

Leave of Absence

Friday, June 30, 1995

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, June 30, 1995

The House met at 1.42 p.m.

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, I have granted leave of absence for today's sitting to the Member for Caroni Central (*Mr. R. Palackdharrysingh*); the Member for Barataria/San Juan (*Hon. Dr. L. Baboolal*); and the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West (*Mr. D. Allum*).

**SAN FRANCIQUE SPORTS, EDUCATIONAL
AND CULTURAL COUNCIL (INC'N) BILL**

Bill for the incorporation of the San Francique Sports, Educational and Cultural Council and for matters incidental thereto; brought from the Senate [*Mr. R. Maharaj*] read the first time.

COUNTING OF UNREMUNERATED WORK BILL

Bill to require the Central Statistical Office and other public bodies to procure and maintain statistics relative to the counting of unremunerated work and to provide a mechanism for quantifying and recording the monetary value of such work, brought from the Senate [*Mr. H. Bereaux*]: read the first time.

PAPERS LAID

1. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Chaguaramas Development Authority for the year ended December 31, 1992. [*The Minister of Finance (Hon. Wendell Mottley)*]
2. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Chaguaramas Development Authority for the year ended December 31, 1993. (*Hon. W. Mottley*)

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

3. The audited accounts and the financial statements of Trinidad Nitrogen Company Limited for the year ended December 31, 1993. (*Hon. W. Mottley*)

To be referred to the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

**Housing and Infrastructure Conditions
(Squatting Areas)**

The following questions stood on the Order Paper:

- 123.** (a) Would the Minister of Housing and Settlement state what action his Government intends to take to improve the housing and infrastructure conditions in the squatting areas of Enterprise and "Datsunville"?
- (b) If action is contemplated, when would improvement works begin?
- (c) Does Government intend to regularise squatting in the above areas?
- (d) If not, why not? [*Mr. R. Palackdharrysingh*]

Street Lighting

- 133.** (a) Would the Minister of Public Utilities state whether the programme of street lighting has been stopped?
- (b) If it has been stopped, why?
- (c) Would the Minister inform this honourable House of the reason/reasons for doing so?
- (d) If it has not been stopped, would the Minister state why there has been no installation of new street lights and servicing of old ones in Central Trinidad?
- (e) What is the policy of Government with respect to street lighting? [*Mr. R. Palackdharrysingh*]

**Enterprise Community Centre
(Rebuilding of)**

- 134.** (a) Would the Minister state whether the Enterprise Community Centre is to be rebuilt?
- (b) If it is to be rebuilt, would the Minister state:
- (i) When construction work is expected to begin;
- (ii) Where would it be built;
- (iii) The expected date of completion;
- (iv) The type of centre to be constructed;
- (v) The estimated cost of the project? (*Mr. R. Palackdharrysingh*)

**Hong Kong
(Trip)**

- 159.** (a) Could the Prime Minister state what was the purpose of his recent trip to Hong Kong?
- (b) Could he indicate whether he was invited by the Government of Hong Kong to undertake such a trip? If he was not so invited, could he indicate who invited him or whether he made the trip without being invited?
- (c) Could he indicate how many persons accompanied him on the trip, giving the names of the persons who accompanied him?
- (d) Could the Prime Minister state the total cost of this trip to the taxpayer giving material particulars of the expenses? [*Mr. R. L. Maharaj*]

**Citizenship/Resident Status
(Asians)**

- 160.** (a) Could the Minister of National Security state the number of persons who resided in, or were citizens of, the Republic of China, Taiwan or Hong Kong, who have been granted citizenship and/or resident status in Trinidad and Tobago since his Government took office in 1991?
- (b) Could he provide the names of these persons, the dates of their applications and the dates of the grant of status?
- (c) Could the Minister state what criteria, if any, were used in the granting of these applications?
- (d) Could the Minister state whether any of these persons were issued with Trinidad and Tobago passports and, if so, how many?
- (e) Could he also indicate whether any of these persons migrated to the United States of America after coming to Trinidad and Tobago? If so, could he say how many and how long after their grant of status did they migrate? [*Mr. R. L. Maharaj*]

**Deportation
(Caribbean Countries)**

- 161.** (a) Could the Minister of National Security state whether his Government deported citizens or residents of Caribbean countries? If it did, could he give particulars stating how many were deported and to which country they were deported?

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- (b) Could the Minister state whether persons from Caribbean countries are being detained for deportation pursuant to action taken by the Government saying how many and to which countries it intends to deport them? [*Mr. R. L. Maharaj*]

The Minister of Education (Hon. Augustus Ramrekersingh): Madam Speaker, the Government would be answering question No. 123 today and we ask for a deferral of two weeks for the other questions.

Dr. C Singh: Madam Speaker, as the Member is absent today, probably the question could be deferred for another week.

Questions, by leave, deferred.

**REGULARIZATION OF TENURE
(STATE LANDS) BILL**

Bill to regularize the tenure of certain state lands, to facilitate the provision of utilities to, and the physical upgrading and social improvement of, the said lands and the communities within them, to repeal the Regularization of Tenure (State Lands) Act, 1986 and for related matters [*The Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs*]; read the first time.

ARRANGEMENT OF BUSINESS

The Minister of Education (Hon. Augustus Ramrekersingh): Madam Speaker, I beg to move that this House deals with Private Motions Nos. 11 and 12 and then Private Bills, Second Reading Nos. 1 and 2 before we begin Motion No. 1 under "Private Business."

Assent indicated.

SPECIAL SELECT COMMITTEE REPORTS

Adoption

Divine Kali Shakti Temple (Inc'n) Bill

The Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Legal Affairs (Mr. Andrew Casimire): Madam Speaker, I beg to move that this House adopt the report of the special select committee of the House of Representatives appointed to consider and report on a Private Bill for the incorporation of the Divine Maha Kali Shakti Temple and for matters incidental thereto.

Question put and agreed to.

Report adopted.

Opus Dei Prelature (Inc'n) Bill

The Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Works and Transport and Ministry of Local Government (Mr. Jarrette Narine): Madam Speaker, I beg to move that this House adopt the report of the special select committee of the House of Representatives appointed to consider and report on a Private Bill for the incorporation of The Opus Dei Prelature (Trinidad and Tobago) and matters connected therewith.

Question put and agreed to.

Report adopted.

Question put and agreed to, That the Bill be now read the third time.

Bill accordingly read the third time and passed.

1.50 p.m.

CALVARY REVIVAL CENTRE (INC'N) BILL

The Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Education (Mr. Edward Hart): Madam Speaker, I beg to move,

That a bill to provide for the incorporation of the Calvary Revival Centre and matters incidental thereto be now read a second time.

Question proposed.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a second time.

Bill committed to a committee of the whole House.

House in committee.

Clauses 1 to 9 ordered to stand part of the Bill

Preamble ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Question put and agreed to, That the Bill be reported to the House.

House resumed.

Bill reported, without amendment; read the third time and passed.

**VISHWANATH HINDU SOCIAL AND CULTURAL
ORGANIZATION (INC'N) BILL**

The Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Legal Affairs (Mr. Andrew Casimire): Madam Speaker, I beg to move,

Vishwanath Hindu social and Cultural Bill
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That a bill to provide for the incorporation of the Vishwanath Hindu Social and Cultural Organization be now read a second time.

This organization is located on the fringes of Sangre Grande in the San Chiquito district. It caters for a number of young people in the area involved in social and cultural work. It has been in existence for quite a few years and it therefore wishes to be incorporated by an Act of Parliament.

Question proposed.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a second time.

Bill committed to a committee of the whole House.

House in committee.

Clauses 1 to 9 ordered to stand part of the Bill

Preamble ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Question put and agreed to, That the Bill be reported to the House.

House resumed.

Bill reported, without amendment; read the third time and passed.

MARKETING FACILITIES (VENDORS)

Mr. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj (*Couva South*): Madam Speaker, I beg to move the Motion standing in my name which reads as follows:

Whereas the right to life is an important human and fundamental right guaranteed to the people by the Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago;

And Whereas the right to earn a livelihood is an integral part of that right;

And Whereas the Government owes a constitutional obligation to ensure that vendors have the machinery for the enjoyment of such a constitutional right;

And Whereas vendors need suitable markets and marketing facilities in strategic locations for the full enjoyment of such a constitutional right;

And Whereas the provision of such markets and marketing facilities would enable the consuming public to enjoy savings if producers are facilitated with direct vending;

And Whereas the Government has not provided suitable markets and marketing facilities for people to enjoy this right:

Be it Resolved that this House recommend to Government that it take immediate steps to ensure that suitable markets and marketing facilities are immediately provided for vendors of Trinidad and Tobago to market their goods.

Seconded by Mr. J. Humphrey.

2.00 p.m.

Mr. R. L. Maharaj: Madam Speaker, the purpose of this Motion is to get this uncaring Government to recognize that unless it provides suitable markets and/or marketing facilities for vendors, they would be unable to earn a livelihood. They would therefore be unable to feed and clothe themselves, their spouses and children, or to have their children attend school. Therefore their whole enjoyment of rights and the promotion of human dignity would be affected. The vendors would, in effect, be in jeopardy of being unable to survive.

This Motion has a history. It was lodged in this House since April 1992, that is a few months after this Government got into office.

This motion has been re-filed thereafter, in 1992, 1993, 1994, and we are now debating it. It was filed because the United National Congress recognized at its parliamentary caucus that unless this Government understood that vendors were part and parcel of our society—although they are probably a weaker section of the society—and unless vendors are considered and brought into the development process, one would have a situation in which the vendors would be marginalized in our society, children would suffer and it would not be possible to have true social integration.

The way I propose to deal with this Motion is to develop the argument to show that vendors are part of that informal sector. They are, in effect, micro-entrepreneurs and part and parcel of the small business sector. This Government has given a commitment to promote the small business sector, but I want to show that by its actions it really has not promoted the rights of the vendors.

Vendors would include all vendors, but it is impossible in a Motion like this to deal with all kinds of vendors. I would, therefore, concentrate on street vending, highway vending and vending of agricultural produce, to be able to show since 1992, when Government first had notice of this Motion, what has happened since then and what is happening now, and to show that the Government's policy is not only not promoting the rights of these vendors, but it has also taken away whatever markets and marketing facilities these vendors had.

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Government has broken down their stalls; it has removed them from the streets and it has not provided any alternative accommodation for these people to make a livelihood. Therefore, the Government has, in effect, caused an obstruction to any social integration and human development in our country.

I want to show how this Government has neglected this informal sector and I make the point that it is the duty and the obligation of this Government to provide more supportive policies in order to promote the interest of vendors; and that the Government ought to have shown, and should show, a more compassionate approach to vendors.

The policy of the Government must be more people-centred and its economic and social development policies seem to lack a human face and do not seem to put people first.

I would also show that this Government, in its printed material, and in particular a White Paper on food and agriculture, has taken a very limited view of marketing facilities according to this Government in its policy document, are really just markets. I suggest that marketing facilities have a much wider meaning than markets. It starts from the time the goods are produced to the time they actually reach the consumer. For example, in respect of agricultural goods it would mean from the farm gate to the consumer.

I want to show that when one considers the vital aspects of marketing facilities, such as transport, storage, actual distribution, access roads, this Government really is not interested in providing such infrastructure for vendors nor for the promotion of the rights of vendors.

I would, in effect, demonstrate, too, what are some of the problems facing our markets, and I would conclude by showing that if this Government is really interested in providing these infrastructures, it would have agreed to the Opposition's demands, which are, one, Reform the parliamentary system to provide parliamentary committees to monitor governmental activities so that some of the moneys which are being wasted, either by favouritism or by mere irregularities, could be utilized to provide the development and enhancement of this informal sector.

What this Motion, therefore, does is take up the plight of the small man and woman in Trinidad and Tobago. It is a Motion trying to pierce the conscience, of the Government—if the Government does have a conscience—to move it to provide some benefits for this weak sector in the society. This Motion is for the street vendor, the market vendor, the agriculture vendor, the meat vendor, the fruit

and vegetable vendor, the haberdashery vendor and all vendors who offer their goods habitually to make a livelihood.

The Motion calls for Government to provide necessary markets and marketing facilities. Unless the Government provides these things, vendors would not have a fighting chance to survive. Vendors are not asking the Government to provide jobs for them. They are not asking for a "ten-days" job. They are not asking for taxpayers' moneys to be spent in order that they be given a job. They are asking for a fair opportunity to be able to make a livelihood. They are, in effect, self-employed and creative. They want to be able to create employment for themselves and they have their own finances, and are working hard in order to survive.

One would have thought that with that kind of attitude, the Government would have done everything in its power to ensure that they are provided with those opportunities.

2.10 p.m.

One does not have to argue, really, that if vendors—who want to work and who are not given the opportunity to work—are removed from their place of work—whether it is on the pavement, on the highway or wherever—and no proper alternative is put in place for them to earn a livelihood, then the society is going to pay the price in crime, juvenile delinquency, drugs and alcohol abuse, unemployment, poverty and so forth.

When one considers the result of not providing markets and marketing facilities and what can be achieved if those facilities are provided, one does not have to be an Einstein to recognize that if one is truly committed to national development and to alleviating the problems of unemployment, poverty and the social ills in the society, a government would readily provide these markets and marketing facilities.

I think it is sometimes forgotten that some of our country's big businessmen and women who have large buildings in busy areas, started as small vendors. They were either itinerant vendors or vendors on the pavement, in trucks or vans. Some of them sold cloth, and were nicknamed "poitiques". Different types of people sold different types of products, but they were once small people. If they were not given the opportunity to vend, and they were not given markets and marketing facilities, they would not have been the big businessmen and women of today.

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Therefore, they can now afford to buy expensive plots in the urban areas; they can afford to have big buildings; they can afford to have people market their goods. They have markets and marketing facilities.

The poor, weak, ordinary man in our society, who wants to have the same kind of satisfaction of earning his living in the same way, is handicapped because he does not have the ability to get into an area in which there is heavy pedestrian or vehicular traffic; he cannot afford even to buy a piece of land; he cannot afford to rent it. Therefore, he finds himself trying to get into the busy area in an effort to make a living.

What we have seen is that these people who tried that have been able to do so, but when this Government came into office it decided to remove the street vendors but provided no proper alternative for them to traffick to make a living.

We also had the situation where highway vendors were removed and their stalls broken down. Then, there was the promise by the Government, after it broke down the stalls, that it would provide lay-bys for them. Up to today, over a year has passed, and not a lay-by has been provided. In the meantime, what must these vendors do? What must they do with their children? What must they do with their commitments? Wait until the PNM Government provides lay-bys?

It is all well and good to construct a building for the Industrial Court to provide justice. This week we saw where the Government is planning to construct a building for the Industrial Court to provide justice. What justice can we have in Trinidad and Tobago if the Government does not provide distributive justice? It wants to construct a building in order to have justice served, but buildings do not give justice, commitments and people do.

Here is a situation where the Government is building a large prison—how many million dollars. *[Interruption]* Two hundred million dollars. The Government is spending much money on the Road Improvement Programme.

I have a report dated March, 1995, which has come into my hands, and when one sees what is in this report—the Parliament and the people of Trinidad and Tobago have been denied the contents of this report—one would want to know whether this Government has a heart. Can it not provide money in order to ensure that these people are provided with a means of making a livelihood?

Vendors and the people of Trinidad and Tobago, who are not as fortunate as some of the Government Ministers, are entitled to be treated fairly. The problem with this Government is that it believes that certain people in this society must not

be treated fairly. They must not be given avenues and means whereby they can progress. That is the philosophy of this Government. One sees it in its policy and hears it in its utterances.

