

*Leave of Absence**Friday, May 12, 1995***HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES***Friday, May 12, 1995*

The House met at 1.38 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 Arima (Dr. Rupert Griffith).

FIREARMS (AMDT.) BILL

Bill to amend the Firearms Act, Chap. 16:01, brought from the Senate *[The Minister of National Security]*; read the first time.

PAPERS LAID

1. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Agricultural Society of Trinidad and Tobago for the year ended December 31, 1987. *[The Minister of Finance (Hon. Wendell Mottley)]*
To be referred to the Public Accounts
2. Annual Report and Annual Audited Statement of accounts of the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago for the year ended December 31, 1994. *[Hon. W. Mottley]*
3. The Immigration (Amendment) Regulations, 1995. *[The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley)]*

OLYMPIC COMMITTEE (INC'N.) BILL

Question put and agreed to, That a Bill to provide for the incorporation of the Trinidad and Tobago Olympic Committee and for matters incidental thereto, be now read the first time.

Bill accordingly read the first time.

KALA BHAIRAVA FOUNDATION (INC'N.) BILL

Question put and agreed to, That a Bill to provide for the incorporation of the Kala Bhairava Foundation and matters incidental thereto, be now read the first time.

Bill accordingly read the first time.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Madam Speaker, I am extremely pleased to report that the Government will be answering all 13 questions on the Order Paper.

**Road Improvement Programme
(Penal/Debe Regional Corporation)**

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

- (a) Would the Minister indicate to this House what works will be undertaken in 1995 under the Road Improvement Programme and under the recurrent programme on the following roads:
 - (i) S. S. Erin Road between 0 mm to 10 mm;
 - (ii) Papourie Road;
 - (iii) Rochard Road;
 - (iv) Clarke Road;
 - (v) Penal Rock Road; and
 - (vi) Scotts Road?
- (b) Would the Minister also indicate what secondary roads within the Penal/Debe Regional Corporation will be repaired in 1995 under the Road Improvement Programme?

The Minister of Works and Transport and Minister of Local Government (Hon. Colm Imbert): Madam Speaker, with respect to S.S. Erin Road, under the Road Improvement Fund Programme, it is expected that a total of \$400,000 will be expended on continuing road improvement works including patching and other rehabilitative works in 1995.

In addition, it is expected that a cylinder crossing at the 3.75 mm will be replaced and a landslip between the 10.75 and 11.00 mm will be repaired. There will be drainage construction to repair a defective drain at the 9.00 mm.

Under the recurrent programme, additional patching works will be done on a phased basis depending on the availability of funds.

With respect to Papourie Road, under the Road Improvement Fund Programme, the sum of \$300,000 is allocated to undertake a number of different road improvement works.

In addition, there will be repairs to landslips between the 7.00 and 7.50 mm for a distance of approximately 30 metres.

Under the recurrent programme, limited patching works will be undertaken.

In 1995, efforts to improve the condition of Rochard Road will continue with funding from the Road Improvement Fund Programme in the sum of \$30,000. Work will also continue to improve the road drainage by opening new drains or constructing an open box drain and curb and slipper drains as required. Apart from this, two retaining walls will be constructed at the 3.5 mm and 4.0 mm.

With respect to Clarke Road, in 1995, under the Road Improvement Fund Programme, road rehabilitation works will be undertaken at a cost of \$60,000. In addition, an out fall box drain will be constructed between the 0.2 and 0.5 mm.

With respect to Penal Rock Road, programmed for 1995 is expenditure of \$20,000 primarily for patching, as well as construction of two curb and slipper drains between the 6 mm and 8 mm.

In addition, two bridges—B4/3 and B1/4—will be improved.

With respect to Scotts Road, maintenance and rehabilitation works will be done under the recurrent programme.

Routine maintenance will be undertaken on all the roads in question in accordance with the work cycle of the various districts. It is expected also that other routine maintenance works, such as cleaning and cutlassing, will be done on the cycle at least six times per year.

The following secondary roads which are within the purview of the Penal/Debe Regional Corporation are being considered for inclusion in the Road Improvement Fund Programme in 1995:

- (i) Union Hall Settlement
- (ii) Latchoo's Road
- (iii) La Fortune Pluck Road
- (iv) Tulsa Trace

These local roads carry an International Roughness Index of 12.62 and an Internal Rate of Return of 18.5. A final decision on the inclusion of these roads in the 1995 programme will be made within the next month.

Mr. Hosein: Madam Speaker, a supplementary question. Since only one of the traces listed falls in the constituency of Siparia, will the hon. Minister consider adding Ragoo Trace, Goodman Trace and Hassanali Trace North to that list?

Hon. C. Imbert: Madam Speaker, the information given to this honourable House is based on representations made by the relevant local government corporation. If the Member can formally communicate with the ministry, consideration will be given to those roads.

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Madam Speaker, I seek the leave of this House to have question No. 84 stand down for answer at a later stage of the proceedings.

Leave granted.

Restoration of Bad Roads

98. Mr. Raymond Palackdharrysingh (Caroni Central): asked the Minister of Works and Transport and Minister of Local Government:

- (a) Would the Minister state whether he is aware of the bad condition of Freeport Village Road, Arena Road, La Cuesa Road, Enterprise Road, and the Old Southern Main Road from Montrose to Edinburgh 500?
- (b) If the answer is in the affirmative, would the Minister state when the necessary corrective measures will be taken for the restoration of these roads?

The Minister of Works and Transport and Minister of Local Government (Hon. Colm Imbert): Madam Speaker, the Minister of Works and Transport and Minister of Local Government is aware of the condition of Freeport Village Road, Arena Road, La Cuesa Road, Enterprise Road and the Old Southern Main Road from Montrose to Edinburgh 500.

Freeport Village Road is 1.6 km long and 5 m wide. Average daily traffic is about 500 with an Internal Rate of Return of 8. Extensive rehabilitation work is required to bring the road up to an acceptable standard. Repairs are estimated to cost \$500,000.

Arena Road is 3.2 km long and 5 m wide. Average daily traffic is approximately 200 with an Internal Rate of Return of 14. Extensive rehabilitation work is required to bring this road up to an acceptable standard. Repairs are estimated to cost \$960,000.

Freeport Village Road and Arena Road are both commonly referred to collectively as the Freeport/Arena Road.

La Cuesa Road is 1.7 km long and approximately 4 m wide with an average daily traffic in excess of 200 and an Internal Rate of Return of 12. It is anticipated that \$250,000 will be required for upgrading works.

Enterprise Road is 1.6 km long and 5.8 m wide with an average daily traffic of 350 and an Internal Rate of Return of 9. It is estimated that \$400,000 will be required for full rehabilitation of this road.

With respect to the Old Southern Main Road from Montrose to Edinburgh 500, the section of road under consideration is 800 m long and 7 m wide with the following characteristics:-

- (a) 0 m—200 m has an average daily traffic of 1,500 and an Internal Rate of Return of 7. This section requires overlay.
- (b) 200 m—600 m has an average daily traffic of 200 and an Internal Rate of Return of 9. This section requires patching and overlay.
- (c) 600 m—800 m has an average daily traffic of 200 and an Internal Rate of Return of 16. This section requires complete reconstruction.

A programme to immediately alleviate user inconvenience will cost \$75,000. Complete rehabilitation will cost \$227,000.

With respect to the Freeport Village Road, the sum of \$100,000 is proposed to be spent on upgrading works in 1995. Additional work can be continued in 1996 and beyond as funds become available.

Under the 1995 Road Improvement Fund Programme it is proposed that an initial sum of \$150,000 be spent on upgrading works in order to alleviate some of the inconveniences experienced by the travelling public. Additional work can be continued in 1996 and beyond as funds become available. In the interim, maintenance works, that is, patching of potholes and so forth, will be undertaken normally.

Work on the La Cuesa Road will be undertaken under the 1996 Road Improvement Fund Programme.

Under the 1995 Road Improvement Fund Programme, the sum of \$150,000 is proposed to be spent on Enterprise Road.

With respect to the Old Southern Main Road from Montrose to Edinburgh 500, during 1995, the Ministry of Works and Transport will undertake patching works using hot mix from Agua Santa as part of its routine maintenance programme.

MOTHER'S DAY GREETINGS

Miss Hulsie Bhaggan (*Chaguanas*): Madam Speaker, I wish the Minister of Community Development, Culture and Women's Affairs a happy Mother's Day.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

**Pierre/Tahadille Multicultural Complex
(Completion of)**

84. Miss Hulsie Bhaggan (*Chaguanas*): asked the Minister of Community Development, Culture and Women's Affairs:

Would the Minister indicate:

- (a) Whether she is aware that the completion of the Pierre/Tahadille Multicultural Complex has been outstanding since 1991?
- (b) The cost of and whether she intends to complete that project?
- (c) If the answer is in the affirmative, when will work begin?

The Minister of Works and Transport and Minister of Local Government (Hon. Colm Imbert): Madam Speaker, the Ministry of Local Government is aware that the completion of the Pierre/Tahadille Multicultural Complex is outstanding.

The ministry has consequently requested the Chaguanas Borough Corporation to make the necessary arrangements to take over the Complex and to complete the necessary works.

At the statutory meeting on March 21, 1995, Chaguanas Borough Corporation agreed to take over the Complex. The Corporation is presently liaising with Caroni (1975) Limited in an attempt to settle the outstanding sum of \$586,566 owed to Caroni (1975) Limited in respect of this project before the necessary handover and completion of the Cultural Complex can be effected.

**Road Improvement Programme
(Work to be Undertaken)**

105. Dr. Carl Singh (*Tabaquite*): asked the Minister of Works and Transport and Minister of Local Government:

Would the Minister indicate to this House what repairs will be undertaken in 1995 under the Road Improvement Programme and under the recurrent programme on the following roads:

- (a) Guaracara/Tabaquite Road from the Tabaquite Composite School to the Guaracara Junction;
- (b) From the Bypass, San Fernando along to Gasparillo, Bonne Aventure through Happy Hill, Morne Roche, Poonah, Whitelands, Williamsville; and
- (c) Forres Park/Tortuga Road?

The Minister of Works and Transport and Minister of Local Government (Hon. Colm Imbert): Madam Speaker, with reference to the Guaracara/Tabaquite Road between 0 mm and 12.36 mm, the section of road in question starts at around the 10 mm on the Guaracara/Tabaquite Road and ends at the junction of the Rio Claro Tabaquite Road. The Victoria West District is responsible for up to the 12.36 mm, and beyond is within the purview of the Caroni District.

Last year, under the Road Improvement Fund Programme, a substantial amount of reshaping and spot patching work was done between the 0 mm and 10 mm resulting in 15,623 m² of roadway being paved with the district expending \$728,444. These works resulted in the improvement of the riding condition of the road with the International Roughness Index decreasing from an average of nine to around six. The section of the road in question had a class 4 average daily traffic, which is essentially approximately 15 per cent heavy axle loading due to the presence of numerous Guaracara materials quarries on the road.

Due to this large heavy axle loading, this section of the road is in an unsatisfactory state with an International Roughness Index of over 10. Under the recurrent votes, efforts are made continuously to keep the road passable using readily available Guaracara material from nearby quarries. However, this section of the road needs major strengthening, reshaping and reconstruction.

1.55 p.m.

Since the Internal Rate of Return for this road is 20, which is quite high, it was selected as one of the roads for rehabilitation under the Ministry's on-going Comprehensive Highway Maintenance Programme. The road is therefore programmed to be comprehensively reconstructed in 1997 under that programme.

Oral Answers to Questions
[HON. C. IMBERT]

Friday, May 12, 1995

Because of the present condition of this road, in this year, 1995, under the Road Improvement Fund Programme, a total of \$400,000 is expected to be expended in order to undertake the following works:

- (i) Repair of landslip located between the 11 mm and 11.25 mm;
- (ii) Replace two culverts;
- (iii) Improvement of the drainage system between the 4. mm and 6 mm and also between the 10 mm and the 12 mm by constructing curb and slipper drains; and
- (iv) Construction of approximately 25m of open box drain at the 2 mm.

It is expected that this expenditure of \$400,000 will reduce the International Roughness Index from 10 to 8. Due to the heavy loading and present state of this section of road, however, major rehabilitation is still required.

The hon. Member is referring basically to three roads which fall within the purview of the Victoria West District as follows:

- (a) Bonne Aventure Road
- (b) Morne Roche Quarry Road
- (c) Poonah Road

The information with regard to these three roads is as follows:

- (1) Bonne Aventure Road:

The section of Bonne Aventure Road in question is between the 1.6 mm and the 4.6 mm. Last year under the Road Improvement Fund Programme, a total of \$49,910 was expended to repair the critical section of this road, which was disturbed by WASA. It is virtually impossible, however, to repair this section of the road on a permanent basis because of the continuous WASA leaks and the fact that the Water and Sewerage Authority continuously excavates this section of the road to repair leaks. Until WASA replaces the entire pipeline on this road, it would be difficult to repair the road permanently.

Again, this year, under the Road Improvement Fund Programme, it is proposed to expend approximately \$150,000 to repair critical sections of the road. Efforts will be made again to liaise with WASA with a view to ensuring that the leaks are permanently repaired before attempting to completely reconstruct the road.

Under the recurrent programme one culvert is programmed for replacement between the 1.5 mm and the 1.75 mm, in addition to work on curb and slipper drains between the 1.7 mm and the 2.5 mm.

- (2) Morne Roche Quarry Road: The Morne Roche Quarry Road is approximately 2.8 miles long and presently in a fair condition. Under the recurrent programme, a number of works are programmed including cutlassing, drainage work, edging, shoulder works and patching.
- (3) Poonah Road: This road is approximately 1.17 miles and sustains the average daily traffic of 720 vehicles. Because of its low average daily traffic, and since the road is presently in a fair condition, no works are programmed for this road under the 1995 Road Improvement Fund Programme. However, under our recurrent programme, it is expected that the following works will be carried out: cutlassing, drainage works, edging, shoulder works, patching.

Finally, Madam Speaker, the Tortuga Road, which is 3.6 km long and 4.5 metres wide, has a daily traffic of 300. Due to the low average daily traffic, the Tortuga Road is also not included in the 1995 Road Improvement Fund Programme. However, routine maintenance work will continue on the Tortuga Road throughout 1995.

Road Repair

107. Mr. M. Haniff (*Princes Town*): asked the Minister of Works and Transport and Minister of Local Government to state:

- (a) Whether his ministry has any plans to repair the following roads:
 - (i) Torrib Tabaquite Road;
 - (ii) Realize Road; and
 - (iii) Garth Road?
- (b) If the reply is in the affirmative, would the Minister state:
 - (i) the type of repairs planned for each project;
 - (ii) the estimated cost of repairs;
 - (iii) when the repairs will begin; and
 - (iv) the anticipated date of completion?
(for each project)

The Minister of Works and Transport (Hon. Colm Imbert): Madam Speaker, the ministry has plans to repair Torrib Tabaquite Road, Realize Road and Garth Road.

