, rather than coming here to us first and saying: "These are the mechanisms that we have for local government to work, therefore, we are now proposing what the Elections and Boundaries Commission has recommended." But that has not been their approach. For the first time changing the law is so burdensome; for the first time it looks as if they need the support of the Opposition to change the laws.

Mr. Valley: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. That point has been made before and I think we need to put the debate on track.

I want to refer Members to the relevant legislation, the Elections and Boundaries Commission (Local Government) Act, Chap. 25:50. In bringing this Order here, the Minister is simply complying with the law. As a fact, there were two committees working with respect to the Municipal Corporations Act looking at amendments; there is another looking at the boundaries.

However, the Elections and Boundaries Commission has a responsibility to report to the Parliament within a certain time frame. The commission has in fact reported and under the Act the Minister has a certain responsibility to bring to the Parliament as soon as possible thereafter, the report of the Elections and Boundaries Commission. That is what has happened.

The amendment of the law is continuing and when that is completed, the Government will come to the Parliament with any changes that it deems appropriate. As far as this is concerned, an independent Elections and Boundaries Commission has filed a report and the Minister is simply complying with the requirements of the Act.

Mr. R. Palackdharrysingh: Madam Speaker, I am sorry I gave way. I really thought that the Minister had a point to make. What he is really doing is trying to justify the Government's lack of commitment to expediting the changes for local government. The Minister cannot behave as if the UNC is in Government, they are in Government. Why do they not give us a time frame? Do you know what would happen, Madam Speaker? Next three years we would have another report like this coming here and not a single piece of legislation to change local government. *[Interruption]*

Mr. B. Panday: The importance is the pending local government elections.

Mr. R. Palackdharrysingh: That is right. Do you see what has been happening, Madam Speaker? While all these committees are working, recommendations are here to reduce the number of electoral districts in certain regional corporations and yet—

Mr. Valley: Madam Speaker, that recommendation is made by an independent commission, the Elections and Boundaries Commission, and all the Minister is doing is bringing that report, without any modifications, for the approval of the Parliament.

Mr. R. Palackdharrysingh: Madam Speaker, I have not denied that. What I am saying is that this Parliament is a higher authority than the Elections and Boundaries Commission and, therefore, this Parliament has to set its priorities. This has to be a point to be reckoned with.

Mr. Manning: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. Member for Caroni Central for giving way.

Is it that the Member for Caroni Central is now suggesting that we do not accept the report of the Elections and Boundaries Commission, but rather, we use our parliamentary authority to interfere with what has been done? *[Interruption]* I should like the hon. Member to be very clear. Is it that he is saying that we should now use our parliamentary authority to amend the report of the Elections and Boundaries Commission before acceptance? *[Interruption]*

Mr. R. Palackdharrysingh: Madam Speaker, I am amazed that that Member is the Prime Minister of this country, really. I am telling you that, Madam

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Speaker, because up to now I have not said anything uncomplimentary about the Elections and Boundaries Commission. What I have said is that the Government lacks the political will to set the priorities right in this country. As a matter of fact, the population might very well applaud the commission for doing its work, unlike the PNM Government that is not prepared to do its work.

Mr. Manning: How uncharitable.

Mr. R. Palackdharrysingh: That is what it is, so do not get up all the time and try to indicate that the UNC has been saying that. *[Interruption]* Therefore, for us to merely come here and rubber-stamp the Elections and Boundaries Commission Report without pointing out to the Government what it should do, is for us to fail in our obligations.

I did not want to come to this point of my contribution as yet, but seeing that the hon. Member for San Fernando East has stood and waved his arms in the air and pushed out his chest, I think I should now get to this point.

Mr. Sudama: Could you do that again, I did not see your chest?
[Interruption]

Mr. Manning: You would not recognize—

Mr. R. Palackdharrysingh: I want to refer to a report of the Cabinet-appointed Supervisory Committee on Local Government dated April 9, 1992. In so doing, because of the Prime Minister's intervention, I must now make extensive reference to this report. On page 23 of this report it states:

"The subdivisions of the remainder of Trinidad into townships is intended to reflect the major regional identities existing at this time, in such a way that each township is defined around a centre of influence such as a commercial or industrial town or an area identified for extensive development. Special effort has been made to subdivide the island in keeping with the manner in which citizens live and to relate at the community level.

The stated rationale for the boundaries of new corporations was not borne out in the actual boundaries. The various agencies indicated the boundaries they used for their purposes, the problems they faced with the new boundaries and their recommendations.

The Central Statistical Office (C.S.O.) advised that their data was based on the former Counties, Wards and Enumeration Districts (E.D's). The C.S.O. pointed out that many of their E.D's were split by the new Corporation boundaries. As a result, they could not now easily supply data by new

regions. Amending the E.D's would be a difficult task and if this were to be done, the historical sequence of information would be lost. The C.S.O. representatives recommended that any boundaries be on the basis of the former counties and wards.

The Valuation Division representative indicated that his Agency utilised a system based on the former counties and wards, namely planning regions, settlement areas and enclosures. Valuation work was not likely to be affected by the new local government boundaries. There would, however, be a serious difficulty to administer their functions in accordance with the new regions."

4.10 p.m.

"The Lands and Surveys Division representative reiterated the legal requirement for survey plans to be related to the former County, Ward, City or Borough. He identified the need for a change in the legislation relating to surveying to reflect the new boundaries. He also felt that in any exercise of definitions of boundaries, natural boundaries were the most suitable since they facilitated definition and survey. He made a strong recommendation that the exercise of determining boundaries be approached from an information management point of view.

The Ministry of Health representative advised that the unit areas operated by his Agency were Sanitary Districts which coincided with the former counties. In order to conform with the boundaries of the new corporations, the Sanitary Districts needed to be redefined and the Public Health Ordinance required amendment. In addition, he pointed to the need to take a closer look at the location of health services in relation to the new Regions. He recommended that any boundaries should conform to the outline of the former counties.

The Town and Country Planning Division indicated that their system of planning regions and settlement areas which were similar to those used by the Valuations Division was based largely on the former Counties and Wards. The administration of the Division's work in the consideration of applications for planning permission was carried out on the basis of Planning Regions.

The Elections and Boundaries Commission had based its recent comprehensive data collection exercise on the new corporation boundaries. The exercise had taken (9) nine months and two million dollars. The Elections and Boundaries representatives was of the view that if Local Government Elections were to be held in April, June or July, 1992 then the

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new corporation boundaries would have to be used since the time frame would be too short to provide the information according to any other boundaries. She indicated that the information based on the old counties/municipalities boundaries no longer existed. If the old boundaries were to be used, the database would have to be changed and this would require extensive field work.

It was the consensus of the Sub-committee that the time frame for the exercise did not permit a comprehensive study to formulate rational recommendations for the re-definition of local government boundaries. With respect to the boundaries of the former municipalities and the new Borough of Chaguanas, it was agreed that for the present, no changes were required for the Point Fortin Borough, no changes should be made to Arima until fairly detailed studies were undertaken. The changes made to Port-of-Spain in the Act were acceptable and while no changes were required to the boundaries of San Fernando, consideration may be given to extend the eastern boundary to coincide with the alignment of the proposed extension of the Solomon Hochoy Highway. "

This report continues by saying;

"The Committee having considered the views and recommendations of the Boundaries Sub-Committee recommended as follows:

- (1) That a comprehensive study be carried out to formulate recommendations for the re-definition of local government boundaries;
- (2) That until such time as the recommended detailed study is carried out as defined in (1) above, the existing local government boundaries be maintained as detailed in Act No. 21 of 1990:
- (3) That the comprehensive study to redefine local government boundaries should include the concept of developing a land information system/ geographical information system (LIS/GIS) which would benefit public agencies and private bodies;
- (4) That the study should include an analysis of urban centres, their services and facilities..."

Madam Speaker: Could the Member indicate how that report is relevant to what we are doing here, today?

Mr. R. Palackdharrysingh: Madam Speaker, I indicated today that this is a report of the Cabinet-appointed Supervisory Committee on Local Government.

What is being said here is very pertinent because this report was presented to the Government since 1992 and they seem not to have acted on anything suggested.

Madam Speaker: We are dealing with the Elections and Boundaries Commission Order today.

Mr. R. Palackdharrysingh: Yes, Madam Speaker, but they are asking me to vote on something that would have far-reaching consequences, without examining what attempts ought to have been made to redefine local government. When I vote on recommendations for boundaries there are implications for every other thing pertaining to local government. That cannot be disputed, Madam Speaker; that is the situation today.

Let the Government know that merely because it might want to have local government elections soon, and not even acting on promises made in this House, or even acting on the recommendations made by several other bodies, and coming here merely to cut boundaries for us to say yes, is totally unacceptable in my view.

You see, it is those people outside there who are suffering daily because of the inefficiencies, and it is my contention, as well as the UNC's, that things ought to be given a priority rating and several things ought to have been done to improve local government before trying to rush this, because whatever happens the population will suffer when local government bodies are not put on the basis of proper functioning. That is my contention.

You see, they have not had access to reports such as these, and that is why it is important. In the beginning I made the point that it seemed that the local government bodies performed much better under the old county council systems because they did not have to contend with some of the disrupting factors that have been pointed out. Therefore, if we are to continue—with no blame to the Elections and Boundaries Commission—if we uncritically accept the recommendations of the Elections and Boundaries Commission as law, whatever they do, we would also be participating in fostering the underdevelopment of local government in Trinidad and Tobago.

4.20 p.m.

Madam Speaker, that is why this information is important, and I have to make the rest of the point made by the study. This was a study that was carried on for and on behalf of local government, and we cannot escape its recommendations. The report also recommended on page 26:

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"A multi-disciplinary team be appointed comprised of professionals in relevant fields including local government, planning, valuations, demography, economics, sociology, the earth sciences, law, public finance and management."

When no cognizance is taken of that, the Member for Diego Martin Central, especially, can come here and make a recommendation to lump Couva with Tabaquite/Talparo regardless of the consequences to follow.

Mr. Valley: Madam Speaker, on the question of relevance. The Member is arguing the 1992 debate all over. We are here with respect to the 1994 Report of the Elections and Boundaries Commission. That is the simple thing we are here for: the approval of that report.

Madam Speaker: If the Member wants to have those recommendations re-discussed, there is a way of bringing them before the House for debate; stating that they were not complied with, no attention was paid to them. We are trying to get the draft of the Elections and Boundaries Commission (Local Government) Order approved in accordance with statute.

Mr. B. Panday: Madam Speaker, the Motion reads:

"Whereas it is provided by subsection (3) of section 4 ...the Minister ... shall lay before the House of Representatives for its approval the draft of an Order by the President for giving effect, whether with or without modifications to the recommendations contained in the report."

So that the Member has the right to put forward any kind of suggestions with respect to recommendations for modifications.

Mr. Valley: Recommendations for modifications of the report; not to rehash the 1992 debate.

Mr. R. Palackdharrysingh: Madam Speaker, I just remembered a little anecdote which says that two neighbours from two houses opposite were quarrelling and the parson man who passed said, "I cannot reconcile it because they seem to be quarrelling from different premises." It seems as though we have some different views on this matter.

It is my contention that if this is passed it would affect what happens in local government outside there, and I am not going to back off at all on that argument. The Government has lost touch with the common man, and that is why. They care nothing. When there is a country with 40 per cent of the people living below the poverty line, what does the Government care? When the Prime Minister

refuses to attend the international conference, what does he care? Nothing, whatsoever! That is the state of affairs today. It will be like hell rolling from now on, I am not making any jokes with them.

