

Minute's Silence (Coup Victims)

Friday, July 28, 1995

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, July 28, 1995

The House met at 1.30 p.m.

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

**THREE MINUTES' SILENCE
(Coup Victims)**

Mr. A.N.R. Robinson (*Tobago East*): Madam Speaker, at the commencement of these proceedings, may I crave your leave to move the suspension of the Standing Orders to enable the House to stand for three minutes' silence in memory of those who lost their lives in the service of their country, arising from the attempted coup in July 1990.

Leave granted.

The House stood.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, I have granted leave of absence from today's sitting of the House to the Member for Siparia (*Mr. Sahid Hosein*).

**SUSPENSION
(Hon. Kenneth Valley)**

Madam Speaker: I wish to bring to the attention of hon. Members a certain matter that occurred within this parliamentary Chamber on Monday, July 24, 1995.

I wish to advise that according to May's *Parliamentary Practice*, breaches of privileges or contempt may be brought to the notice of the House by:

- (1) A complaint from a Member;
- (2) A communication from the Speaker;
- (3) A petition; and
- (4) A report from a committee.

As a result of the decision in *Stockdale v Hansard*, the maxim, "That whatever matter arises concerning either House of Parliament ought to be examined, discussed and adjudged in that House to which it relates and not elsewhere"

Suspension (Hon. Kenneth Valley)
[MADAM SPEAKER]

Friday, July 28, 1995

became applicable to matters concerning the internal proceedings of the House and judges have long held that when matters are proceedings of the House, beginning and terminating within its own walls, they are obviously outside the jurisdiction of the courts.

Acting on this authority, I now bring to the attention of hon. Members the contemptuous behaviour of the Leader of Government Business, the Member for Diego Martin Central, Mr. Kenneth Valley, within the walls of this parliamentary Chamber on Monday, July 24, 1995.

Before doing so, I shall, for the guidance of hon. Members, state some general principles applicable to the conduct of business in the House. These have been gleaned from May's *Parliamentary Practice*, 17th, 20th and 21st editions, and *Commentary on the Constitution of India* by Justice Durga Das Basu.

- “(1) Reflections upon the character or action of the speaker vis-à-vis the Office of Speaker constitute a contempt.
- (2) From the Speaker's rulings on points of order, there is no appeal and any expression of disagreement with it by a Member would constitute contempt of the Chair. Acceptance of the Speaker's rulings on points of order is the hallmark of a disciplined parliamentarian that ensures the preservation of the Authority of the Chair.”

Basu continues to guide us as follows:

“Even the House cannot directly override a Speaker's decision, though the House may at any time change its own rules by a majority vote. Sometimes the Speaker himself refers a question to the judgment of the House; but if he makes a decision on his own responsibility, its authority cannot be questioned.

- (1) To use insulting and abusive language to any Member of the House, including the Speaker, in the coming to or going from, or within the House, is a grave contempt; and so is any endeavor to compel the Chair to act in accordance with one's wishes.
- (2) To use abusive and insulting language to the Speaker within or on going from the House on account of the action of the Chair while presiding over the sitting of the House is an atrocious contempt.
- (3) That where it is manifest that an offence has been committed in the face of the Chair, the Chair should at once or at the next earliest opportunity proceed to deal with and punish the offender for the contempt.

Suspensin (Hon Kenneth Valley)

Friday, July 28, 1995

(4) Misleading of the House by a Member is punishable as contempt.”

I wish to inform hon. Members, and the Member for Diego Martin Central himself, that I am now charging the Member for Diego Martin Central, Mr. Kenneth Valley, with contempt of the Chair.

The particulars of contempt against the Member for Diego Martin Central, Mr. Kenneth Valley, are as follows:

You, Kenneth Valley, on July 24, 1995, at a sitting of this honorable House, defiantly expressed your disagreement with the ruling of the Chair and sought to bully and command the Chair to adjourn this House to a date that was in accordance with your wishes, notwithstanding the provisions of the Standing Orders and the Speaker’s right to rule thereon. In seeking to bully and command the Chair to do your bidding, you were prepared to mislead the Chair and the House.

On rising to move the adjournment of the House, *Hansard* records that you said as follows:

“Also. Before moving to the adjournment to Thursday at 1.30 p.m., I have to seek the leave of the House under Standing Order 48(2) to take the constitution (Amdt.) Bill, which was introduced today, through all the stages on Thursday.”

When met with conflicting views on this matter from Members of the Opposition, and an indication from the Chair, that in the absence of an agreement between the parties and the required consent of the Speaker under Standing Order 26, Standing Order 9 will be invoked to adjourn the House to Friday, you defiantly bellowed:

“Madam Speaker, I am adjourning the House to Thursday at 1.30 p.m.”

1.40 p.m.