With respect to the Torrib Tabaquite Road, repairs to this road will comprise the levelling of depressions and potholes and paving of a significant section of the roadway. The estimated cost of these repairs is \$1.2 million and the repair work is included within the ministry's seven-year Road Improvement Programme, 1994—2000.

With respect to Realize Road, repairs to this road comprise the filling of depressions, the patching of potholes and the paving with asphaltic hot mix, as is necessary. Again, the work on this road is programmed to be undertaken within the ministry's seven-year Road Improvement Programme, 1994, at a cost of \$1.2 million. Routine maintenance work will continue on this road in the interim.

With respect to Garth Road, it is proposed to carry out rehabilitation work on this road, including reshaping of the roadway, levelling and spot patching as well as some roadside drainage improvement in 1995. Work is estimated to cost \$324,000 and should begin by the end of May, 1995.

Carlsen Field Farmers

112. Mr. Raymond Palackdharrysingh (Caroni Central): asked the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources:

Would the Minister state:

- (a) The names of farmers and the sizes and purpose of farms which were allocated to them in Carlsen Field?
- (b) Whether the original purpose for allocating such farms is being observed?
- (c) Whether the support services for maintaining the viability of such farms were provided on a timely and sustained basis?

Madam Speaker: Question No. 115 is also to the Minister. Would you like to ask it so that the Minister can take them one after the other?

Mr. Palackdharrysingh: I prefer to ask it, Madam Speaker.

The Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources (The Hon. Dr. Keith Rowley): Madam Speaker, the names of the dairy and pig farmers at

Carlsen Field, their farm numbers and acreages allocated between 1968 and 1972 are as follows:

<i>Names</i>	<i>Farm No.</i>	<i>Acres</i>
Eric Lennard	1A	20
Balkissoon Jagmohan	1B	15
Sonny Tilkeran	1	15
Ganesh Ramoutar	2	15
Deo Kalladeen	3	15
Badrallie Mahaboob	4	15
Bagwandeem Rago	5	15
Ramdeo Durga	6	15
Pollard Jagmohan	7	15
Aldwyn Williams	8	15
Standford Lennard	10	15
Kelshall Lucien	11	15
Shaddock Toussaint	12	15
Brichnn Dass	13	15
Kelvin Lucien	14	15
Sonny Bejaisingh	15	15
Motilal Sookram	16	15
Rosanne Hospedales	17	15
Frederick Lynch	18	15
Martha Gueverra	19	15
Sunchan Saith	20	15
Kenneth Hamlet	22	15

Oral Answers to Questions
[HON. DR. K. ROWLEY]

Friday, May 12, 1995

<i>Names</i>	<i>Farm No.</i>	<i>Acres</i>
Lall Narine	23	15
Sidchand Jankie	24	15
Boodram Ramoutar	25	15
Harry Santoo	26	15
Oudit Roy Ramjattan	27	15
B. Boodoo	28	15
Pyaca Mahabir	30	15
George Lokai	31	15
Ramnarine Mahabir	32	15
Ronald Ramsingh	33	15
2.05 p.m.		
Harry Mannick	34	15
Ramdath Ramoutar	36	15
Ramnarine Ramoutar	37	15
Ram Madho	38	15
Ramdaye Rampersad	40	15
Rajkumar Ramdass	42	20
Sankar Seepersad	43	20
Jerry Lezama	44	20
Bootan Dhoray	45	20
Rooplall Roopchand	46	20
Motilal Jagnath	47	20
Errol Bissesser	48	20
Roy W. Wilson	49	20
Faizol Mohammed	50	20
Sumintra Jagmohan	51	20

*Oral Answers to Questions**Friday, May 12, 1995*

<i>Names</i>	<i>Farm No.</i>	<i>Acres</i>
Motiram Mahabir	52	20
Una Neckles	53	20
Khairul Santokie	54	20
Deodath Sooklal	55	20
Rookmin Kanhai	56	20
Teemul Samlal	57	20
George Poliah	58	20
Leon Williams	59	20
Mohan Jaggarsar	60	20
Dulcie Solomon	61	20
Ramdin Seecharan	62	20
Sookdeo Singh	63	20
Hubert Vincent	64	20
Glenford Lennard	65	20
Totaram Salick	66	20
Shuraice Chunilal	67	20
Ganey Ramanan	68	20
Cecelia Noel	69	20
Joan Moore	70	20
Soogrim Ballie/Edward Thompson	71	20

PIG FARMERS—CARLSEN FIELD

<i>Name</i>	<i>Farm No.</i>	<i>Acres</i>
Joan Lawrence	1	5
Gowkaran Seerattan	2	5
Clyde Niles	3	5
Joseph Coryat	4	5

Oral Answers to Questions
[HON. DR. K. ROWLEY]

Friday, May 12, 1995

<i>Name</i>	<i>Farm No.</i>	<i>Acres</i>
Samdaye Ragbirsingh	5	5
Deo Seemungal	6	5
Sonny Kalipersad	7	5
Herbert Sutherland	8	5
Aurthur Duncan	9	5
Tommy Yorke	10	5
Rampaul Babwah	11	5
Johnson Thomas	15	5
Neil Madray	16	5
Feliciano Deleon/Angela Cummings	17	5

Madam Speaker: Would the Member for Caroni Central like to say something?

Mr. Palackdharrysingh: Madam Speaker, I wonder if the Member could provide the other names as a written answer and continue with the other sections?

Madam Speaker: Knowing the length of the answer probably the Member could have agreed with the hon. Minister before. That would have saved so much time.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, this question was listed for Oral Answer and I am sure the Member would have known when he asked the question what the answer would have been. I have just completed the list of names.
[Interruption]

Madam Speaker, the question asked for the names of 67 dairy farmers and 14 pig farmers; 67 and 14 the Member must add those two figures. May I proceed, Madam Speaker?

Madam Speaker: Hon. Minister, in future, perhaps there can be some agreement on these types of questions with respect to part (a) and an oral answer to part (b) if the Member had requested that.

Proceed, please.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, I must mention that I am only proceeding as per the Standing Orders. I am not in a position to determine how an Oral Answer should be given other than orally.

I have just answered part (a), Madam Speaker, may I proceed to part (b) now?

Madam Speaker: Yes, you may.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: The original purpose for which the farms were allocated is generally being observed as most of the farms remain productively engaged in dairy or pig farming. *[Interruption]* Could I do that, Madam Speaker? The Member asked me to go through each farm to say what the status is.

Madam Speaker: Would the Member like this answer to continue or would he prefer to have it as a Written Answer?

Mr. Palackdharrysingh: I would prefer to have the answer in written form, Madam Speaker. *[Laughter]*

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, I would undertake to have my staff prepare the answer so that the Member could have the status of each farm individually.

May I proceed to answer part (c)?

Madam Speaker: Yes, you may.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: The support services for maintaining the viability of these farms are being provided on a timely and sustained basis. The services provided include extension, information and training services, veterinary services, artificial insemination services and access roads maintenance.

Agricultural Development Bank (Debt Owed)

113. Mr. Raymond Palackdharrysingh (*Caroni Central*) asked the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources:

- (a) How many farmers could not honour their financial obligations to the Agricultural Development Bank during the last 10 years?
- (b) The amount of debts owed to the Bank by the farmers?
- (c) The action taken by the Bank to recover same?

The Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources (Dr. The Hon. K. Rowley): Madam Speaker, is this question to be answered orally?

Madam Speaker: Hon. Member, would you like the answer to this question in written form?

Mr. Palackdharrysingh: Madam Speaker, I see no problem because this answer seems to be short, unless the Member wants to filibuster.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, I have no desire to filibuster, my only desire is to answer the question as comprehensively as I can. *[Interruption]* If the Member does not want the answer I would be happy not to give it. I am trying to facilitate.

2.15 p.m.

During the last 10 years, 2,300 farmers did not honour their financial obligations to the ADB. It is not possible to determine how many could not do so.

The total amount of debt owed to the Bank by the farmers is \$174 million.

(c) The ADB continues to take the following actions to recover its funds from delinquent farmers:

- (i) Issue of letters to delinquent borrowers;
- (ii) Personal contact by officers;
- (iii) Sale of assets by Private Treaty/Auction;
- (iv) High Court action.

The Agricultural Development Bank is in the process of selling these non performing loans to Taurus Services Limited, a debt recovery facility, at a discounted price.

Mr. Palackdharrysingh: Madam Speaker, a supplemental question: Would the Minister indicate what is the relationship between Taurus and the ADB?

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, it is an arm's length commercial relationship

**Infrastructural Work
(Nariva Swamp)**

135. Mr. Krish Jurai (*Nariva*) asked the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources:

Would the Minister state:

- (a) When will infrastructural work begin to develop the area designated as the small-holdings for farmers in the Nariva Swamp?

- (b) How soon will the said small-holdings plots be distributed to the farmers of the area?

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley): Madam Speaker, the proposed programme of infrastructural work in the area of the Nariva Swamp designated for small holder farming is as follows:

Plum Mitan: Under the Access Roads Rehabilitation initiative, a 2.8 km length of roadway has been under construction since May 1994 and this paved roadway and ancillary civil structures are scheduled for completion by mid 1995. The following additional infrastructural activities for this area are scheduled to commence about mid 1995, namely,

- installation of nine kilometres (9 km) of access roads, 5.5 km of which will be gravelled;
- excavation of eighteen kilometres (18 km) of earthen drains;
- construction of eight (8) cylinder crossings.

Kernahan/Cascadoo: In 1994, approximately 1.8 km of roads within this area was repaired under the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources Access Roads Maintenance Programme. In 1995, 1.2 km of roads is scheduled for maintenance under the Access Roads Programme and this work will begin by the middle of this year. Clearing and defoliation of the roadside drainage network will also commence in the Kernahan/Cascadoo areas at about the same time.

The Government intends to settle 101 farmers in the Plum Mitan area on two hectare plots. One hundred and sixty 160 farmers will be settled also on two hectare plots in the Kernahan/Cascadoo area.

Issue of leases for the areas identified is scheduled for October 1995.

Mr. Jurai: Madam Speaker, a supplemental question, please. The hon. Minister indicated that smallholdings will be distributed to small farmers; could the Minister state what are the reasons farmers were given quit notices?

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, those notices were given to persons who have occupied lands. The distribution of land as mentioned in the question earlier has nothing to do with unauthorized occupancy.

Mr. Jurai: Madam Speaker, another supplementary question, please. Could the Minister state whether the large farmers who are encroaching on the sanctuary

Oral Answers to Questions
[MR. JURAI]

Friday, May 12, 1995

of the Nariva Swamp have been given notices to quit? If so, why are they continuing to work the lands in that area at present?

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, the answer to the first part of the question is that to the best of my knowledge and information I have, all persons who are in unauthorized occupancy of the area called the Nariva have been issued with quit notices. With respect to why they are continuing—I cannot say why people choose to break the law.

Road Improvement Programme (Nariva)

137. Mr. Krish Jurai (*Nariva*) asked the Minister of Works and Transport and Minister Local Government:

- (a) Would the Minister state the nature of the road improvement work to be done in 1995 under the Road Improvement Programme and would the Minister also state how soon work will begin on each of the following roads:
 - (i) Cunapo Southern Road from Sangre Grande to Rio Claro;
 - (ii) Plum Mitan Road from Manzanilla to Plum Mitan Junction;
 - (iii) Little Coora Road from Guaico Tamana Road to Cumuto Main Road; and
 - (iv) Bon Air Road from Guaico Tamana Road to Cumuto Main Road?
- (b) Would the Minister state what steps would be taken to fill the massive potholes that have beaded these roads in order to give some measures of immediate relief to road users?

The Minister of Works and Transport (Hon. Colm Imbert): Madam Speaker, the nature of the work to be done in 1995 under the Road Improvement Fund Programme to the roads in question is as follows:

On the Cunapo Southern Road between the 7 and 9 mm strengthening and resurfacing work will be done, starting April 1995 targeted for completion in June 1995. The area to be repaired is approximately 9,000 square metres at a cost of \$300,000.

Secondly, on the Plum Mitan Road between the 0 and the 8.75 mm strengthening and patching work is scheduled to commence in March 1995 and

due for completion in May 1995. Approximately 2,500 square metres of roads will be repaired at a cost of \$100,000.

Thirdly, on the Little Coora Road between the 0 and 1.75 m.m., patching work is programmed to start in May 1995 for completion in June 1995. Approximately 1,000 square metres of roadway will be repaired at a cost of \$50,000.

Finally, on the Bon Air Road between the 1 m.m. and the 2 m.m. strengthening and resurfacing work is programmed to commence in March, 1995 and is programmed for completion in May 1995. Approximately 9,000 square metres of roadway is programmed to be repaired at a cost of \$300,000. It should be noted that the above work described will give significant relief to road users in the very near future.

Mr. Jurai: Madam Speaker, a supplemental question: Could the Minister state why priority is not given to repairing the Cunapo Southern Road which is the main link road between Rio Claro, Biche and Sangre Grande? It is in such a terrible condition at this point in time.

Hon. C. Imbert: Madam Speaker, as I indicated, strengthening and resurfacing work is programmed for the Cunapo Southern Road—the road the Member just referred to—from April 1995 and the completion in June 1995 which is next month. Considerable strengthening work has already been done as the Member for Nariva is well aware and resurfacing is programmed for completion in June 1995. I am very certain of this information.

Mr. Jurai: Madam Speaker, I wish to say that the Minister of Works is misleading this House; no such work is being undertaken.

Madam Speaker: The 45 minutes question time has elapsed, therefore, if all the questions are to be answered someone will have to move a suspension of the Standing Order.

Hon. K. Valley: Madam Speaker, in accordance with Standing Order No. 90, I beg to move that we waive the Standing Order relating to question period to allow for the answering of the questions on the Order Paper today.

Question put and agreed to.

Unemployment Relief Programme (Pavement Repair)

139. Mr. Subhas Panday (*Naparima*) asked the Minister of Works and Transport and Minister of Local Government:

Could the Minister state why the Unemployment Relief Programme continues to repair pavements which are in reasonably good condition, along Manahambre Road, Ste. Madeleine, while none is being built along the said road between the Petit Morne Health Centre and the entrance to the Petit Morne Settlement?

The Minister of Works and Transport (Hon. Colm Imbert): Madam Speaker, as the Member for Naparima is aware, the Manahambre Road was recently resurfaced by the Highways Division of the Ministry of Works and Transport under the Roads Improvement Programme. This has resulted in the roadway being at the same level as the sidewalk, which is a dangerous and unsafe situation. In order to alleviate the conflict between vehicular and pedestrian traffic it has, therefore, become necessary to reconstruct the sidewalk to a higher elevation.

This portion of the Manahambre Road experiences annual average daily traffic average of 1,590 vehicles and is accessed by a large population of pedestrians, including school children. The area spanning the Petit Morne Health Centre and the entrance to the Petit Morne Settlement referred to in the question has a smaller percentage of traffic and a limited road reserve.