Hon. Member: Former Reverend.

Mr. S. Panday: Take that! Put that in your pipes and smoke it.

Mr. R. Palackdharrysingh: Madam Speaker, when I tell people to sing hallelujah and praise God, I know what I am speaking about. It would take nobody who merely studied rocks and soils to advise me on that.

Mr. Sudama: Did he resign from the church or was he thrown out?

Mr. R. Palackdharrysingh: Madam Speaker, there is one little section on page 27 which I must mention here. It says:

"That in light of the urgent need to restore representation of the people and the need for a detailed study of the boundaries, the undermentioned regions, cities and boroughs be considered for the holding of early Local Government Elections pending the detailed study of the boundaries."

My contention is the same sentiment as that. Is the Government prepared—as they are saying on that side—to bring that sort of study and lay it in this Parliament? He said that they are doing that sort of study. This report was finalized since April 1992. Is he aware of this report?

Mr. Valley: Madam Speaker, as Minister of Local Government at the time, I commissioned that report. I am well aware of that report. The recommendations were implemented. As I said, there were two committees; one looking at the laws and the other looking at the boundaries. The report spoke about a comprehensive review of the boundaries; and that will not take two days, that work is continuing.

Mr. R. Palackdharrysingh: Tell us how long it would take. It is a nice formula to say that it will not take two days, but if there is no commitment this thing would go on in perpetuity.

Hon. Member: Oh no!

Mr. R. Palackdharrysingh: Madam Speaker, that has been their track record.

Mr. Valley: Madam Speaker, may I inform the hon. Member that this Government is more eager than he to have that work completed to make the adjustment in the local government system which we are committed to in our

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manifesto. They did not mention anything about local government in their manifesto of 1991.

Mr. R. Palackdharrysingh: Madam Speaker, for the Member to make spurious allegations like that is merely to display a certain measure of ignorance in this House. Is he saying that we do not care about local government? As a matter of fact, it is the Government that has prevented the integration of local communities into the local government system because it has not recognized the village or community organizations. It has not given them any type of status but merely used them for political purposes.

Madam Speaker: Would the Member revert to the debate, please?

Mr. R. Palackdharrysingh: Madam Speaker, I am totally disappointed that the Government has not made any prior attempt to strengthen some of the weaknesses of local government, which are so apparent throughout the length and breadth of this country. To indicate to me that just because this is a report submitted by the Elections and Boundaries Commission this is what we should stick to, suggests that the Government believes that we on this side have no intelligence.

Hon. Member: Oh no!

Mr. R. Palackdharrysingh: That is what it is. Why did the Government not consider the suggestion made to it by my colleagues on this side? That suggestion was to review some of the more critical issues in local government and have some consensus on it and hold this report in abeyance until such time and, of course, when that happened we would be more pre-disposed to doing these things.

Why should I come here knowing that in the areas which I represent there is such a large regional corporation and not find out why I should accept the recommendation of the Elections and Boundaries Commission, particularly when it suggests a reduction in the number of electoral districts from 15 to 11? Why should I accept it without a critical contemplation of this report? Why should I not look at the ramifications and implications of such a move? That has to be dealt with. If I do not deal with it, how could I tell my constituents and other people that I have put forward their views in the Parliament? This is critical to them.

The reduction of seats in an area such as central Trinidad means that in the new arrangement a councillor would have to service an electoral district of 9,000 to 10,000 persons, which would be very difficult. To us on this side this is very

pertinent because after that would come the functioning and sustenance of regional corporations and electoral districts. When that time comes, do you know what would be the problems, Madam Speaker?

4.30 p.m.

There would be complaints of not enough money to pay workers; or provide electrical lamps; or clean recreation grounds; or provide cesspool empiters and the whole works. That is clear, so before we have any further debate in future, we should try to get a report that recommends making Trinidad and Tobago simply one municipal corporation—end of story!

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.

4.31 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.05 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Mr. R. Palackdharrysingh: Madam Speaker, basically I have been arguing, why should I support a report of the Elections and Boundaries Commission? Not that it is any fault of the Elections and Boundaries Commission, but because of the consequences that can flow from this report. Why should I contemplate supporting a report that does not improve upon the present position of local government?

There has been no explanation whatsoever indicating why the number of electoral districts in the Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo region should be decreased from 15 to 11. If anyone is to say that something was wrong in the mathematics or the formula—is it to say that for the past three years that corporation existed in a manner that did not comply with the requirements?

You see, if innovations are pending or imminent, then why can I not be the beneficiary of those recommendations? And when I say, "I", I mean my constituents and indeed the nation of Trinidad and Tobago. We must recognize that while there is a time period stipulated for local government elections, there have been several occasions when those elections have been postponed beyond the three-year period. That also has to be taken into consideration.

But the point is, it would be tremendous folly to support a report that makes the present position worse. One only has to go through the communities today,

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particularly the rural communities, to understand the trauma of daily existence, because the way local government currently operates does not respond to the needs of people. Therefore, if these recommendations are likely to exacerbate that situation, why should we support them?

We have made it abundantly clear that we are not questioning, and will not question, the EBC. They have done what they ought to do. It is the Government that has not responded by putting mechanisms in place to make local government effective. As a matter of fact, it has done so many things to undermine local government that I fear that it is now pursuing a process to make local government redundant, and it is being done step by step, very surreptitiously.

That is what has been happening. If the laws that govern the functioning of the Elections and Boundaries Commission constrain them to a particular line of action, is it not incumbent upon this Parliament to have those laws changed so as to make them pertinent, relevant and meaningful? It is only when we have shown that commitment that we would be able to indicate to this nation that we care about a system of government that mitigates the daily problems of the vast majority of our citizens. If we cannot do it by prioritizing those things that are more fundamental to meeting the needs of the people whom we serve, then we are merely pulling an enormous hoax on the population once more.

I should like to see the boundaries structured in such a way as to make sense; so that they can be manageable, serviceable and, of course, respond to the needs of the communities. Local government is still a department here of central government: a very peculiar arrangement. Councillors are responsible to the electorate, but yet what happens in local government depends upon the good graces of the Minister of Local Government. As often as he has any temper tantrums, local government is going to suffer.

It is clear to me, and to us, that of higher priority today, than approving this local government report, are mechanisms for the provision of all the basic services and for accountability and for improving systems, so as to have the maintenance of state property, the enhancement of the physical environment, community help, community service and regional participation in environmental protection and so on. All those things are critical.

Today we see that this Government cares nothing but to further hide behind some archaic law that seems to coincide with its own political agenda and to bring it here and ask us to support it.

5.15 p.m.

This is an issue, I am sure, that will not end in this Parliament today. I am sure that this matter is going to be in constant dialogue with the people in terms of letting them know how manipulative and wicked this Government is, especially as it seeks to destroy the functioning of local government and to promote other agencies that can be manipulated to suit their political whims and fancies.

I find it extremely difficult, as my colleagues do, to lend support to this Motion for the adoption of this report, because all that can result from this is further chaos and confusion in local government that would redound to our eventual negation in terms of self-development.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Mohammed Haniff (*Princes Town*): Madam Speaker, I join this debate because I am concerned about the system of local government in our country. The report before us, in my view, should not be taken just as a report, but one which must be looked at in the context of what is and is not happening in local government.

In this country we have a system of local government that has survived for long and in recent times, rather than improving the system, what we have found is that the system has been degenerating as a result of a Government that does not care one bit about what happens in local government, or whether or not there is a system.

I am not surprised that the Government came here today asking us to adopt this report. The laws of this country should have been changed so that at this point the report would have been accommodating what is out there.

On the last occasion when we discussed such a report it was done together with the local government system. The then Minister of Local Government indicated to this House—I do not have the exact words before me—that we should try the system as was being presented, together with the boundaries proposed and very soon they would have held consultations and looked at the situation with a view to improving it and bringing about a system of cutting the boundaries and even improving the system of local government, so that it would satisfy the needs of the population at large; and attempts would have been made in that context.

So much has been said about the inequality and inequity of the distribution of polling stations, electoral districts and so forth, but there is need to emphasize, that there is disparity as well as inequality. It is amazing—and we have heard no

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reason why the Government is prepared to allow such a situation to continue to exist. Whereas in the cities, approximately 3,000 electors fall within an electoral district, in other parts of the country, in this day an age, the Government is recommending 10,000-plus electors in an electoral district.

I cannot understand—and I hope someone on the Government side would tell me—why it wishes to continue with this system, rather than seeking to amend the laws in such a way that we can rectify that situation. If, on the other hand, the Government does not care about local government and there is no policy, then by all means what is happening would continue to get rid of the system, as has been happening since the coming into office of the present Government.

And that is not strange. Not only local government is getting blows at this time; all the different aspects of Government's operations—and we are seeing it reflected in its policies of sellout, decentralization and so forth.

Madam Speaker: Can the Member stick to the debate that is before us! I understand you would want to make some comments on the boundaries and so forth, but try to confine yourself to the debate in hand. Once you can link this up with what you are saying that would be fine.

Mr. M. Haniff: Madam Speaker, on this report before us the Members opposite did not expect that four, five or six Members would have spoken; they thought it would have been an easy thing and we would have agreed to it as it is.

Mr. Valley: Madam Speaker, what we did not expect was that all of them would have been saying the same thing over and over and over. *[Laughter]*

Mr. M. Haniff: Madam Speaker, I am of the view that this is so relevant to what is happening in local government today, as far as the Government is concerned. What about the implementation of the laws in accordance with local government? How about that? Does it not relate to what is happening today with the report?

The fact that certain local government bodies cannot service their areas has to do with the irregularities that we have pointed out; the inefficiencies and very large areas of inequity and inequality in distribution of the funding that is given to these areas which affects the equipment and manpower etc.

In Act 21 of 1990 functions have been allocated for the system of local government. If steps are not taken to implement those functions, what can we expect? We do not know whether the Government is interested in keeping and

strengthening a system of local government or merely coming here to lay a report, give all sorts of sweet talk about the suffering of our people as far as the services are concerned, expecting us to come here and say "Okay, we agree with the report as it is presented."

The point has been made. We recognize that the Elections and Boundaries Commission has no choice in the present situation. To repeat what we are saying is to emphasize the point that there is too much inequity in the system and there is need to change the laws to adjust that.

If one looks at the first point under the functions of local government—the first point is the distribution of truck borne water subject to the provisions of the Water and Sewerage Authority Act. Is that relevant to what is happening today? If we look at the Regional Corporation of Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo, for example, we would see that the distribution is so out of context that the resources to distribute water are not adequate. Whether in areas with or without pipes, that situation is not being addressed. If it is the responsibility of the local government—and today we are talking about boundaries—then someone must tell us why this service is not being provided. Is it a matter of funding, equipment, manpower or the layout of the regional boundaries?

5.25 p.m.

Madam Speaker, in certain parts of the constituency of Princes Town, the Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo—

Madam Speaker: We are dealing with the recommendations of the Commission. How does that become relevant?

Mr. M. Haniff: Madam Speaker, I will tell you how it is relevant.

Madam Speaker: It is just not relevant to the recommendations.

Mr. M. Haniff: I am going to tell you immediately, Madam Speaker, how it is relevant. In San Pedro, there are some areas known as Ridge Road. Ridge Road is related to Rio Claro, naturally. The people of Ridge Road walk to Rio Claro which is the centre of their town.

The people of Ridge Road, which falls within the boundaries of the Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo Regional Corporation, must come out of Ridge Road to take a vehicle to go into Rio Claro; and from Rio Claro go to Princes Town; from Princes Town go to San Fernando; from San Fernando to Couva, and take another taxi to get to where the offices of the Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo Regional

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Corporation are situated. That is the fact of the situation and that is the point I am making—pointing out its relevance.