These vendors, in effect, have been neglected, taken out of the areas in which they can make a living—and one knows that a vendor cannot make a living if he is placed at a point in the city where there is no pedestrian traffic. For example, the Government wanted to place the Couva Market far from the main nerve of Couva—in a back street—and the people abandoned it and started to sell at the side of the road.

The Government is not interested in providing a market in the main area for the people. Markets and marketing facilities must be considered with that in mind. That is, for the people to be accessible to their trade. They cannot survive with their trade unless there is human traffic.

It, therefore, follows that whatever percentage of the working population in Trinidad and Tobago constitutes the vending sector, if these people, or the majority of these people, or a substantial number of these people are not provided with a means to make their livelihood, we would have a situation, where there would, at least, be the promotion of poverty and unemployment among them.

This Government, in its National Report for the World Summit for Social Development said one thing, but it seems that in respect of vendors it is doing another. The policy which the Government recognized in this document states that if there was poverty and unemployment, there could not really be full participation and integration of all sectors in the community. If the vendors are therefore, removed—they are not permitted to participate in vending their trade—and the Government does not take steps to provide the machinery for them, but instead prevents them from doing it, then the Government is acting contrary to its own document which it prepared in 1995. I should like to quote from the Overview on page 3, "Enhancing Social Integration."

"Poverty and unemployment are two factors which significantly hinder the full participation and integration of all sectors of the population in the development process. The concept of social integration addresses the extent to which all individuals or groups receive equal treatment in a society. Social integration can be enhanced by improving the conditions of life for all and by ensuring that all individuals or groups are able to participate as fully as possible in the development process."

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2.20 p.m.

Very nice words. Correct. No one can doubt their accuracy and relevance to Trinidad and Tobago, but is the sentiment being implemented? It is one thing to put it on paper but is the Government implementing this? If the Government is serious about reducing poverty and unemployment; and is serious about its statement that if it is not reduced it hinders the full participation of all sectors of the population; how it is that the Government could be treating the vendors in this way, in effect, treating them unequally?

Madam Speaker, you would know that the Government of the United Kingdom recognizes that vendors are an important part of the culture of the British society. What do they do in several countries? They decided to pedestrianize certain streets. That is to say, those streets would not be open to vehicular traffic. They open the streets at early hours of the morning or late at nights for the service of stalls on the streets.

They allow the businessmen to sell in their stores but in the middle of the streets they construct certain temporary equipment which can be moved quite easily to permit vendors to have stalls. There is the case where the store owners are selling and the vendors are able to sell in the busy areas of the city. The effect is that competition reduces prices—and the consumer gets a better deal.

With some vision, this Government, could have created a situation where vendors could have been licensed, regulated and some of the busy streets in Port of Spain could have been closed to vehicular traffic. Pedestrianize the streets to access to pedestrian traffic so that they can make a living. Instead, this Government removed them and where did it put them? It put some of them in areas where they could scarcely make a living, and street vending in Trinidad and Tobago has been virtually abolished, thanks to the PNM Government. That is the brutal and callous treatment given to an important sector of the society.

This document, which the Government prepared for the World Summit for Social Development, is only to fool people; it is not a document to really develop Trinidad and Tobago.

It is also recognized in this document that the informal sector is increasing. Where in a country the structural adjustment policy starts to bite and continues to bite, there would be many people who cannot find employment either in the Government or private sector resorting to making a living somehow or the other. Whether it is in art and craft, vending or whatever. This document under 'informal sector' on page 7 recognizes that.

"Unemployed withdrawal from the labour force also occurs when those seeking jobs in the formal sector may, after being unsuccessful turn to the informal sector."

One sees that the Government recognizes that there will be an increased number of people in the informal sector, and also that vending is part of that informal sector. It also says:

"Although not statistically measured, informal sector activities are visibly evident in such industries as personal services, artisan and craft production, commodity retailing and border trading."

One sees that the Government recognizes that with the policies it is implementing there will be an increase of the informal sector, and therefore, there will be an increase of people who would want to do vending. Despite its recognition of all those matters, the Government has not taken any steps to improve the situation. The majority of vendors, who used to vend on the streets and on the highways have to steal an opportunity to make a living.

Since this document was prepared by this country for the World Summit for Social Development and much publicity was given to this Government's participation, I want to remind this Government that the Summit expressed its concerns in its declaration about the increase in poverty, unemployment and social disintegration in different countries and called upon governments to have a more compassionate and people-oriented approach to social and economic development. It stated that it would like governments to consider the marginalized people in their countries, to assist the sectors which did not have means of assisting themselves.

Has this Government shown, by its action, that it really wants to help the vending sector? On the contrary, it has declared war on the vending sector. By its policy it has, in effect, stated that although the vending sector is a major source of self-employment, it is not interested in that.

I wonder whether the Prime Minister's words in his famous Hong Kong message, would provide a solution to the problem of vending. The message says in part:

"It is important for you to understand that a lot is spoken of vision, but vision is more than saying that you have a vision. Vision is working to have a vision work."

I am appealing to this Government whether "vision is working to have a vision work," or whatever—I cannot understand that. Whatever it means, this

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Government must try to get a vision. *[Interruption]* The Attorney General said that he would explain to me later what that means. I anxiously await his explanation, his expounding on the law and his on English Language to show what that means. This Government really does not have a vision. It should not even use that word because its policies have reflected no vision whatsoever.

I should like at this point to talk a bit, particularly, about the street vendors. These street vendors try to make their living in the urban areas and they sell all sorts of produce. Over the years they have been selling in these important areas in the city, the nerve centre areas. I would demonstrate the effects of their not being able to do this.

It cannot be doubted that these vendors have not been able to make their living. They have been turned away from these busy areas and they have been turned away on the basis—example, in San Fernando the Government needed to beautify the city and it was considered not proper to have them on the pavement.

2.30 p.m.

If those vendors are turned away and are unable to make a living and have commitments for themselves and their families, what effect can this have on society? I shall deal with that after. Even the highway vendors fall into a similar category. They had built stalls along the highways and they tried to peddle their goods. Some of them still do that, but the Government has taken steps to prevent that. I have mentioned the promise of the lay-bys.

You would recall that Barataria, Cross Crossing, and Mon Repos are some of the areas where the Government has virtually prevented these vendors from earning their livelihood. Apart from what one knows, I have looked at some of the reports from the newspapers including letters and articles. I would refer to one or two.

I would say that from what I have gathered, it seems to me that the effects of governmental action in turning away these vendors from making a livelihood are as follows. Vendors have not been able to have a decent meal cooked in their homes. I refer to a survey done by Suzanne Gosine of the *Newsday* published on September 18, 1994. She mentioned this in a long article as one of the effects of Government's policy.

Vendors are forced to conduct their trade from travelling bags. I am sure that the Member for Diego Martin East—and nobody else—would get up to try to defend and justify the Government's action in this matter. Vendors, as parents, are

unable to provide a decent living for their families. Young men, women and children vending, stand along the streets with their unopened bags placed at their feet waiting for a change to make a quick sale; Children of the vendors are being forced to stay away from school. Many spend the day with empty stomachs eagerly awaiting the return of their parents at the end of the day; vendors, as parents, have to go home to face hungry faces of their children with nothing to offer them; vendors who take goods on consignment are unable to sell not them and some of them sell one cent sometimes in three weeks.

Children of vendors are being forced to drop out of school as the parents cannot afford to pay transportation for them; nor provide lunch and other requirements; vendors, as parents, cannot take their children to the doctor. Their suffer from colds, fevers and they have eczemas on their bodies, but the children have to remain unattended and hope that they recover.

One does not need an investigation or a scientific survey to see what the effects would be of people who were accustomed making a living, and no longer have the means to do so, especially who have children. In this case we have facts and allegations. I do not think that the Government can dispute that these are the effects on people who are unable to make a living.

In a survey published in the *Newsday*, it was said that out of 300 plus vendors in the City of San Fernando, more than three quarters of them did not sell one cent for the past three weeks. It quote a woman from Manahambre as saying that she has four children. These are her words:

"None of them have gone to school since the new school term reopened. Now that I am not selling anything, I cannot feed them. Sometimes the neighbour will give me something to eat and if I have a few green figs I will boil that with some other ground provision that I can dig up from the garden."

That is how people are surviving today under this caring Government. The effects of this are not only on vendors who have just started to vend, but also on those who have been vending for more than 20 years. This is the only kind of employment they know."

An article was written by Raddish Maharaj from Rio Claro. It was published on June 19, 1995 in the *Express and Guardian*. It states:

"The Editor

Out of employment, little or no income, while children out of school, little food and no books, no maxi fare, this is the stage set for child prostitution,

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drugs and some other crimes by any desperate parent. And who is causing it all?

In today's world lack of financial income can lead some unbalanced minds to turn to crime. Authorities must take heed. Fishermen, fish vendors, meat vendors, small farmers, and other vendors in Rio Claro are being unjustly oppressed with the closure of the main market building here.

Selling their various products at retail price at the market building on the busy Naparima Mayaro Road, south eastern gardeners and small farmers used to fetch a good sale from both the travelling public, and beach lovers from south to Mayaro beach.

Today the Rio Claro market is reduced to just a few poorly stocked stalls in an open unprotected shed way behind the former market down in a hollow, out of sight.

All indications are that the Rio Claro market is closed.

The once thriving Rio Claro market serving Nariva, and Ortoire/Mayaro no longer exists. The public eagerly seeks out the murderers of the Rio Claro public market...

Not only the vendors are suffering, but the poor residents cannot reach even to Princes Town with bison cart and bicycles. It is \$10.00 return fare to Princes Town, just like Port of Spain to San Fernando. Who cares?

Tardiness and neglect in updating and reopening the market at an early date is a burning shame on local government.

I am of the opinion that Rio Claro surely needs proper local government representation."

Dr. Rowley: You are spreading mischief.

Mr. R. L. Maharaj: What is wrong with you? That is not true. Get up and say it is not true. Have you provided anything for vendors? Get up and say what you have provided for them.

One sees therefore, that even where they try to put a market, it is put away from the traffic. That is because they do not care about vendors. If one examines the legislative policy of this Government for the last four years, can one point to a piece of legislation which provided some social or economic benefit for the little man in Trinidad and Tobago? One sees that the Government has not only failed

to provide markets but it has also aggravated the damage. It has taken away whatever existing markets the people had to make a living; removed the vendors from the streets, broken down their sheds and have not provided any alternative.

Dr. Rowley: You lost the case in the courthouse, you come here to try it again.

Mr. R. L. Maharaj: It is the duty of anyone, whether he be parliamentarian or lawyer, to fight at all times for the rights of ordinary people. This matter has nothing to do with “case”. That is how this Government always wants to divert attention.

2.40 p.m.

While they drive in their nice motorcars. All these Ministers have nice motorcars, they have brutally and callously removed these people from the streets. while those people do not have the facilities to make a living. *[Interruption]* I am not in Government. When we become the Government of Trinidad and Tobago we will level the playing field. We have distributive justice. They are in Government; they control the resources, but they have abdicated their responsibility to govern. They say that the Opposition should govern, but they are not giving the Opposition the resources.

I would like to deal with marketing facilities. When I described marketing facilities in the Motion, I was not talking about just creating markets. This Government in its White Paper on Food and Agriculture—that is the Ministry of the Member for Diego Martin West—at Item 22, described marketing facilities as consisting of wholesale and retail markets. That is all they are concerned about—providing a building either for a wholesale or a retail market.

That is too restricted a meaning. Marketing facilities must include all institutional arrangements put in place to facilitate the sale of goods. Some of the markets which fall under either the Ministry of Works and Transport or the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources are not equipped with facilities such as a regular supply of water, toilet facilities and adequate storage arrangements. If a market is constructed and it does not have these facilities, how can it really be considered a market providing marketing facilities? Marketing facilities include places where vendors can store their goods, and where they are safe in the market. But vendors cannot even get water in the market, and the Government says that there are marketing facilities.

Apart from that, assuming that there are markets in Trinidad and Tobago, let us see whether the facilities exist and to what extent the Government has shown a

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commitment to marketing facilities. Bear in mind that I am saying that the concept of marketing facilities embraces all the transactions and actions between the time of cultivation in the field and the time the produce reaches the consumer. That would mean, therefore, that transport, storage, packaging and actual distribution are important.

If the Government shows a commitment to vendors to vend their produce, it must show the aspects in its policies and also that what it has done so far, has not really neglected the vending industry in Trinidad and Tobago. My contention is that even in this respect the Government has indeed neglected the vending industry.

I want to point out some of the problems which confront and militate against suitable marketing of commodities in this country. Lack of security result in the pilferage of stock. That is a major problem vendors have. Although they have this problem, the Government, over the years, has not done anything to improve protection against this problem, so vendors are hesitant to leave produce overnight at the markets and are consequently forced to incur additional transportation costs, which they inevitably pass on to the consumer.

There are inadequate basic amenities including electricity, water and toilet facilities. These are relevant and important in respect of the sale of foodstuff.

Dilapidated condition of markets: Vendors have complained about the presence of rodents and stray dogs, broken-down stalls, leaking roofs and the general disregard for the upkeep of the markets. There has been no improvement in respect of market vending.

There is overcrowding in some markets, which results in the proliferation of sidewalk vendors who attempt to get away from the congestion inside the markets. Of course, the tendency is for individuals to purchase from the sidewalk vendors, but the Government has a responsibility to solve this overcrowding problem.

The Government in its contempt for the vending industry has not considered even providing parking facilities at these markets.

In respect of agricultural produce, which I have been talking about, it is important that the markets be constructed at the nerve centre of the area. One of the main problems in agricultural vending is access roads. A market should ideally be a place where people can market their goods in an orderly and businesslike atmosphere, where the buyer can shop with ease.

Access roads. There can be no proper marketing, of course, if the people who cultivate their goods and the vendors cannot transport them. Access roads are needed to go to the lands to bring out the produce. So it is a vital link in the vending industry, if one considers marketing facilities on a broad aspect and not on a limited aspect.

According to my information, the Food and Agriculture Policy of the Government states at Item 19 that there are more than 2,000 kilometres of rural access roads, most of which are in need of maintenance and/or repairs. If access roads constitute a vital component of the whole marketing of farmers goods, then the US \$35.5 million which the Government accessed from the IDB for the rehabilitation of rural access roads, can repair a total of only 160 kilometres of access roads, less than 13 per cent of the total in need of repair, and I understand the repair of 30 bridges.

2.50 p.m.

If this Government is serious about promoting market facilities, it would take steps to ensure that some greater effort is made to repair these access roads for farmers. Some of the problems therefore confronting farmers and vendors of the agricultural sector are:

- (1) Restricted availability and high cost of agricultural inputs—land, labour, seeds, fertilizers, pesticides and so forth.
- (2) The lack of application of functional research and often ignorance of available research and technology.
- (3) High losses and waste due to improper post-harvest handling, processing and storage.
- (4) The need for improvement in land distribution and security of tenure.
- (5) Poorly developed and maintained physical infrastructure, particularly in respect of roads, flood control and irrigation.

I suppose the Minister of Works and Transport would say that he is doing a very good job in respect of drainage. If it is one area of this country that is in a total mess, it is the drainage plan or the plans to prevent flooding. The drainage in Trinidad and Tobago is very, very bad.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Member, five minutes ago the 45 minutes elapsed, so you are on your 30 minutes now.

Mr. R. L. Maharaj: I am much obliged, Madam Speaker.