The Unemployment Relief Programme of the Ministry of Works and Transport, however, has in fact given consideration to the construction of a footpath in the area referred to in the question in a later phase of its 1995 Programme.

Mr. S. Panday: Madam Speaker, a supplemental question, please. Is the Minister aware that the Manahambre Road is a continuous road from Princes Town to San Fernando? Further, is the Minister aware that there is no road edge between the Petit Morne Health Centre and the Petit Morne entrance?

Hon. C. Imbert: Madam Speaker, in answering the question I pointed out that the section of road referred to has a limited road reserve. That means that there is no shoulder and as I also pointed out in the answer the Unemployment Relief Programme has in fact, given consideration to the construction of a footpath in this area and it will be done in a later phase of the 1995 Unemployment Relief Programme.

2.25 p.m.

Road Rehabilitation (Naparima)

141. Mr. Subhas Panday (Naparima) asked the Minister of Works and Transport:

Could the Minister state when will the following roads be rehabilitated:

(a) St. Croix Road from its junction with Papourie Road to Rees Road?

- (b) Papourie Road from the Barrackpore Police Station to Lallbeharry Trace?
- (c) Rochard Douglas Road?
- (d) Ciperio Road from its junction with Papourie Road to Golconda Village?

The Minister of Works and Transport (Hon. Colm Imbert): Madam Speaker, with regard to the St. Croix Road from its junction with Papouri Road to Rees Road, this section of the St. Croix Road starts at the 3.3 m.m. and ends at the 5.02 m.m. which is Rees Road. The road at present has an Internal Rate of Return of 12 per cent and an average International Roughness Index Value of 11, which suggests that the existing condition of the road is unsatisfactory.

The road was constructed on a ridge in a highly plastic clay environment. It was not properly constructed and does not have proper drainage or proper pavement thickness. As a consequence the section of the road referred to in the question has around five landslips and the road surface is not in good condition.

The ministry makes every effort within the limits of available resources to ensure that the section of the road in question is free from potholes, which is the level of service that the district can provide at the present time. Most of the critical depressions are levelled with Guaracara crush metal and sealed with either oilsand or asphalt.

In 1995 using routine maintenance funding, efforts will again be made to have the road free from potholes and critical depressions. It should be noted that this section of the road needs major rehabilitation or reconstruction and it is being examined within the context of the Comprehensive Highways Maintenance Study.

The Stage A estimate at the present time for major reconstruction for this section of the road is \$4.47 million and the works are therefore being considered in the context of the ministry's seven-year Road Improvement 1994 to 2000.

The Papourie Road from the Barrackpore police station to Lallbeharry Trace. The question refers to the section of the road between the 4 m.m. and the 6.5 m.m.. This section of road has an average International Roughness Index of 7.26 and an Internal Rate of Return of 57 per cent, which means that road repairs have a very high cost benefit ratio.

Over the last four years the district has expended a large sum of money to repair this section of road which entailed the construction of a bridge, B1/7 which

reduced the perennial flooding problems and, in addition, reshaping and patch paving were done to approximately 1 mile of roadway.

To date only 1½ miles of the road is in a poor condition requiring either major rehabilitation or reshaping and resurfacing. One major landslip exists at the 5.75 m.m. This landslip occurred in 1993 and has rendered that section of the road impassable. Temporary measures, such as shifting the horizontal alignment of the road were taken in order to ensure that the road is passable.

Under the 1995 Road Improvement Fund Programme the district is programmed to expend approximately \$300,000 on this road. The fund will be used primarily to repair the WASA damaged section between zero and 1 m.m. and carry out some re-shaping and patch paving works to the critical 1 and one-half mile section of the road. The Stage A estimate to properly reconstruct this road is \$1.15 million and therefore complete reconstruction of the road, again, will be done in the context of the Ministry's seven-year road repair programme.

Rochard Douglas is another of the roads in this particular district that pose numerous maintenance problems. The road was constructed on an embankment in a predominantly lagoon area. It is believed that the type of material used to construct the embankment was of poor quality and so when the road is subjected to heavy axle loading, it moves under the weight of heavy traffic.

Since this road, the Rochard Douglas Road, is used as a main route by the oil companies to Guyaguayare and its environs, the average daily traffic is quite high. The traffic class of the road is 1. Presently the International Roughness Index is approximately 11.9 and the Internal Rate of Return, 70 per cent. Again, over the years the district has expended a substantial amount of time and funds in a continuous effort to keep the road passable.

Before the coming into being of the Road Improvement Fund the road was maintained using Guaracara crush and asphalt or oilsand. Since the coming into being of the Road Improvement Fund efforts are being made on a phased basis to repair sections of the road using proper materials, reshaping, reconstruction and asphalt hot mix. In 1994 a total of \$34,000 was expended to reshape and patch approximately 1,200 sq. metres of roadway. In 1995 a further \$200,000 has been allocated and it is expected that a further 3,500 sq. metres of roadway will be repaired and paved.

Cipero Road from its junction with Papourie Road to Golconda Village. Cipero Road is one of the main roads which link San Fernando to Lengua and its environs. The section of the road in question starts at the 2.5 m.m. and ends at the

7.6 m.m. This section of the road has an Average Internal Rate of Return of 83 per cent, Class 3 rated traffic and an International Roughness Index of 21.

In 1994 the ministry was able to reshape and pave approximately 5,903 sq. metres of roadway between the 0.8 and the 3 m.m. and replace the wooden bridge B 1/5 with a concrete box culvert. The entire Ciperio Road is earmarked for rehabilitation in 1997 under the Comprehensive Highway Maintenance Programme. In the interim funds will be expended under the Road Improvement Programme to repair critical sections of the road. In 1995, therefore, the district has allocated \$188,000 to repair the Ciperio Road. The fund will be used to carry out critical drainage works along the road and reshape and patch pave critical sections between the 3 m.m. and the 7.6 m.m.

Electricity Supply (Tobago)

144. Miss Pamela Nicholson (*Tobago West*) asked the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries:-

Is the Minister aware:

- (a) of the critical importance of electricity to the tourism thrust in Tobago and that Tobago depends on two nitrogen gas cables coming from the north-eastern corner of Trinidad and that these cables function simultaneously?
- (b) that from April, 1994 a leak was discovered on the 10 megawatt cable and has since shown serious deterioration between January and February, 1995?
- (c) that Tobago's electricity supply now depends only on the 15 megawatt cable and that any fault on this remaining line will result in a total loss of supply to Tobago?

If so, could the Minister indicate what corrective action his Government has taken to resolve this urgent problem?

The Minister of Energy and Energy (Sen. The Hon. Barry Barnes): Madam Speaker, there are two submarine cables between Trinidad and Tobago. One is a 10 megawatt high pressure nitrogen filled cable; and the second is a 15 megawatt solid cross-laid polyethelene cable. Both cables are in good electrical condition and are currently in service and on load. In the case of the nitrogen-filled cable, the function of the nitrogen is to protect the electrical insulation by preventing the entry of sea water into the cable.

In April 1994, T&TEC detected an increase in the quantity of nitrogen required to maintain the pressure of nitrogen in the cable. This indicated a possible leak in the system. The condition remained stabilized until January, 1995 when a further increase in nitrogen requirement occurred and the condition again stabilized with a higher nitrogen consumption level. As a result, T&TEC elected to carry out an extensive inspection of the cable which was undertaken by an under-sea remotely operated vehicle during March, 1995.

The inspection showed damage to the nitrogen lines at two points on the cable—at water depths of 120 ft. and 150 ft. respectively. The damage to the nitrogen lines appeared to be caused by trawlers dragging nets across the cable. Otherwise the cable was found to be in generally good condition and electrically sound. Accordingly, both the 10 megawatt and 15 megawatt cables have continued on load and in service.

2.35 p.m.

Moreover, T&TEC has had the benefit of consultation with the cable manufacturers and electrical consultants in the assessment of the integrity of the 10 megawatt cable and have solicited the assistance of the coast guard in the maritime division in seeking to ensure that trawling activities in the vicinity of the cable are discouraged.

T&TEC has issued formal press releases and paid advertisements informing the public of the precise situation with respect to the damaged submarine cable between Toco and Milford Bay in Tobago.

I thank you.

Tobago Power Station

145. Miss Pamela Nicholson (*Tobago West*) asked the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries:

- (a) Could the Minister indicate to this House whether the rated electrical capacity of the Tobago Power Station is technically assessed to be 11.3 megawatts and is now down to 6.8 megawatts?
- (b) Is the Minister aware that the measured peak load recorded for Tobago is 15.5 megawatts?
- (c) Could the Minister indicate to this House whether he is informed of the following recommendations from the Tobago region for urgent remedial and developmental action to alleviate the actual and potential crisis regarding electricity in Tobago:

- (i) Replacement of all radiators on the units at Tobago Power Station;
- (ii) installation of water storage and filtering facilities at the same plant;
- (iii) installation of a new diesel/natural gas fired 15 megawatt machine for the Tobago Power Station?

If the answers to the above-stated questions are in the affirmative, could the Minister state what action his Government has initiated to prevent any electrical crisis occurring in Tobago?

The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries and Minister of Public Utilities (Sen. The Hon. Barry Barnes): Madam Speaker, T&TEC advises that the name plate capacity of the generating units at the Tobago Power Station totalled 11.3 megawatts. Given the requirements to have units out of service on a planned maintenance schedule, the available capacity at any time is generally less than the name plate capacity and is currently 7.1 megawatts.

The highest peak load recorded in Tobago is 15.4 megawatts which occurred for one hour during 1994. The usual peak load for Tobago is 14 megawatts.

It must, first of all, be emphasized that Tobago is fully integrated into T&TEC's nationwide electrical distribution system and is supplied by two undersea cables with a current capacity of 25 megawatts, backed up by the Tobago Power Station with an available capacity today of 7.1 megawatts to give a potential capacity of 32.1 megawatts.

In short, available capacities today more than double the highest ever recorded peak demand in Tobago. As part of its ongoing maintenance upgrading programme, T&TEC has already:

1. commenced work on refurbishment of radiators to the Tobago Power Station with all radiators scheduled to be repaired by March, 1996;
2. placed orders for treated water storage equipment which will be installed as soon as received, and;
3. as part of its nationwide development plans, earmarked the installation of five megawatts of additional diesel standby generating capacity for the Tobago Power Station.

Miss Nicholson: Is the Minister aware that when Tobago's electricity is cut off from Trinidad, at least seven-eighths of Tobago is without electricity?

Sen. The Hon. B. Barnes: Madam Speaker, I am not aware that seven-eighths of Tobago is cut off. But, quite frankly, if they become cut off from Trinidad—

Oral Answers to Questions
[SEN. THE HON. B. BARNES]

Friday, May 12, 1995

that is neither of the two undersea cables can work—then the installed capacity in Tobago is 11.3 megawatts; the peak demand is 14. So that if they are relying on that station alone there is going to be a problem, which is precisely for that reason that, in fact, there is the requirement to expand the standby capacity in Tobago by 5 megawatts.

**ROAD IMPROVEMENT FUND
(FIRST BIENNIAL REPORT)**

[SECOND DAY]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Motion [May 05, 1995]:

Bet it Resolved that the House of Representatives take note of the First Biennial Report of the Road Improvement Fund. [*Hon. C. Imbert*]

The Minister of Works and Transport (Hon. Colm Imbert): Madam Speaker, on the last occasion, I indicated to this honourable House that the roads in Trinidad and Tobago are quite different in terms of their origin, their condition, and in terms of the degree of difficulty in repairing them. I had pointed out that it is far easier and cheaper to repair roads in North Trinidad and even Tobago, for that matter, than it is in certain parts of south Trinidad, because of the type of foundation material of the roads in question.

The Motion asks this House to take note of the first bi-annual report of the Road Improvement Fund covering the period January 1 to June 30, 1994. I may say at this time that I have received the draft of a second bi-annual report for the latter half of 1994 which I expect to take to Cabinet for its approval in due course, after which it will be laid in this honourable House in the usual manner.

Let me deal specifically with this Motion. In the first six months of 1994, over \$30 million was spent on a large number of roads throughout Trinidad and Tobago. I think that it is fair to say that the first six months of the Road Improvement Fund Programme was an unqualified success. For the first time in many years the ministry had available to it the type of resources required to carry out a systematic and sustained programme of road repairs and road improvement.

If one looks at the list of roadways in the report, which is in alphabetical order, one would see there was a wide geographic spread of work in all parts of the country in keeping with the Government's commitment to equity in terms of allocation of resources. The Members on the other side may want to dispute this, but the fact is that in carrying out this road improvement fund programme we sought to ensure that virtually every part of the country got an equitable share of

the resources that came via the fuel tax. I think during the first half of 1994, and thereafter, in the second half, and right now as we speak, I think we have achieved that objective.

It is a great disappointment to me, however, when certain Members on the other side make statements to the effect that nothing is being done; that no roads are being paved in the constituencies that they represent, and so on. I would say for the record today, those types of allegations are simply unfounded.

I give you a specific example. The ministry mobilized its equipment in the Cunapo Southern Road in the Nariva area some weeks ago and is at present working in that area, but the Member for Nariva will have us believe that no work is taking place there. It is very unfortunate when Members of Parliament adopt this approach.

The fact is, however, that the persons who live in these areas, the citizens, the taxpayers, the voters, of this country, are aware that work is taking place. That is what is important; not what the Members on the other side say, not the fiction, not the make-believe stories that come with regard to road work. What is important is that the people of this country are aware that their tax dollars, the money which represents fuel tax, are being well spent in an equitable and efficient manner throughout the length and breadth of Trinidad and Tobago.

2.45 p.m.

We get letters in the ministry every day; we get telephones calls and when one looks in the newspapers, we see that people have recognized and are generally happy with the work that is being done by the ministry under this Road Improvement Fund. We in the ministry would continue to carry out the mandate given to us by the Government to ensure that the resources made available to us, under the Road Improvement Fund are distributed in an equitable and efficient manner.

One can go to any part of the country—from Toco in the north-east to the north western peninsula; the north coast to Chaguanas, Central Trinidad; to the south east; to the south west, Port of Spain, San Fernando; Arima—and one would see evidence of the work being done under the Road Improvement Programme.

I know it is a source of great distress to the Members on the other side; I know it upsets them, because it is becoming more and more difficult for them to make the case that this Government is not working.

Road Improvement Fund
[HON. C. IMBERT]

Friday, May 12, 1995

The arguments from the other side have come from another direction. No longer can they say, with any degree of believability, that nothing is being done. They can say it, but it does not sound believable. So, what they have done now is to say that the work is not being done properly and that there are a number of irregularities in the programme. They have shifted their attack to the quality of the work, the methods of workmanship and the manner in which the work is being done.

We in the Ministry of Works and Transport have put in a number of procedures to deal with all aspects of the method and approach that the ministry adopts in carrying out road improvement work throughout the country.