Are we not here debating the boundaries set by the Elections and Boundaries Commission?

Madam Speaker: You will have the opportunity at the appropriate time to bring all those things to show the inequity. As it is here under the statute, we have to accept it. You can go into the meat and substance of it at the appropriate time as suggested by the Minister; then you can make all your recommendations.

I advise you to do so if this is the kind of hardship that the people are suffering. As it is here, what we are doing—the Government has submitted a report in accordance with the Act. I am trying to bring you back on target, to the trend of the debate.

Mr. M. Haniff: Madam Speaker, for the purposes of this debate it could be that I do not understand, but for my own purposes all I understand is that we are here to discuss and debate a report concerning boundaries for local government, and it is my strong view that unless we examine what is happening in local government and what is not happening in local government, then this has no bearing. That is my view.

I started pointing out the relevance of some of the services that ought to be carried out by the local government body. Let me point out certain aspects of the laws of local government which to date have not been proclaimed. They are not in effect and that is a disadvantage to some of the local government bodies while others are being given the facilities. For example, section 48 of the Act has to do with policing in the respective regional corporations.

The area is large. In certain areas there are municipal police services—in the cities and in the boroughs. In the regions, however, this police service does not exist. Can anyone say how these local government bodies are to patrol their large areas with a view to protecting property belonging to the local government bodies if there is no financing, no equipment, and no municipal police service?

That is a fact. We can see what is happening in the cemeteries and the recreation grounds. People are tying their animals there, they are stealing the property from the local government bodies, and this aspect of the Act has not been proclaimed, and it is not in effect in the regional corporations. That is why it is relevant. In a small area it might be possible to monitor and manoeuvre with whatever little there is, but in a much larger area it, it is difficult and virtually

impossible to carry out those functions. In that kind of situation one cannot understand the delay if there is any seriousness at all, as they claim, in strengthening the local government system.

The functions of local government, as I said, are many and there are new ones in this Act, which had not been given much thought. In many instances because of the existing cutting, contrary to what was there before, people in many communities are not accustomed to it, or in many instances it is difficult to get into existing centres. Some of these laws need to be put into effect. I just want to point out one or two.

The maintenance and control of homes for the aged established by the corporations. When will this come into effect? In certain areas there are some established ones but because of the setting, there are none at all in certain areas. The local government bodies in the present situation cannot establish these homes. But there is more need to establish homes today than previous years, for child care in the communities. Nothing is happening with that and the local government system cannot at the present time be effectively established because of lack of funding and manpower.

Madam Speaker, do you know what has happened in the local government system? The areas are so large now that this Government has sent home over 4,000 persons. All casual workers have gone home. There was a system where there were casual workers in each local government body. This Government has sent home every single casual worker. There is no room to employ them anymore. Instead of having a smaller area that the permanent workers can take care of, they have a much larger area. It has to do with the size of the local government body. Instead of giving the local government body the funding, equipment and all that is required to run these bodies effectively over, 4,000 workers were sent home.

Apart from sending home over 4,000 casual and regular workers, when I raised the issue in Parliament, recently, of Government filling the vacancies created as a result of sending home over 1,000 other workers under the system of VSEP and early retirement, the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Local Government got up and asked why these vacancies should be filled. Who would want to know why these vacancies should be filled? That is natural because they have an area to service and they have a responsibility to service that local government area. What are the services? I wonder if some Members of Parliament—Ministers—are aware or whether they care at all about what their responsibilities are to local government.

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5.35 p.m.

The issue of water. Do you know what is happening these days? One has to find security to put on the trucks because they are going into the rural areas and giving water in those areas where there are no pipes at all. They are giving there. That is normal.

This Government ought to have taken steps for WASA to provide water in the areas where there are pipes. The Government has to find security to put on the trucks. They cannot afford to put security on the trucks and people are being harassed and threatened physically as a result of the function that they have to carry out.

The other issue deals with equipment as a result of the larger areas they have to service. There are numerous roads which are not being attended to by any agency. There is no point in coming here or going to the Minister's office to point out that there is difficulty in those areas. We have raised it on numerous occasions and they are just not listening. Instead of putting the funding in the local government bodies, of course, it is put into URP, so they can choose their own labour, while they are sending home the labour that is related to the local government bodies.

They are saying that they are strengthening the system of village councils. It is not village councils. They know exactly what it is. As a result of the larger areas, apart from roads and traces, there was a time when the Ministry of Agriculture used to allocate funds to the local government body to deal with access roads. Instead of that small area of their roads, there is a larger area, and not one step has been taken to deal with that situation.

Sanitation: The local health authority needs much in this present situation. Does it not have to do with the amount of service that these small local government bodies—in terms of resources and manpower—are giving when they are called upon to service this much wider area? Nothing is happening with that, and as a result, under this Government and this Minister, the local government body has been instructed that it should not pick up the derelicts free of charge. It should implement a fee for picking up the old cars and fridges. In the cities they are being taken up to some extent, but in the other regional corporations they are not.

In a situation where so much is being said about the need for health care, it is a disaster. We have a disaster on our hands as far as those derelicts are concerned—all over the country. They cannot manage; even in the little towns

the resources cannot be managed. Now they have to go to all parts of Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo with no resources. They have to go to all parts of Moruga with no resources. It is my information that the Debe/Penal Regional Corporation does not even have an office from which to operate, after two years of local government, and three years of this Government being in office.

There is also the situation which has to deal with spraying and keeping the drains and the environment clean. There is need to establish and maintain cemeteries and recreation grounds. What is the situation with recreation grounds as regards the local government body and the Ministry of Sport? In certain areas, the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs would put down recreational facilities; in other areas, it is the responsibility of the local government bodies—which have no funding, manpower and equipment. They are being told that if they wish to acquire lands for recreational facilities, they must take the funding out of the allocation.

I have detailed some of things the former Minister of Local Government said that the Government would do prior to the next local government elections coming up. We are here today and are being asked to approve a report which deals with so many differences in respect of the number and the areas. They are of the view that we must stick to this report and say it is all right, when they had time to do better. So we are still asking that this report be deferred so that collectively we can sit down; examine it and change the laws to suit. And we would see, I am sure, that there is really need for a system of local government where the people can feel just what they are saying, that the communities can participate.

Madam Speaker, do you know that in this country local government falls under an Act? There were situations when under the PNM local government elections were held after three to five years, and in one case after nine years. In the Caribbean, it is only in Guyana that the local government system finds itself under the constitution of the country. That is a call that we have been making. What is the comment on that?

Why not put local government in the place where it belongs? Why not put the power, the authority and the autonomy in the hands of the people? Is the Government afraid of the people of this country? Why not put it there, so that if even the areas are large, one would find the communities coming into play?

The Government itself has been saying that there is need to get the village councils involved. We are saying, yes, the community organizations, but the

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Government has not done a single thing to improve the system of local government, and there are pretty statements in the manifesto. The Government comes here to tell us that having 10,000 persons in one electoral district is all right as compared to 2,000 in some, and less than 2,000 in others.

The Government is trying to say that because of the law, the Elections and Boundaries Commission could not do otherwise. We are saying that we recognize that they could not have done otherwise, that is why my colleague, in starting his contribution, recognized that the Elections and Boundaries Commission did a good job under the circumstances. The circumstances do not allow them to do a job that would satisfy the needs of the existing situation.

As I said, I do not wish to continue to burden anyone with the needs of local government, but I must point out that if we are to agree that there is a system of local government existing outside there, and if we are holding elections and moneys are being paid to councillors, then what is the point in not having an effective system? There is need to put adequate staff in these local government bodies, either daily paid or monthly paid.

Does anyone really understand what is happening in local government? At this time, about 60 per cent of the vehicles in local government bodies are not functioning. There are all sorts of functions to carry out; the areas are large; they cannot even reach the other end in most cases. As I said, that is the only way I can understand this report, because it has to do with local government. This Government comes here and says this is the report and it wants us to approve it. We are pointing out the reasons that the boundaries, as outlined here, cannot function in the interest of the majority of our citizens. This is because of the system of local government which operates within these boundaries.

There is need for improved technology. No one is saying anything about that. We are hearing so much about reform. What is happening with the reform? Does the reform mean sending workers home? More and more, the security of the whole property, as I said, comes into play. The issue of street lights has been raised earlier today. Not even the Minister of Public Utilities could say what is the present system of installing and maintaining street lights.

5.45 p.m.

Local government bodies are being called upon to pay arrears—with funding that they do not have. What is happening is that some of the new areas which have been given to the new local government bodies are areas where the whole

infrastructure is bad. They are new areas in the sense that traditionally neither the old one nor the existing one went there.

The crime rate in the country is such, that no one knows who will pay for street lights. They do not care, but that is not happening in many other areas. While we are hearing of one situation with respect to street lights, we are seeing street lights in other areas. There is no system. Can anyone say what is the system?

One other new area is the maintenance of property such as police stations, health centres, post offices and other Government buildings as the Minister to whom responsibility for construction and maintenance of buildings is assigned may by order determine. Is that not an area of concern?

I was recently in the yard of a particular police station which borders on a court, and it could be burnt to trash because nobody is taking care of it. Leaves and garbage surround the area.

Madam Speaker: This Motion is being brought under section 4(1) of the Elections and Boundaries (Local Government) Act, Chap. 25:50, which says:

“The Commission shall define and review the boundaries of the electoral districts into which an electoral area is, or is to be, divided and shall submit to the Minister reports either -

- (a) showing the constituencies into which it recommends that an electoral area should be divided in order to give effect to the Rules ...”

This is what is being done here. I appreciate all your points. I am not saying that they are not valid points. What I am saying is that they are just not relevant to section 4 under which this report has been submitted. I think that if you find that the boundaries ought not to have been this or that way, you could have linked it— I cannot tell you how to construct your debate, but surely what you are saying here is really not relevant to section 4 under which this report is submitted. I ask you to take note of that, please.

In another debate on local government it would have been very relevant, but we are dealing with a statutory provision and, unfortunately, this debate has to be probably a legalistic one, but we cannot help that. Another debate might empower you to bring all those things into consideration, but section 4 is a statutory provision under which the Elections and Boundaries Commission must act.

Mr. M. Haniff: Madam Speaker, I have been trying to point out that with the present situation the local government members and staff are being called upon to service very large areas. At the present time they cannot service them properly for want of all that is required. *[Interruption]* I realize, based on the statement made by the Member for Diego Martin Central, that I have already made the Prime Minister leave. It is being pointed out that I have made others leave and I wish that as I continue to point out the ills, that all of them would leave and, perhaps, not return.

Madam Speaker: You can make your points relevant. This is what you have to do. I can see how you can make that relevant to some extent.

Mr. M. Haniff: I am saying that some areas within existing boundaries are not being serviced properly by the local government system. This report has to do with the boundaries of the local government system. If those areas are not being serviced properly, and they are asking us to approve the same boundaries, then it means we are going back into a system where these areas will again not be serviced properly. It would bring hardship to the people of the respective communities.

Madam Speaker, I do not wish to continue with this because of your continued disagreement with the way I am proceeding with my discussion. I, however, wish to point out, as I did when I started, that I am not surprised that they have asked us to approve this report, because the system of local government since the advent of this PNM Government continues to go downhill. They continue to take away the functions of the local government, and ask us to approve the same thing, meaning that they do not care anything about the system of local government and have no intention of improving it.