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In some of these areas there are rivers and drains which have not been dredged and cleaned for years and no amount of appealing to the Minister of Works and Transport would get him to do that. He is very concerned about fixing roads, using the moneys from the road fund to fix roads to make sure that these contractors get their contracts to fix roads; he is probably very busy with that. What he should do is ask to be relieved so that somebody else could look after drainage in Trinidad and Tobago. Drainage has been neglected, so vendors in the farming industry also are adversely affected.

The next problem is poor land reserve management including soil and water conservation: Another major problem is indebtedness of farmers to lending institutions. We have a situation where the farmers have borrowed money and the Government has sold this debt to a debt collecting agency at such a price that the farmers cannot repay their loans.

There is also the situation where this very Government has sold a debt owed to a Government institution in favour of one of its Ministers; that Minister received special treatment. This Minister has, in effect, been relieved of paying the debt, but these poor farmers would lose their plots, their means of survival. Their children, as mentioned in the articles, will have to boil figs to live, while other people are reaping the benefits of society.

No amount of diversion—they can divert their own Members—but no amount of diversion from the main issues in this Parliament would, exonerate this Government from its heartless and uncaring approach in dealing with the poor and the small people in our country.

We have the problem of larceny of produce—if it is one thing, you cannot control the Opposition; we can control the Government, but you cannot control the Opposition.

Dr. Rowley: But she is not part of the Opposition

Mr. R. L. Maharaj: I am not saying that she is part of the party, but she is part of the Opposition. *[Laughter]*

It is not that this Government does not have the financial resources to provide these benefits to alleviate the plight of the vendors, whether it be the street vendor, the highway vendor or the agriculture vendor, in whatever aspect of the infrastructure that is necessary to promote vending. It has the financial resources, but what has been happening is that the expending of the moneys is not being monitored properly. If the Government had agreed for that to occur, then we

would have had a situation where moneys which are being wasted in different sections of governmental activity could have been utilized for the vendors.

If this Government had agreed with the Opposition's suggestion that the Parliament should be accountable to the people, it would go for the committee system. A parliamentary committee consisting of both Opposition and Government Members would monitor each government ministry in order to provide safeguards and checks to determine whether the policy of the Government is being implemented. This committee would not be changing the policy of the Government; it would merely be overseeing the implementation of Government policy.

For example, with respect to the Road Improvement Fund, if there were a parliamentary committee, as there is in the United Kingdom, it could monitor the Ministry of Works and Transport to see that the fund is being used appropriately and that the money collected is not being wasted. These moneys which are saved from the Road Improvement Fund and other governmental projects can then be used for other matters in order to promote the social development of our country.

I have in my hand a report dated March 1995 on the operation of the Road Improvement Fund. I want to state that I am not going to read names in this report; I am just going to read the facts as to the summary and conclusion leaving out names. At page 9 under "Summary and Conclusion", it says:

"The result of my investigations and conclusions arrived at are hereby summarised.

The rental of motor vehicles should be viewed in the context of:

- (a) rentals in respect of the seminar on Road Maintenance Policy during the period January 09th to January 15th, 1995.
- (b) the continuing rental of motor vehicles by travelling officers of the Highways Division.

With respect to (a) above, unconfirmed Cabinet Minute No. 2070 dated August 11, 1994 recommended that the organizing expenses of hosting the seminar which was estimated at \$75,000 be met from budgetary allocation of the Ministry of Works and Transport. This, in my opinion, does not constitute authority to incur the expenditure..."

The actual money spent amounted to \$147,861.25, a sum exceeding the estimated amount of \$75,000."

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That is “chicken feed” in relation to what follows.

"The following discrepancies/irregularities were uncovered as a result of examination of payments/commitments effected in respect of (a) and (b) above.

- (1) Approval should have been sought from Central Tenders Board to incur expenditure in excess of \$100,000 in respect of open market items. No such approval was seen."

3.00 p.m.

- (2) The level of delegated authority for the Director of Highways and the Chief Construction Engineer (Roads) is limited to \$20,000 and \$15,000 respectively.

Contrary to Circular No. 13 dated October 19, 1988 re delegation of authority for the award of contracts in respect of the purchases of goods and services, it was noted that the Director of Highways and the Chief Construction Engineer (Roads) had approved local purchases in excess of the stipulated amount.

- (3) The period of the seminar on road maintenance policy was from January 9, 1995 to January 15, 1995. It could not be satisfactorily explained why rental of motor vehicle exceeded beyond January 15, 1995. In fact, invoices indicated that the period of rental of vehicles was from January 16, 1995 to January 31, 1995."

Mr. Imbert: Madam Speaker, on a point of clarification. I believe what the Member is referring to are the preliminary findings of internal investigations within the ministry—which he has castigated in the past. I simply wish to point out that it is evident that our internal audit procedures are working.

Mr. R. L. Maharaj: He can reply, Madam Speaker. I am not concerned about who is suspended or prosecuted from who is not. There is a situation where funds are being used for the purposes of certain matters. I am saying that if there is a system of accountability the machinery should be improved. The Minister should sit down because he has been aware of this since March, 1995.

Mr. Imbert: That is my investigation.

Mr. Sudama: Is it the Member's money?

Mr. R. L. Maharaj: Madam Speaker, I am a very reasonable person. I do not read all the letters I get. I have another letter dated April 6, 1994 addressed to Mr.

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Sydney Knox, but I shall show it to the Minister before I read it. I shall not read it today.

Miss Nicholson: Read it first.

Dr. Rowley: Read it.

Mr. R. L. Maharaj: I do not read everything; I pick and choose. It seems that they know about the letter.

Dr. Rowley: We know the author.

Mr. R. L. Maharaj: Madam Speaker, to continue the quotation:

"There is evidence to indicate that invoices..."

This is a real report.

"...(bills) submitted by the supplier ..."

I am not calling the name of the supplier.

"... were deliberately falsified and, as such, constitute an act of fraud."

Very revealing.

"Expenditures in respect of rental of motor vehicles is debited to various votes... (For example,) under Materials and Supplies, Upkeep of Vehicles, Maintenance of Main Roads, Advances from Treasury Deposits Road Improvement Programme.

It should be pointed out that incorrect classification of expenditure constitutes a breach of...Section 65 of the Financial Regulations.

(6) There is no authority for a scheduled travelling officer to utilize a rented motor vehicle in the execution of his or her duties, the payments for which are defrayed from the Consolidated Fund.

Any officer requiring alternative means of transport should conform to paragraph 29(1) of the Travelling Allowances Regulations which state as follows:"

I will not read that. It goes on:

"It was discovered that some officers who had utilized the services of rented vehicles for the months of January to March, 1995 had also submitted claims for travelling and/or upkeep allowance for the same period."

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I will not read the names of the officers and all the particulars, but they are here.

"This is contrary to paragraph 14 of the Travelling Allowances Regulations which state:

If an officer who is required to keep a motor vehicle for use in the performance of his duties is in receipt of a commuted allowance and is at any time, owing to the vehicle being temporarily out of use, allowed to use a government vehicle, he shall receive only such proportionate part of the commuted allowance as is due to him.

- (8) Expenditure incurred and described in the body of the invoice as an item of expenditure known as rental of motor car does not appear on any approved estimates or approved programme of works in this ministry."

We are talking about taxpayers' money.

"The criteria with respect to who is authorized to utilize the services of a rented vehicle could not be rationally explained by the Chief Construction Engineer."

It mentioned certain matters here which I do not think I should read. The report continues:

"During the course of my investigations other areas of irregularities and improprieties were disclosed in respect of the supply of goods and services, the maintenance of proper records and the adherence to financial control. Such occurrences were especially pronounced in the districts of Victoria West, Caroni and St. George West where my examination was primarily focussed. From an examination of invoice order books, local purchases, authority's requisitions, contract records and the expenditure ledger at the Victoria West district, it was noted that numerous invoice orders issued in favour of ..."

The name of a firm is called.

"... for the supply of goods and services were deliberately split in order to avoid the approval of a higher authority."

It mentions all the particulars. Then, it states:

"Additionally, it was discovered that in several instances requisitions for the supply of materials were not signed by the Works Supervisor responsible for the district in which the works were carried out, but were signed by the Works Supervisor from another district. There were other instances where

requisitions were not signed by the Works Supervisor at all and only carried the approval of the Road Supervisor."

If one reads this report one would see that without proper accountability to Parliament through a reformed system of parliamentary committees monitoring Ministers, the people's rights would be in jeopardy because the people's money can be spent not for purposes for which they were collected. The Government says that it is investigating. Even if it investigates and a few persons are prosecuted, whether they are convicted or acquitted, how does that solve the problem? It may deter the one or two of the offenders who have been punished, but that does not solve the problem.

What I am talking about is for the Government to agree to have machinery whereby the finances of the country, the people's money, can be monitored by the Parliament, so that moneys which are collected can be used to provide goods and services and projects which would alleviate the problems of the country. If the moneys from the Road Improvement Fund were used to provide lay-bys at appropriate places on the highway some children who are not able to go to school would have been able to do so; some children who are suffering would have benefited from that. As it stands now, they are suffering and other people are benefiting.

I respectfully submit to this Parliament that if the Government is serious about providing social integration in this country, so that all sectors would participate in the development process and reap the rewards of the country and get distributive justice, it has an obligation to agree to this Motion and take steps immediately to ensure that vendors are able to earn their livelihood.

Thank you very much.

3.10 p.m.

The Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Works and Transport and Ministry of Local Government (Mr. Jarrette Narine): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to join the debate at this time on a Motion brought by the Member for Couva South. As he indicated at the very start of his presentation, this Motion was placed on the Order Paper since 1992. As a matter of fact, if my memory serves me right, it arose because of some problems that were taking place in Port of Spain, and there was a matter before the court.

The President of the Vendors' Association who stood for his political party in an election recently and lost that election in Laventille West, if he remembers, two weeks ago brought down the largest crowd from Laventille in support of the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago.

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But we are in 1995 and the Motion is still a good one, he thought, so he brought it before the House today to discuss matters that started in 1992 and before that. He kept repeating that the Government is an uncaring Government. Even before this Motion was filed—you will remember that during the period of Dr. Eric Eustace Williams there were similar matters and the People's Mall in Port of Spain at the corner of Frederick and Queen Streets, came into being as result of that caring that the PNM has had from day one for vendors.

So that parcel of land was acquired by Government, and the People's Mall erected. That is part of Government's policy to acquire areas to be used by vendors and providing them with proper facilities. So the People's Mall is an indication of the caring that the PNM has always manifested.

Even before Tent City was built, one would remember that there was the Eastern Market, which was closed down in favour of a new market on the Beetham Highway. The Eastern Market was also renovated and given to those same vendors for whom the Member for Couva South is speaking; they are quite happy today where they are on Charlotte Street; and they are making a profit and earning their living off that Eastern Market—an entire block, of prime property in the city of Port of Spain. But the Member comes here and says that the Government is uncaring.

Recently we had the same problem in Port of Spain during the tenure of the late Mr. Augustus Williams. Everyone in this room would remember the negotiations which took place and the acquisition of that parcel of land on Independence Square, now known as the Brian Lara promenade where NIPDEC House has built an enormous building called the Tent City.

We also have next to Tent City, as recent as last year, an extension to accommodate the persons who were occupying the Brian Lara Promenade—they are better known as the Drag Brothers, and NIPDEC went in on behalf of the Government to make available space for those persons to continue their trade.

But as they left the streets of Port of Spain, new persons appeared as vendors. It is an ongoing thing. It started years ago. So when you speak about the People's Market, the Eastern Market, the market in Sea Lots, Tent City and other areas that were made available, you are speaking about a caring Government, a Government since 1956 in which the people have confidence.

It is not only for Port of Spain. Recently there were problems which in San Fernando. Accommodation was made at that time for the vendors in San Fernando at that car park near the hospital. A building was placed there to

encourage those persons to get off the streets, because they may have perishable items and they have to be under sanitary conditions. The Member for Couva South will not go and buy from those people there, but he is encouraging other people to buy from them.

There is a cholera outbreak near to us in Venezuela. We are trying to prevent it here in Trinidad and Tobago, but the Member for Couva South is trying to be lawless, encouraging people in this country to be lawless and defending them at every turn that they indulge in lawlessness. I shall come to that, but may I remind him now that I was a member of the St. George East County Council from 1983 to 1991. He may remember what is going on up to this day in court.

He spoke about corruption in the Road Improvement Programme. I am pleased to say that before the report, which he quoted, even reached the Auditor General, that he got a report of it. We had information that something was wrong within the ministry and the Minister of Works and Transport initiated investigations. We are not going to deal with workers in our ministry on hearsay, or on allegations. We have an audit department, and that department, investigated thoroughly and a report was made. He got the report. It is due process.

So that the Auditor General's Department now comes in and these allegations are investigated and the Fraud Squad will be called in, if it is considered that there is need to do so. It is the same thing that happened at the Licensing Department. The Member for Couva South cannot but be aware that two persons who did certain wrong things there were defended by him and they got off in court.

So the point is, no Minister hires anybody; no Minister fires anybody; no Minister makes up any invoice order; no Minister ever signs any invoice order. The point is, one cannot prevent someone from being corrupt, but it is what ones does about it when he or she is found out.

I hope that I have laid that matter to rest today. The Member for Couva South is always talking to the gallery about corruption. The point is, the people of Trinidad and Tobago know better than that.

He spoke about lay-bys, and I would come to that matter later on. I wonder whether the Member for Couva South ever visited a market on the weekend. I do not know who does his marketing for him or what market he goes to, or if he goes to Hi Lo or other markets. He never had the opportunity to walk into a market on a weekend from Friday night to Sunday morning. He should take the opportunity to do so. The Member for St. Augustine did that. On many occasions he went to

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the Tunapuna market together with us, when we were members of the St. George East Council Council.

The first part of this Motion states:

"Whereas the right to life is an important human and fundamental right guaranteed to the people by the Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago;

And Whereas the right to earn a livelihood is an integral part of that right;

And Whereas the Government owes a constitutional obligation to ensure that vendors have the machinery..."

He spoke first about rights, and immediately he got to the third paragraph of this Motion, he spoke about vendors.

3.20 p.m.

The Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago states the rights of persons—the Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago, Acts No. 4 of 1976 and No. 30 of 1979, chap. 1, The Recognition and Protection of Fundamental Human Rights and Freedoms. I would like to read into *Hansard* the rights that are enshrined, although it is probably known to everybody seated in Parliament:

"It is hereby recognised and declared that in Trinidad and Tobago there have existed and shall continue to exist, without discrimination by reason of race, origin, colour, religion or sex, the following fundamental human rights and freedoms, namely—

- (a) the right of the individual to life, liberty, security of the person and enjoyment of property and the right not to be deprived thereof except by due process of law;"

When the Member for Couva South encourages people to block the pavements, clog up drains and to do all sorts of lawless things, he is infringing upon my rights and the rights of other citizens of this country. He comes here and talks about vendors; what about the rights of other persons in Trinidad and Tobago to enjoy the right to live and to enjoy the freedoms that are enshrined in the Constitution?

Paragraph—(b) states:

"the right of the individual to equality before the law and the protection of the law;"

This is why the case that the Member for Couva South had in the courts was lost. We are protected by the magistrates or the judges who have given decisions. The

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Member knows and accepts that, but still he encourages a small group of people in Trinidad and Tobago to be lawless. Maybe it is because he has many benefits to get from those people: creating employment for himself and his colleagues in his profession.

"(c) the right of the individual to respect for his private and family life;"

In many areas, there are vendors blocking all the entrances and so forth. It is a known fact that vendors in many of the markets in Trinidad, which are scattered all over the country, facilities which were placed there even before the PNM came into office in 1956, and improved facilities are ignored by vendors who want to be by that first gate to catch the business. There may be 10 stalls in the market, but they want to be at the gate. They want to be outside. I would come to that when I am speaking about Tunapuna.