The selection process for contractors, for example: We have adopted a systems approach. We do not use a random choice approach. We assess the various capabilities of contractors and contractors are awarded marks based on a number of categories which I would now go through.

There are five main categories:

- (i) the technical ability of the contractor;

That is given 25 points out of 100.

- (ii) the type of asphaltic plant;

Whether it is environmentally friendly; whether it has equipment to recycle dust and minimize pollution.

- (iii) the quality of the asphaltic mix coming out of that plant;

These two are given another 25 points.

- (iv) the availability of equipment;

Also whether the contractor has in his possession all the necessary equipment required to spread and roll the mix in accordance with the specifications, and in accordance with the ministry's requirements in terms of scheduling of work. That is given 15 points.

- (v) price;

This is assigned 25 points out of 100; and the workmanship is assigned 15 points bringing to a total of 100.

A systematic, scientific approach is being used to select contractors, given the lowest price best quality material that meets the technical needs of the ministry.

That is how contractors are selected. At present, we have a system of bonded contractors where we updated our asphalt specification, submitted it to the Central Tenders Board and they awarded the bonded contracts for the supply and placement of asphaltic work mix.

We recognize that no system is perfect and there will always be instances where workmanship is not being done to the appropriate standards; where materials are not of the appropriate quality and where there may be other breaches of the specifications, contractual terms and so forth.

So we have an internal audit division in the ministry, which is continually reviewing all the contractual awards and processes for testing and examination of work being done to determine whether any irregularities have taken place. These matters are brought to the attention of the senior officers in the ministry, up to the level of the Permanent Secretary, for necessary action. From time to time, irregularities are uncovered and are dealt with. That is what I should like to point out to the Members on the other side.

No system is perfect. As far as we in the Ministry, are concerned, in the main, the work is well done and everything is done in accordance with proper procedures. As in any system in the world, where human involvement is required, there are going to be breaches of the procedures. I simply wish to state that we have an internal audit procedure that picks them up and deals with them accordingly.

Perhaps, later on we shall hear from the Members on the other side any information that they wish to bring to my attention. We are always grateful, as I said before, for any information from Members on the other side, on any discrepancies or irregularities that they know of and I give them the assurance that the matter would be dealt with.

Action would be taken to deal with any breaches of internal procedures, because our mandate in the ministry is to carry out the work in a most efficient manner to the highest quality standards. That is our mandate and we are constantly striving to carry it out and perform our duties and responsibilities as required of us.

Let me touch briefly on the work done in 1995, although it does not refer specifically to the Motion before this House, which is for the first six months of 1994. The information I have for the first three months of 1995 indicates that we expended approximately \$15 million on a number of roads throughout Trinidad and Tobago, in the districts of St. George West, St. George East, county Caroni,

Road Improvement Fund
[HON. C. IMBERT]

Friday, May 12, 1995

St. Andrew/St. David, Victoria West, St. Patrick, Victoria East, Nariva/Mayaro. There was also expenditure in Tobago in accordance with our consultations with the Tobago House of Assembly.

In Tobago we simply agreed on the roads that the Tobago House of Assembly wishes to work on during the year. We agreed on the allocation and we make disbursements to them on a regular basis and they are given guidelines to follow. We do not get involved in the day-to-day operations of this fund in Tobago. We simply have delegated that function to the Tobago House of Assembly, but in Trinidad all the work is done by the Ministry of Works and Transport district offices.

When I look at the roads that were repaired in the first month of 1995, again, I see considerable work done throughout the country. For example, in the Caroni East area, the Talparo/Mundo Nuevo area, \$351,000 spent over a length of 10 km of road. In the Tamana area, \$635,000; in north Trinidad, I see that in Tunapuna \$100,000 was spent. We have also done work on the Bon Air Road, the Plum Mitan Road.

As I said, we have been working on the Guanapo Southern Road; in Caroni, we have worked on the Madrass Road, the Longdonville Road; Jerningham Junction Road, Chin Chin Road, Caparo Valley/Brasso Road; Caroni Savannah Road, Chaguanas Road, Orange Field Road and so forth.

2.55 p.m.

In Victoria West we are about to commence work on Papourie Road, Rochard Douglas and New Colonial Roads. These are primarily local government roads. In terms of the work done on the main roads and in the Caroni area; I have just described them. We also did work in the San Fernando area, Arima, the East/West Corridor, Central and South Trinidad. I think we in the Ministry can answer any accusations that we are not dealing with the population on an equitable basis with this road fund. As I said, I think this road fund has been an unqualified success. We shall continue to strive to discharge our responsibilities to the population in an efficient and equitable manner.

Let me just briefly talk about the rationale for prioritizing roads because this is one of the questions that arise all the time. How do we prioritize roads? We use scientific criteria to do this. You may have heard me referring to terms such as the Internal Rate of Return, the International Roughness Index and the average daily traffic. The internal rate of return is a measure of the benefits which come to road

users from expenditure on the road in question. It is a very powerful tool for us in the ministry.

We have a computer programme where we can establish the condition of the roads, the Internal Rate of Return and the benefits that would arise from expenditure on these roads. This is based on a comprehensive study of all main roads in Trinidad and Tobago and was done under an IDB loan which was submitted to the ministry in March 1994. There is a lot of data on roads in the ministry.

As I said, the Internal Rate of Return is a very powerful tool in determining how we prioritize roads and what benefit will come to road users from the expenditure on roads. The International Roughness Index is really a measure of the condition of the road. It gives us an indication of how much money we have to spend. If a road has an unsatisfactory roughness index, it means that we have to spend a lot of money on it to bring it up to the minimal riding comfort level which we have established within the Ministry. The average daily traffic also helps us.

The roads which have the highest traffic are given the highest priority. They are the Eastern Main Road, the Southern Main Road and the Solomon Hochoy Highway. They have an average daily traffic count in excess of 15,000 vehicles per day. There are many roads in the country which have traffic counts of below 1,000 vehicles and some with traffic counts of below 300. When you get down to the level of about 200 vehicles or fewer using a particular road, all things considered, that road is given a lower priority than roads with a higher traffic count.

There are other criteria. If a road is the only access to or exit from a particular settlement, then we recognize that we cannot use the criteria such as traffic or internal rate of return. If we do not work on these roads, communities will be cut off.

I have made these points to explain to the other side that we use scientific and logical criteria in selecting our roads. When I look at the roads which have been repaired, I am quite satisfied that the criteria for prioritizing them are being applied generally and properly. As I said, the population is getting its just due in an equitable and efficient manner.

Before I take my seat, I should just like to indicate to the Member for Oropouche who has raised certain matters with me, that there are a number of files in the ministry with complaints from road users, contractors and other interested parties who feel that they are not being treated fairly with regard to the

Road Improvement Fund
[HON. C. IMBERT]

Friday, May 12, 1995

operation of the road fund. In every instance, whether it is a complaint from John Public, a contractor, a community group, a Member of the Opposition or a Member of the Government—we also get letters from Members of the Government, and I will say for the record that we do not discriminate against anybody in this programme; we are spending money in all areas of the country; we treat each case on its own merits to determine what the appropriate action should be. I hope I have been able to satisfy most of the concerns that might be raised about this programme.

Let me close by saying that the ministry will continue to discharge its responsibilities to ensure equity; that proper materials are used; that the selection process for contractors is done according to the prescribed and proper procedures, and that every instance of breach of procedure, irregularity or poor workmanship that is brought to our attention, will be dealt with in a prompt and efficient manner.

Thank you.

Question proposed.

Mr. Mohammed Haniff (*Princes Town*): Madam Speaker, in taking note of the report which was laid, I wish to make the following observations. Today May 12, 1995 is approximately 10 months since the end of June 1994 which marked the end of the first six months of that year. This Parliament is supposed to have this report after six months of each year telling us about the expenditure of the Road Improvement Fund and where these works were undertaken. We eventually received the report dated Monday September 1, 1994 on October 28. While the report is dated September 1, it was eventually laid on October 28. The relevant division seemed to have this report ready just two months after the end of June. However it was not laid until October.

With the report being debated at this time, I wish to point out the many concerns, some of which were demonstrated today. You may have noticed that seven questions out of 13 on the Order Paper had to do with the Minister of Works and Transport; most of them, if not all, were related to concerns expressed. These concerns are being raised by those citizens who are not seeing any work being done in their areas, and they say they are paying this five per cent. Naturally, they go to their Members of Parliament and speak about it and so questions are raised. We come here to ask these questions and seek answers.

We observe that there are mistakes in the report; some of them the Minister sought to correct; others have not been corrected and perhaps there are other mistakes. We observed that the way the report is presented—the listing was given

to us by districts of the Ministry of Works and Transport—it takes time and leaves us in a state of confusion to understand why this was done, and why it was not done in the same way it was handed to us, by districts.

3.05 p.m.

My view is that since these reports came from separate districts to the ministry, it would have been easier to prepare and submit them to this Parliament by district, so that we would have been able to see clearly where those works were taking place.

I draw reference to demonstrate. Just a while ago, when the Minister was replying to a question from the Member for Naparima, he pointed out that there is need to do some works on St. Croix Road. If one looks at this report, one would realize that some work was done on St. Croix Road, but from this report no one can determine whether the works were done in the Victoria East or the Victoria West district. That is an illustration.

There are many other roads which run through constituencies. We would have preferred—and it would have been easier for us and others to follow—this report to have been done in accordance with the way the listing was presented to us. At this time, 10 months later, not only should the report for the first six months have come for debate, but we should also have already received and debated the report for the second six-month period for 1994, if we are to keep track of what is happening.

As I said, one recognizes that there are many concerns. A number of questions are being raised and last week, on May 5, when the Minister rose to explain the report, among the many things that he said on that occasion—which he repeated today—is that the matter of repairs under the Road Improvement Fund Programme is one which has received extensive coverage inside and outside the House. That is certainly the case because we should have already debated that report. He said that he appreciates and welcomes the comments, but the comments at this point are quite late because, apart from the 12 months in 1994, five months in this year has gone, and that advice could have come his way long before now.

Those are some of my observations on the timing of the report. It is my view that this report should have been laid and debated urgently so that not only Members here, but the population at large who have a great interest in this matter, would know. As I said, there is concern about the expenditure of the Road Improvement Fund to the extent that people are looking forward to getting

Road Improvement Fund
[MR. HANIFF]

Friday, May 12, 1995

information. People are curious. People have heard that money has been expended on certain roads and they have seen no works done on those roads.

I submit that the lateness of that report and this debate is deliberate on the part of the Government. We are receiving complaints from members of the public, but it would be difficult for us to provide evidence. These delays are deliberate for this purpose.

As a result of our concern, contrary to what the Minister has just said, I, submit that an independent organization of whatever number of persons, out of different professions, be appointed to look at the expenditure, and monitor what is being done with regard to the quality of work and the funding that is being utilized in all areas. I wish to repeat that there is need for such a monitoring agency because we are not satisfied that the Ministry of Works is doing the kind of monitoring required.

I look at some of the issues raised by the Minister and, as I said, most of them were already raised when he presented his report last week. There are reports coming out of the communities, from officers, workers and others, that there is tremendous corruption in the Road Improvement Fund Programme. I am not one of those who like to accuse people of being involved in corruption, but I am saying this in the context of the reports received. We are also receiving reports that there is duplication of the works in the sense that the gangs at the Ministry of Works and Transport are doing certain works that contractors are being paid to do. There is no agency to monitor properly what is happening in these areas.

In Trinidad and Tobago we have a history of corruption in PNM governments, past and present, and so, if one hears about corrupt activities, even if they are rumours, it is in this nation's interest to set up the kind of machinery which is required to remove those rumours. This is important; this is crucial.

This is so important because there is so much unemployment in this nation at this time. People are having trouble in all areas; they cannot get employment. The cost of living is extremely high. People are losing their jobs on a regular basis and with all that the cost of living continues to rise on a daily basis. When there were billions of dollars in this country as a result of an oil boom, I remember a statement—famous or infamous—that money was no problem. Now this Minister presents a report and says that as a result of a lack of funds our roads are in a bad condition.

In that context, I ask: Where has all the money which was listed to have been expended on the country's roads gone? We are speaking about billions of dollars.

We come here to talk about the lack of funding and proper systems. This Minister speaks today as though prior to 1992 there was no ministry, engineers, accountants and equipment. That is how he presents the report. Today he is formulating plans.

3.15 p.m.

We appreciate new technology, we appreciate improvements in the way accounting is done and so on. I am looking at it in the context of the presentation of the Minister when he said that there was no funding, no adequate equipment and no techniques and so on, as though only from 1992, and especially since the Road Improvement Fund was implemented, all techniques etc. are being put in place. I think it is an insult to those who have been there and continue to be there in their profession.

I spoke briefly about the money spent over the years; a quick calculation tells me that over the period 1984 to 1994 a 10-year period, the sum of \$5,548 million was spent on the Ministry of Works and Transport, yet the Minister talks about inefficient and outdated management systems and inappropriate technology." As I said, we appreciate the improvements that the Minister says he is bringing to the ministry. All our roads in the country are in a bad state and the Minister says, in seven years' time—at the current rate of income from the 5 per cent tax which has been imposed—all our roads would be repaired, they would be put in good shape.

The Minister spoke about a 10-year period and I quote:

"...the Minister while addressing the Second Caribbean Conference of Road Maintenance Policy at the Trinidad Hilton on 5/1/95, told delegates that Trinidad and Tobago 'had struggled through two decades of inadequate funding, limited resources, inefficient and outdated management systems and inappropriate technology, ...inappropriate policies and institutional failure."

Madam Speaker, I smile because everything in this country regarding the Ministry of Works seems to have started in 1992, nothing else was taking place over the years. With respect to the condition of the roads, it is interesting, because while the Minister speaks about limited resources, materials and so on; we have asphalt, we have all sorts of boulders, metal, gravel; we have the oil industry providing all the colas and the bitumen; we have people in the Ministry of Works and Transport who are willing to work, people who have been trained over the years to do this job and they are competent and capable.

But rather than pooling the resources and making the Ministry of Works vibrant, by utilizing the manpower, replacing and repairing some of the

Road Improvement Fund
[MR. HANIFF]

Friday, May 12, 1995

equipment, the Minister and the Government are seeking to bypass and send home those workers and replace them by contractors. That, in their book, is good because they want to see the unemployment go up because they are the ones who are sending home the people. The workers do not go to the Ministers and give kick-backs, but the allegation is that the contractors do.

We continue to struggle with a 5 per cent tax imposed on the citizens of this country. I say "citizens", because whether one is an owner of a vehicle or not, the fact is that if one is an owner one has to pay at the gas stations, and if one is not an owner of a vehicle then one would pay the maxis taxies and so on when one travels.

The Minister made heavy weather of the roads in Trinidad and Tobago. I wonder where the Minister studies roads. Is he a born Trinidadian. Is it in Trinidad? Are we not speaking about Trinidad and Tobago roads in this Parliament? We are not referring to roads anywhere else.