If the Minister had said that they were presenting this report, but that they intended to take steps to correct this situation by asking us to amend the laws, this report might have already been approved. However, he did not indicate anything of the kind. As such we must point out that if we approve this report as it is, we are causing people—councillors, the electorate and citizens generally—to continue to be placed in a situation where they will continue not getting service with this new proposal.

Madam Speaker: You are well in order to say what will be the effect of these boundaries on the community—whether it will affect them adversely and so forth. That is within the ambit of your debate, but what I am asking you concerns the question of lights, water and so forth. That is definitely not the argument you will put up in a case like this.

Mr. M. Haniff: Madam Speaker, the services rendered by local government have to do with the area to be serviced; they have to do with the resources provided; they have to do with whether the communities are relating to where the office is located and whether they are getting service.

5.55 p.m.

The former Minister of Local Government said that they would look into the subdivision of Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo. Give us a chance, and let us examine it, said he. If when this report was being introduced the present Minister had said, "Although we are introducing this here today, we intend to come to the Parliament with laws so that we can improve the situation that is likely to continue to exist," and they were serious about that, one of two things could have happened; the report could have been approved, or deferred, pending those adjustments that are required. But nothing of the kind is forthcoming.

We on this side are trying to get a commitment from the Government as to whether they have any intention of changing this, and secondly, whether they have any intention of improving and giving to the local government bodies adequate resources, so that we would have a system of local government for the purpose of servicing those who depend on the service. We are trying to point out the deficiencies in the present system, with a view to relating them to the larger communities that these regional corporations have to look after.

Apart from the statements that were made earlier, not one single thing has happened with local government to improve it since this Government came into power, rather, it has been dismantling on a regular basis what ought to be happening in the local government bodies. As such, their policies have continued to be to send home workers, to privatize, not to repair the vehicles, not to provide offices, not to provide workers, not to fill the vacancies, to let the markets and the abattoirs continue to suffer as they are, and to break down people's stalls on the roadside without providing accommodation for them. We are talking here about approving a report which will continue that system in which one member of the local government must represent 10,000-plus in a very large area in certain sectors.

Is it not good to know that a local government representative can take a little walk around and talk to 2,500 of the electorate in a short space of time? Yet in most cases, the local government people have to cover very large areas to talk to 10,000-plus of the electorate, apart from the other people who would complain. We are saying that that system cannot continue. But we are called upon to approve a system today where that disparity would continue.

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I wish to point out that we have no intention of approving the report as it is. We are asking the Government to defer it or take whatever steps are required—all the necessary consultations—so that we can make the adjustment to the laws and have this report adjusted in the interest of those people suffering under the local government system.

Much has happened in the local government system in this country. I attended conferences recently under the existing system. The local government system is put in place to provide for the everyday activities of the communities. If we do not take steps to improve it and get rid of the problems as we go along, then there is no point in continuing with the system as it is. If that is the position of the Government I must come here and say so.

If they intend to continue with this system of local government, then there has to be improvement. They are not saying anything as regards the improvement of the system. Part of the problem is the very large areas that local government representatives have to service without the required resources and equipment.

Madam Speaker, notwithstanding the fact that my contribution has met with your disapproval in certain ways—and that of Members of the other side—if I have offended anyone, it was not really my intention to be rude or to disregard your ruling. I wish, however, to point out, because of my involvement in local government over the years, I can see it no other way.

I have served in local government for 11 years, I have looked at the system encompassing Trinidad and Tobago and the Caribbean. I have all sorts of reports here on local government. When I see that no improvement is coming the way of local government, rather, we are being called upon to approve reports which have no way of improving what happens there, then it bothers me.

It bothers me to know that the Government continues to come here; continues to go all over the country and say that it has a commitment to local government. The only thing that is happening to local government is the taking away of its responsibilities, not supplying the required funding and so forth, and saying, "yes, we have a commitment to the system."

I hope that you will appreciate—I am saying again—it is not my intention to be rude to yourself, or to anyone else, but because of my deep concern for the system of local government, that is the only way I can understand it. I wish, therefore, to call on the Government to rethink the situation, to get together and

amend the laws so that we can bring a report that represents the wishes of those who are affected by the system.

Thank you very much.

Mr. John Humphrey (*St. Augustine*): Madam Speaker, I am going to make a very short intervention.

Prior to the last local government elections we went through a similar exercise in this House and Members recognized the difficulties that amendments to the boundaries of regional corporations would create—we had recognized it—and we therefore included a provision in the order for the elections of 1992. Let me quote it from the current Order:

"Notwithstanding the merger, by the Municipal Corporations (Amendment) Act, 1992 of the Municipal Corporations listed in the Schedule, for the purpose of the Municipal Councils elections of 1992, the Elections and Boundaries Commission (Local Government) Order, 1991 made in pursuance of the Elections and Boundaries (Local Government) Act, shall have effect for all purposes as though the Corporations so listed had not merged. "

That took care of it then, but what you are doing now is bringing the mischief that we recognized then, in the 1992 elections into this current Order. That has to be an error. It is an error that redounds to the benefit of the PNM if it is based on results of previous local elections.

Mr. Valley: Madam Speaker, what that section says first of all, in 1992, by separate law, some months after we had accepted the Elections and Boundaries Commission Report, because we wanted to reduce the number of areas to nine, we amalgamated. Having amalgamated, we said that notwithstanding that amalgamation, the areas that were now merged were to be treated as separate areas for purposes of the election.

The important thing to note is that it was done by separate law. We accepted the report and this is the same thing we are saying, we are looking at this comprehensive review of the boundaries and that is going to come to the Parliament. *[Interruption]* If the Parliament feels we ought to make adjustments we would make the necessary adjustments, but by convention we do not interfere with the Elections and Boundaries Commission Report.

Mr. J. Humphrey: I appreciate what the hon. Member for Diego Martin Central is saying, but during the tea adjournment I had a chance to chat with the Member and I asked him, whether prior to the next local government elections

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which are constitutionally due in September of this year, Parliament would in fact, look at *[Interruption]* The assurance I got from the Member was that we are going to the elections on the basis of what is now recommended.

Mr. Valley: Madam Speaker, I could give no assurance. First of all, the local government elections are due by statute within three months of September 28. I know that we are doing the work with respect to the boundaries, but I can give no assurances that that would come to the Parliament before that time.

Mr. S. Panday: That is the trick.

Mr. Valley: There is no trick, Madam Speaker; we would like to leave Mayaro separate from Rio Claro too, that is the reality of the situation.

6.05 p.m.

Mr. J. Humphrey: Madam Speaker, it is a very simple exercise to correct this problem. If we get the assurance from the Government that they will come to Parliament in the near future and correct the problem that we all recognize, what we would do is stop talking and support the Motion—but we need that assurance.

We had a system of local representation that was laid down by the British which was working reasonably well. However, the British had laid it down on the basis of their interest under the colonial dispensation. The last government looked at it again and sought to redefine the boundaries for local government on the basis of community interests—Tobago is quite separate with the Tobago House of Assembly legislation—trying to identify in Trinidad areas that had identifiable interests as communities.

That government did a very, very comprehensive exercise in identifying these areas and proposed that the country be divided into thirteen regional corporation electoral areas and proposed the addition of one municipal corporation. It was when this Government came in that it was amended. It was argued on that side that 13 was too many and too costly to manage. The Act was amended in 1992 to reduce the number of regional corporations. We on this side identified the difficulty of doing that.

This Government created a system of inequitable representation and we recognized that and we were able to persuade the Government then to go into the 1992 Local Government Elections without taking the mischief that the reduction of the number of corporations had created. That is why a special law was passed to enable that. What we would be doing now, if we do not correct the mischief, is going into the next local government elections with that mischief which Parliament has recognized for a very long time.

I think it is the duty of a Member of Parliament, who is conscious of a mischief that is going to be created by any procedure, not to sanction such a thing. I am going to speak on behalf of my colleagues on this side, if we do get the assurance that in the near future we will amend the legislation so that that mischief can be corrected. Madam Speaker, this report recognizes the mischief

Mr. Valley: Madam Speaker, just for edification, could the Member state clearly the mischief that he is talking about?

Madam Speaker: Inequitable distribution of the electorate: 8,400 vis-a-vis 9,000; methods for correcting that inequity.

Mr. Valley: Madam Speaker, let me say that with respect to the cities and boroughs and so forth, if one is looking for equitable distribution throughout, then obviously one is going to interfere with the whole concept; if one agrees that the cities and boroughs ought to be treated differently from the regional municipalities then that is a different thing. I think the point that has to be made is that, perhaps, the 15,000 threshold may have to be reduced—it is not the minimum number of seats in an area rather it is the threshold for the number of seats—the 15,000 which may have to be reduced.

The Minister has informed me that the committee is close to completion of its work. We can give no assurance; all we can say is that we would do our best to have the changes brought here as quickly as possible. I can tell you that the Boundaries Committee's work is not simple. We had a system of wards and they have been working with the CSO and a number of other organizations; that committee has been chaired by Eustace Seignoret and I can tell you that they have been working since 1992; they have not finished their work. That is a fact. They have been working on that comprehensive review of the situation [*Interruption*]

Madam Speaker: What the Member is asking is, if after such exercise is completed, that would have, in fact, addressed what the Members on the other side are saying.

Mr. Valley: When the committee's work is completed it is going to come to the Parliament and we shall have to debate it. That is what it is, I cannot anticipate the committee's work.

Mr. J. Humphrey: Madam Speaker, I appreciate that a very good committee is at work. Mr. Eustace Seignoret has tremendous experience in local government and I expect that that committee would come with some very good recommendations for the reform of the system. However, there is a simple

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mischief, it was never intended but it occurred when the Government amalgamated certain corporations. That requires a simple amendment to change a base figure to eight, instead of four.

What happened is that when the number was reduced they amalgamated areas that had already been identified and divided into electoral districts on an equitable basis. *[Interruption]*

Madam Speaker: Would not that be something we ought to bring to the attention of the present committee so that they can address it?

Mr. J. Humphrey: No, it is the responsibility of this House, Madam Speaker. We know the “mischief”, it is a “mischief”—

Madam Speaker: Is that mischief in inverted commas?

Mr. J. Humphrey: Yes, in inverted commas. I am not saying anybody made mischief, but this happened inadvertently—

Madam Speaker: "Mischief" there means the wrong that was done.

Mr. J. Humphrey: We remedied it for the last local government elections. Therefore, there are constituencies within the local government system with a reasonably equitable distribution of electors—*[Interruption]*

Madam Speaker: As the hon. Minister has said, I would think that if that is so, that individually or as a body, you make that recommendation to the committee that is presently addressing this question so that it can, in fact, view the whole thing through and have a more global picture.

6.15 p.m.

Mr. J. Humphrey: That is very fine, Madam Speaker. However, a very simple amendment to the formula that determines representation is all that is required. If you read the report you would see that the commission is careful—

Madam Speaker: There must have been a policy decision.

Mr. J. Humphrey: No, the policy decision was to reduce the total number for cost purposes. That is carried in law. However, it was not intended that by doing that the number of electors in certain areas would be increased as against other areas. We had always intended an equitable system of representation, but this now makes it inequitable.

For example, let me give the House the effect of the amendment that will come up in the next local government election that does not now pertain. The electoral district of Curepe is a very dense area with many streets, drains, street

lights, problems. This new proposal will add to the Curepe area, two more areas represented by two councillors at the present time—Spring Village and St. Augustine South. These amalgamated areas are presently represented by three councillors.