When told by the Chair that you could not adjourn the House unilaterally and that we were considering Standing Order 48(2), you conveniently shifted your position as follows:

“No, I am not adjourning the House under 48(2). As Leader of the House I am moving that this House be adjourned to 1.30 p.m. on July 27—”

You continued to defy and disregard the authority of the Chair by insisting, in very hostile tones, what the Chair must do.

Suspension (Hon. Kenneth Valley)
[MADAM SPEAKER]

Friday, July 28, 1995

You, Kenneth Valley, on the said Monday 24 July, 1995, within this Parliamentary Chamber, in the presence of hon. Members, persons in the public gallery and members of the media, continued to express your disagreement with the decision of the Chair, made in the conduct of the Business of the House, by hurling abusive, threatening and insulting language at the Speaker, as she rose from the chair and was on her way out of the Chamber. You were heard clearly to say, "You can run, but you can't hide." Although the Speaker stood in the Chamber and looked at you; you, while looking at the said Speaker, threateningly and menacingly repeated the abusive and insulting words, "You can run, but you can't hide" a few more times.

Mr. Valley, an outrageous contempt has been committed by you against the Chair and I now ask you whether or not you would like to say anything on this matter.

Mr. Valley: Madam Speaker, I apologize.

Madam Speaker: I have taken note of the apology of the hon. Member. For the benefit of hon. Members, again may I indicate that the proceedings in a case of contempt against the Chair are similar to the proceedings in a case of contempt of court in the face of a judge. We have the famous case of *Maharaj and the Attorney General* giving the guidelines as to how a Chair or a court ought to proceed in matters of contempt in the face of it.

May's Parliamentary Procedure tells us that when contempt is committed in the actual view of the Chair, the Chair should proceed at once, without hearing the offender. But *Maharaj and the Attorney General* goes a little further and says: You give the offender a chance to explain himself or to apologize. When a contempt is committed, the Chair should proceed at once, without hearing the offender, unless by the way of apology, or to manifest his contrition, to punish him for his contempt.

The main value of this power lies in upholding the dignity of Parliament and defending it against disrespect and affronts. The effect of immediate punishment and example is required to prevent other evils necessarily arising from the offence.

All these will be found in our *Bible*, *May's Parliamentary Procedure*, and that great-learned author, Basu, on constitutional law, where he went into detail in discussing the Constitution of India, on which we have based our Constitution on many of its provisions. That is to be found on page 91 of *May's Parliamentary Procedure, 17th Edition*.

Suspensin (Hon Kenneth Valley)

Friday, July 28, 1995

They also tell us that both Houses of parliament have power to send for persons to answer charges of breach of privilege or contempt without specifying in the Order what the actual cause is. However, the Member for Diego Martin Central has apologized.

The penalties that can be inflicted for such atrocious and grave contempt committed by a Member are a term of imprisonment, suspension from the sitting of the House, or expulsion. Having regard to the apology of the Member, I will adopt the least punitive, which will be a suspension from the sitting service of this House.

But, hon. Members, no one can deny that it was indeed a grave and atrocious contempt committed by the Leader of Government Business. This Leader of Government Business has displayed immaturity, lack of discipline, lack of justice and the “give and take” that is required of a Leader of Government Business in a House. To abuse the Chair in such atrocious terms is hardly forgivable.

In the circumstances, I now order that you, Kenneth Valley, be forthwith suspended from the service of this House for a period of six months [*Interruption*] and you will not return herein or within the precincts hereof until the expiration of six months of today’s date. I now order that you, Kenneth Valley, forthwith leave this honorable House and its precincts. [*Interruption*]

[Mr. Kenneth Valley leaves the Chamber.]

SISTERS OF ST. JOSEPH OF CLUNY (INC’N) BILL

Bill for the incorporation of the Congregation of Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny and matters incidental thereto, brought from the Senate [*Mr. Desmond Allum*]; read the first time.

[Noise in the public gallery]

Madam Speaker: Order! Order, please, persons in the public gallery. Please be quiet!

**TRUSTEES OF THE PORT OF SPAIN CHAPTER
(AMORC) (INC’N) (AMDT.) BILL**

Bill to amend the Port of Spain (AMORC) (Inc’n) Bill 1995 brought from the Senate [*Mr. Basdeo Panday*]; read the first time.

PAPER LAID

Report of the Auditor General on the public accounts of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago for the year ended December 31, 1994 and on other selected audit activities. [*The Minister of Education (Hon. A. Ramreakersingh)*]

To be referred to the Public Accounts Committee.

SELECT COMMITTEE REPORTS**Presentation****Kala Bhairava Foundation (Inc'n) Bill**

Dr. Rupert Griffith (*Arima*): Madam Speaker, I wish to present 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 Kala Bhairava Foundations and for matters incidental thereto.