Mr. Mottley: The man is a "road" scholar. *[Laughter]*

Mr. M. Haniff: Thank you very much. Madam Speaker, the man is a roads scholar. We appreciate the qualification and all the technology that the Minister has been able to acquire over the period. Put that in Trinidad and Tobago. It is sad that the Minister is at a loss as to how to start to repair our roads.

The Minister said that the roads in the South are difficult and they are in a state of—I cannot find his exact words, to be honest—they are struggling with the issue of the condition of the roads. Is that the it roads in the South are not being attended to, because the Ministry is struggling with a method to deal with them?

The Minister speaks about most of the roads having been developed from tracks in the past. We all agree with that. But that was a long time ago. Many of these roads have been in use by vehicular traffic for many, many years. Yes, they were originally tracks used by animals and so on. Most of those roads, notwithstanding the billions that I have spoken about and some 33 years of PNM rule have never been constructed. No attempts were ever made to construct them properly, hence the reason for the difficulty in repairing the roads in the South. Are we going to say that these roads are difficult to fix and as a result the people living there will continue to suffer? If we are not saying that, let me quickly point out that that is what is being demonstrated.

I would expect that, yes, one must find a formula to deal with the roads. The hon. Minister would recall that he asked me—I do not know if he asked other

Members—to submit a list of roads to him in order of priority. I did not and I could not, I told him that I am prepared to go along with the criteria his ministry was using because it seemed reasonable.

What one would have expected in that kind of situation in terms of equity to start with, is that the roads which have been neglected for a long period would have been given priority. That is not happening and it seems that that would not happen.

While that is the case, I would expect that when the Minister laid emphasis on equity and equality, approximately \$50 million per year for the Road Improvement Fund, would have been divided into the districts of Trinidad and Tobago: eight in Trinidad and one in Tobago. It should have been divided so that each district would get a reasonable amount of money to deal with their roads. When one goes to the districts one would use the formula recommended to deal with those roads where there is the greatest volume of traffic. Madam Speaker, that has not happened. Let me give a demonstration of my own calculation of what has happened in two districts.

3.25 p.m.

In St. George West money has been expended on 100 per cent of the roads listed in this area, some work has been done. The amount of money spent in St. George West is \$11,176 million. Compare that to what has happened in Victoria East. Of the 12 roads in Victoria East work was done on five. That is one point.

In St. George West there are many more roadways than in Victoria East, but in Victoria East money was spent on five roads, according to this report, in the sum of \$4,316,000. That is the disparity of which I speak and, over the years, that has been the pattern. It would appear that the father has children in the North and stepchildren in the South, because that equity is not taking place and one cannot overemphasize—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Imbert: I thank the hon. Member for giving way. On a point of clarification. The population of St. George West is over one quarter of the entire country; the population of the district the Member refers to is far smaller. There is a smaller number of vehicles in the area and the per capita density of that area is much smaller, the level of traffic and so forth. *[Interruption]* One cannot, in total terms, compare St. George West with any other part of the country, because it is the most densely populated, has the most traffic, and the most roads.

Mr. M. Haniff: Madam Speaker, let me just mention also that the same thing happened in St. George East work was done on 100 per cent of the roads listed,

Road Improvement Fund
[MR. HANIFF]

Friday, May 12, 1995

contrary to what has happened in Victoria East; in St. Patrick; in Nariva/Mayaro; or in St. Andrew/St. David. That is the trend that I am speaking about. That is not what is expected in these times.

The Public Transport Service Corporation, has decided to have private enterprise run the school service because of the condition of the roads and the demands these roads are making on the people who run vehicles on these roads. PTSC cannot afford it, so they say.

The Minister went on to speak about the quality of clay, I have heard that on so many occasions that it is a type of soil. I wish to submit that notwithstanding the different types of clay and soil, the landslipping in certain areas and the erosion in other areas and what is happening in Tobago—that is the situation in Trinidad and Tobago. We cannot change that therefore we must do what we can to cope with it rather than come here to try and make excuses. Do not give us excuses, tell us what is being done to make it work. People are living all over this country and they deserve to be attended to with roads and other infrastructure.

The hon. Minister came here and sought to point out the 1,000 landslips all over the country. At what rate are we repairing them? He mentioned quite naturally a road in the Victoria East district known as St. Julien Road with 30 landslips. He came in 1992. I asked questions—the road was closed it is still closed to most traffic and I ask: Since you cannot repair all 30 landslips at the same time, have you repaired any? The answer is, nothing was done.

Nothing is being done. Mohess Road—I think the Minister went to that part of the country and said that he was going to take certain remedial action—Mohess Road is going down into the river as most people know; nothing was done and nothing is being done. As a result we ask: What are the criteria used? There is a large population in the inner part of that area which uses Mohess Road to come out onto the main road. I mention these issues only because the hon. Minister mentioned them while he was going through the report.

Madam Speaker, we hear much about poor drainage and leaking pipelines and I ask: Are the poor drainage and the leaking pipelines the fault of the Opposition? The Government has a way of saying that we are preventing it from doing what it ought to do and we are not supporting it and what have you. I ask: Are the number of landslips and poor drainage, the fault of the Opposition? It comes here and make excuses rather than deal with the problem.

Average traffic and cost/benefit: We appreciate that, but what is the policy of the Government? Is it a policy which would encourage people from the rural

parts of the country to come into town because there is where all the infrastructure and expenditure are concentrated? If that is not the policy and the Government seeks to encourage people to go into the rural areas to do agriculture and what have you, then the policy ought to be reversed because there is where the infrastructure is mostly needed.

Much emphasis has been put on the quality of the roads in the South and I ask: Can the Minister name even one road which was reconstructed in the South over the period? As it is in the report and when the Minister introduced the Road Improvement Fund he said: In the first six months roads will be paved and/or patched."

I ask anyone who has a copy of this report in his possession to look at Appendix I—Road Improvement Fund—List of Main Roads 1994 and he would see the expenditures. Can anyone say where exactly these expenditures have been incurred? Can anyone say what kind of materials were used on these roads?

While the Minister has emphasized in a very definite way how many systems are being put in place about quality of material, I want to inform him—and I have already done it in the past; I want to draw it to the attention of this Parliament and the national community that while he is trying to put systems in place—and he spoke about a certain quality of material—pitrun, gravel and limestone—I did not hear him mention Guaracara metal being used in the Road Improvement Fund Programme. He mentioned that kind of material and pitch or oil sand were being used in the recurrent repairs.

On the Moruga Road I have seen the use of Guaracara crush with hot mix on it and no roller. I do not know if he is aware of that, but it is a fact. Can anyone take up this report and try to determine which roads were paved and which ones were patched? That is a defect, as far as I am concerned, in the quality of this report.

3.35 p.m.

We ought to be able to take up this report and determine, in as much detail as possible, some of these works which were done. I have heard the Minister mention drainage work, curb and slipper, and what have you. I have heard him mention bridges. Whether that was in the first six months or not, is not reflected here.

So these are some of the points which arise from the presentation of the hon. Minister. Do you know what happens when hot mix is put on Guaracara metal

Road Improvement Fund
[MR. HANIFF]

Friday, May 12, 1995

without any blue limestone and no roller? The quality of the surface is rough; the water penetrates very early; it cracks up because it was not rolled. He would know that better than anyone else.

Therefore, I want to submit that the moneys expended on the Moruga Road and any other road where Guaracara metal is put down, or any other metal, without rolling it, is wasted. As a result, I have looked in some detail into the kind of work done and it is not up to the standard about which the hon. Minister has spoken. We need, as a matter of urgency, the monitoring about which I spoke.

I invited the hon. Minister to Princes Town. He did not come; he promised to come, but he is afraid to come. He knows that I would show him where poor quality work is being done. The patch work being done on the Naparima/Mayaro Road is cracking up regularly and has to be repaired continually. Therefore, at the rate they are going with this patching—work was done in the Victoria East district on three roads to date and they are continuing on the Naparima/Mayaro Road and the Moruga Road—it will take them the full seven years, to complete these roads, because every time they patch, the roads keep cracking up. I mention these roads as a reference, but it is happening in other areas.

The hon. Minister spoke about systems and quality of plants and so forth. In the course of my duty I have visited Agua Santa. I want to ask him, since he is putting systems in place in the private plants, whether he has taken steps to put in place the same kind of controls to prevent the dust and the dangers that exist in the Agua Santa plant.

The Minister spoke about criteria and sampling of quality. We all appreciate that. I want to suggest that perhaps that is happening, to some extent, at the plants. I want to humbly enquire whether any steps are being taken to check the quality of material on delivery, because naturally, the plants will have the capacity to produce good quality material. What sort of continuous monitoring is taking place to ensure that that quality is kept going on a regular basis?

The hon. Minister told us about an internal survey team and irregularities. He said that time and time again they will pick up on some irregularities and will take steps to deal with them. I wished that the hon. Minister would have pointed out those irregularities so that the people who are involved would see it fit to keep watch for that kind of thing and bring it to his attention.

But we have no idea of the kind of irregularities about which the Minister spoke. We know of some that we have picked up on our own, but I should like him to tell us what sort of irregularities. There will be irregularities either

consciously or unconsciously. The more people are aware of what is happening, then the more you are likely to get reports concerning the kinds of irregularities and therefore take steps to correct them.

Earlier, this Minister made heavy weather about the Member for Princes Town pointing out two roads in the Victoria East district, Lengua Road and Railway Road, where work was not done. He was able to determine this just minutes, he says, after receiving a report. We have quite a number of school children visiting today and the youngest child can tell you if you travel on a road every day you would be able to see repairs taking place.

Lengua Road and Railway Road, were mentioned in this report. I travel on those two roads every day. The hon. Minister laid a report in this Parliament which says that \$194,000 was expended on Lengua Road, and on Railway Road, \$244,000. He says, within minutes he was in a position to determine that no expenditure took place. Naturally.

This hon. Minister went on to say that people tampered with the records to the extent that they put Lengua Road and Railway Road on the listing. I want to let this Parliament know that on every occasion that there was a listing that came to this Parliament, these roads were mentioned on it. I want to submit that there was no tampering with the listing. There was, he says, a genuine mistake.

How can we determine which mistake is a genuine one and which is not. If there were two genuine mistakes which we could have picked up, are there other mistakes? Have they picked up with other mistakes? I am submitting that there are others.

There is need for proper auditing, a close eye should be kept on expenditure, telling the nation exactly which roads are being done so that the public could keep an eye on what is going on and say, yes, this road is being done with the Road Improvement Fund, so we must look to see what is happening because we expect a certain quality of work. But instead of sticking with the listing, what have we found? We have found that a number of roads on the listing have not been reported on while quite a few others.

The question, therefore, is: Why have certain roads not been reported on while work is being done on others which were not in the listing? That does not help with the monitoring about which I have spoken. As a matter of fact, it increases the suspicion that we have spoken about and it increases the reports coming from people as a result of that same kind of suspicion.

Road Improvement Fund
[MR. HANIFF]

Friday, May 12, 1995

3.45 p.m.

I wish to point out briefly that in many areas where no reports came in about those roads which were listed, there are also other roads which were not listed but reports have come in because expenditures have taken place.

I just wish to name a few and to ask a broad question. The roads in this listing which have not been attended to—is the Minister going to continue to do work on these? Because he said that this was the first phase. Is his ministry going to complete works on these roads before going on to others, or is the priority going to change? If it is going to change, why should it?

When the Minister is replying, could he state whether the listing which was handed to this Parliament, will be stuck to as the first phase, and whether the first phase will be completed in 1995? If not, when? Because the listing is here. I briefly want to point out some of the roads which are listed and where no reports were received:

Inverness Road, Naparima

Tableland Road, Princes Town

Biche-Ortoire, Nariva

San Pedro, Nariva

Tabaquite-Nariva Road, Nariva

Mayaro-Guayaguayare Road, Ortoire

Rio Claro-Guayaguayare Road.

There was nothing done on these roads.

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. M. Haniff: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker and Members.

This is a very serious question. Nothing was done. Are they going to put emphasis on the listing which was said to be the first phase? The listing continues:

Plum Mitan Road, Nariva

Road Improvement Fund

Friday, May 12, 1995

Sangre Grande Junction Road, Nariva
 Chin Chin Road, Central Trinidad
 Guapo Cap-de-Ville Road, Deep South
 Morne Diablo Quarry Road, Deep South
 San Francique Road, Oropouche
 Fyzabad Guapo, Fyzabad
 La Fortune Pluck Road, Oropouche
 Erin Road, Deep South
 Windward Road
 Bloody Bay.

And so on.

I am of the view that these roads, since they were submitted based on a formula and on research done, are in a very bad state, especially with heavy traffic on them and should be given first priority in the continuation of the first phase. I observe that works were done on other roads which were not listed, such as Ariapita Road, La Pastora Road and Mucurapo Road. Perhaps there is an explanation, and I would like to hear it.

For the second six-month period we ought to have had a listing of roads. I understand that local government roads were included. Such a listing was not laid in this Parliament. I make the point that there is need for the entire population to be able to monitor what is happening and if we do not have that listing we cannot do so. I wonder why that listing was not presented to us.

I raise another question. Appendix II of this report—List of roads repaired by Agua Santa. Many of these roads have not been listed. Were there roads repaired from the Road Improvement Fund. If that is so, did we agree to spend money on parts, plants, spreaders, rollers and so forth? Perhaps it was expected but we were not told so in advance.

What was the formula used to arrive at these roads? If, in fact, the roads done by Agua Santa were roads which were repaired under the Road Improvement Fund, what formula was used? You have here:

Antigua Road - Not on list

Aripo Road - Not on list

Road Improvement Fund
[MR. HANIFF]

Friday, May 12, 1995

Caura/Royal Road

Bonne Aventure Road

Road Improvement Fund, Agua Santa

Cumuto/Tumpuna Road - Not on list

Demerara Road - Not on list

Heights of Guanapo Road - Not on list

Hermitage Road - Not on list

Munro Road - Not on list

Old St. Joseph Road - Not on list

Reform Road - Not on list

The question, therefore, is, if roads can be done which were not submitted in the listing, what can Members of Parliament do, in seeking to get their roads done in their respective areas, to get Agua Santa to do these roads?

I do not wish to extend my contribution, but to emphasize that my concerns raised are very serious ones. I have information that the allocation in many districts is unequal. In addition to that, some districts are owing money and as a result they will be using the 1995 allocation to pay the contractors. The Minister says that he has a file with complaints. I would imagine some of those complaints have to do with when those contractors will be paid.

The other point is, there were certain expenditures which were incurred, according to the report. If some of those expenditures go into 1995, there will be less work done. If that is the case, then I expect the hon. Minister to inform this Parliament because we expect a certain amount of work to be done again. If that is not the case, he must tell us.

As this Road Improvement Fund continues, I want to emphasize that there is great concern about the way the programme is run. There are a number of questions asked which are not answered. It is not very easy to get the information required, and, therefore, the quality of the work, in many cases, does not meet up to the standards and specifications outlined today by the Minister.