With the new formula—that area will amalgamate two other areas so there would be one electoral district with one representative where there were three prior to that. The number of electors would be multiplied by two. So that there will be twice the number of electors and nine times the geographical area. That is what I call "mischief" if you like. It is very simple to remedy. All that has to be done is to change the formula: instead of using the base of four, use eight.

Madam Speaker: The commission is guided by the Act.

Mr. J. Humphrey: Madam Speaker, the commission is not just guided by the legislation; it is confined to the legislation.

Mr. Valley: Madam Speaker, is that base of eight to be applied throughout the regional corporations?

Mr. J. Humphrey: The three which have been merged.

Mr. Valley: Madam Speaker, first of all, they are making a separation now. For three of the corporations, they want the base to be different from the base of the rest of the system. I am not an expert in that area. There is a committee looking at that and after it reports, the Elections and Boundaries Commission would have to do a re-assessment. I think that ought to be left to the competent authorities.

Mr. J. Humphrey: Madam Speaker, Parliament is the competent authority because we make the laws. The Elections and Boundaries Commission functions independently, but under the laws which are made by the Parliament. One cannot get away from that!

Madam Speaker: The point was that if your recommendations are—

Mr. J. Humphrey: It is not a parliamentary committee.

Madam Speaker: It is a committee which is looking into the whole system and if you feel that your party can recommend that this is how the committee ought to approach its work, then make these recommendations, and when the report comes to the Parliament, it would have the benefit of the consideration of that committee.

Mr. J. Humphrey: Madam Speaker, this Parliament has the authority to accept this report as it is or to amend it. It is stated in the Motion. If the

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Parliament recognizes that there is something in the report which needs to be amended to remedy a problem—of which we have all been conscious for a number of years—how could the report be passed back to a committee which does not have the same power as this Parliament and then try to justify doing so by saying that they are advisers? In this case, no more advice is needed. We have gone through this before. Madam Speaker, if you refer to *Hansard* you would see that everything that is being said here today has been said before. Why is this Government so stubborn in not wanting to remedy something which all of us have recognized is a problem?

Mr. Valley: We do not recognize anything as a problem.

Mr. J. Humphrey: Oh! Well, Madam Speaker, the position on this side is that we cannot accept this report as it is. Therefore, I beg to move an amendment to the Motion as follows:

"Be It Further Resolved That this House hold in abeyance the said report pending amendments to the Act referred to above to enable equity in representation of all regional corporations."

Seconded by Mr. K. Jurai.

Question proposed

Amendment put and negatived.

Mr. Krish Jurai (Nariva): Madam Speaker, I rise to make a small intervention on the Second Report of the Elections and Boundaries Commission which is before us today. I shall attempt to give a definition of local government. Before I do so, however, I would like to point out an error on page 120 of this report. It is a very small error, typographical to me, but anyone reading this report can get the wrong impression if this is not corrected. It refers to Polling Division No. 2450 which should read Polling Division 2350. With that correction, I move on.

The term "local government" is concerned with localities and not with the country as a whole. The term further implies some jurisdiction or activity of a public nature. It implies also the existence of authorities empowered to exercise that jurisdiction and activity. Furthermore, the purpose of having a system of local government is to deepen the whole democratic process by giving citizens at the local level an opportunity to participate in the decision-making process on matters affecting their daily lives, particularly matters relating to their localities. For the purpose of local government, therefore, the emphasis is on local areas or localities.

As you know, Madam Speaker, local government provides a number of local services relating to the activities of the local area in which it is represented. In the regional corporations there are polling divisions within electoral districts and the representatives of these electoral districts should ideally reflect the local areas which they represent in their respective organizations.

I wish to emphasize the word "local" to mean restricted to a reasonable geographical area with particular reference to representation at the local government level. When I look at this report and at the proposals for the Sangre Grande Regional Corporation and the Mayaro/Rio Claro Regional Corporation areas, I do not see electoral districts confined to a reasonable local geographical area for representation at the local government level. I shall give the actual figures in a moment.

6.25 p.m.

Some electoral districts have been scattered far and wide over a large geographical area and, as I said, they can no longer be termed "local" areas, for the purpose of effective local government representation. As a matter of fact, I get the impression that some of these polling divisions within the electoral district are grouped together, but not sufficient consideration was given for truly effective local government representation.

When I look at this report, I see the electoral district Toco/Fishing Pond is stretching all the way from Matelot to Sangre Grande, a distance of some 50 or 60 miles; then you go on to Fishing Pond which is another 10 to 15 miles away from Sangre Grande—this is considered to be one local electoral area. I am sure my friend the Member for Toco/Manzanilla, who represents that area, will agree with me that this area is too far and wide for a single member to represent

We are talking about 60 or 70 miles of road, but what makes it difficult is that within these areas there are several other roads, traces, villages, hamlets and so forth; and these have to be serviced by one representative. That is why I made the definition of "local government", as being confined to a specific local area for effective representation. But when it is such a large area, it is virtually impossible to give effective representation, particularly when we consider that funds have been restricted. The Government has not been allocating sufficient funds for the effective operation of local services by these local authorities.

We also have to consider that this applies moreso in the Mayaro/Rio Claro new proposed region, which is a much larger area, where there were ten representatives and it has now been reduced to six. So, the problems are going to

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be greater than we anticipated. The question naturally arises as to how effectively a local government councillor can perform his function when he has such a large geographical area; and also when there is such a large area, there are not likely to be common interests.

If we take the area of Toco/Fishing Pond, we would see that in Salibia, Matelot/Toco, Gran Riviere and so forth, there is common ground, as it were, where the accent is on fishing, in Fishing Pond it is different. They grow rice cacco and coffee. I am not saying fishing does not exist in these areas, but perhaps you will find it more so in the Fishing Pond/Biche area.

So that, apart from the size of the geographical areas, there are differences in the various localities in terms of the kinds of problems that exist. If we look at Toco/Fishing Pond, this electoral district has 12 polling divisions and an electorate of 5,171. In Toco/Manzanilla there is one polling division 2260, Fishing Pond, which is in no way closely linked to the Toco/Matelot area.

What I am suggesting for consideration, therefore, is that for effective local government representation, it would be more prudent to link polling division 2260, which is in Fishing Pond, to Manzanilla Polling Division and that would, perhaps, give a more effective representation for that area. If you subtract 640, which is the number of electors in polling division 2260 from 5,171, the number of electors in the Toco/Fishing Pond Polling Division, there will be a difference of 4,531 electors, which is way above the 4,055 minimum recommended for the polling division of Toco/Manzanilla.

Similarly, when we look at the Mayaro/Rio Claro Regional Corporation, there is a maximum number of electors, 4,595, and a minimum of 2,757. But there is a problem similar to what exists in the Toco/Fishing Pond area. There is Cocal/Mafeking, which is based mainly in the Mayaro area, but this area now includes a polling division which is in Biche.

Madam Speaker: I think that the hon. Member definitely ought to submit a memorandum to the committee that is looking into this at the moment, because they would then have the benefit of the Member's experience and of what the Member is saying. Unless they recommend it, this House will not be able to consider it and it is an exercise in futility here. Whereas, if the Member brings it to the attention of the committee, it would then have to be considered and recommendations can be made on what should be done. If the committee feels there are valid points made—

Mr. K. Jurai: Yes, Madam Speaker, I tend to agree with you, but I would like to place it on the record so that the committee that is looking at it would have the official record and can look into it.

Madam Speaker, I am almost through, but—I just want to make the point that there is an electoral district, Cocal/Mafeking, and there is a polling division in Biche and one has to go all the way from Cocal/Mafeking to Mayaro; Mayaro to Rio Claro; Rio Claro to Biche to service that area which is several miles around the Nariva Swamp. So it shows that one cannot get effective local representation when these polling divisions are scattered far and wide, as this report advocates.

I think this would be worthy of the consideration that the Minister has spoken about and that is why I seconded the Motion that the report should be held back to give ample consideration to this question. But I get the impression, Madam Speaker, that no matter what is said here this afternoon, this report is going to be passed, and all I can hope and pray for is that the Minister of Local Government, when this is approved, give ample consideration to providing sufficient funds to service these large areas and I refer, particularly, to the Sangre Grande Regional Corporation, the Mayaro/Rio Claro Regional Corporation; as well as all the other large corporations throughout the country.

I want to wind up by saying that during the past three years I have been in this Parliament, I have been asking for a very simple measure to be put into effect. It is degrading, humiliating and embarrassing and I should like to point out, again, to the Minister of Local Government that there is a garbage dump close to a cemetery and I hope that this year, 1995, it will be removed from there.

Mr. S. Panday: Especially the corbeaux!

6.35 p.m.

Madam Speaker: I would advise the Member if he feels strongly about those recommendations he has been suggesting here, that he submit a memorandum to the appropriate committee that is looking into the matter. That is how things get consideration. It may find favour with that committee.

Mr. K. Jurai: Madam Speaker, I prefer if it is taken directly from the *Hansard*.

Madam Speaker: No. You must submit it as a Member who is interested in local government being regularized—the boundaries being regularized. These are things you all must do.

Mr. Chandresh Sharma (Fyzabad): Madam Speaker, it is rather unfortunate that eight speakers later, only Members on this side are making contributions. The

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reason for saying that is that local government concerns every one of us. All 36 of us represent the national community of Trinidad and Tobago. It is very unfortunate that it was presented by the Member responsible for the EBC, the Member for Diego Martin East, and no other Member on that side found it necessary to participate in this debate, regardless of what advances they may make at this point. The national community is participating through the media, both print and electronic.

I always make this point that Trinidad and Tobago has the youngest population in this part of the Caribbean and there is great relevance to this.

Hon. Member: How do you know that?

Mr. C. Sharma: A silly question was asked: How do I know this? It is as though this side is not supposed to know anything of this national community. Everything that ought to be known in this country must be known only by that side. The point is that 34 per cent of this country's population is under the age of 15. A further 31 per cent is between the ages of 15 and 35. So we are dealing with a very young population—65 per cent under the age of 35. They are consumers in this country and as a result, they depend on the services extended by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. The local government plays a very important role.

The universal law about politics is that it must be relevant and meaningful to the day it is being practised. Today we are faced with approving or adopting the report of the EBC. The EBC has been created to perform a particular function. That function must bring some degree of comfort to the national community. The cost of running the operations is paid for by taxpayers. Many Members on this side have raised the point that the local government system is not working. What do we do about it? The Government hides behind the position that the EBC is independent and one is trying to interfere with it. We have made it crystal clear that that is not the case. The Member for Nariva, again, made that point.

I want to take you to Point Fortin, an area with which you are familiar, Madam Speaker. I am referring here now to page 68 of this report. In the district of Guapo there are 1,900 electors. So that the representative there can take a scooter or bicycle to meet his 2,000 constituents in two or three days.

Mr. Bereaux: That is not true!

Mr. C. Sharma: The Member for La Brea is saying it is not true.

Mr. Bereaux: That is a big area.

Mr. C. Sharma: Do you have a map you can measure? The Member argues that it is a big area. So it is a big area with 2,000 people.

Here you have an electoral district of 2,000 people with five polling divisions. Let us look at Cedros, another area with which you are familiar. It has 7,000 electors. So the representative of Cedros has to take bicycle one day; take a bull-cart the following day; take a motor car; take a boat, to service his electoral district. There are 7,000-plus people there. The report here says that. How are we going to approve such a situation?

The borough of Point Fortin has absolutely no difficulty obtaining its funding. The representative of Cedros has to come to Siparia to serve because the regional office is situated there. He has to take a taxi from Cedros if he does not own a car. The compensation offered to these electoral representatives is very meagre. No facilities are extended to them. It is even difficult to make or receive telephone calls in Cedros. Very little facilities are made available to the representatives, but they have to serve. The important thing is to serve.