"(e) the right to join political parties and to express political views;"

"(f) the right of a parent or guardian to provide a school of his own choice for the education of his child or ward;"

The Member would not speak about these things. He has a particular interest in a certain group in the community that he keeps representing all the time. It is lawlessness in the country that the Member is encouraging. Heaven help Trinidad and Tobago if the Member for Couva South, should ever be part of a Government to make decisions for this country. His entire life would be contrary to what his ideologies should be if he sits on this side. I do not think he would even accept the opportunity to come on this side because he would have problems for five years. It would not be one year or two days, for the Member for Couva South. Sitting on this side is a different ball game. The talkers are out, as I said two weeks ago, and they continue to talk.

When we on this side speak, we do so soberly dealing with the activities that we are in charge of. It is a difficult thing for the Member for Couva South to come here and bring a Motion like this.

Madam Speaker, in the Constitution—

"(g) freedom of movement;"

(h) freedom of conscience and religious belief and observance;"

All these persons—the entire citizenry of Trinidad and Tobago—are protected under these rights.

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- "(i) freedom of thought and expression;
- (j) freedom of association and assembly; and
- (k) freedom of the press."

Many times we are not satisfied with what is said in the press. If I am criticized by the press, it just simply makes me a stronger person. We use the criticisms of the press to be better individuals in Government; they have their rights enshrined in the Constitution.

It is the right of every citizen—an integral part of the right to life—to earn a livelihood in whatever field of endeavour he may choose, provided it is done in a lawful manner. It must be done in a lawful manner. One cannot be selling all over the highway; there are no toilet facilities. One is selling corn in the afternoon and there are no houses around. Look at the sanitary side of it. I am sure the Member for Couva South would not stop on the highway to buy a boiled or roast corn in the afternoon. I am sure.

Can the hon. Member for Couva South honestly say that PNM administrations, from 1956 to the present time, have taken any action that has been contrary to the human rights enshrined in the Constitution with respect to the deprivation of citizens of lawfully earning their livelihood?

It is said here, according to law, if one is a lawless person, then there is a due process for that. One can be pulled before the magistrate or a judge to answer for lawlessness. Some time ago I heard that lawyers in the United States of America wanted to start pulling other lawyers in front of the magistrate to answer for their lawlessness. The Member for Couva South probably stays away from these issues because he would not want, as a legal luminary, to read these things. It is contrary to what he is saying in his Motion.

There are bylaws that govern the market. What he is saying about leaving produce in the market is not right. The bye-laws state quite clearly that one cannot leave any produce in the market. I would come to that further when I go on to talk about a matter which took place at the St. George East County Council in 1989 when I was a local government representative.

When I look at the bye-laws of the market, I feel—and we have been looking at this—that they need updating, because some are there from since October 16, 1905 and the last Government Notice, No. 189 was sometime in 1953.

3.30 p.m.

When we talk about health of the nation, in the bye-laws, 6(1),

"...otherwise as provided in the preceding bylaw, no person shall remain in the market after closing hours."

"Every person who shall be in the market after the closing hour, and who after being requested to leave by the Clerk or by the Constable, shall not leave immediately, may be removed there from by the Clerk or by any Constable.

It goes on to say in (2):

"Every person when leaving the market shall carry away all unsold goods and all articles whatsoever which shall have placed within the market. Any such goods or articles left in the market after the closing thereof shall be at the sole risk of the person leaving the same.

No fresh meat or fish offered for sale on any one day in the market shall be brought back to, or offered for sale in, the market on the next day or any subsequent day."

Why are these bye-laws written? It is to have hygiene. If the vendors go into the market and when they have completed their day's sales the produce that remains, is left there—some of it is very close to the ground—the workers of the corporation cannot clean properly. It simply means that over a period of time the market is going to be in the dilapidated condition, which the Member spoke about for some of the markets, not all.

I have information that I should like to make available. The document goes on to say:

"Every person selling in the market shall be dressed in clean clothes and...every person selling fresh meat, game or fish in the market shall be properly shod and shall wear a clean apron or other protective garment which shall be replaced every morning by another clean garment."

All these are bye-laws of the market. Sometimes the persons who are in charge turn a blind eye to most of these bye-laws. The Member is saying that people do not care. The public servants who are working in these institutions and the security there care about the others who work there too, they protect them. Some of the forceful bye-laws are still in existence but it simply means that one cannot enforce all of them. I would not want to stay on this matter for too long because I have much more to say on other aspect.

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This honourable House and the country know that the Member cannot answer in the affirmative. This Government has not been vindictive against anybody. Even the bye-laws and some of the other laws are overlooked when the time comes because of the economic situation in the country—if one goes with a bicycle in the market it can be seized.

I am well acquainted with the bye-laws as most of my colleagues who came from local government are, although they are on that side: the Members for Princes Town, Siparia, Naparima and the Member for Laventille West on our side will understand the local government situation because they have been there. They were in charge of those facilities and today they come and blame the Government.

At the Couva/Talparo Tabaquite Regional Corporation—which is the body that is in charge of the market at Couva—it is his own party and his own family who are in charge of that area. The chairman and his councillors are in charge of market facilities at Couva. I shall come to that very soon. Why has the Member singled out vending from all the other fields of endeavour in which the citizenry earn their living? What about the other million people? If there are 0.2 million vendors, the other million citizens, because of your vendors, must lose their right to property etc?

Is it only vendors who are important? Probably it is the monetary gains that are important to the Member, not the vendors. How does the Member for Couva South identify those vendors, the consuming public, when there is consistent change in the market place in the consumers' needs and tastes?

Recital 4 of the Motion states:

"And Whereas vendors need suitable markets and marketing facilities in strategic locations for the full enjoyment of such a constitutional rights;"

Is the hon. Member for Couva South saying that markets located in Carenage, St. James, Port of Spain—there was a market in Port of Spain and it was relocated and transformed for the same vendors that the Member is talking about. The market in Barataria is just one block off the Eastern Main Road; it was never utilized. There was adequate space there. What happened? It is very close to San Juan, the Croisr e. So everybody had to be in the Croisr e. The market remains there up to this day. There is one vendor in that market. When the Member says strategically placed—one block off the Eastern Main Road—where are we going to put the market?

Mr. Imbert: In the middle of the road.

Mr. J. Narine: I feel so. What has happened over the years is that you start off with a market occupying a certain area for example, Chaguanas, but the area does not enlarge as the years go by; it is the same amount of land space for the market. What happens? You have Lange Park going up, Edingburgh 500 going up and when you look around there is tremendous development over the years. The market now becomes inadequate for the centre town area.

The Mayor of the borough of Chaguanas moved a motion to have the market relocated to some other area in Chaguanas and people objected saying no way. They were not going out of the town for that. The business people, too, recognize that once the market is moved business would be lost. So that you are looking for parking facilities in the centre of Chaguanas; they do not want to move to the outskirts. You cannot have your cake and eat it. It is either you remain there without parking facilities or we build up.

A month ago I met with the Association of Market Vendors in Chaguanas who have this plan to go three storeys up. They are looking for funding from international communities. They are around the table discussing it but it is just a floor plan. It is not a structural plan. They had no estimates. I believe the Member for Couva South was invited to that meeting but did not turn up. He made an excuse that he had some other pressing problems. I alone attended. If he had gone he would have seen the proposal and probably tried to help the people in that area to get it off the ground; or have it relocated on the outskirts. That might have been the best thing, like what happened to the Port of Spain market. How are you going to move those markets?

The Member spoke of Rio Claro, when there were vendors on the roadside. The regional corporation did its work by renovating the market and moving them back inside. The Member is now reading some antiquated article from a newspaper saying that the Rio Claro people are being treated badly and their children are getting sores because they cannot sell produce at the side of the road. Be honest.

What happened in Curepe? Where the Scherzando Steel Orchestra has its pan theatre, years ago a market was built there—not even three minutes off the Southern and Eastern Main Roads. There were adequate facilities for parking and everything. Government was saying that every town going up the East/West Corridor should have its own facilities. It became a while elephant

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It did not become a white elephant because it was not strategically located. They wanted to sell on the main road thus blocking traffic and causing congestion, and they would not get into the market. If one went down the Southern Main Road during the night, one would see the number of persons lined up there, and it was not because there were no facilities. Facilities were placed there for the people, but after a number of years Scherzando Steel Orchestra occupied the area. A massive structure is now there; it is a pan theatre, much to the credit of the Member for St. Joseph. It is a beautiful area. We care about the panmen too in this country; we do not care only about the vendors.

Tunapuna is an area that is dear to me. I was a local government representative in the area for eight years, 1983-1991. Sometime in 1989, we went into a transition team because there were changes in local government to regional corporations. Our business in that council at the time under the chairmanship of Mr. Mervyn Assam was to keep vigilance at Tunapuna the market.

Every week we went to the market to look at toilet facilities, the chilling room, cold storage and the accommodation. At one time everybody was saying that a market was not built in Tunapuna; it was a cultural centre because of the beautiful facility. We had to take down some walls for vent. He is saying that there have been no facilities and that the Government never cared about Tunapuna.

When we checked at the Tunapuna market, there were over 200 empty stalls, but the vendors were overflowing onto the Eastern Main Road and the Priority Bus Route. When one passed there on a weekend, one could have barely driven one's vehicle. The entire vegetable section was empty.

Mr. Hosein: That is not true.

Mr. J. Narine: We had complained about that in the Association of County Councils. What could we do about it? Probably, he does not have a problem in Debe because he has new facilities. A total of \$7 million was spent on market facilities. Imagine that! The Member for Couva North gets up today and says nothing was done.

We sent a report and even got Century Eslon to design a collapsible stall for which the council would have provided part of the funding. We were trying to get away from those unsightly stalls which were there during the week. The problem was that one vendor occupied a lot of space. We felt that the vendors should be

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equally treated, so we started to mark off the areas and number them. We wanted to regularize those vendors and put them in the market. so that they could have said a stall was theirs. The culture is that they block up the whole market so who is outside would get the sale and there is nobody inside.

We went ahead with the recommendations of the local government authority. We called in the association, had discussions with the representatives and came to a compromise. They were happy to know that we were doing something to have the market properly managed and well used, instead of having all these empty unsightly stalls inside.

The chief administrative officer at the time, Mr. Victor White wrote a letter about the cleaning, restructuring and regularization of the Tunapuna market that was sent to all vendors. I shall like to put this into the record. The letter stated:

"To ensure that the Tunapuna market is utilized in accordance with the Public Market bye-laws you are hereby requested to take note of the following:—

That vending of any marketable commodity is hereby prohibited on the streets in the vicinity of the market including the Priority Bus Route.

Vending of any marketable commodity is hereby prohibited on the compound of the market during the weekdays Monday to Thursdays."

We recognized that Monday to Thursday is a slow period, but from Thursday afternoon it picks up, into Friday night to Sunday. That is the time of the most occupancy around the market.

"Storing of any marketable commodity within the market building or on the compound after closing hours is hereby prohibited.

Any stall/s not constructed in accordance with the specification (6' by 4') is/are hereby prohibited and could be demolished if not removed by vendor/s."

That is the stall which I talked about. We were willing to pay part of the cost for that. Mr. Mervyn Assam who was our chairman at the time got Century Eslon to design a collapsible stall that would have cost anything between \$300 and \$400. We were willing to help them to buy those stalls.

"Any owner/occupier of stalls within the market is hereby prohibited from vending on the market compound."

This meant that all the persons who had stalls within the market should not vend on the compound. Some of them had five or 10 stalls in the market, but they still

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had stalls outside on the compound, and on the weekend they had stalls on the road. There was a lawless situation at the market on a weekend. We were trying to regularize that.

"All illegally occupied stalls will be removed.

Any unoccupied stall or stalls owned by persons in arrears of one month's payment or more will be forfeited and reassigned by a registration process on a first come first served basis."

3.50 p.m.

We found that persons who had stalls inside and were paying rent, just blocked them and were selling on the outside. They were not occupying them and someone else wanted to occupy them. If they did not pay the rent for a couple weeks, there was a waiting list of persons who wanted to get occupancy, so we determined that if these persons did not pay after a period, we would take the stall from them and give it to someone who really needed it.

All stalls or spaces rented by a person must be used or occupied by that person, failing which the said stall would be forfeited and reassigned.

"The sale of any meat, fish dry goods, poultry or clothing will not be permitted on the compound of the market."

When there is an area designated for meat, it means that there are certain sanitary conditions—water included. But when one puts up a stall by the roadside to do poultry, there is difficulty. Even to clean it after is a difficult proposition. We felt that persons should use the stall in the market designed for that type of activity.

"No display of goods of any type should be carried out on the fence or walls of the market."

Everyone hangs things on that chain link wire fence on the Eastern Main Road, so we thought that was not in keeping with the market place. As a matter of fact, when I went to Barbados for the first time in 1964, the market place at Bridgetown was sheds, but there were toilet facilities. When the people were through vending, they took up their things and went home and one could clean the area properly. At that time the market place was a "liming" spot in the afternoon. The people played windball cricket, cards and draughts there. It was cleaned so that the next day people could use it.

Here, we have to put our markets under lock and key. We have to employ watchmen. People sleep in the market. They live in them. It is not the law of

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Trinidad and Tobago to do such a thing, but the Member for Couva South encourages it. He defends them at all times. They block all the gateways. Action was taken because we sent notification to them. We have had meetings with them; we had consensus with them and then up comes, in 1989, a writ on behalf of

"(1) Terrence Haywood, (2) Claude Henry, (3) Naarad Rambally and (4) Gyandath Sookhan applying on behalf of themselves and all other weekend vendors who are vendors of the Tunapuna Market Vendors Association for leave for judicial review."

The representatives of the Association spoke with us and agreed with us, and these four persons felt that if we had to remove their stalls, they must do something about it. Here goes:

"In the matter of the action and/or the conduct of the St. George East County Council (hereinafter called 'the County Council') and Mr. Victor White the Chief Administrative Officer on the 12th day and 13th day of December, 1989 at the Tunapuna Market wherein they, their servants and/or agents demolished the stalls and booths of the applicants and other vendors on whose behalf this application is filed and obstructed and/or hindered and/or prevented the applicants and other vendors as mentioned above from vending at the said market."

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. J. Narine: Thank you, Madam Speaker. This writ goes on:

"In the matter of the decision of the said County Council and the said Chief Administrative Officer contained in this letter the 15th December, 1989, whereby it altered and/or revoked the licence of the applicants to occupy their stalls and/or booths."

Between

Terrence Haywood

Claude Henry

Naarad Rambally

Gyandath Sookhan

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On behalf of themselves and all other weekend vendors who are members of the Tunapuna Market Vendors Association

Applicants:

And

St. George East County Council, Mr. Victor White, Chief Administrative Officer of St. George East County Council

Respondents:"

It goes on to say—

Mr. Maharaj: Read the grounds.

Mr. J. Narine: I am not reading any grounds. I want you to see the signature on this writ. Mr. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj, Attorney at law for the applicants. So, knowing full well that we wanted to do something to upgrade the facilities at the market, he put this matter into court and to this day nothing can be done. Now he is calling for upgraded facilities and we can do nothing about it.

Mr. Maharaj: I wonder if the hon. Member would be honest with this House and say that the High Court of Trinidad and Tobago declared that the action of the council was unlawful and ordered the council to pay damages to those vendors.

Mr. J. Narine: Madam Speaker, there was a case recently where a man had some false papers and lied on affidavit and he got away at the Licensing Office. The Member for Couva South was the lawyer.