Many of these road are crumbling and will continue to do so because of the constant traffic, and there is going to be a continuation of patching of those same roads where work was already done. So instead of seven years it would appear

that many more years will be required at the current rate to repair the roads in this country. When the Minister said, seven years—even though it was a technical report—I want to submit that in seven years time most of our roads will not even be touched.

I wish to make the point that there should be equity in the districts throughout Trinidad and Tobago so that every section of the country would enjoy a reasonable amount of repairs in its respective area.

I wish to thank you for this opportunity and to point out, as I said in my opening, not only should we be debating the first six month report, but the second six-month report should have already been laid and debated.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Sahid Hosein (*Siparia*): Madam Speaker, whether we recognize it or not, this is one of the more important debates in this Parliament, in that it demonstrates not only to us but, also to other citizens of this country rather graphically, how taxpayers' moneys are spent and accounted for. I think if only for that reason it is extremely important. It is not very often that we get the opportunity to look into these expenditures by the way they have been presented to us.

3.55 p.m.

Indeed, I want to venture to say that the way the Government handles the concerns raised in this debate by Members on this side, would determine whether this PNM administration is any different from the previous PNM administrations.

It is important in that this programme is being administered through an additional tax which has been placed on the citizens of this country; the motoring public especially. An additional burden in an environment of escalating cost, so that any burden becomes—especially now—more and more onerous on a hard-pressed public.

As I said earlier, it is extremely important, therefore, how taxpayers' moneys are spent, given that burden. We have heard platitudes, time and time again, about accountability. That too is important, especially in the environment in which we operate in this country. We operate in an era of inadequate resources, and one can understand at times the dilemma of the Government when certain demands are being made on them. That is why it is extremely important, that whatever resources are available to them are used as efficiently as possible.

I am going to demonstrate that that is certainly not the case. In fact, if the Government was accountable, by now we would have been debating the first

Road Improvement Fund
[MR. HOSEIN]

Friday, May 12, 1995

report, but the second report. We are almost five months into the year and the second report has not been presented to Parliament. One wonders why the tardiness. Are there no systems in place in the ministry, or the various districts, to ensure that the information is collated and presented on a timely basis to the citizens of this country? So, one cannot talk about accountability when these simple matters cannot be addressed.

What we should be concerned about in this report is whether the best methods, engineering skill and technology are being utilized in terms of the repairs being done. One also has to be concerned about the question of equity with which my colleague the Member for Princes Town, dealt. The fact that the Ministry of Works and Transport operates under districts and that the Government chose to list the roads in the report—not in districts but in a different manner—demonstrates that there is more in the mortar than the pestle.

When one analyzes the figures on a district basis, as the Member for Princes Town has done, one would see that there are glaring inconsistencies as far as equity is concerned. To talk about equity in that breath is an insult to the people of this country when one looks at this report. Despite whatever reasons the Minister has put forward—traffic density, net rate of internal returns and so forth; much of the decision-making as to which roads are to be repaired has to do with politics, pure and simple.

So, to talk equity is to insult the intelligence of the Members of this House and the people of this country. In the same way, we fire a man to give him a bigger "wuk" without telling him about it, and expect people to swallow it! We really must think very little of the citizens of this country if we can engage in such behaviour when we should be setting the example for others to follow—invariably, we come up very short.

I have in front of me a report dated Monday, September 1, 1994 and another report which I obtained not too long ago, dated Monday, September 1, 1994; so both carry the same date. When I look at Appendix I of both reports, they differ, and this is the confusion.

It boggles the mind that there are professional people in a ministry and a report is presented to Parliament—which was circulated to all Members—Appendix I, of one report lists the first road—let me read the heading, "Road Improvement Fund, List of Main Roads, 1994" which is the same in both reports—as Arima/Blanchisseuse Road and in the next report, off Audrey Jeffers Highway.

More interestingly, when one looks for expenditure on the roads a curious thing happens: Penal Rock Road, mile average daily traffic, 211, which is the same as the next report; the mile mark, 0-8.5, the same on both; expenditure, in one is \$435,000 and in the other one it is \$554,000. On the basis of that, we should stop this debate, correct the figures and come back.

Something has to be absolutely wrong. This is the document that was circulated to Members some months ago; many moons ago. This is a document I just sourced from the Clerk of the House, carrying the same date on the cover; the same title and so forth as this one. Do you want to respond, hon. Minister? [Interruption] No, I am very serious because this is a very serious matter, if we are talking about accountability.

Madam Speaker, if you look at both covers, they are the same; they both carry the date, Monday, September 1, 1994. Apparently, they were done at the same time—I can only assume that. Yet, in Appendix I, we have a different listing of roads; there are some of the roads in one and not the other. More importantly, the figures for expenditure are different by almost \$100,000.

This document was not prepared by the Members on this side. It was prepared and presented by the Ministry of Works and more interestingly, we heard that there were seven drafts; not one, two or three, but seven drafts to correct all the errors. One understands why this ministry does not now function at all. It seems to me that there is no leadership at the ministry. There is no sense of direction.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Speaker, for the benefit of the hon. Member, a report was laid in this House on Monday, September 1, 1994 and was circulated to all Members. I have absolutely no idea what report the hon. Member for Siparia is talking about. There is a report before this House of which I have a copy; I just got it from the Parliament library myself, and it is the report I have referred to. I have no idea what the Member is talking about.

Mr. S. Hosein: Madam Speaker, I would not belabour the point, but it is very important. Both reports are dated Monday, September 1, 1994 and both apparently came from the same ministry. I did not break into the computer, nor did I insert any figures.

Incidentally, a question was asked in the Parliament about whether that particular matter was reported to the police and the Minister responded by saying, yes. I ask: Can the Minister tell us, when he is winding up, what were the findings of the police with regard to that break-in? Again, it is a very serious matter. There is a reason for that, which I would get to.

Road Improvement Fund
[MR. HOSEIN]

Friday, May 12, 1995

It is a very serious matter. One questions this whole report based on the differing figures. The Minister can sigh, groan and protest as much as he likes, I will lay the blame on his doorstep.

4.05 p.m.

I move on to another matter which deals with the question of equity. In response to a question, the Minister said that \$30,000 will be spent on Rochard Road in the Siparia constituency. If one were to look at that road, one would see that it is in an extremely deplorable condition. When one looks at the expenditure on other roads and the fact that there is sheet paving on them, how on earth, if the Minister is talking about equity and treating citizens of this country equally, can he talk about spending \$30,000 to repair a road? Is it because it is in the Siparia constituency? I do not want to belabour that point because this talk about equity is just so much talk.

We were treated to a treatise on the evolution of roads and the manner in which they should be repaired. We got a lot of technical jargon which some of us understood and others did not. What came across very clearly though is that the Minister or the ministry, or both, have chosen to ignore basics in terms of road repair.

That is why the Member for Princes Town could have told this House that the Ministry of Works is using Guaracara metal to repair the main roads and overlaying it with asphaltic hot mix. This is a "no no" by any engineering standards. If anybody should know that, it is the roads scholar. Having background myself, I agree with his assessment. It is easier to deal with roads in the North than it is to deal with roads in the South.

I made the point earlier that the problem with our roads today is not how much money we have expended or not expended, on them but it is the lack of a basic maintenance programme in the Ministry of Works and Transport. The moment a crack appears on the road, there should be a gang to go around to seal it. When a pothole appears in the road they should not wait until it becomes a cavern, and instead of spending \$500 they have to spend \$50,000 subsequently. If the ministry had such a basic programme in place, we would not be crying about a seven year backlog. That is where the Minister should be focussing his attention instead of talking about the testing that he is putting in place for asphaltic hot mix.

I have told him before, and I am telling him again: that is not his problem. His problems go deeper than that. If the maintenance programme was in place, he would have been dealing with the cracks and potholes as they appear, and that

would have prevented us from wasting taxpayers money which could be used in the areas of health, education or security. The responsibility for ensuring that that programme is in place lies with the Minister and his Government. That does not call for any big technology.

We also heard from the Minister that money was spent on strengthening roadways. What does that entail? Does that mean putting some crushed blue limestone in a depression and filling it? He should explain to us what it means. It sounds quite big. What it really means is spreading some limestone and rolling it over. I want to know where the ministry has done lateral support. They have done about 200 yards of lateral support on the S.S. Erin Road around Dumfries, but that should not be the reason why the cost of repairing roadways in the South should be higher than repairing roadways in the North. I agree that lateral support calls for a certain kind of work and one has to ensure that there is a certain expenditure. But where has it been done? This talk that repairing roadways in the south is so expensive, and as a result it is limited, is just too much talk and hot air.

The Member for Princes Town made the point about local government roads. Since last year the regional corporations were asked to submit a list of local government roads and to date the Minister said that they are looking at including them this year. If we continue to neglect those local government roads we are not going to spend \$10 million in one year's time, but we would spend \$100 million. I am saying that we should do all in our power at this time to ensure that money is spent on local government roads to save taxpayers further additional expenditure later. The ministry should really be on its toes in that respect.

When I started earlier with accountability and how taxpayers' money is spent, I meant whether the money is spent in the most efficient way, or it is just being frittered away. There is a system in place where you allocate as people request, and the moneys are being frittered away. We have to ensure—it is extremely important to me and Members on this side—that whatever little resources are available to us as a nation, that we do all in our power, given the position we hold, that the population benefits to the maximum. I venture to suggest that that is definitely not happening today.

While we are on the issue of local government roads, I want to make the point that under the Road Improvement Programme, the Minister should look at the question of repairing bridges. Most of the bridges on the local government roads are down at this point and it will make no sense repairing those roads unless the bridges are also repaired.

Road Improvement Fund
[MR. HOSEIN]

Friday, May 12, 1995

I want to tell you about some of my experiences. The Minister made a curious statement that if we have access to certain information we should bring it to their attention. I want to tell you Madam Speaker, and the public, that many Members on this side share the concerns that I have with regard to the expenditure of that fund. I know for a fact that Members on this side have approached the Minister and other people to discuss their concerns, and we see the same situation continuing unabated.

4.15 p.m.

These are some of my own experiences. According to this report, Clarke Road in the Siparia constituency, interestingly, \$319,000 was spent on half a mile of flat roadway with no landslip and in fairly good surface condition. There must have been five or six potholes repaired. Curiously, those same potholes in the road were repaired three times last year. Is that not a shame and a waste of taxpayers' money? That money could have gone to repair another road.

What has been happening at a particular spot in Clake Road is that the depression is filled, but because of the sponginess of the area, there is a new depression. The stuff moves sideways and instead of excavating the depression and filling it with boulders as per engineering techniques, they continue to put stuff in the depression, so that on a flat road there is a depression and the sides of the road are about three feet high, with all the material moving laterally.

I did not think that I would have had to stand in Parliament to tell anyone that what should have been done was to have the area excavated, filled with boulders and compacted. This would have saved the cost of filling over and over. Apparently the Minister is not speaking to his staff. After all, lectured and he tutored a number of engineers in the ministry. I do not know if he is taking an example from the Father of the Nation. This is a serious matter. Madam Speaker, I crave your protection, please.

Another thing I have observed is that crusheron or blue limestone is being placed in the depression filled with water without any application of colas or anything of the sort and then a coating of asphalt is applied over that. This is what I mean when I talk about basic practices in the ministry. How on earth do they expect that to last if they do not use colas, and compact the stuff properly to ensure that it binds? *[Interruption]* The Minister is saying that is not true. I wonder where he lives. He certainly does not live in Trinidad and Tobago, or there is definitely something to hide in the ministry. *[Interruption]*

Oh, I am making up those matters? I made the point before that Members on this side have more important things to do than to make up stories to make Ministers, of all people, look bad. I can understand if it is to make the Member for San Fernando West look bad, but the Member for Diego Martin East? It does not make sense.

And of course we have heard of the Guaracara crush on the main road. What is needed in the ministry, if we are to see any improvement, is a retraining programme for the workers. When we look at the way employment has evolved in the ministry, we see there is need to retrain those workers who have not been retrenched in the basic techniques and technology of road repair. Again, that would go a long way in saving expenditure.

I felt sorry for the Member for St. Ann's East when he complained. In fact, he has alerted us that there is the possibility that he would create additional taxes. I feel sorry to see the manner in which the Member for Diego Martin East is allowing moneys, which the Member for St. Ann's East has so much trouble in acquiring, to be wasted.

So, I should like to make the point to the Minister that testing of asphaltic hot mix is not the problem. The problem occurs long before that with the techniques used in setting down the base materials and so forth. In fact, I delivered a letter to the Minister from one of my constituents, who gave me a copy. He was complaining about the paving of a road. The cartage received from the contractor stated eight and 10 tonnes of hot mix, and he saw a little pile which could not have been more than four tonnes. That letter was forwarded to the Minister. Maybe that is another lie.

Additionally, in recent weeks I have seen, in one of the weeklies an article in which they were making the point that it cost a hot mix contractor \$180 per tonne to produce hot mix, yet he was tendering to the Government to produce, spread and compact the hot mix for the very same \$180 per tonne. *[Interruption]* I am stating what I read in a weekly newspaper. Even if it is not credible, the fact is that we are being short-changed as taxpayers. The fact that Cartage receipts stating one quantity in variance with what is delivered on the job, is a reality and the Minister can say what he wants, there are many members of the public and in his ministry who would be prepared to say that this is so. There is a very easy way to deal with that. There are portable weighing scales and one can set up a system where one looks at the trucks on the roads and checks the cartage receipt against the weight. But the Minister will not do that. He simply will not do that for reasons of his own.

Road Improvement Fund
[MR. HOSEIN]

Friday, May 12, 1995

Again, we have heard about the selection of contractors for mix and other aspects. A curious thing happened last week when the Member for Oropouche asked for the names of the contractors working under the Road Improvement Programme and, of course, the whole question of hot mix came in as part (c) of the question. The Minister talked about the hot mix contractor and refused to give the names of the other contractors. I hope he would give that information on a subsequent date because he did give this House a commitment.

I come to what is taking place at the Southern Division of the Ministry of Works. I can talk about the Southern Division of the Ministry of Works, the Highways Department, and I wish the Minister and his leader, the hon. Prime Minister, would pay attention to this. I have raised my concerns in this House through questions and motions. My colleagues have raised similar concerns and the response of the officials to those concerns are twofold. They have refused to accede to any request coming from the Member for Siparia to do minor works in the Siparia constituency, but more importantly, they have accused the Member for Siparia of being corrupt.

With respect to the issues I have been raising in respect of those matters, I have been accused of being corrupt, in order to deflect allegations. Questions and Motions raised in Parliament, apparently, were getting to some people. So a defence has been concocted. That is why I said that the Prime Minister should pay attention to this matter.

4.25 p.m.

In fact, people from within the ministry have been expressing concerns about the manner in which tenders are dealt with. In some cases, the lowest tenderer does not get the tender. Although one person qualified as the lowest tenderer he was told that he should register for VAT before he could get the tender. Even though clearly, on the basis of his income he did not meet the threshold.