Let us go back to 1991, when the conference was held here in Trinidad and Tobago. We should all be very proud; that first conference was under the chairmanship of my colleague, the Member for Princes Town. We have a wealth of information sitting right in front of us. But what do Members opposite do? They laugh at his English, at his pronunciation—the Member for Diego Martin East, in particular, a professor of English. The point is, when you are representing people, it matters not how you communicate—

Madam Speaker: Member for Fyzabad, I find you have a tendency to get a bit personal in the House. Please proceed with the debate. What is all of this? There is no need for this at this time. Let us proceed with the debate.

Mr. C. Sharma: Madam Speaker, I bow to your ruling, but I do not agree with it. It is very unfortunate that it comes from the Chair.

Madam Speaker: Observe the ruling and forget the personalities at this point.

Mr. C. Sharma: Madam Speaker, if a comment is made during the contribution of any Member speaking—

Madam Speaker: I did not hear anybody laugh at the Member for Princes Town's English. I have been sitting here all afternoon and nobody did so.

Mr. C. Sharma: Madam Speaker, again, if you did not hear a particular thing, it does not necessarily mean that it was not said. You might be correct—

Madam Speaker: Are you arguing with me now or are you going to proceed with the debate?

Mr. C. Sharma: I am proceeding, but in presenting my submission I have to make responses to everything that took place here, once it is related to the debate. I am saying that the Member for Princes Town has a wealth of information. He has served in local government for a number of years.

Hon. Member: We cannot say the same thing about you!

Mr. C. Sharma: Not at all.

At the conference of 1991, it was felt that local government had an extremely important role to play. Some members made the point that the first contact with the constituent is the local government representative. If that contact has to be continued, the local representative must be accessible. How do you present an accessible local representative? Bigger is not always better. If you are expanding the area, as is advanced in this document, you are causing the representative to become inaccessible, because, obviously, he now has to serve a much larger area.

The question is: Where do we make this presentation to create the awareness? Where do we provide this information? The only opportunity for Members here is in this Parliamentary Chamber. We have access to no other medium. The Motion says very clearly:

"...shall lay before the House of Representatives for its approval the draft of an Order by the President for giving effect whether with or without modifications to the recommendations..."

So this is the only place where we can make reference to these matters.

I want to refer you again to the recommendations; that local government be incorporated into the constitution of the Caribbean countries. This was one of the recommendations that came out then. *[Interruption]* Madam Speaker, you would recognize that I am having some difficulty.

Madam Speaker: The Member finds it a bit difficult, hon. Members. He is being interrupted.

Mr. C. Sharma: The Member for Caroni Central made the point earlier that the number of people living below the poverty line has increased in recent times. The McIntyre Report indicated it to be 23 per cent. But because of the increase in the price of goods and services, again the number has gone up. One Member has advanced that it might be close to 40 per cent. So immediately there would be an

increased demand for services offered by local government and its representatives.

We have heard here today that the local government representatives are finding it difficult to serve because of lack of resources. We have also heard that the existing machinery, plants and other assets held by the corporations are run down. Why is this happening? Because if you now have to serve a larger area with the same amount of equipment, you certainly would have a higher degree of wear and tear. You would also have a higher degree of requirements, in that more people would be trying to get the services.

In many of the regional corporations in Trinidad and Tobago more and more people are saying they are not accessing services. At the present time in this country there is a national water problem. One of the facilities of the local government corporations is to make truck-borne water supply available. Again, because this report is extending the areas, you would have less trucks, or the same number of trucks, with less water provided. So fewer people would be serviced. And water is a basic essential, something which every home requires. So that when we debate this particular Order, it must be in the interest of the entire national community.

6.45 p.m.

The other recommendation that came out is that steps must be taken to bring about a positive change in the perception of local government and its functions. Again, this report does not lend itself to that thinking.

This report is only presented because the law of the country demands that it be presented at a particular time. When it comes to this Parliament, what are our functions—to accept it as it is? Or to debate it and to make sure that the next time a report comes to this Parliament it must be meaningful to the national community? This is the gist of my contribution. I am suggesting that to improve the performance of our local government representatives they must be given the resources.

The geographical areas also must be taken into consideration. It is really unfortunate but in recent times the point has been made that there are more admissions of children with minor ailments to the hospitals when local government cannot provide certain services any more. For instance, the spraying of mosquitoes, the cleaning of drains and so forth. The Member for Princes Town made the point that 4,000 workers went home and the areas have been expanded. Who is going to clean the drains now?

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Are we going to continue to allow our children to go to health offices where, on many occasions, facilities are not available for whatever reasons? Our responsibility is to minimize this as much as possible. How do we intend to do it? We intend to do it by having this debate now—it is very important for both sides to debate this—and at the end of the session, we would arrive at the best format.

The other area I want to touch on, which was raised by a number of Members, is the relevance of funding for local government. One cannot establish the corporations and not fund them. It is impossible. And one cannot fund them late, when their work should be completed. They must have money at all times. We have found over the years, in a number of corporations—those controlled by the Government and others—that they have a difficulty in obtaining funds.

Another area is the formula arrived at by the electoral districts. Today, we have suggested that the formula needs to be revised. I want to submit again that the strongest recommendation should be given to making sure that elected representatives are able to facilitate the people they represent, in that the areas must be meaningful and within their geographical area.

One of the Members highlighted the case of a constituent having to travel from Tabaquite, then to Rio Claro, proceed to Princes Town, then to San Fernando to get into Couva. The whole question of the establishment of *[Interruption]* That is a good question. One of the points raised by the Member for Diego Martin Central was that in his time it was accessible, but the roads are no longer maintained. There is no funding for road maintenance. The people in the area are not offered any URP projects so the roads are no longer accessible; taxis are not passing there; there are high unemployment and crime, so one cannot even walk.

It is very important that we take all these matters into consideration. It has been advanced to the Member for Nariva that, perhaps, he could attempt to challenge the information in another quarter, but that quarter is not accessible to us. It is not! The point is that at no time—*[Interruption]* Madam Speaker, we cannot appear to be influencing the Government's work. They have a job specification and that—

Madam Speaker: But it is you to influence that.

Mr. C. Sharma: No, Madam Speaker. It is the same thing. Can we go to the EBC and say, "Look, you should do X, Y and Z"?

Madam Speaker: There is a committee looking into the whole aspect of local government and I would think that it would welcome suggestions from representatives. That might make its work easier.

Mr. C. Sharma: Madam Speaker, while that should have been the actual scenario, the manner in which these establishments are appointed, there is difficulty in accessing people for whatever reason. One must be realistic about these situations.

They are appointed for a particular purpose and they have specifications under which they operate. If one looks at the reports, one would notice that the contributions of people who have a wealth of information never get to them. The question is: Why? This has not been happening yesterday. The Member for Princes Town said that in one instance elections did not take place for nine years; in another case it did not take place for seven years! Those things are there, but they are inaccessible. Again, this is the only forum one has.

What is the purpose of all of us taking part in this debate today? Is it to extend this debate late into the tonight? The intention here is very noble, and the national community of Trinidad and Tobago is really suffering for basic—

Madam Speaker: I really feel very strongly about this, and I should like to make it clear if this is, in fact, so. There is a committee looking into the question of boundaries and it just cannot be a committee that is going to be accessible only to Members of Government. It has to be a committee that is accessible to Members of the Opposition also. Therefore, if the Opposition indeed has views that are valid and feels strongly about, it seems to me that it is a public function that is carried out by this committee and it must be accessible to Members of the Opposition; not personally, but via memoranda.

Mr. Valley: Madam Speaker, let me assure the House that that is, in fact, so. As a matter of fact, when that committee was established, there were persons from a cross-section of the community appointed to it, and they consulted with different people. *[Interruption]* Yes, it has always been so.

Mr. C. Sharma: Madam Speaker, the records would indicate that I did not say, and I am not saying, that the committee which exists is accessible only to Government Members. I am not saying that at all. What I am asking is: How does the constituent in Cedros or Tabaquite know of the committee's existence? There are no publications to the effect. There is nothing in either the print or electronic media saying, "Listen, there is a committee sitting in Port of Spain, or wherever, and persons who are desirous of making submissions can address it."

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For instance, when the Ombudsman visits San Fernando, there is an advertisement [*Interruption*] The Member would have an opportunity to speak and I would allow him to speak after. The Ombudsman would have an advertisement placed in the newspapers stating, "I shall be at the Town Hall in San Fernando. Persons desirous of meeting me can do same." Members of Parliament also have advertisements from time to time so people would know where they can be reached. Legal Aid does it.

The point is that this information does not come. Do not say that it is the responsibility of the Member of Parliament. Certainly, he has that responsibility, but the Member of Parliament cannot see everybody. It is impossible.

Madam Speaker: I was talking about a responsibility on the parliamentarian, vis a-vis the boundaries. We are under the Act we are considering here today—the Elections and Boundaries Commission Act. You have an interest in the boundaries. All Members of the House have an interest in the boundaries. So, if there are valid points to be made with respect to these boundaries, you have a right to make them to this committee. I mean, John Public does not have an interest in boundaries, it is the parliamentarians who do.

6.55 p.m.

Mr. Haniff: Yes, Madam Speaker, they have an interest in the boundaries.

Mr. C. Sharma: Madam Speaker, you remarked earlier, and it is very unfortunate when you hear only one side of the comments. I have no difficulty when my socks are being pulled up. I am a young Member of Parliament and I am here to grow as well. I have said to the Member for Diego Martin Central that when I come here I am prepared to go 24 hours.

Other Members are saying that I have nothing else to say. Madam Speaker, you do not hear those things, you do not make any comment. I am not here to point out who is saying it, I have no difficulty with it. The crosstalk is important, it is very healthy but it is unfortunate that only when the crosstalk comes from this side it is heard.

Madam Speaker: I am more concerned with the substance of the debate which is the boundaries. We are dealing with the boundaries, hon. Member. You were making a valid point with respect to the boundaries and I am simply giving you some guidance as to how it can reach the proper quarters. To me that was more substantial. Proceed, please.

Mr. C. Sharma: It is important that the committee's functions are extended to incorporate maximum participation. How do we do that? By getting into the newspapers and through the electronic media. As representatives of the people—and the point was made by previous Members—we are finding ourselves doing more and more of the regional representatives' work for the simple reason that they are finding great difficulty in facing their constituents. They do not have the resources.

There is a health scare in this country from malaria, as a result everybody wants to have his area sprayed. If there is an electoral area extending for 60 miles, as was pointed out by the Member for Nariva, it is extremely difficult to spray that 60 miles. The Member for Arouca North will say that is 60 miles, but there are only 6,000 homes. That is not the point. If one child gets malaria and dies, that is one too many and that is our responsibility. Again, it is not a question of changing the boundaries—and the Member for Diego Martin East said move the child to San Fernando—it does not work that way. Resources must be distributed in such a way that they are available to the maximum number of people.

As the Member for Siparia indicated, we are aware that resources are limited; the question is how they are distributed. Madam Speaker, you will recall in the old days—and I am sure the Member for Diego Martin Central recalls—there was very little money in our homes. There was the breadwinner who worked occasionally and was able to spread his resources to make sure that there were always food and clothing in the home. That kind of sharing existed in homes, neighbourhoods and communities.