Mr. Maharaj: I do not think that we can make allegations against people outside this House.

Madam Speaker: Are you referring to a criminal matter?

Mr. J. Narine: This matter is still in abeyance. This has not yet been heard before the court. It is now five years.

Mr. Maharaj: On a point of order, since the Member can be accused of misleading the House, I am giving him notice that this matter has been determined. The High Court has declared that the action is unlawful and ordered the St. George East County Council to pay damages to the vendors and the Association.

Mr. J. Narine: Madam Speaker, I got this document this morning at the Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Office. The CEO gave it to me and told me—

Madam Speaker: The attorney is saying that the information is not quite correct.

Mr. J. Narine: The point is that I am speaking after my CEO at Tunapuna. He is saying that this matter is still in abeyance. If the Member for Couva South is saying that he has a judgment, I have not seen it. It was not on the file up to this morning. This copy was taken out of a file at the St. George East County Council today, June 30, 1995.

Madam Speaker, I am just saying that the same person who brought this Motion, and is telling us that we have not made facilities available, since 1989 is preventing the Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation from doing anything around that market.

4.00 p.m.

It is only recently that we started putting a chain link wire on the Priority Bus Route side preventing people from overflowing onto the bus route. It simply means that when you are at the Tunapuna Market, utilize the accommodation inside the market; on a weekend if it overflows they would control it, and they would not break down the people's stalls just like that. We had consultation and an agreement with them. This is the type of thing that happens where there are people upholding persons who are not doing things lawfully.

The Arima Market is in the centre of the town. Over the years it has become inadequate, so that even the park areas which were used in the afternoon to relax, "on the greens" they call it, one has to pave that area in order to keep the market within the town. It is not fair to say that we do not have facilities, or that we have not tried to upgrade our facilities. We care, we have marketing facilities, we are always upgrading them, but the Member for Couva South wants the country to feel that the PNM is not doing anything; that the regional corporations under the Ministry of Local Government are doing nothing.

In Sangre Grande, Mayaro, Rio Claro, Princes Town, San Fernando, Marabella, La Romain, Chaguanas, Couva, La Brea, Siparia and Point Fortin; are these markets not strategically located? I am talking about markets all over the country that are strategically located. The Member talked about access roads to the markets and so forth, Madam Speaker, if you ask the Member for Fyzabad he will tell you that a road was built, part of the cemetery was used as that link road to come back out on the S.S. Erin Road.

The first year that we came into office, in 1992, we extended that road to link back with the S.S. Erin Road, so that there was access going around and coming

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out on the S.S. Erin Road, the Clara Gregory Road. It was a chaotic situation on the main road near the market and persons had to line up, so we gave access to persons who wanted to pass on the other route to get back out after the market. To say otherwise is not telling the truth.

It is clear that markets are located in all districts and towns throughout Trinidad and Tobago. Has he considered these as not strategically located? Even new markets can be built by the regional corporations. What then is his idea of strategically located markets? I would really like to know. After calling all these markets from Carenage to Toco down to Mayaro, back down to La Brea and Point Fortin, I would really like to know where he needs these markets. They are strategically located.

I hope that the hon. Member is not thinking that vending on the shoulders of the roadways and highways is operating in a strategically located place? I would hate to think that the Member is talking about the little huts all along the highways and by-ways of Trinidad.

Ours is a country that is developing, we are a Third World country, and we have a commitment to the people of Trinidad and Tobago, but most of us are law-abiding citizens, we are not lawless people. He must know that these other locations are not legal places for vendors to earn a livelihood, unless he is thinking about earning a livelihood by representing them in the illegal action.

As I said before, there is a health problem with these illegal vendors, for instance the oyster vendors. The Member for Arouca South, when he was Minister of Health, placed a ban on oyster vending because of the cholera outbreak in Venezuela and we had decided that these vendors should not be outside doing their trade. Recently, I have seen an upsurge of oyster vendors again, so it tells me that the ban has been lifted.

The oyster vendor has a collapsible table, leaves by some person who is living near where he is plying his trade. You can see oyster vendors coming up from Central whether to Arima, Curepe, Tunapuna or wherever it is; they walk with only one bag with their oysters already in bottles, they have their sauce and they have a bucket in the back of the vehicle for the water.

You do not ever see an oyster vendor treating the environment and the other areas with contempt as persons do on the highway. They nail two sheets of galvanize and leave it there overnight where anything or anyone could run into them during the night; there are no toilet facilities; no running water and they are selling foodstuff. I am sure that most of the persons down in those areas do not

have the Health Authority food badges permitting them to sell; they must have food badges and so forth. Sometimes you say they are poor people so give them a chance. But the point is they cannot continue to be lawless. We are supposed to be law-abiding citizens.

Traffic obstruction: Probably because the Member for Couva South is fortunate as I am to use the Priority Bus Route, he does not pass through Aranguez and the Churchill-Roosevelt Highway in the afternoon.

4.10 p.m.

The international community coming into Piarco—everything was there on the roadway. The situation was regularized by placing facilities in Piarco off the road, and everybody goes there. We are happy to see that area is cleared of all traffic. Foreigners come into this country. I am proud of that facility there. I go there to buy coconuts in the afternoons. Changes have to take place continuously. When Project Pride gets on stream they would have to move from there to the northern side of Piarco Airport. One does not put down a facility today and it lasts a lifetime.

I have had a perfect example of that when I visited Namibia in 1989. The capital of Namibia was Ojimbimway but a new small town was built called Winhoek which is now the capital. They bypassed the rail line and sent it to Winhoek instead of Ojimbimway, and that killed the town. In Ojimbimway, buildings can scarcely be seen. There are old churches and so forth there. Winhoek has now taken over as capital.

The same thing happened when the highway was extended to San Fernando. There was less traffic in places like Chandernagore, St. Mary's, Chase Village, Couva etc, so that there was less business. One would remember Hot Oh Hot Nandlal which had to close down. In that area there was a hub of activity. Build a big market facility in that area and then, because of progress a highway is built to Mayaro. That facility will have to close down.

The Couva Market is a case in point. It is five minutes away from where vending takes place in Couva. This market is strategically located.

Hon. Member: Strategically located.

Mr. J. Narine: It is not being occupied by the vendors. To say anything to the contrary cannot be truthful. There is the supermarket which is further away from the vending area than the market. There is Isaac Settlement where development is taking place, and people go there to buy but they do not go to the

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market which is just about three or four minutes walk from where they live presently.

Enforcement of the law by having vendors occupy the market will certainly prevent many of the problems being experienced by the travelling public in the area. There is a situation where people spend much money for properties, build large buildings. Couva is a perfect example of that. Vendors build unsightly sheds by the Main Road while there is a beautiful market in Couva. When the Member says strategically located, probably he wants to put it in the centre of the Main Road. Maybe, that is the only place where it would be strategically located.

The foremost problem is the lack of safety for pedestrians and unsafe parking for vehicles in the vicinity of an illegal vending area. This is a habitual thing in Trinidad and Tobago. Every part of Trinidad and Tobago where there is illegal vending there is a problem with and a problem for pedestrians drainage. It creates traffic congestion and unsafe conditions which cause traffic accidents. If something unlawful is done, it is condoned by the Member for Couva South.

Couva is one of the areas where I feel if the vendors are removed, there would be adequate facilities. There are new facilities and adequate parking areas down there. The Member is quite acquainted with the area. He is the Member for Parliament for that area. If he does not know the area, it is where the URP office is. He must have gone there at some time.

There are a number of factors which make ongoing planning essential for the legal, effective, efficient marketing of agricultural produce as outlined on page 154 in Act No. 16 of 1991. I would not go through these because the Member is quite aware of them. It is well documented in the book which was recently given to us—the type of marketing strategies which can legally be used; not against the law. I can ask him to accompany me to the docks. There are a number of persons in Trinidad and Tobago who send containers with agricultural produce out of the country.

Mr. Maharaj: Answer the Motion.

Mr. J. Narine: The Member spoke about agriculture and farmers. How many farmers want to be vendors? He never spoke about that. The Member for Diego Martin West in many debates, even in the last budget debate, spoke about the increase in agricultural products in Trinidad and Tobago as against having them exported. It is not that they want to sell their produce here; they would rather export. Fifty per cent of our farmers do not retail their produce, they wholesale it

to other persons. There is a person in the middle. They do not sell their produce on the highways, a wholesaler goes to them.

Recently I met a young man in Caroni, who is a middle person, and he told me that he makes a good profit every week. He goes to the agriculturists, provides the produce to Pizza Hut and he is paid that extra price which he places on it. That middle person is also doing business, and he has access to some of the better products in Trinidad and Tobago. He goes in the Freeport area for tomatoes and then he chooses the best type for Pizza Hut. There is also McDonald's in Port of Spain.

In addition, there are matters such as population increase and distribution. I spoke about Namibia with former capital Ojimbimway by Winhoek and be closed down. A number of persons had to leave because there were no activities going on there.

4.20 p.m.

"Psychological influences (preference and rights of the citizens who so choose to shop even for agricultural produce at supermarkets)."

You do not have to go to the marketplace. There are many persons around town who do not go to the market. They go to Tru Valu or Hi Lo and buy all their produce there. There are persons who grow their vegetables who do not stand by the highway to sell them. In Aranguez, those persons who have built homes on the main road, use the ground floor of their homes to sell their produce.

Madam Speaker: You have five more minutes.

Mr. J. Narine: Thank you, Madam Speaker. There is a chain brought by the volume of traffic that will take place, and all that. I am saying that Act No. 21 of 1990, it states clearly on page 197, that the regional corporations are the ones responsible for markets. So to come here and talk about a Minister not doing this and the Government not doing that—the regional corporations have autonomy to do it. I will read what was done.

"...for 1994 Municipal Corporations obtained approximately 1.2 million dollars (out of the Ministry of Local Government) for market development."

Based on their requests it is anticipated that this year they are going to spend \$1.9 million on markets throughout Trinidad. *[Interruption]* The Tobago House of Assembly takes care of markets in Tobago. So what the Member for Tobago West is arguing there does not make any sense to us. Tobago is monitored by the House of Assembly.

Miss Nicholson: Madam Speaker—

Madam Speaker: Do you wish to give way?

Mr. J. Narine: I do not have injury time, Madam Speaker. I have only about three minutes. I am sorry, but those are the facts.

In Port of Spain, there is an allocation of \$10 million for the upgrading of facilities at the Central Market. At the end of the project it is anticipated that much of the unauthorized vending in the area would be accommodated at that market.

We spent also \$2 million upgrading Chaguanas market. When I went down there I met with the public health inspector, Mr. Mohammed, and there were no problems. Toilet facilities and everything were in place, but they still talk. I should like to read from a table before I close. It is the Market Expenditure Data for 1994/1995. Apart from the \$10 million that will be spent on the Central Market it says here:

Corporation	Expenditure 1994	Anticipated Expenditure 1995
Port of Spain	\$186,989	\$75,000
Arima Borough	100,000	60,000
San Fernando City	150,000	500,000
Point Fortin Borough	-	75,000
Chaguanas Borough	100,000	2,000,000
Tunapuna/Piarco Regional	-	497,000 Virement)
Sangre Grande Regional	200,000	125,000
Rio Claro/Mayaro Regional	175,000	150,000
Penal/Debe Regional	40,000	100,000
Princes Town Regional	-	75,000

In the Penal/Debe area it was expected because there are new facilities down there for wholesale and so on.

So it is very clear to this House what the Member for Couva South brought here is a non-Motion. As far as the PNM are concerned, we have been providing

facilities all the years; we have been providing funding; we are law-abiding; we are not going to allow any lawlessness as created by the Member for Couva South, but we are continuing to look after marketing facilities for the people of Trinidad. We are looking at new markets between the regional corporations.

It was my pleasure speaking on this Motion and I hope that the Member for Couva South would come with a better Motion the next time. I cannot support this Motion, Madam Speaker.

I thank you.

Mr. John Humphrey (*St. Augustine*): Madam Speaker, I am surprised that the Member for Arouca North ended by saying he could not support the Motion, because from what I understood from his contribution he was supporting it. In fact, I cannot understand any Member of this House not supporting this Motion, quite frankly.

The Member for Arouca North, on behalf of the Government, has gone to the Constitution and has quoted Chap. 1—all the rights of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago—but let me quote for his sake and for the sake of the hon. Attorney General and his legal assistant, the Member for Diego Martin East, clause 2 of the Constitution, which states:

"This Constitution is the supreme law of Trinidad and Tobago, and any other law that is inconsistent with this Constitution is void to the extent of the inconsistency."

That is absolutely clear. So when you allude to laws that are inconsistent with the Constitution, they are void and of no effect and it is just a matter of taking the trouble to go to the courts at the various levels of jurisdiction to get a determination.

I want to support this Motion by citing the preamble to the Constitution. There certain economic rights are clearly defined.

"Whereas the People of Trinidad and Tobago—

- (b) respect the principles of social justice and therefore believe that the operation of the economic system should result in the material resources of the community being so distributed as to subserve the common good, that there should be adequate means of livelihood for all, that labour should not be exploited or forced by economic necessity to operate in inhumane conditions but that there should be opportunity for advancement on the basis of recognition of merit, ability and integrity;"

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This Government caters for one group in the society—those who have property. It does not take into account those who cannot cater for themselves. For example, the group that has property, which has the means to purchase motor vehicles, are availed of the facilities of marketing by the private sector with malls being built all over the country to facilitate them. Not only the motoring public is facilitated, but small business people are facilitated, because they do not have the means to provide a place from which to operate a business from, but the investors in the malls provide that for them.

So that class of people is catered for. But the small people in the society have no such facilities provided. This is where the Government should step in. On the next occasion, because I understand we are going to adjourn this debate at the tea break, I am going to explain the principle of marketing for the benefit of Members on that side. I am also going to also explain the reason that the very vendors that the Member for Arouca North claimed they were seeking to serve, would not support what the regional corporation was seeking to do. The reason those vendors do not abide by the bye-laws that he spoke of is the shopping public do not go into those places where they are trying to force them to go. That is the reason. On the next occasion I shall explain these things.

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Education (Hon. A. Ramreakersingh): Madam Speaker, I beg to move that this House do now adjourn to Friday, July 7, 1995 at 1.30 p.m.

Madam Speaker: There are four Motions on the Adjournment so we are going to take that at 5.00 p.m.

4.30 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.28 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Madam Speaker: We were about to deal with the Motions on the Adjournment. The first will be by the Member for Nariva to the Minister of Works and Transport and Minister of Local Government.

Re-opening of Licensing Office (Sangre Grande)

Mr. Krish Jurai (Nariva): Madam Speaker, I rise to speak on a Motion on the Adjournment of the House on the urgent need for the reintroduction of motor vehicle licensing facilities at Sangre Grande. This measure would ease the plight of motorists of the east and north east of Trinidad who have journey to Port of

Spain to transact such business; and on an already burdened Licensing Office in Port of Spain.

Some 40 or 50 years ago when the motoring population of Trinidad and Tobago was, perhaps, less than 10 per cent of what it is today, the colonial government saw the need for the establishment of a sub-licensing office at Sangre Grande, which served the people of that area well for about 40 years. When this Government came into office, the Minister of Works and Transport closed down that sub office some time in 1993 or 1994, and as a result, people are experiencing great difficulty in transacting their business relating to motor vehicle licences and so forth, since they have to travel all the way to Port of Spain.