We heard here today about internal audit being done by the Ministry of Works. That has to be the biggest joke of this decade. Who is auditing whom? In fact, I recall some 10 years ago that there were sliding doors and windows and so forth on a bridge, and there was an audit department. Did anything happen to anybody? This happened in Ortoire/Mayaro of all places. I really want to see that bridge. *[Interruption]* Before your time. *[Laughter]*

This question about audit is a standing joke. The ministry has no serious internal audit system in place. If there is one it is a question of Caesar reporting to

Caesar and they can laugh as much as they want and allow taxpayers' money to be frittered away.

There is none so blind as those who will not see, or are corrupt. I am not here to score points on my colleague, he is my good Friend. I am raising matters which are of grave concern to me and other citizens like me. These concerns should be shared by every Member on that side who professes to be accountable.

Logically, what should have set off the alarm bells, based on the concerns we are expressing, was when we heard that the ministry's office was broken into. Minister in coming here to say somebody broke into the office to insert information on the computer to embarrass him, ascribes great importance to himself—too much importance to himself. Why would anybody want to discredit my good Friend the Member for Diego Martin East? *[Interruption]* He disclaims my friendship, Madam Speaker. That should have set off alarm bells, the fact that somebody took the time—

Who would want to break into the Ministry of Work's computer? If it was broken into, why did they do that? Obviously there would have been a reason so it should have been investigated. Instead, the hon. Minister comes here and glosses over it and says that the people want to embarrass him. What action did the police take? What did their inquiries reveal?

We heard that the information about three roads in the Southern Division was inaccurate—and that is not accidental, they did not fall in the other divisions—the errors came up. More curious—and this is amazing—the fact that the Minister got up and admitted that there was side-by-side reporting where officers were mixing up the expenditure on the road repair programme and the recurrent expenditure. One wonders, who works in the ministry. Are there no accounting technicians, no accounting officers? How could such a basic elementary mistake be made? That only has to be an excuse. For God's sake, credit some of us with a little logic and common sense.

There is this programme that Ministers fought so hard to get coming into being. Was there no system, or instruction sent out that it had to be accounted for separately? Surely instructions had to be sent out.

4.29 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.10 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Mr. S. Hosein: Madam Speaker, I was making the point about the question of side-by-side reporting, which never should have taken place. Then we

Road Improvement Fund
[MR. HOSEIN]

Friday, May 12, 1995

heard from the Member that one of the reasons that expenditure was accredited to the two roads when there should have been none, was that the expenditure on one particular road was split up into three roads. If there was ever a lame duck excuse, that certainly has to be it. I cannot see how the expenditure on one road, given a minimum reporting and accounting system, could be ascribed to two other roads. That again tells me that something is seriously wrong in that division. Something is seriously wrong in that area.

Having raised those matters—I do not intend to prolong my contribution—I just want to make the point that when we raise legitimate issues on behalf of the citizens of this country, we are accused of crying and complaining, of bullying Ministers and the Government to take certain actions. Nothing could be further from the truth. When we get up to speak, we raise issues which we feel are pertinent to the well-being of the citizens of this country.

Finally, having spoken at length about the Ministry of Works and the Road Improvement Programme, I honestly empathize and sympathize with the Minister who has that responsibility. Very often when people in his ministry make errors and create a mess of things, it is the Minister in the final analysis who carries the responsibility and to whom blame is ascribed. Therefore, it is incumbent upon the Minister, of any particular ministry, when certain matters are brought to his or her attention, to explore them with a view of eliminating them.

I know for a fact that the Ministry of Works is not the easiest ministry to run, and being saddled with two ministries makes it more difficult for the Minister. I would like him to adopt the position that there is merit in matters raised in this House and his ministry through its personnel, has a responsibility to ensure that matters are carried out, and issues are dealt with in a way that redounds to the benefit of the nation. We must strive to be God-fearing and manly enough, that when we make a mistake, we admit it, and say to each other that we are sorry, and in so doing wipe the slate clean. As parliamentary representatives and leaders we must admit our errors and be honest with the population. They will understand because after all, they know that we are human.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Trevor Sudama (*Oropouche*): Madam Speaker, the Minister stated that the implementation of the Road Improvement Fund for the first six months, was an unqualified success. I disagree with him. I think the implementation of the Road Improvement Fund, has really been an unmitigated disaster, from which I hope the Ministry and the minister could learn. This is what we have been trying

to emphasize this afternoon. I would go on to indicate why I think the administration of this Fund has not brought the benefits which were envisaged for it, and therefore what has happened is that we have had wasteful expenditure and in certain respects, corrupt expenditure of millions of taxpayers' hard-earned money.

I do not make these accusations lightly. I myself have done inquiries and investigations, and I have had reports come to me. Therefore I stand here today with a sense of sadness, that here was an opportunity for the Government, in a way, to redeem itself somewhat, with respect to the manner in which it has maintained the infrastructure of this country; but instead we have ended up in a situation where moneys have been expended and we have not got value for the money spent. More worrying is the fact that the Minister seems unresponsive and reluctant to investigate things which seem, on the face of it, to indicate corruption.

I am satisfied, on a number of different indices, that given the number and extent of roadways which are being paved, more material has been alleged to have been used than was actually used. I am convinced that, given the quality of work done on these roadways, where after a few months they are unravelling, the potholes are reappearing; given the quality of work and material used that that, too is an indicator of corruption with respect to the administration of this fund.

It is not as if the Opposition alone is making these complaints. These complaints come from far and wide. I have a letter written to the newspaper from one Peter O'Connor of Cascade, who, in the very first month of this year, spoke about the problems with resurfaced roads. He cited a number of things—which I will not go into in any detail—in the quality of the finished work: Road surfaces appear to have been patted on by a giant hand, leaving an undulating instead of a level surface. Certainly no supervising engineer has checked this aspect with a straight edge rod which is a simple device. Waste of material. Contractors are paid for resurfacing by the tonne of material supplied, not by the area of road that is repaired. By dumping the material mixed to eight inches thick, far less roadway gets repaired compared to spreading two inches of topping.

The writer talked about the official potholes, and the road edges not being addressed. Vehicles turning into side streets, which have not been resurfaced, actually run aground on the resurfaced portion. Paving over leaks—Almost unbelievably, there for everyone to see, asphalt is spread over visibly broken water mains. Excavating resurfaced roads—why should anyone be surprised that WASA would excavate a road which was repaved yesterday?

Road Improvement Fund
[MR. SUDAMA]

Friday, May 12, 1995

He went on to list a litany of woes regarding the work that is being done and supervised by the ministry under the Road Improvement Fund. If the Minister is alleging that it is only the Opposition politicians who are making complaints, here I have someone who has put his name down. Apparently he knows something about road engineering and so forth, and he is a PNM politician. So it would seem that there are politicians on both sides who are giving him problems.

Another incident that I would like to report on, is one I drew to the Minister's attention on a visit he made to the Oropouche constituency. I want to emphasize that I did not ask him to come to the Oropouche constituency; he volunteered to come. Madam Speaker, I am a gracious person; I would not refuse a request. So he came.

5.20 p.m.

I particularly asked a question in this House which was responded to on August 19, 1994, about three miles of roadway in my constituency—the S.S. Erin Road. I did not indicate to him beforehand that I was driving him over this portion of road.

Mr. B. Panday: You did it for spite?

Mr. T. Sudama: Yes. I asked the Minister: "Can you identify any road repair work being done on this portion of the road?" He said, "You know, I really do not recall." I said, "well in a response to a question, you said that the ministry had spent up to that date \$344,804 and that you had earmarked to spend to the end of December, \$436,804."

Mr. B. Panday: On the same piece of road?

Mr. T. Sudama: The same piece of road! If that is not an indicator of corruption, I do not know what is. He promised to check it out. I do not know if he is still checking. All this is hard evidence that something is amiss with the administration of this Road Improvement Fund. Instead of the Minister trying to ascribe ulterior motives to Members on this side, I think he should take a good look at what is happening in that ministry.

He did indicate that there was a system of internal audit and monitoring in which senior officials of the ministry are involved. I want to ask him here today: If these senior officials in the ministry are also involved in the corruption, how can they monitor themselves? Are they in a position to monitor their own corruption?

I am coming to a number of things which I observed. In answer to a question which I raised in this House, he gave me information as to the contractors who were involved in the road paving programme for the first half of 1994 and those who were involved in the second half of 1994. There is a lot of inconsistency and a lot of unexplained issues here.

In the first half of the year, by far the bulk of the road paving work was done. From January to June, 109,547 tonnes of mix were supplied. From June to December merely 30,802 tonnes of mix was supplied. When I looked at the moneys paid per average tonne of mix supplied between January and June 1994, a certain picture emerges.

Trinidad Asphalt supplied at the rate of \$260.00 per tonne on average; Seereeram Bros. supplied at the rate of \$229.00 per tonne on average; Asphalt Road Surfacing Company supplied at an average of \$270.00 per tonne. Coosal's Construction, together with Jusamco and Carib Asphalt Pavers who got the bulk of the work—Coosal's supplied at \$234.00 per tonne; Jusamco at \$222.00; Carib Asphalt Pavers at \$315.00 per tonne.

In response to a question which I asked, the Minister said:

“It has also been the experience that the price quoted by contractors under the open market system—that is the system that was used between January and June—are different from the prices quoted under bonded contract—the system used from June to December 1994—primarily because of the different quantities involved.”

It stands to reason, if you are supplying more hot mix, then your unit price should be lower. If you are supplying less hot mix, then your unit price, perhaps, would be a little higher—economies of scale. But do you know what happened? From June to December 1994 only three contractors were bonded to supply, and they supplied in total, 30,000 tonnes of mix, but they supplied at a lower figure, as bonded contractors, than was supplied for the period January to June 1994 when more hot mix was supplied. Very curious!

Coosal's Construction supplied at \$222.00 per tonne. Jusamco Pavers, maybe justifiably, supplied at \$211.00 per tonne and Carib Asphalt Pavers, very curious—which supplied at an average of \$315.00 per tonne between January and June 1994, despite the spread of roads—were able to reduce their figure to \$224.00 per tonne. Is that not curious that you could come down from an average of \$315.00 per tonne to \$224.00 per tonne?

Road Improvement Fund
[MR. SUDAMA]

Friday, May 12, 1995

Then, very curiously, Seereeram Bros. who supplied in the January to June period at \$229.00 per tonne, could not get a tonne of hot mix to supply in the June to December period, although on the basis of the average prices quoted in January to June they were, apart from Jusamco Pavers, the lowest.

What was involved in the selection of just these three asphalt paving companies in the period June to December 1994? All is not well in the Ministry of Works and Transport, especially when you get this very curious statement that they used a systems analysis approach to decide on contractors and they used five criteria: technical ability; type and standard of asphaltic plant; equipment availability; price and workmanship.

Now it is again very curious that in this component, "price" fetches only 20 points. But you see, they used this criterion in order to try to manipulate the system where price only has 20 points out of 100, but you have these very subjective factors, like technical ability; type and standard of asphaltic plant; equipment availability; workmanship.

5.30 p.m.

Are you telling me that on all these criteria a company such as Seereeram Bros. would be excluded on the criteria on technical ability, of "Type and standard of asphaltic plant", of equipment availability", of workmanship," when, in fact, their quoted figures for January to June was the second lowest among all the contractors? Something is amiss in the manner in which contracts have been awarded by the Ministry of Works and Transport. It seems to me that the evidence points in that direction.

When you use multi-faceted criteria with price being one of the elements and only 20 points in that element, then what you are doing is opening the way for subjective evaluation by your officials, and therefore, opening the possibilities for corruption. I say this because the number of reports I have had coming to me cannot be accidental. Therefore, today I say that the Ministry of Works and Transport has a lot of work to do.

I have also pointed out that there are other curious things which occur in the Southern Division of the Ministry of Works and Transport, particularly. I have in my possession a tender document. This is one of the most curious requests that I have seen. It is headed, "Ministry of Works, Rushworth Street, San Fernando, dated June 22, 1994." It is addressed to Boysie S. Khan and Sons, General Contractors and Equipment Rentals, and so on. It reads:

Road Improvement Fund

Friday, May 12, 1995

"I shall be grateful if you will supply me with quotations for the undermentioned materials and labour for the following jobs not later than 12.00 noon on 3/6/94. Tender box will be opened at 2.00 p.m., 3/6/94."

I am very curious that less than a week's notice is given to a specified contractor here to supply tender documents at 12.00 noon when the tender box is going to be opened at 2.00 p.m.—two hours difference.

My information is that Boysie S. Khan and Sons—this contractor is deceased, and that the present contractor, really, is a supervisor in the Ministry of Works and Transport. Furthermore, he is not a bonded contractor. Then when the payment schedules are noted, it is seen that Boysie S. Khan and Sons gets a priority for payment regardless of whoever is owed and for what period. How is that priority worked out?

I have another report that in March 1994 there was a tender put out. The tender box was due to be opened. The tender box is normally opened by the district administrative officer. I understand this same Works Supervisor went into the office of the district administrative officer, cut open the tender box, supervised the tenders, tore up the lowest tender, threw it away in the waste paper basket and then substituted in the place of the lowest tender, a tender in the name of Boysie S. Khan.

I understand that this contractor has no equipment but contracts out to individual transport contractors, and one truck is even owned by a checker in the same Ministry of Works and Transport, doing contract which is really in the name of a Ministry of Works and Transport supervisor. Have you ever heard that a fellow ordered sliding glass and windows for a landslip? He was suspended and was reinstated because of the clan of corruption.

I could go on and on. I want to put this in a little context. I am quoting from a gentleman by the name of Roger Israel who is an employee with the Ministry of Works and Transport. He ought to know what he is talking about. He is an engineer, I understand. Listen to what he had to say. I am quoting from the *Guardian* of August 22, 1994:

"Hugh Francis once told me..."

Now, of course, you know who Hugh Francis is, a former Minister of Works and Transport in a former PNM government.

"Hugh Francis once told me, 'Roger, I know we can't put hungry bird to watch corn.' I've never forgotten that. There are so many hungry birds in the

Road Improvement Fund
[MR. SUDAMA]

Friday, May 12, 1995

Public Service watching the public's corn. And I was sure that would never apply to me. I knew I would be representative of that small hungry group you could trust. That's the sort of personality I had.

Seventeen years in this thing and I have been easily able to laugh at the attempts to bribe me. In the boom years, contractors would offer to take you to lunch, or buy a tape deck for you (when tape decks were in vogue), or work out some deal whereupon you would benefit if you favoured them in some way. And I always laughed. 'You give me a couple hundred dollars and I give you a couple hundred thousand?' Joke boy! I loved it.

It was funny even when, as a graduate professional with a confirmed posting in the service, I was ridiculed by the mortgage financing people. I struggled and got through somehow, though, but I couldn't help noticing that persons with less than half my salary were able to build houses that were three times the size of mine. And trip off to Miami regularly to boot.