The intention of local government was to incorporate communities. We have seen it over the last 10 to 12 years. When the Government came into power, it indicated that it would make every attempt to incorporate the village councils and so forth. It has not come about. One of the reasons for this is that the geographical areas do not facilitate it—because of the spread. Certainly there are other factors; the Government would have to explore what those factors are. We are in total support of the idea that more people getting involved would be the best approach. To date nothing has happened. Why? Because of lack of consultation.

We have come to the point that the report of the Elections and Boundaries Commission has been brought to the Parliament. The Member in moving it asked that the report be approved. We have submitted on this side that in approving any report or any matter in this House, it must be in the interest of the national

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community. No Member on that side—and unfortunately there was only one speaker—has indicated to us in the smallest degree how the adoption of this report is going to benefit any member of the national community.

We moved an amendment which was voted out, but time is the greatest healer. I suggest that the Government adjourn the House to another day; examine everything we have said—there must be something of value—and let us continue next Friday. Small as it might be, drop by drop the buckets are filled. One vote, one vote and we have come here.

Madam Speaker, I submit that the debate at this point be adjourned until next Friday when the submissions can be looked at, the Members opposite can agree or disagree; extract the good points from what we have presented and let us approve a report that is to the benefit of the national community.

I thank you very much.

The Minister of Works and Transport and Minister of Local Government (Hon. Colm Imbert): Madam Speaker, I shall try to be as brief as possible as I address a few of the points made.

The Member for St. Augustine made the point that we could make a simple change to the law to allow a base of 8,000 in the application of section 2 of the Elections and Boundaries Commission Act, Part II.

The fact of the matter is that this is not a simple issue. When one looks at the existing cities and boroughs one sees that the number of electors that are served by a councillor in a city or a borough varies from 4,900 to 2,280. One sees, therefore, that even if one were to apply the proposal of the Member for St. Augustine, this might only address certain perceived anomalies within the municipalities, but the cities and the boroughs would still have much smaller numbers than what would arise from the proposal of the Member.

One cannot look at this matter in isolation. One cannot say, in the regions 7,000 electors is a good number per councillor, but in the cities and boroughs 3,000 or 4,000 is all right. One cannot look at it in a vacuum. One needs to look at it comprehensively. In fact, this Boundaries Committee which has been working extensively since its appointment in 1992 has, in fact, considered that reality. It has looked at some of the existing city and borough areas.

There has been the areas that have developed over the last several years with the migration of population away from urban centres into suburban and even rural areas, and also the creation of new urban and suburban centres, such as in the

eastern part of Trinidad, where there are large residential communities which have built up over the last several years—La Horquetta, Maloney, D'Abadie and so forth. These areas are approaching the status of townships where before there was no population whatsoever.

The committee has examined facts such as this and population migration and demographics throughout the country and has, in fact, indicated there may be need to take another look at the boroughs and cities to see whether the boundaries of the borough and cities themselves should either be contracted or expanded to deal with these new realities.

In addition, much consideration has been given to exactly what defines a borough. Is it population density? Is it the size of the electoral area? Is it the number of commercial or residential centres? Is it the number of industrial companies active in the area? In fact, if one looks at the Great Britain situation, a borough is defined by a number of criteria such as population density, size, the number of industrial and commercial centres and persons can apply for their local government district to be elevated to the status of borough, once it meets certain criteria.

The committee is looking at it from a holistic viewpoint and may very well, at the end of the day, recommend additional boroughs, changes in the size of the cities and boroughs or shrinkage of certain electoral areas.

7.05 p.m.

As a matter of fact, at a very well-attended seminar that we had under the aegis of the Ministry of Local Government, in December 1994, which was represented by all political entities, presentations were made by persons who are elected members and appointed members of local government corporations throughout the spectrum of the Government and the Opposition. The point was made at that forum that it was the feeling of many that the previous system of county councils was a better system.

There is a divergence of views in the country, therefore, one cannot simply say fix the base at 8,000 for three regional corporations and amend the law. We are often accused in this House of tinkering with legislation and making piecemeal amendments to them. Therefore, I do not share the view that in this particular instance, we should just make a simple change that may become irrelevant when the Boundaries Committee has submitted its recommendations. The Boundaries Committee may recommend, and at some time this House may accept, a reversion to the old county council system or the creation of new boroughs. This is a very complex issue.

Mr. Humphrey: Madam Speaker, would the hon. Minister indicate to this House what deadline was given to the committee, if any, for reporting, so that the Government can consider amendments to the legislation? He said it was established in 1992.

Hon. C. Imbert: Madam Speaker, the committee was formed in 1992. In the course of its work, it went into the areas that I have just mentioned; the whole question of looking at it from a holistic viewpoint. As a result of the far-reaching implications of some of the recommendations if they are accepted, the committee had found it necessary to engage in extensive consultation with the local government bodies themselves. This is taking place.

I do not think that we would be able to reach a point to address the matter in the context of the Motion we are debating today, for the committee to be able to give a final report within the time frame that would be necessary for this Motion. I hope that in the near future, a report will come in and all Members would have an opportunity to send in memoranda to meet with the committee and give their views. I expect a report would be submitted in the near future, but not within the time frame required for this Motion.

In addition, a number of statements have been made about 10,000 persons being too many electors for a single councillor to address. I am advised that the Member for Arouca North served with distinction in the county of St. George East, as the councillor for D'Abadie, Bon Air/La Horquette, which included Maloney. He served an electoral district with over 10,000 electors.

Mr. Hosein: Madam Speaker, on a point of order. I thank the Minister for giving way. The point we were making is not that it was too much because obviously, in local government bodies abroad 10,000 persons are a drop in the bucket. The point we were making is that given the present-day resources, 5,000 people cannot be serviced and another 5,000 would be added.

I also want to make the point that the Member for Arouca North would say that in those days, the allocation in 1982 was about three times what it is today. It is a whole question of resources.

Mr. Narine: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I never made that statement that the resources were three times as much.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Member states that you should make the point.

Mr. Narine: I should make the point? On the question about the area where I represented 10,000 persons, the Member is making the point that that is a drop

in the sea when it is compared with other countries. We have a better system here of road networks and communication, so that the area would have been wider. Whether it is larger or smaller it is the same amount of finances we have to service these corporations. It does not make a difference.

Hon. C. Imbert: Madam Speaker, I am very thankful for that intervention. My hon. Friend the Member for Arouca North has made the point which clearly escaped everybody on the other side. If you have an allocation of \$20 million for the Mayaro/Rio Claro Regional Corporation, for example, whether there are 10 councillors or five, it is the same \$20 million. The councillor who previously served 5,000 persons had access to one tenth of the resources; another councillor now serving 10,000 has access to one fifth of the resources. The point is not correct. The resources remain the same. When the number of districts is reduced, you give more resources to the councillors where the numbers have been reduced. The argument has absolutely no logic.

Let me re-emphasize. Whether it is two councillors serving a district with certain resources, or one serving a district with twice the amount of resources, it all amounts to the same. It is simple arithmetic. If there are 10 districts and \$1 million, it would be \$100,000 each; if there are five districts and \$1 million, it would be \$200,000 each.

Mr. Sharma: Madam Speaker, the point that we were advancing is that if the constituent has to leave Rio Claro and come to Couva to get a truck to do something at his place, it would be cheaper and easier to get the truck from the Princes Town Regional Corporation to attend to that. The geographical spread is too big. That is where money would be saved and the resources would be spread better. It would be more economical.

Hon. C. Imbert: Madam Speaker, what I find a bit surprising in the context of what has been said in this debate is that the Member used the example of the representative from Cedros who, by the way is a PNM representative—and I am not aware that he has been complaining about taking a taxi to Siparia—I do not know where the Member for Fyzabad got the information about a PNM representative. Under the old county council system, that district was in the County of St. Patrick. This was a huge area and the regional administrative office was in the same place, so that the councillor had to travel the same distance to go to the administrative office.

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7.15 p.m.

I am sorry to say that I get the impression that Members come here and do not do proper research. It is very unfortunate. Many of the points which were made could have been avoided if Members had looked at the history of this whole matter in terms of the number of electors that used to be in the districts in the old and new system. They should have looked at boundaries and distances from administrative centres; if they had looked at it thoroughly many of the points they made here would not have been made. If simple arithmetic had been done, this whole concept of someone having twice as many people to serve, but not getting any more resources would not have been put forward because it is simply not correct.

I need to correct a few other points made. Members on the other side made the point that corporations controlled by the present administration have no difficulty in obtaining funding, whereas Opposition controlled corporations have problems and get their funding at the end of the year. That is absolutely untrue.

As a matter of fact, at the last meeting of mayors and chairmen of local government corporations that I held, the chairman of the Princes Town Corporation was making the point to other chairmen of councils, including PNM councils, that this was one of his best years in terms of releases; that he had received funding quicker and in excess of several other corporations, including corporations controlled by the People's National Movement.

So, these statements are simply not correct. I, in my capacity as Minister of Local Government, meet with mayors and chairmen of local government corporations—whether they be PNM or UNC—regularly and at no time does the question come up that there is discrimination between corporations, and that this one is getting funding quicker than that one. Absolutely not! The whole question of funding has to do with the efficiency of the corporations themselves and, as I said, the Princes Town chairman was quite pleased to point out to his colleagues that he had been so efficient that he had accessed funding quicker than they.

When one looks at the allocations for vehicles, equipment and so forth in the 1995 Budget, one sees that a number of Opposition corporations have had allocations for new vehicles and equipment, whereas some government corporations have received no such allocations. The allegations are simply untrue. That system does not operate in local government. We deal with everybody equitably. The people in the system, not the people in this House, can attest to that.

Let me also deal with some other issues. The Member for Diego Martin Central had to intervene in this debate to make the point that what we are about today is simply an exercise in law.

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: There is legislation relating to local government boundaries and the Elections and Boundaries Commission has applied the rules under the legislation. As I said, we cannot tamper with these recommendations in the simple manner that the Member for St. Augustine suggests. Although there may be merit in his argument, I do not believe it is prudent to do so.

What is the magic about 8,000? It could be 7,000, 6,000 or 3,000. These are matters which must be studied very carefully because they have far-reaching implications. Many of the points raised here, as far as we are concerned, are not relevant. The whole question of the number of electors that a councillor serves is not relevant. The whole question of the geographic size that a councillor serves is not relevant unless taken in a holistic context. It would not be relevant if taken in a vacuum. One cannot make a bold statement that 11,000 electors are too many and 2,000 are too few. One must do it in the context of population density, demographics and so forth. A number of the points are not correct. Areas which have a high population density have a greater demand on resources in terms of garbage collection and maintenance of infrastructure, for example. One must look at these things from all sides.

I wish to give this House the assurance, that once the committee which has been set up—and it is a committee comprising experts: officials from the Elections and Boundaries Commission, Town and Country Planning Division and so forth—completes its deliberations and we look at a new policy for local government boundaries and so forth in Trinidad, we would then be in a position to make whatever amendments to the legislation are required. At this time, I do not think it appropriate and prudent.

One final point. The Member for Naparima quoted at length from a document prepared by the former administration. He extolled the virtues of the former administration in terms of its vision for local government and lambasted the Members on this side for not understanding and following the vision of the former administration in terms of the changes that they made to local government.

I have in front of me the manifesto of the United National Congress—Local Government Elections, September 28, 1992. Will the Member for Naparima please sit up! Let us read, page 7:

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“Local Government under the NAR

In the Local Government election of 1987 the NAR promised that Local Government will be released ‘from the stranglehold of Central Government.’”

And I think some of the Members on the other side may have had a hand in writing this, but they have not spoken to the Member for Naparima.