This means that people from as far as Matelot, Toco, San Souci, Cumaque—that is in the constituency of the Member for Toco/Manzanilla—and people from Guayaguayare, Ortoire/Mayaro and so on have to come to Port of Spain. That constituency is represented by the Member for Ortoire/Mayaro. In my own constituency, people from Biche, Tamana, Mafeking, Plum Mitán, Caigual, Talparo etc, have to leave their homes as early as two and three o'clock in the morning to get to Port of Spain to join the line to have their business transacted at the Port of Spain Licensing Office. Sometimes when they join the queue they are not able to reach to the head to have their business transacted because the queue is so long.

Very soon we would be seeing—as a matter of fact, it starts on the second day of January each year—a mad rush at the Licensing Office in Port of Spain. People are literally crushed in the rush at the Licensing Office in Port of Spain and San Fernando in trying to get their drivers' licenses renewed and their motor vehicles licensed.

We must also not forget that about two or three years ago someone was seriously injured and had to be hospitalized because there was a mad rush and a glass pane broke at the Licensing Office. It seems as though the Minister of Works and Transport takes pleasure in seeing people suffer. They have to line up come rain or sunshine and stay in place because if they move they would lose their place in the queue. As a matter of fact, I recall some years ago someone at the San Fernando office suffered a sun-stroke from having to wait all day in the hot sun to transact business.

Mr. Eckstein: In what year was that?

Mr. K. Jurai: About two or three years ago. I understand the person died.

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The question I wish to ask is: How long are we going to tolerate the centralization of licensing office facilities at Port of Spain and San Fernando? The time has come, and I call on the Minister of Works and Transport—to reopen the sub-licensing office at Sangre Grande to ease the plight of motorists in having to come all the way to Port of Spain to transact their business.

Daily I meet people in my area, the east and north-east of Trinidad—businessmen, farmers, taxi, maxi and private car drivers who complain and ask why the office in San Grande is not reopened? This is a regular cry, almost daily. I am sure the Member for Toco/Manzanilla would agree with me on that score.

The east and north-east parts of Trinidad are mainly farming communities and there are also fishermen, businessmen, livestock owners and so forth. These people have to close their business places, leave their livestock and travel all the way and sometimes spend more than a day to have their business transacted; whereas, if the office was in Sangre Grande, this could have been completed in the office in their area.

The closure of this office shows that the Minister of Works and Transport seriously lacks managerial capability which simply means that he cannot manage more than one office, hence, he chose to close the Sangre Grande office. As the Member for Arouca South just said, why not decentralize? If the Government can decide to decentralize the Board of Inland Revenue, the Customs and Excise Division, the Immigration Office and so forth, why can it not decentralize the Licensing Office as well?

I call on the Government and the Minister of Works to reopen the Sangre Grande office.

Mr. Eckstein: But you are against decentralization.

Mr. S. Panday: It is not decentralization; it is deconcentration.

5.35 p.m.

Mr. K. Jurai: Madam Speaker, it is important to note that if the Government intends to reopen the Sangre Grande sub-licensing office this can be done at a minimal cost. I would like to show the Minister of Works and Transport and Minister of Local Government how this can be done.

Firstly, I recommend that the abandoned PTSC bus compound is ideally located for such an office. It has ample space for offices. As a matter of fact, there are several offices in that building already. There is also a large open area for

conducting driving tests. There are also two or three ramps already in place for inspection of vehicles. These ramps were previously used by the PTSC for inspecting their buses. The building on the compound is secure as it is fenced. The strategic location of this building and the presence of licensing officers and policemen will ease the traffic congestion that usually occurs in this area.

I plead on behalf of the thousands of motorists from north-east and east Trinidad for the re-establishment of a sub-licensing office at Sangre Grande. I urge that when the Minister of Works and Transport and Minister of Local Government reopens this office it would have all the facilities of a full-fledge licensing office so that people would no longer have to journey to Port of Spain from that area to transact their business.

This should not be a difficult exercise because we live in the computer age. There can be linkups with the licensing offices in the country. In addition, as I said, the facilities are ready-made for such activities with minimal cost to the Government.

The motto of the Government is 'We care about you', Well, it is now put to the test, and more particularly, the Minister of Works and Transport and Minister of Local Government. Let him show us that he cares, not with words, but by action.

I am calling on him to consider what I have said, and to provide this licensing facility for the people of east and north east Trinidad whereby they will save time, money and energy not having to travel all the way to Port of Spain to transact business.

Thank you very much.

The Minister of Works and Transport and Minister of Local Government (Hon. Colm Imbert): Madam Speaker, on yet another occasion it seems to me that the Member for Nariva is unaware that the following services are provided in the Borough of Arima, which, for the information of the Member for Nariva is some 15 minutes away from Sangre Grande. I shall go through in detail.

1. Renewal of drivers' permits/Change of names and addresses.
2. Endorsement of driver's permits for heavy goods vehicles.
3. Issuance of taxi badges.
4. Issuance of learners' permits for private cars and issuance of duplicate licence stickers.
5. Provision of computerized certified copies for motor vehicles.

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6. Issuance and inspection of licence stickers for private cars and motor cycles and issuance of duplicate licence stickers.
7. Regulation testing and driving testing for taxis, motor cycles and heavy goods vehicles.
8. Collection of fees for traffic violation within the county of St. George East.

Madam Speaker, I am simply amazed for yet another time, that the Member for Nariva has come here and said people have to leave remote parts of the country—Ortoire/Mayaro—to come to Port of Spain on licensing business. People have to get up at 2.00 a.m; people have to line up in the rain or shine, and the most amazing statement of all, that at the San Fernando office somebody suffered a stroke and died a few years ago. Amazing! The Member makes these ridiculous allegations when he is well aware that there are sub-offices of the licensing department at San Fernando, Chaguanas, Princes Town, Arima and Tobago. He comes and makes a case for decentralization—

Mr. Jurai rose.

Madam Speaker: Would the Member give way to a question?

Mr. Jurai: Madam Speaker, could the Minister of Works and Transport and Minister of Local Government tell us at which points in the country commercial vehicles are inspected for licences?

Hon. C. Imbert: This is why I did not want to give way. I knew it would be a frivolous interjection. In the Member's presentation he said nothing about inspection of vehicles. He spoke about people leaving remote parts of the country to go and line up in the rain and the sun to transact their business and he conveniently did not tell this House that a full range of services—

Mr. Jurai: Did I not say ramps at the PTSC compound?

Hon. C. Imbert: Madam Speaker, my information is that Arima is considered to be a strategic location. It is just 15 minutes away from Sangre Grande, and it is therefore neither feasible, rational nor economical to duplicate the full range of services provided at Arima at Sangre Grande. It is simply not efficient.

Mr. Jurai: Where are the vehicles inspected?

Hon. C. Imbert: I might add, however, that because of the growing population in Sangre Grande, in terms of the present economic development of

the area and after consultation with the Member of Parliament—because the Member for Nariva likes to squat in other people's constituency. We are talking about Sangre Grande which is in the constituency of Toco/Manzanilla. I hope that the Squatter Regularization Bill could be passed to regularize the Member for Nariva.

Mr. Jurai: I speak not only for my constituency, but I speak for Trinidad and Tobago.

Hon. C. Imbert: Madam Speaker, after consultation—

Madam Speaker: I think the fundamental human rights of the Member for Nariva permit him—

Hon. C. Imbert: Madam Speaker, that is why, perhaps, there is some truth in the allegation, often repeated in this House, that the Member for Nariva lives in Haleland Park, Maraval, conducts his office business in Barataria and represents the constituency of Nariva. He has every right to do that.

Mr. Juria: The hon. Minister is misleading the House. I live at Wilson Street, St. Augustine.

Hon. C. Imbert: Madam Speaker, the Member for Nariva has every right to live 25 miles away from his constituency. I have no difficulty with that. The fact of the matter is that the Member is woefully ignorant of reality. He is clearly not aware that a full range of services is offered at Arima, and therefore, to make this kind of statement I have heard here; farmers have to leave their livestock in east and north east Trinidad and travel to Portof Spain, is incredible obviously do not pass through Arima on their way. Members should do proper research before they come into the House.

Let me just say there are adequate licensing services in close proximity to the areas referred to by the Member. The Member is ignorant of the facts. He has not done any proper research. After consultation with the true representative of the area, the Member for Toco/Manzanilla, the Ministry of Works will consider expanding the services already available in Sangre Grande.

The Member is obviously unaware that at Sangre Grande there is a service for the issuance of motor vehicle licences for private cars, apart from the fact that he is unaware that a full range of services is available at Arima. I, therefore, consider this Motion to be improperly presented, and I wish to give this House the assurance that the Licensing Department offers services throughout the country and that we subscribe to the principle of decentralization. We are already highly

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decentralized in this area, and we will continue to improve whatever services we offer citizens.

5.45 p.m.

**Water And Sewerage Authority
(Preferred Partner—Severn Trent)**

Mr. Mohammed Haniff (*Princes Town*): Madam Speaker, the matter before us which I wish to raise deals with the current status of negotiations with Severn Trent as a preferred partner with the Water and Sewerage Authority in a situation where a number of issues concerning the company are being raised as matters of concern. I raised this matter partly on another occasion and the Prime Minister said that there was no concern.

I therefore wish to raise the matter again to demonstrate that there is concern to the extent that on the *Mirror* dated June 2, 1995 the headline read as follows: "WASA Divestment Manipulated". That is a matter of concern. I can go on to read all the highlighted areas to demonstrate the fact that consumers are concerned about the quality of the water which was supplied by Severn Trent in the United Kingdom. Workers at WASA, their representatives and other citizens, are expressing concern regularly.

There is another article questioning WASA's new partner, headlined "Lack of Transparency". The headline in the *Express* dated Thursday June 15, 1995 reads as follows:

"Daly tells Gov't to dam WASA deal and the article

Independent Senator Martin Daly wants Government to dam the WASA deal.

That is, at least until all the issues that have arisen concerning contaminated water have been thoroughly investigated and reported upon."

In the interest of time I shall not quote all the clippings I have here, but I do wish to demonstrate to you and this House that as a result of these clippings and other information that is available, there is much concern about the issue of bringing Severn Trent to take over operations at WASA.

The *Express* dated Thursday June 15 states:

"Union heads questions WASA-Trent deal.

A WASA trade union leader has questioned the soundness of the evaluation process used by the Government to select the UK-based water company, Severn Trent, as a partner for WASA.

President of the Public Services' Association (PSA), Clyde Weatherhead, asked yesterday: 'What is the evaluation process about?'

His question came in the wake of announcement by Public Utilities Minister Ralph Maraj that Cabinet has agreed to send a team to the UK to investigate Severn Trent operations in the wake of several publicised negative cases involving the company in that country."

In the circumstances, we ask: Why investigate now? Had the Government not taken steps to investigate prior to signing that memorandum of agreement? If they did not, why did they not do it? Is that not normal procedure?

Mr. Casimire: Is that a motion?

Mr. M. Haniff: Yes it is a motion. The Member wishes to enquire. Yes it is a motion. I am raising the concern of the people in this country with regard to the Government's intention to divest WASA and put it in the hands of a foreign company. The Member for Toco/Manzanilla wishes to know if that is a Motion.

Why did Severn Trent lie? Are these not questions that citizens of this country ought to be concerned about? The article goes on to say that a very senior officer lied to the authorities in Trinidad and Tobago about their own operations concerning legal matters in the United Kingdom. Let them tell the nation if they are happy about the way things have gone so far with their negotiations; whether jobs are likely to be lost, and if the rates are likely to be increased based on documentation.

There is the *WASA Bulletin* dated Thursday June 1, 1995. Because of his question, I feel that I should quote everything in this document for it raises very important questions. However, I quote just a bit. The document states"

"(7) Severn Trent has one of the worst pollution records in Britain, convicted for six pollution offences last year (1993)."

That is not his interest. I am sure if he goes to Toco/Manzanilla residents of the area would be concerned about the quality of water if or when the contract is awarded.

"(9) Poison fine hits Severn Trent in worst water pollution incident in 10 years."

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Is that not a matter of concern to us?

"(iv) That no proposer was asked to make a formal presentation to corroborate their proposals to determine their capabilities.

(v) That in financing of over \$1B, this country would eventually repay approximately \$23B over the next 25 years."

I say here loud and clear that the investment of approximately \$1 billion is most certainly a matter of concern.

"(vi) That Severn Trent has proposed a plan called the ROBIN HOOD PLAN..."

Are we not supposed to be concerned about this 35 per cent increase which has been awarded by the Public Utilities Commission? The water situation in this country could not be worse. I continue to get calls from people all over my constituency about the lack of water. Sometimes in certain areas for 11 days there is no water. In addition to that, the repairs which the Government promised, are not taking place. At least they have not yet started in that part of the country. I wonder whether that is purposely designed to be so.

5.55 p.m.

I wish to assure this House that I have been holding discussions with all the senior officers of WASA in the South. I have also hinted our concerns to the Minister of Public Utilities. Quite naturally, we will give the Minister who has just taken up office a chance to become acquainted with what is happening before he gets the job done. How quickly that will happen we do not know.

We have grown accustomed to hearing this and that will be done, nothing happens and people continue to suffer. Those are just some of the issues raised in that bulletin.

There is another bulletin from WASA Workers Section, NUGFW, dated June 13, 1995.

"YOU are in danger.

"1. Notwithstanding our reports, the PNM Government has adopted a policy of no confidence in our people's ability."

They are speaking here about their workers' ability to do what needs to be done at WASA.

2. "Showing clearly that they are no longer a People's Movement and caring Government. They have selected a 'felon' named Seven (sic)

Trent who showed total negligence and incompetence in managing their water company—resulting in Severn Trent being charged in the British Courts with providing contaminated water to its consumers."

We are saying that WASA's daily-paid and monthly-paid workers and other citizens of this country are concerned about the issues.

- "3. Water is to be treated like a variable commodity to be priced just like TV, cars, clothes and so on—a top WASA Official has already stated that water should be increased by 700%. Severn Trent increased their prices in Britain by 69% in the first four years of privatisation."

There are two things happened here. The first thing is that I have always said that for an essential service such as the provision of water, we should be in a position to manage it. I am of the view that we do have the necessary skills but the PNM Government is demonstrating that it has no faith in the very people of this country for whom it says it cares. As a result, the questions being raised are about the process and procedures that have been gone into as a result of speeding up the matter.

I do not wish to go on for long, but I assure you that these are matters of concern on which I can speak for a long time, especially with these headlines. "WASA Divestment Manipulated". It is said in that very article that a meeting of five of those commissioners was held at a senior PNM person's home and they took the decision. One of those commissioners is speaking out because he is not satisfied. I do not know the name of the person, I am saying that based on the article before me.

There is need, as far as the citizens of this country are concerned, for the authorities to clear the air on all those questions that have been raised. We hope that the authorities will take a decision. I heard through the grapevine that there is now a second thought coming. We are not too sure that they will go ahead with Severn Trent. If so, we hope that they will take a sensible decision, having assessed carefully all the requirements in the interest of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, and we shall continue to get good, clear water for consumption.

I, therefore, await a reply from the Minister.

The Minister of Public Utilities (Hon. Ralph Maraj): Madam Speaker, let me start first of all, with the leaks in the constituency of Princes Town. It is not really true to say that we have not started work there. In fact, after I spoke the last time, I actually followed it up, and the information is that in that constituency we

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have already done some repairs at McNish, New Grant, Estate Road, Hindustan, Mathilda Road, Nagir Road, Hindustan, Torrib, Tabaquite and so forth. So, we have repaired some leaks. Indeed, I have a long list of leaks which are earmarked to be repaired in the constituency.