I couldn't help noticing the guy who built such a house with Ministry of Works' men, materials and machines. 'How does he sleep at night?' I used to think. Last week, however, I found myself thinking something else. That the people who have always called me a fool for holding on to this high morals thing were right after all."

It just shows you the massive and elaborate nature of the corruption which seems to exist in the Ministry of Works and Transport. I am amazed that the Minister is not aware of this, because this impacts on the amount and the value of work that can be delivered under the Road Improvement Fund. Because if the money is syphoned off in a certain direction, how can you get value for money?

It seems to be endemic. I have in front of me a copy of a letter written by concerned contractors to the goodly father—the self-appointed but unwanted father—of the nation.

Hon. Member: Papa Doc!

Hon. Member: Guilty of child abuse to the nation!

Mr. T. Sudama: The Minister will want to say this is mischief. When people could be moved to write to the Prime Minister—and I want to put this letter on record as to what is happening under the Road Improvement Fund.

"We, a group of very concerned contractors, who, by virtue of our business and need to survive, cannot at this point disclose our identities, wish to draw very critical matters to your attention; and these we state below.

The tendering procedures at the Ministry of Works and Transport do not appear to be fair and limit significantly, the contractors invited to tender, and the selection procedure for contractors."

5.40 p.m.

Regardless of what the Minister tells this House, people are concerned that there is no level playing field. Obviously, corrupt; kick-backs, short delivery of materials—seems to be involved, and there seems to be a substandard quality of the materials and workmanship deployed on the roads. This is why the roads are not standing up, and this is why we cannot get the amount of work done for the moneys being expended.

"1. The tendering procedures..."

we are told, are not fair—

"2. The basis on which contracts are awarded.

3. The real value of work carried out by the 'Ministry related' contractors."

I am told there is another arrangement whereby the ministry pays for contractors to repair or repave roads and the labour is done by the Ministry of Works personnel, but the contractors are paid as if they are supplying both labour and material. This is happening on a regular basis.

"4. The materials used..."

in instances

"are provided from supplies of the Ministry."

Contractors are being paid.

"5. There seems to be much more than 'arms length' relationship between senior Ministry personnel and the 'selected' contractors.

6. The payments for jobs performed for the Ministry clearly favour the 'related' contractors."

That is the schedule of the priority of payment. The letter goes on to say that they wish this matter would be investigated.

These are very serious matters. The matter has reached the attention of the Prime Minister. I think that is after he returned from Hong Kong.

Road Improvement Fund
[MR. SUDAMA]

Friday, May 12, 1995

"Informal findings from the rank and file Ministry's personnel indicate that the most involved personnel are:

- "(a) Chief Construction Engineer - Highways Division.
- (b) District Engineer - Victoria West/St. Patrick District
- (c) The Roads Supervisor - Victoria West District.

The business entities associated with these are GNF Enterprises and Boysie Khan & Sons. These companies possess no equipment and provide no complete address. We have enclosed some support for our allegations.

Sir, we have invested heavily in equipment and organization, and our livelihood and that of our employees are in jeopardy. We also feel aggrieved by the abuse of State assets for individuals' personal benefit. We urge that you inquire into this matter and take the corrective actions necessary."

I have before me an invoice to Messrs GNF Enterprises. I have another one which gives the reason for local purchase not contracted. The other one says that these are not bonded, but the recommendation says—

"I recommend that GNF Enterprises supply the above items as their prices are the lowest."

If these people have access and are privy to prices quoted by other people, then obviously they are in a position to quote the lowest prices. GNF Enterprises, I am told, is the acronym for three names: Ganesh, Navin and Fazal—perhaps, these names are familiar to the Minister. GNF Enterprises puts its address as Curepe, but nobody can find GNF Enterprises there. According to the schedule of payments I have here, it shows that for some strange reason, GNF Enterprises gets priority with respect to payments.

This is not hearsay. *[Interruption]* If it is hearsay, it ought to be investigated. Given the fact that I found gross inconsistencies in pricing and the people who were selected from January to June and then June to December; that we have roads in this country on which very little work is done, but on which it has been reputed that hundreds of thousands have been spent; the quality of the work done and the amount of work done, and that the ministry relies on the contractors' scales to weigh each load of asphaltic mix instead of using an independent scale—all these are avenues for corruption.

I am arguing that all is not well. Further, I have been told that what happened under this Road Improvement Fund between January to June, 1994, when there

was this rush to get involved in the road improvement programme—and time was not allotted for tendering—there was a deliberate attempt to circumvent the authority of the Central Tenders Board, or the Financial Regulations, the Director of Highways and the Chief Construction Engineer, Highways Division, through the use of purchase orders to favour contractors for amounts not exceeding \$20,000, which is the limit of the authority of the Director of Highways.

If one issued many \$20,000 purchase orders, then one did not have to go through a tendering procedure. That was being done consistently during the period January to June, 1994.

On the question of the manner in which these contractors are selected, the Minister tried to rationalize it and we have questioned it. The only way we would be satisfied is if an independent committee is set up, by this Parliament to get all the records and question the people involved. Merely a report from the Minister of Works and Transport would not suffice, given all the allegations made.

I am not arguing that all the allegations are correct. What I am arguing is that with the consistency with which these allegations have been made they ought to be investigated; and given other indicators, something seems to be rotten in the state of the Ministry of Works and Transport.

The Ministry of Works' equipment and workers were deployed on certain projects for which the contractors were paid to do the same work, and there is the expeditious nature of payment to some contractors and not to other contractors."

As a Member for Parliament I have written to the Auditor General, who is a creature of the Constitution, and, who in fact, reports to this Parliament, and who ought to be doing an independent inquiry—expressing my concerns on the basis of reports made and the evidence which I have produced. I have written to him and asked that this matter be thoroughly investigated.

I understand that the Road Improvement Fund has not been used solely for the repair and maintenance of roads, but, also to pay T&TEC bills; to purchase equipment and so forth.

What is also curious is that, quite apart from getting priority payments, GNF Enterprises is not only concerned with supplying road building equipment and so forth. I have an application for local purchase order which shows that GNF Enterprises is supplying calculators to the Ministry of Works and Transport. I understand that it is in the process of supplying fax machines.

Road Improvement Fund
[MR. SUDAMA]

Friday, May 12, 1995

5.50 p.m.

GNF Enterprises, whoever they may be, seem to be an all purpose supplier to the Ministry of Works and Transport. The allegation is that GNF Enterprises is a firm owned and controlled by officials of the Ministry of Works and Transport. It is my job as a Member of Parliament and as someone who is responsible to the taxpayers of this country to see that the moneys are expended both properly and according to law. This is why I raised these issues.

There is corruption in the Ministry of Works and Transport. If those who are in charge of awarding contracts use the criteria, and they are involved in the bidding process; they break up the purchase orders to bring it within the authority of the various officials in the Ministry of Works, something is wrong.

I mentioned the discrepancy which I found in the amount of moneys expended between the one and three mile marks on the San Fernando/Siparia Erin Road, and the limited amount of work which was done on the La Fortune Pluck Road, between the zero and three mile mark. The work done was spot patching which involved an expenditure of almost \$400,000. The actual amount stated in the Minister's response was \$391,667. Part of that road was repaired with oil sand and pitch, not hot mix, and yet this phenomenal expenditure was recorded. Does that not indicate to you that something is grossly amiss? Material is transported by the trucks of the Ministry of Works and Transport, yet the expenditure keeps mounting.

I ask the question: How could the Naparima/Mayaro Road in the constituency of Ortoire/Mayaro with almost three miles of continuous paving cost the Government \$873,000, and three miles of limited spot patching of potholes cost them over \$400,000? Something is wrong somewhere. All the evidence seems to point that, particularly in the Southern Division of the Ministry of Works and Transport, something needs to be investigated. It must be an investigation from the outside. It cannot be done by the officials of the Ministry of Works and Transport because that would be laying the foundation for a cover up of what is going on.

I am raising these issues because if it was being done properly and above board, all the roads in my constituency would have been satisfactorily paved with the amount of money allocated and expended. Then there is this issue about selecting roads on the basis of the volume of traffic. I point to the S.S. Erin Road. Let us look between the Naparima/Mayaro Road and the S.S. Erin Road. I am not arguing that money should not be spent on the Naparima/Mayaro Road, but in

terms of the volume of traffic, which one has more traffic? Is it the S.S. Erin Road or the Naparima/Mayaro Road? When they spend money on the S.S. Erin Road, they spend it on the less populated areas.

If one starts in Erin, the traffic builds up in San Fernando where there is the heaviest volume of traffic. If one took the S.S. Erin Road, one would have thought that if the Government is going on the basis of the volume of traffic, it would have started from the San Fernando end of the S.S. Erin Road and continue towards the Erin end. When the Minister talks about scientific criteria, I do not know whom he thinks he is fooling. He thinks that we are a bunch of little boys. He uses the criteria of a volume of traffic, density and international roughness of the surface of the roadway. He did not mention the main criterion, which is the political input in the selection of roads for the purposes of repair and resurfacing.

If he wants to get more value for the taxpayers' hard-earned money which he is expending, I urge him to seriously make investigations into the operation of the Ministry of Works and Transport, the system of the award of tenders for the supply of material and the question of the manipulation of the system by those who are actually in control and monitor the system to feather their own nests. If the Minister refuses to carry out the kind of enquiry that is required in this matter, then all he will be doing is implicating himself in this whole process of corruption and outright favouritism in the Ministry of Works and Transport. The fact is that the taxpayer of Trinidad and Tobago is getting the short end of the stick.

There is a lot more I wanted to say on this matter because I have accumulated a lot of evidence. I have taken the trouble to investigate, examine and analyze it. We have given a commitment here to this House that we will not speak for more than 45 minutes.

Mr. B. Panday: It is 50 minutes not 45 minutes.

Mr. T. Sudama: I have another five minutes to go to harangue this Government about the manner in which it is carrying on.

When I look at the performance of this Government with respect to the Road Improvement Fund; and consider its general performance; its leader—who is exercising power ruthlessly—the manipulation, intrigue, subterfuge and fear that is created in the Members of the PNM; the inhumanity and the callousness; the institutionalizing of fear and threat on that side; the political execution of the Member for San Fernando West, I tell myself that the nearest thing to a Mafia organization is the PNM Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

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

Motion made, That the hon. Member's speaking time be extended by 10 minutes. [*Mr. B. Panday*]

Question put and agreed to.

6.00 p.m.

Mr. Trevor Sudama: Madam Speaker, I will oblige the House by just taking five minutes.

What is happening in the Ministry of Works and Transport in the administration of the Road Improvement Fund is not accidental. It is part of the general culture of the PNM which we have come to associate with its style of government over these very many years. It is as I said the nearest thing to a Mafia organization, so the Member for San Fernando East is really not the Father of this nation. Nobody wants him to be the father of this nation anyway. I certainly do not want him to be my Father. I will disown a fellow like that. I do not want him to be the Father of the nation. What he really is, is the godfather of the PNM Government, not the Father of any nation. It is a disrespect for him to offer himself as anybody's father.

After 33 years in office these irregularities and certain indicators of corruption continue in the Ministry of Works and Transport. Evidence has been deduced and reports have been made regularly on what is going on. This cannot go on except there are kickbacks involved. The officials of the Ministry of Works and Transport could not have been so deeply mired in this manipulation and corruption except there was some relationship between officials, contractors and suppliers of materials—a very underhand kind of relationship. This is what we are witnessing.

The other point we have to consider, is the relationship between politicians and civil servants. If there is not an arm's length relationship between them, the politicians would never be able to supervise them and get them to work according to regulations. When one can take a Permanent Secretary overnight and pitch for him to be a Minister of Government, there has to be prior collusion. One cannot take a Permanent Secretary overnight and appoint him a Minister without having discussed with him the failings or otherwise of the Minister and without having used him to undermine the Minister.

Mr. Valley: Madam Speaker, I am sure there is nothing wrong with taking a senior official from the Ministry of Finance and putting her to run for election.

Mr. T. Sudama: Madam Speaker, the procedures were followed. She resigned from the ministry.

This is why I am now trying to sort out the relationship between the Minister of Works and Transport and the officials in his ministry. If there is no arm's length relationship, if people do not know their spheres of authority and what they are doing is not monitored, we are in serious trouble. The evidence is there that people can inveigle Permanent Secretaries to undermine their Ministers. Unless there is the proper relationship under our parliamentary democratic system between Ministers, politicians and public servants, then this system will be subject to erosion. It will be negated and the system will lead to the detriment of the population at large.

I raise these much larger issues and I told myself that this is really not the place to go into all the details of what we have heard happening in the Ministry of Works and Transport and what I have deduced myself from my own examination and analysis of the situation. Of course, this has to be confirmed, and the only confirmation which can satisfy us is an independent inquiry into the administration of the Road Improvement Fund in 1994, continuing into 1995. This is so that the Minister of Works and Transport could at least exonerate himself from any blame that could be attached to him. I am not standing here to accuse him of anything. As a Minister he has a responsibility, if things are brought to his attention consistently, however far-fetched he may think they are and there is evidence to indicate irregularity, he has to do something and do it independently.

I do not want to hear that he has set up somebody in the Ministry of Works to question officials, with whom they have been working on a regular basis, to find out whether there is corruption. It would not work. It must be an independent authority. If he cannot take such action, he stands to be tarred by the same brush. I am just giving him a friendly warning as a colleague who wishes to come down to Oropouche constituency unsolicited.

The Minister came to my constituency. I welcomed him. I did not want to refuse his coming to my constituency, so I am reciprocating by giving him friendly advice on how to proceed in this very serious matter. One would recall that the issue in 1986 was corruption. and given the tendency of this Government, it is likely to be an issue in 1996 as well.

The Minister of Works and Transport and Minister of Local Government (Hon. Colm Imbert): Madam Speaker, the Members on the other side have

Road Improvement Fund
[HON. C. IMBERT]

Friday, May 12, 1995

raised a number of matters which I shall be unable to reply to in sufficient detail at this time. As a matter of fact, a number of these matters warrant further investigation before I can respond appropriately, especially some of the issues just raised by the Member for Oropouche.

I want to give this House every assurance that every matter which is brought to the attention of the Minister and the senior officers, or any officer for that matter, in the Ministry of Works will be investigated thoroughly. As I have stated before, any breaches of procedure that have been discovered will be dealt with decisively.

I cannot at this time respond in the manner I would like, to the Member for Oropouche. I will conduct some investigations in the specific matters he has raised and respond at a later date.

6.10 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Madam Speaker, I beg to move that the House do now adjourn to Friday, May 19, 1995, at 1.30 p.m. *[Interruption]* No, no, the Minister is not finished, Madam Speaker, he is continuing on the next day of the sitting of this House. The Minister is going to investigate and he would be coming back to the debate.

In moving the adjournment, Madam Speaker, please allow me to wish all mothers in Trinidad and Tobago a very happy Mother's Day.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 6.12 p.m.