“After winning, however, those in control reneged on their promise and set about to tighten the control over Local Government ... This was capped off by Act. 21 of 1990 ...”

This is the fantastic vision that the Member referred to:

“which purported to decentralise and devolve power into the hands of Local Government Bodies but which, in fact, put more power into the hands of the Minister responsible for Local Government.”

And they are talking about the NAR whose virtues he extolled.

“Their commitment to decentralization turned out to be mere rhetoric.”

I am reading the whole document. So that the manifesto which perhaps the Members for Siparia and Princes Town—who have experience in the field of local government, for whom I have the greatest respect and who make excellent contributions to debates in this House—must have been involved in the drafting, debunked the NAR vision for local government, the virtues of which the hon. Member for Naparima extolled in this House.

Mr. S. Panday: I said “I did not agree with the former regime but, they had a vision.” That was the point my Friend missed.

Hon. C. Imbert: At no time did I hear that Member say he did not agree. He said they had a vision and he went on and “explashed”. When one goes through, they tore the NAR vision to shreds in this local government manifesto.

While we are at it, when one looks at the General Elections manifesto of the United National Congress for 1991, it is a shadow in comparison to this beautiful document, the PNM manifesto, in which there is actually an entire section devoted to local government.

“The PNM reaffirms its commitment to a system of local government which ensures that the people have the opportunity to assume authority and management of their own communities.”

There is a whole section devoted to it. The United National Congress manifesto has no section. It makes passing reference, in an obscure section, to local

government, under something to do with public utilities. It does not deal holistically with the question at all.

In 1991, no dedicated section in this manifesto to local government; in 1992 the UNC lambasted the NAR for their vision. Those are the facts, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

7.25 p.m.

It is really distressing sometimes when Members on the other side speak. It is clear that they do not talk to one another, because if they did, they would not make these kinds of statements, at variance with official policy documents.

Let me also correct the record. The allocations for local government are spread proportionately throughout the country in the context of the geographic size; it has nothing to do with who controls which corporations. I would not tell my hon. colleague too much about the statement he made that "any worker in the world who had the opportunity to sit down whole day and do no work would do so, and if I were in the same position I would do the same," except to say that I am not sure that his colleagues share that view. I am sure that there are Members on the other side who are very hard-working. Even when it is difficult because of resources and so forth, to do so, they take the initiative and create the circumstances which allow them to work very productively.

There is really not much else I can say, except to reiterate that what we are about today is simply following a process of law. While we appreciate the contribution of the Member for St. Augustine—and I sincerely do appreciate his contribution—that there is a need to look at the way the rules have affected the outcome of the exercise, I do believe that this cannot be done in isolation. It cannot be done with a simple change to one aspect of the rules. I believe that we must look at it holistically; look at the cities, the boroughs, the corporations, see whether we need new boroughs, to expand cities, shrink cities and so forth.

Therefore, I cannot at this time accede to that request, but I give the Member for St. Augustine the assurance that as soon as the committee has finished its deliberations, I will make contact with the hon. Member and allow him the opportunity to make a full and comprehensive comment. I am certain that any matter he raises that has merit will be addressed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft of The Elections and Boundaries Commission's (Local Government) Order, 1994 be approved.

ORAL ANSWER TO QUESTION

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, question No. 59 which was agreed to be taken at a later stage, will be taken now.

**Tourist Attraction Development
(Tabaquite Constituency)**

59. Dr. Carl Singh (*Tabaquite*) asked the Minister of Tourism:

- (a) Could the Minister state whether the Tourist Attraction Development in the Tabaquite constituency is still in operation?
- (b) If the answer is in the affirmative, could the Minister state:
 - (i) What is the recurrent annual expenditure for its maintenance?
 - (ii) The number of tourists visiting during the period January 1, 1994 to December 31, 1994?
 - (iii) What revenues were collected over the same period?
- (c) If the answer is in the negative, could the Minister state what has become of the facilities that have been put in place?

The Minister of Finance and Minister of Tourism (Hon. Wendell Mottley): Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Minister of Tourism assumes that the Member is referring to Knolly's Tunnel. Knolly's Tunnel is a quarter mile long disused railway tunnel in Tabaquite. The ministry does not view it as a major tourist attraction, although it does have some local interest.

The tunnel was restored in 1991, but since then has not been maintained. In 1993, however, the Civilian Conservation Corps identified the project for repair and began clearing the tunnel. During 1994, materials were procured and work is expected to begin in April, 1995. It is proposed thereafter that the facility be turned over to the regional corporation for administration and maintenance.

Dr. Singh: Mr. Deputy Speaker, could the Minister say what is the purpose of the electrical supplies to that unit at the moment? Secondly, what has happened to the unit of the horse and buggy?

Hon. W. Mottley: Mr. Deputy Speaker, obviously the Member for Tabaquite is a local tourist and has far more information than I have on Knolly's Tunnel. I will, however, seek the information that he has requested.

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move that this House do now adjourn to Friday, March 17, 1995 at 1.30 p.m.

I should like to inform hon. Members that we would be debating the Finance Bill 1995 at the next sitting of the House.

I should also like to say that by arrangement with the Chief Whip, we are deferring Motions on the Adjournment today.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 7.33 p.m.

WRITTEN ANSWER TO QUESTIONS

**Penal/Debe Regional Corporation
(Contracts Awarded)**

The following question was asked by Mr. Sahid Hosein (Siparia):

- 75.** (a) Would the Minister of Local Government indicate to this House how many contracts were awarded by the Penal/Debe Regional Corporation for the past six months?
- (b) Would he indicate what procedures were used to award these contracts?
- (c) To whom were these contracts awarded; for what purpose and at what price?
- (d) Will he provide the technical evaluations supporting these contracts?

The following reply was circulated to Members of the House.

- (a) The Penal/Debe Regional Corporation has advised that it awarded 22 contracts during the past six months.
- (b) The corporation has advised that the procedures used are based on guidelines stipulated by the Central Tenders Board Regulations. These

procedures involve obtaining quotations for services required and evaluation based on price, quality, ability to supply and performance record, then the most suitable one is accepted.

- (c) The corporation has advised that the contracts awarded, their purposes and prices are as detailed in Appendix I.
- (d) The corporation has advised that technical evaluations for the 22 contracts are based on the parameters mentioned in (b) above: re price, ability to supply, performance record and quality.

APPENDIX I

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER AWARDS (\$5,000.00 LIMIT)

Item	Contract	Contractors Name	Price (\$)
1.	Supply of one fire extinguisher at Penal Abattoir	Frank Mouttet Ltd.	1,000.00
2.	Supply of water for Penal Abattoir	S. K. Bhikarrie	80.00
3.	Hire of a roller	R. Mahabir and Sons	485.00
4.	Supply of bronze sliding window	Geddes Grant Industries	434.25
5.	Fabricate burglar proffing for Penal Sub office	Paul Rooplal	785.00
6.	Welding repairs work for Penal Rock Road	ALTYP Enterprises Ltd.	800.00
7.	Welding works at Scotts Road Recreation Ground Pavilion	Paul Rooplal	675.00
8.	Augering works at La Fortune/Pluck landslip	Trinidad Auger Piles	2,790.00
9.	Printing of Food Premises approval sticker	Singh's Printery	1,000.00
10.	Welding construction works for Latchmandass Tr. Bridge	ALTYP Enterprises Ltd.	2,125.00
11.	Preparation of turf wicket, Wilson Road Recreation Ground for Nov. and Dec. 1994	Mukesh Persad	1,950.00

Item	Contract	Contractors Name	Price (\$)
	To prepare cricket pitches and outfields for:		
12.	Morne Diablo Recreation Ground	Egune Webb	1,200.00
13.	Wilson Road Recreation Ground	Suruj Mahabir	3,600.00
14.	Penal Road Road #2	Adesh Sampath	1,500.00
15.	Chapman Park	Mubarak Ali	1,800.00
16.	Congo Hill	Devanand Ragoonanan	4,500.00
17.	Abdool Aziz (Luck Street)	Anil Bhagowtee	1,200.00
18.	Mendez Village	Rabindranath Ramlal	1,800.00
19.	Penal Rock Road #1	Gildharry Rampersad	1,800.00
20.	Scott Road	Dalip Ramsamooj	1,800.00
21.	Boucaud Trace	Horace Bhagaloo	3,500.00
22.	Dabiedial Road	Deolal Sahatoo	1,800.00

**Cricket Pitches and Outfields
(Procedures)**

The following question was asked by Mr. Sahid Hosein (Siparia):

- 76.** (a) Would the Minister of Local Government indicate to this House what procedures were put in place in 1995 for the preparation of cricket pitches and outfields on grounds under the jurisdiction of the Penal/Debe Regional Corporation?
- (b) How much money was allocated for each named ground?
- (c) To whom were these moneys paid and what procedure was used to allocate these moneys?
- (d) Whether there are technical evaluations to justify the sum spent on the repair of each ground?

The following reply was circulated to Members of the House:

- (a) In 1995, the procedures used for the preparation of cricket pitches and outfields under the jurisdiction of the Penal/ Regional Corporation involved negotiating with relevant cricket clubs in the regions to carry out the necessary work.

- (b) The corporation has advised that the name of the grounds and money allocated to them are included in Appendix attached.
- (c) The corporation has advised that no money has been paid to date. The negotiated cost for each ground was based on the evaluations carried by technical officers of the corporations. Parameters considered in the evaluations include sizes of grounds as well as scope of works to be implemented.
- (d) Technical evaluations were done by officers of the corporation to ascertain the estimated cost of preparation of cricket pitches and outfield. On completion of work, technical evaluations will be carried out by officers of the corporation to ensure that grounds are properly prepared before payments are effected to the clubs.

APPENDIX

NAME OF RECREATION GROUND	SIZE (HECTARES)	ALLOCATIONS	NAME OF SPORT CLUB REPRESENTATIVES RESPONSIBLE FOR CONTRACT	SCOPE OF WORK
Mohess Road	1.2	1,800.00	Salick Jagroop	Brush, cut, grade, supply 12m ³ earthfill and level
Scotts Road	1.6	3,000.00	Dalip Ramsamooj	Brush, cut, grade supply 320m ³ earthfill and level.
Mendez Trace	1.6	1,800.00	Rabindranath Ramlal	Brush, cut, grade, supply 96m ³ earthfill and level.
Boucaud Trace	1.6	1,800.00	Horace Bhagaloo	Brush, cut, grade, supply 320m ³ earthfill and level.
Lucky Street	.8	1,200.00	Anil Bhagoutie	Brush, cut, grade, supply 64m ³ earthfill and level.
Chapman Park	1.8	1,800.00	Mubarak Ali	Brush, cut, grade, supply 64m ³ earthfill and level.
Congo Village	2.5	4,500.00	Devanand Ragoonan	Brush, cut, grade, supply 240m ³ earthfill and level.
Wilson Road	1.6	3,600.00	Surju Mahabir	Brush, cut, grade, supply 64m ³ earthfill and level.
Clarke Rochard	1.6	1,800.00	Murali Baboolal	Brush, cut, grade, supply 96m ³ earthfill and level.
Penal Rock Rd #1	1.4	1,800.00	Gildharry Rampersad	Brush, cut, grade, supply 96m ³ earthfill and level.
Penal Rock Rd #2	.8	1,500.00	Adesh Sampath	Brush, cut, grade, supply 96m ³ earthfill and level.
Dabiedial Rd.	1.6	1,800.00	Deolal Sahatoo	Brush, cut, grade, supply 96m ³ earthfill and level.