Mr. Haniff: Madam Speaker, I know that some repairs have started. I simply would like to let the Minister know that for 11 days prior to yesterday, there was no water in many of those areas.

Hon. R. Maraj: I have been told that there is no water. I remember the last time I said we think WASA is a disaster; WASA is in an atrocious state; WASA represents backwardness in its worst form. We are seeking to repair that situation and we have the information here that some work was done.

I share many of the concerns raised by the Member for Princes Town. It would be irresponsible of me, as the Minister of Public Utilities, not to be concerned about reports that we are hearing with respect to a preferred proposer, who will be the interim operator, with respect to a utility as essential as WASA. I want to make that point very, very clear. We are concerned and we will seek to clear up whatever doubts there are in the minds of the population. Let me also assure the Member that the Government will do only that which is best with respect to this very important utility.

I want to make one statement clear. There has been no divestment of WASA. In fact, there has been no decision to divest WASA. We are bringing in an interim operator for a certain period and at the end of that period the operator will have the option to enter into a more long-term arrangement with the company with respect to management.

The Member talked about the price of water going up like the price of cars. Let me assure him that the Government is committed to ensuring that water is available at affordable prices to the population, and will be taking steps through a new regulatory agency to ensure that price remains affordable.

The Member mentioned \$1 billion being brought in and \$23 billion being repaid. I do not know where he got those figures. My information is that the interim operator will bring in some financing on non-guaranteed loan and that loan, as far as I am aware, is \$1 billion. I do not see how that can be translated into \$23 billion. That figure is strange to me.

The Member talked about a Memorandum of Agreement. Let me say that there is no agreement between WASA and our preferred proposer. There is a

memorandum of understanding which sets the parameters for the discussion. It talks about conditions for confidentiality and so forth. The Government has not entered any agreement with any company to manage WASA. Negotiations are taking place and these negotiations can go either way. The process is not yet complete.

As regards the comment about lack of transparency, a process was gone through and this was determined in great detail—request for proposals, the appraisal of these requests and so forth. The preferred proposer was arrived at by a particular process which was decided upon and agreed to by all the firms that eventually tendered. As you will recall, 21 firms originally tendered for this contract and it was short-listed eventually to about five. The process was based on three envelopes which were to be opened, a process which we have already spoken about and which in our view was based on transparency.

6.05 p.m.

I get the impression that the Member's main concern had to do with the preferred proposer, Severn Trent and all the reports that are emanating about whether it is a company capable of providing the kind of service that we want; whether it is a responsible company; whether it will provide unfit water for consumption and so forth. Let me make this point before I go any further.

I am not here to advocate any case for Severn Trent. As the Minister of Public Utilities, I have already taken steps to find the information that will answer all these concerns and queries that the Member has. As he knows a team is in London at the moment interacting with this particular company and when that team returns we shall be able to clear up many of the concerns.

I am saying this very clearly; I am not making a case for any particular company. I want to assure the Member though, that in deciding on this proposer a very responsible course of action was embarked upon. Let me make the point that Severn Trent, for example, operates in a country which can be considered one of the most highly regulated in the world with respect to water.

In fact, there are six regulators operating in England and Wales. As the Member knows, this is the area from which Severn Trent emanates. There is the Office of Water Services; the National Rivers Authority; the Drinking Water Inspectorate; Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Pollution; Local Authority and the EC Commission. These water quality regulations can be considered the most stringent in the world.

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Under these conditions and this kind of regulatory framework and atmosphere, where there is a full audit of the compliance data and annual inspection of the companies—there are about 31 companies—and where there are 57 different quality standards ranging from temperature of water to colour and so forth—these are facts emanating from England—in 1993 of over .5 million drinking water quality tests carried out under the supervision of the Drinking Water Inspectorate, Severn Trent achieved 99.7 compliance rate compared with the average for all companies of 98.9 per cent; so that it was a bit higher than the average. In 1994, Severn Trent achieved a 99.8 compliance. In a very stringent regulatory atmosphere it did achieve very high marks.

In the case of effluent quality in 1994, more than 99 per cent of the samples taken by the National Rivers Authority met these standards for the more than 1,000 sewerage treatment works which the company operates. So that in terms of the standards and so forth, the company really has a very high standard. I just want to bring that bit of information to bear on the discussion which is taking place nationally, and which has not yet been completed. The information continues to come in with respect to this particular company.

We also made some inquiries on our own, we asked our Mission in London to do some investigation as a result of the reports that were appearing in the media. We contacted the Chief Inspector of the Drinking Water Inspectorate of the United Kingdom with respect to some of the claims in the media. Although it was reported, for example, that Severn Trent had allowed some polluted water to enter into the system, the report from Mr. Michael Rouse, Chief Inspector, Drinking Water Inspectorate of the United Kingdom had this to say on the incident:

"Although Severn Trent were unable to detect the contamination before it entered into supply once they were aware of the problem they handled the incident extremely effectively. Consumers were warned quickly and an incident control team involving the company, the local health authority and the local authorities was established quickly and the actions necessary to protect the consumers were taken.

During the investigations of the incident the company acted in a wholly open and responsible way and in my report this year I will commend them for their high level of public duty. "

This is a direct quotation from a letter written by Mr. Michael Rouse, the Chief Inspector of the Drinking Water Inspectorate of the United Kingdom.

May I also say that with respect to water companies in England these reports are a common feature of life about these companies. So that it is nothing unusual, accidents happen and there are other charges that have been laid against other companies.

Again, I want to make the point—and I want hon. Members to bear in mind—that I am not making a case for Severn Trent, but I am just letting Members know what has happened so far, what is the information that is emanating and that we are taking a responsible approach to this particular matter. We are convinced that we are dealing with a company that has had high standards of compliance and so forth with the regulatory conditions with respect to this kind of activity in England and Wales and we, as a Government will do our best to ensure that only the best is done for the people of Trinidad and Tobago with respect to this very important utility.

I thank you, Madam Speaker.

Inadequate Water Supply

Mr. Sahid Hosein (*Siparia*): Madam Speaker, this Motion speaks about the need to identify the adequacy of potable water for WASA customers, in light of the expanding industrial development, both at Point Lisas and La Brea. Following from my colleague the Member for Princes Town, this issue is very important in light of present developments, both in terms of what is to take place at WASA and in terms of the present; and the projected industrial development both at Point Lisas, La Brea and possibly elsewhere.

6.15 p.m.

It is also important in light of the plethora of complaints being made throughout the length and breadth of this country. One would have thought that given the fact that the rainy season is here and water is available from alternative sources, those complaints would have abated, virtually gone away, but that is not the case.

If one examines the situation one would conclude either that; there is an inadequate supply of water available to citizens or there is a shortfall. If the latter is not the case—as has been affirmed on several occasions by the former Minister of Public Utilities in this House—there is adequate water being treated and produced at the various locations but a vast amount of this water is lost through leaks.

If that is the case, then a case is obviously made out for the replacement of mains. My view is that it is a combination of both factors, there is a shortfall in

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the production when one looks at the demand and, secondly, it is quite evident across the country that much of the water that is produced is lost through leaks.

When one looks at the amount of water that is utilized at the Point Lisas Estate, one sees that the last figures were 18, million gallons per day. That is much water and this has serious implications for citizens who live in the south because they source their water from the Caroni/Arena system. Whatever water is sent to south, once it passes the Point Lisas Industrial Estate it is decreased; so less water goes further south to San Fernando and environs—Penal, Debe, Siparia and, with the new development, La Brea and elsewhere. And this is very important.

The time has come—given the emphasis of the Government, and the logical need to continue to industrialize—to look at alternative sources of water for those industrial estates. It is evident that that is creating a problem in terms of how the domestic consumer is serviced, in addition to the cost involved in producing this water and then using it in industry when, surely, there are alternative sources available at a significantly lower cost.

The problem is a national one. However, it assumes greater proportions in those areas that are at the extremities of the Navet system and the Caroni/Arena system, moreso in the south than in the northern areas. And the problem becomes quite acute with the onset of the dry season. WASA has a policy of cutting back production in the dry season in order to conserve not knowing how long the dry spell would last, and the demand for water at that time is very much greater. One is aware that certain developments are taking place—the previous Motion referred those developments—that, hopefully, would ease the situation.

I move this Motion in light of the present situation and it has to do with what is taking place in the constituency of Siparia which I represent. That constituency sources its supply of water from the Navet system which supplies two-thirds of the constituency. Madam Speaker, you have become accustomed to hearing me almost on a weekly basis raising concerns about water in the Siparia constituency. When one thinks it has bottomed out, it continues to get worse. Every time I tell constituents that it cannot get worse so hang in there, the situation continues to prove me wrong.

The constituency is serviced by the Navet System. It is at the end of the system and very often the constituency is without water. Most of the areas which get water get it on a fortnightly basis. Very few areas, if any, get water on a more regular schedule than that. One is always confronted with the complaint that

something has happened to the Daisy Main. No water goes into the constituency via the Clarke Road booster and people continue and be without water and to complain. There are large areas in the Siparia constituency at this time without water through WASA distribution and transmission system.

Recently a leak occurred on Rochard Road. The pipe blew out, I was told, on May 22 and the system was shut down and not repaired until three weeks after when I had to intervene and speak to the previous Minister. You understand what I am saying. They shut down the system which supplied the whole of Rochard Road and Penal Rock Road and left it shut down until three weeks after. These are some of the difficulties that we encounter and which people in other areas fail to appreciate. The line was just shut off and left there.

I cannot understand why a parliamentary representative should have to go to the Minister to raise the question of repairing a leak and then he intervenes with the Water and Sewerage Authority. Something is terribly wrong with that system.

On the other side, there is the supply from Caroni/Arena. It is interesting that we hear so much about the St. Patrick water project and how it will supply the La Brea Estate and all the areas down that way—Palo Seco and so forth. Before that system was put in place, the constituencies of Oropouche and Siparia sourced water—from the S.S. Erin Road—from the Caroni/Arena system. With the implementation of the St. Patrick water scheme, most of the water is being sent along that route. I have been told that once the Teak Village booster operates, it draws the water away from the system that would normally bring it down into S.S. Erin Road. That problem exists.

A few years ago, there was a situation where, because of the drawdown at Point Lisas, very often the San Fernando booster, which is supposed to supply water downstream into Penal, Debe, Teak Village and so forth, could not operate until the late hours of the night. Unless I am told otherwise, I fear that the situation will continue despite all the talk we have been hearing about new management.

6.25 p.m.

Yesterday, I had a meeting with the representatives of WASA, trying to see how the situation can be dealt with, but I have not spoken to the Minister. I know he is very approachable, but I wanted him to enjoy his honeymoon. I wanted to give him that, because the ministry is not an easy one, especially when it relates to the Water and Sewerage Authority, so I empathize with him. I know everybody was at his doorstep. I did not want to join the queue at that point, but today I have

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joined it, and I am not going to leave it—I am giving notice to him—until matters in the Siparia constituency are dealt with.

I have been speaking in this House for the past four years and the situation has not improved one bit. I hope with the change of Ministers, given his positive approach to things, like a very few of his colleagues, that something would happen. Because in my constituency at this time I am accused of defending WASA. It is a funny situation for a representative to be in. I keep explaining to people what the situation is and given the position of things it could not get worse and we should bear a bit, but I cannot adopt that posture any more.

We have read in the newspapers that pipelines are going to be laid. In fact, under the loan we got from the World Bank, 100 km of pipeline is going to be replaced. Indeed, in the Siparia constituency I am seeing signs that something is about to be done, but I want to make the point.

The previous Minister indicated to this House on January 1, 1995 that WASA has 3,000 miles of transmission mains, not talking about distribution mains. That is the information which was presented to this House and I have no reason to doubt that it is absolutely correct. He went on, on March 24, 1995, in response again to queries about water, to state that 576 miles of transmission mains are 50 years old and are undersized and encrusted.

So that you understand the implications. While we are encouraged by the first step of 100 km which is roughly 67 to 70-odd miles, we still have, according to their estimate, 576 miles of transmission mains that are over 50 years old. We are not talking about those that are 35 and 40 years old.

So it seems to me that WASA and the Minister have a tremendous job ahead, because surely all the thousands of leaks we are seeing are the manifestation of a problem with that transmission system. It has to be that the lines have become so old and encrusted that they are in dire need of replacement. To replace 100 km of pipeline in the first instance—unless we hear that a lot more of these pipelines are going to be replaced—means that for many years to come these very same problems are going to be with us.

Incidentally in talking about repairs, I have had cause to interact, as I said earlier, almost on a daily basis with the personnel at San Fernando. In fact, we have reached the stage where they have started changing their phone numbers and refusing to give them to me. When material comes into the country and is available to repair leaks, I have been told that it operates on a "partner" system.

Those in the north or close by are informed immediately that material is available and the bulk of the material goes into a particular area.

One really cannot quarrel with that if there is need for it, but at least put a system in place to ensure that at least a fair proportion of the material flows down south and into the other areas—La Brea and all these areas—where we have all these problems, so that they could be dealt with. Some people complain when they do not get water for 10 hours. I wish people could understand what it means to go without water for months on end.

So what I would expect to hear from the Minister this evening is how the ministry and WASA propose to deal with this whole question of a sufficient supply of water, given that industrial thrust we are making? Secondly, how you would deal with this replacement of mains in the whole country.

I thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Minister of Public Utilities (Hon. Ralph Maraj): Madam Speaker, again, I agree with most of what my Friend the Member for Siparia has said. Indeed, we have a tremendous job ahead to really bring back the Water and Sewerage Authority to an acceptable level. I made the point in the House the last day that I think that water cannot be a political matter; it is something that concerns all of us and we all must get together and really solve the problem.

As the Minister of Public Utilities I would be seeking to interact in a very real way with all the representatives of the people—on both sides of the House—to be fully apprised of what is going on in their constituency; what are the short-term needs, while we seek to deal with the long-term plans.

I invite the Member for Siparia to hold discussions with me as early as possible. I wish to let him know I have already started holding discussions. I have held discussions with my colleague the Member for Diego Martin East, out of which has come a document from which we will seek to deal with the problems in his area. I have visited the constituency of Laventille West. I have spent an entire morning with my colleague the Member for Port of Spain, South.

The Member for Oropouche came and we discussed the problems in his constituency to a great extent. I have an officer from my ministry who is in the Parliament today and who is going to be looking at these particular areas of operation. So that while we are talking about the long-term plans, the needs and the concerns of the representatives will be also given special attention. So that I want to assure you, that is on the cards.

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The Member for Siparia also spoke about mains replacement. The estimate is about 532 km of mains that need to be replaced in the first instance. They are encrusted, and so on. There is action being taken towards this goal. At the moment, under an Emergency Rehabilitation Plan, we are going to be replacing 50 km of mains and that is taking place throughout the country; areas include in Ciperó, Diego Martín, Toco, Siparia, and so on. In fact, in his constituency, 33 km of transmission pipeline and eight tanks have been constructed in the south/western part of Trinidad. This project would serve from Oropouche to Point Fortin via the Siparia/Erin Road. So action is taking place down there already.

Mr. Hosein: Sorry to interrupt, Madam Speaker, but the Siparia constituency does not benefit from that project, nor does Oropouche.

Hon. R. Maraj: Okay. But we are in the area and we have the St. Patrick project coming on stream, and so on. In fact, there is the intention as well to look again at the proposal to construct the pipeline and pump station from St. Mary's Village in Oropouche to Point Fortin. I hope that will help to bring some relief to that area.

The point is, work is taking place under this emergency Rehabilitation Programme. In addition to that, we have, as I said, and as you remembered, the World Bank financing which will enable us to replace 100 km of mains, in addition to upgrading the water treatment, the booster programme, the metering programme—the 80,000 meters that we are going to install as a result of that financing. So that infrastructurally, things are going to be taking place in addition to institutional strengthening of the Water and Sewerage Authority.

So I expect that between now and the next dry season we are going to see improvement taking place incrementally. Over the next two to three years we are going to see considerable improvement in the water supply, which would make us comfortable, but which is not going to be the end of the problem.

As the Member quite rightly said, transmission mains, feeder pipelines, all of these things need to be looked at. It is my estimation that with the interim operator—whichever operator it is—one would expect that about \$2 billion worth of investment will go into WASA, either through financing from the international agencies or from that arrangement that we are going into with respect to the interim operator.

That kind of financing will take the Water and Sewerage Authority a very long way towards viability and efficiency, to serve the needs of the domestic

consumer, and as well to serve the industrialization thrust in our country. So that is where we are.

The Member also mention the rainy season, and he is right. The rainy season is here, but it will only help to a certain extent. The fact is, the transmission mains, and so on, still leak, but we have this repair programme which is on, where more than 14,000 leaks have been repaired since October 1994 and we expect that about 1,800 leaks will be repaired each month over the next six months. This massive leak repair programme would help us to increase the water supply.

6.35 p.m.

Mr. Hosein: Madam Speaker, I hope the Minister would identify the measures, because it is a major concern, not only to me, but to the country. The Motion is about the need to identify the adequacy of potable water in light of the—

Hon. R. Maraj: I am coming to that. I deliberately started with Siparia because the Member spent a long time dealing with that.

Madam Speaker, with the level of industrialization we have in this country, we are convinced that there is sufficient water to supply both domestic and industrial needs. The fact of the matter is that the transmission system is inadequate because there are leaks and other problems. Water treatment, for example, is not up to mark so that also affects the level of water that can be supplied to the population.

Let me make the point that at present we are convinced that there is enough water to supply the population of Trinidad and Tobago, but the system is inadequate, in terms of the institution, the management, the transmission, treatment, storage and so forth.

We are engaged in an industrialization process. The Member is very right. We have to look at how this industrialization process is going to affect the domestic supply for consumers. We expect that during the next two years or so, when these new plants become operational, we would have an increase in the water supply from 11 to about 14 million gallons per day. We expect that WASA would be able to move to that point.

The point about using industrial water as opposed to potable water for industrial use is the ideal, but it cannot be applied to the country globally. To have industries use only industrial water would mean a whole new transmission system and we do not have the heavy capital at this time.

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At present it would seem to be a more cost-effective option to continue to use potable water to a certain extent for industrial purposes. In special cases for example, Point Lisas, the plan is that the Chickland scheme would have, as its major objective, the construction of an impounding reservoir where after heavy rainfall we would have industrial water to serve the Point Lisas area.

But at present to engage in a national programme to have alternative transmission lines placed for industrial use, as opposed to domestic use, is not yet achievable though it is something that I am sure is in the thinking of the Water and Sewerage Authority. Certainly, it is in my mind because it is something I feel we would like to move to at a certain point.

With respect to increasing the water supply, the intention is to provide additional water resources, to upgrade the water treatment plants and to expand the transmission and distribution capacity. Additional water resources have already been identified in Caroni, North Oropouche, and as I said, in the Chickland water scheme. Preliminary studies for the extension of the Caroni treatment plant have already started and upon completion, the capacity of the plant would be increased by 11 million gallons per day.

The North Oropouche scheme involves the construction of an impounding reservoir with associated works in treatment plant expansion so as to double the capacity of the plant from 20 to 40 million gallons per day. This impounding reservoir in the North Oropouche scheme is for potable water as opposed to the Chickland scheme.

There are plans in place to increase the production of water; to increase the treatment of water; improve the transmission of water; to repair the leaks which would all lead us to the point where, even as we move to industrialization and even as the industrialization process makes heavy demand on the water supply, there would be in Trinidad and Tobago an adequate supply for the domestic use.

I want to assure the hon. Member that the Government is aware of his very valid, genuine and reasonable concern, and that it is taking steps to ensure that we do not move into a situation where the industrial demand is so great that it affects the consumer.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Point Lisas Disaster Preparedness
(Implementation of Recommendations)**

Mr. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj (*Couva South*): Madam Speaker, this Motion is asking for Government to state what steps it intends to take to

implement the recommendations contained in the report dated November 17, 1994, of the Cabinet-appointed committee into disaster preparedness at Point Lisas.

In December, 1977, Cabinet established an advisory technical group for fire prevention and other disasters at Point Lisas. Based on the advisory technical group's report of August, 1987, Cabinet established a permanent committee for Point Lisas in December, 1992 to evaluate, among other things, and plan for, disaster preparedness at Point Lisas including community awareness programmes.

On November 17, 1994, a report was presented to Cabinet and according to that report the situation at Point Lisas was considered to be serious, to the extent that one could not relax in the situation. According to that report, it identified the many hazards, such as the release of ammonia, hydrogen, chlorine, hydrocarbon and methanol. On page 3 of the report, the risks were assessed as follows:

- "(a) The potential exists for the occurrence of a major chemical disaster at the Point Lisas Industrial Estate.
- (b) Catastrophic failure of process equipment, pipelines or storage vessels can result in devastating effects both on the workers and the residents in the vicinity of the plants.
- (c) Some of the housing settlements are definitely too close to the estate. These settlements include Brechin Castle, Couva; Couva Housing Settlement and California."

6.45 p.m.

"There may not be enough time to evacuate the estate and the surrounding settlements, should the release of chemicals occur."

Quite recently, in May 1995, it was reported that a 47-year old seaman from a foreign country was killed as a result of an ammonia leak. Eighty per cent of his body was burnt.

In the *Express* of June 27 1995 it reads:

"Construction workers at the Point Lisas Industrial Estate have been suffering from dizziness, burning throats and 'unusual skin rashes' caused by leaking chemicals.

A pipeline has been leaking ammonia and urea gas for the last two weeks and construction workers at Methanol II, Point Lisas explained yesterday that

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they were first alerted by the strong smell of 'ammonia' in the air but ignored it because they were accustomed to strong smells on the estate."

The report talked about on-site and off-site emergency planning. I would not trouble the House with that. I must say that I am very sorry to give the Minister this as the first Motion to which he must reply, as he has just come into the ministry.

The report also talked about short-term and long-term plans. It stated on the short-term plan for fire and emergency units.

"It is proposed to acquire appliances and equipment worth approximately \$14 million for dealing with Point Lisas Industrial Estate. This equipment would be located at the Chaguanas Fire Station until the fire station is built at Point Lisas."

We would like to know what the Government has done about that. My inquiries have revealed that nothing has been done.

"Medical Facilities. Setting in place arrangements with PETROTRIN for the use of the Augustus Long Hospital for receiving, treating and caring for industrial casualties. It would be necessary to establish a specialized detoxification, poison control, burn therapy and industrial trauma care unit at these facilities. Details to be submitted by the Ministry of Health."

Telecommunications—and there are certain recommendations about telecommunications.

"Public Education. The public education programme should be undertaken to inform the public of the hazards present at Point Lisas Estate and the outline Emergency Plan. This should take the form of workshops and seminars to inform the public concerned about the actions which they should take."

My enquiries reveal that this has not taken place.

"Enactment of legislation on minimizing risk of technological disaster and adoption of international standards, codes and practices.

Long Term Plans.

New fire station.

Construction of a new Fire Station suitably designed to include observation tower, conference room facility and—seal-proof interior.

Couva County Hospital.

Expediting construction of the proposed polyclinic Health facility, residential buildings.

Phasing out of the residential buildings at California, Couva Housing Settlements and Brechin Castle.

Staff-relocation of non-essential staff of various manufacturing companies beyond 1.9 kilometres radius of the estate.

Security.

Security of operations outside the fence should be considered critical and should be immediately addressed by PLIPDECO in conjunction with the police."

Those are some of the recommendations. I just want to read on some more in order to give an idea of how serious this matter is. I want to put into the record of this House, if I may read, a few parts of the disaster plan itself.

The Preamble:

"There have been many minor incidents involving the leak of toxic gases, fires, explosions and hazardous waste in the country, but none has been on the scale comparable with those which occurred in Mexico and India.

On November 19, 1984 an explosion at a factory, killed 542 and injured 400 in Mexico. At that time this was the most serious accident in the chemical industry. It held this record for only two weeks.

On December 3, 1984 a man-made accident at the Union Carbide plant at Bhopal, India, caused the greatest industrial accident known. Over 3000 persons were left dead, killed by toxic fumes and as many as 250,000 may have suffered permanent disability in sight, breathing and general physical and mental health.

As so frequently happens in chemical disasters, there was little the emergency services were able to do to rescue survivors other than to assist in transporting a very small portion to the hospitals.

The rising level of industrial activity, commencing as far back as 1956, increased further with the establishment of the Point Lisas Industrial Estate. This has created the potential for major industrial disasters, similar in magnitude to those which occurred in Mexico and India."

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At appendix F on page 20 of this report which talks about the Point Lisas Industrial Estate it says:

"It has been recognized that industrial accidents today are not so much the result of weaknesses in the physical safeguards but are related to failures in human element."

I am stressing this because if there are the potentials one knows that these disasters can occur at any time. These chemicals which are stored on this estate are very lethal. On page 21, under Risks Analysis, it states:

"Despite the uniqueness of the hazard inherent in each operation all of the seventeen industries mentioned above are subject to the vagaries of chance and random error probabilities."

The data clearly indicate that there is no scope for relaxing stringent safety standards at Point Lisas.

"On page 22 it states: Population at Risk.

"The population figures are:

Employees on the estate—6,000,

Surrounding districts—17,615 (inclusive of schools).

The surrounding districts include the settlements of Couva and California within a 1.2 mile radius. These districts are located North, North/East and East, South/East of the Industrial Site.

Madam Speaker, I would not read this but I would like to state that at page 25 of the report, the Disaster Preparedness Plan there is a hazard analysis in relation to exposure. It states:

"All the elements for the making of a disaster exist at Point Lisas." And they have developed a scenario to show with the analysis of the situation that if nothing is done to implement this plan there is no way that these people can be saved in case a disaster occurs.

In this House we have tried to get information on this matter. There are questions which were asked and at that time we were not in possession of the report but there have been questions asked, answers have been given as far back as February 10, 1995.

Quite recently in an attempt to get information, I wrote to the Prime Minister, on the instruction of the residents—because since this matter has occurred there

have been several meetings in the Couva Housing Scheme, the Brechin Castle area, and in the California area. As a matter of fact, tomorrow we shall be having a meeting. The residents are very concerned. They want to find out what the Government is doing to implement this plan.

The Motion is to try to get information from the Government. It may be that the Minister cannot give me all the information today, but certainly, whatever information he can give, I would very much like to get it, and I am sure the country would like to get it as well.

The Minister of National Security (Hon. John. Eckstein): Madam. Speaker, the plan proposed by the committee referred to was developed with certain objectives in mind. These are:

To localize the emergency—that is, if one occurs—and to minimize the effects of the accident, most importantly on people but also on property.

The committee in formulating its recommendations took into consideration the fact that most of the plants at Point Lisas already have an emergency facility plan. We cannot dismiss this because the fact is that the estate has been in operation from 1977 and there has really been no serious accident of the type described. Clearly, the plans that the companies operate cannot be dismissed as of no consequence.

6.55 p.m.

The committee's recommendations anticipate various ministries doing different things. I can give the assurance that the Ministry of National Security would utilize all the available resources at this time to fulfil the responsibilities assigned to them under the recommendations made by the committee.

We are, in fact, addressing some of the specific recommendations made. I know that at the present time we have received tenders from at least four companies to supply fire fighting equipment to the value of \$45 million or thereabout. The evaluation is under way and an award will be made. We also have money to the extent of \$30 million to repair existing equipment.

As the recommendations suggest, some of this equipment will be stored at the Chaguanas Fire Station until such time as a fire station is built at Point Lisas. I will not say that I am aware because I am not aware that there is on the drawing board at this time a plan to build a fire station at Point Lisas. It has not been brought to my attention that design work or anything is being done in respect of a fire station at the Point Lisas facility.

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At present, I am not apprised of all the plans of the Ministry of National Security, but I do know for a fact that tenders have been invited from suppliers in North America and Europe for fire equipment to the extent of \$45 million.

I assume that the Fire Services Department, in distributing the equipment throughout Trinidad and Tobago, would have regard to the serious problems that can be posed by an emergency at the Point Lisas Industrial Estate. I will pursue the question of the construction of a fire station at Point Lisas, and I will get back to the Member in terms of whether there are specific plans within the ministry in respect of that.

I know from past assignment to the Ministry of Health that the plan for the development of the medical services in Trinidad and Tobago involves the development of a very enhanced capability for delivering medical care in that area. That is a charge on the Ministry of Health to develop that facility in a reasonable time frame, and it is definitely part of the recommendations, not only coming from this disaster plan, but also from the consultants who have come to Trinidad and advised us on the development of our health system.

I am not sure that the Ministry of Health agrees with that recommendation. We agree there is to be a burns unit in the southern area, but the preferred location when I was at the Ministry of Health was the San Fernando General Hospital because that requires tremendous back up facilities. We spent \$90 million building an extension in San Fernando and it is designed, in part, for that purpose. It is a really very expensive proposition to suggest that there will be one in San Fernando and one in Couva. Once the trauma victim is stabilized, it would not take a long time for transportation by ambulance from Couva to San Fernando.

Having been transferred from the Ministry of Health, I do not know what the thinking is, but I know for a fact that from all the technical advise that is available to us, the preferred location for the burns unit to serve the national community is the San Fernando General Hospital. Given the back up specialities which are needed with burns, it just does not make sense to me that it be located in the Augustus Long Hospital.

We have never had a burns facility in Trinidad and Tobago. It is the first time we are doing so and it is a multimillion dollar facility. It must be built in one of our premier institutions. As I said, the San Fernando General Hospital is the preferred location, because it will take in problems coming further south. It is better located strategically for the servicing of the entire southern area.

The telecommunications people are designing the systems which they have been mandated to do. Clearly, we shall have to develop our public education programmes to inform the public about the hazards in this area, and what action they can take to protect themselves in the event of difficulty. I can give the assurance that the Ministry of National Security is working on developing its capability to deal with the problems. The specific one cited was fire and I know for a fact that we are moving very rapidly in that area.

One of the things we have to reflect on is the fact that we do not really have any capability in this country to assess the possibility or consequences of a disaster occurring in the Point Lisas area. We have established a committee of Trinidadians and they have come up with some suggestions which we have taken seriously. The Government wants to be satisfied about the real situation as seen through the eyes of people who have worked in situations like this, and who are really more familiar than our locals are, with the different situations which can arise.

7.05 p.m.

We have taken steps to get a panel of international experts who are trained in this area to come down to look at this situation and advise us on the possibility of people being exposed, the likelihood of risk and the action to be taken. They would subject the local report to scrutiny and, based on their own experience, let us know what the facts really are in this situation, and to what extent the dangers are critical and need to be addressed.

We would like a second opinion; we would like to be absolutely certain from international experts. We are pursuing this while taking as seriously as we can the recommendations from the locals. However, some of them are far-reaching. They will take time to be implemented and we want to use that time to have a second look at it. The Ministry of Planning and Development, therefore, is in the process of engaging international consultants to look at it and advise us on what we really must do to deal with the problems whether apparent or real.

I probably have not satisfied the Member, but he can speak with me and I will do further research on this matter and give him whatever additional information is available to me.

I thank you, Madam Speaker.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 7.07 p.m.