Glory Church (Inc'n) Bill

Mr. Jarrette Narine (*Arouca North*): Madam Speaker, I wish to present the report of the special select committee of the House of Representatives appointed to consider the report on a Private Bill for the incorporation of the Glory Church and for matters incidental thereto.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

The Minister of Education (Hon. Augustus Ramrekersingh): Madam Speaker, the Government is in a position to answer questions 149, 150, 161, 165, and 166. I therefore ask for a deferment of two weeks for the others.

The following questions stood on the Order Paper.

**Enterprise Community Centre
(Rebuilding of)**

134. Would the hon. Minister of Community Development, Culture and Women's Affairs state:

- (a) 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*]

**Police Station—Central Trinidad
(Serviceable Vehicles Assigned to)**

164. Could the hon. Minister of National Security indicate: the number and type of vehicles, in good working condition, which are assigned to the Cunupia, Caroni and Chaguanas Police Stations? [*Miss H. Bhaggan*]

**Road Improvement Fund
(Award of Contracts)**

168. Would the hon. Minister of Works and Transport state:

- (a) The names of the companies and/or firms that have been awarded contracts in respect of projects under and/or in respect of the Road Improvement Fund?
- (b) Whether officers of his ministry and/or their spouses or relatives have shares and/or interests in these companies? If they do, could he give the names of the officials, the names of the spouses or relatives, the nature of the family relationships and the names of the companies?
- (c) The particulars of these contracts, which particulars are to include the names of the contractors, the contract price of each contract and the place the contract was performed? [*Mr. R. L. Maharaj*]

**Road Improvement Fund
(Rental of Vehicles)**

169. Could the hon. Minister of Works and Transport state:

- (a) Whether the Road Improvement Fund has been used by his ministry for vehicles to be rented for officials of his ministry?
- (b) If the answer is in the affirmative, could the Minister state whether the officers who used these vehicles also collected travelling allowances as public officers?
- (c) Could the Minister give particulars of the rental agreements, giving the names of these companies and/or firms with which these agreements were entered, the sums of moneys paid for each rental and the reason and/or reasons for the rentals? [*Mr. R. L. Maharaj*]

Questions, by leave, deferred.

1.50 p.m.

Asbestos Pipelines

149. Mr. Raymond Palackdharrysingh (*Caroni Central*) asked the Minister of Public Utilities:

- (a) Would the hon. Minister state whether any asbestos pipes were laid as part of the pipe-borne water distribution system to consumers?
- (b) If the answer is in the affirmative, would the Minister state:
 - (i) How many such lines still exist and where?
 - (ii) Whether such lines contaminate the portable water supply thereby endangering the health of consumers?
 - (iii) Whether such lines would be replaced with urgency?

The Minister of Public Utilities (Hon. Ralph Maraj): Madam Speaker, as was worldwide practice 30 years ago, asbestos cement pipe was widely used in the water transmission system in Trinidad and Tobago at that time. Over the years, several sections of these old transmission pipelines have been replaced but there still remain some 100 kilometres of asbestos cement pipeline in several areas of the country. Current thinking recognizes a potential threat to public health and most countries have moved to eliminate all asbestos cement mains from their water distribution systems.

As part of WASA's short-term rehabilitation project, it proposes to replace the existing 100 km of asbestos cement mains with ductile iron pipe as a matter of urgency. Design work for the replacement of transmission mains is nearing completion and replacement of these mains will commence in 1996 as part of WASA's rehabilitation project funded by a World Bank loan.

**Arena "Tank Reservoir"
(Freeport)**

150. Mr. Raymond Palackdharrysingh (*Caroni Central*) asked the Minister of Public Utilities:

- (a) Would the hon. Minister state whether the Arena Road "Tank Reservoir" in Freeport, is still in use?
- (b) If the answer is in the negative, would the Minister state why it is not in use?

- (c) Would the Minister also inform this House whether there are any plans to rehabilitate this “Tank Reservoir”?
- (d) If there are any plans, would the Minister state:
 - (i) When they would be implemented?
 - (ii) The number of consumers that would be served from this system?

The Minister of Public Utilities (Hon. Ralph Maraj): Madam Speaker, WASA has advised that the Arena “Tank Reservoir” was a tank installed during the Second World War and has been out of service since 1972 because of extensive structural deterioration.

As part of its medium-term rehabilitation programme, WASA is currently is currently examining the feasibility of reactivating a number of its defunct tank reservoirs across the country including Point Cumana, Picton and Arena among others. To this end, WASA proposes to retain consulting engineers to prepare all necessary designs and tender documents relating to the tank reservoir reactivation project by mid-year 1995

The current projects schedule anticipates commencement of physical construction work by July, 1996.

Some 12,000 consumers could be served by a reactivated Arena “Tank Reservoir”.

Deportation (Caribbean Countries)

161. Mr. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj (*Couva South*) asked the Minister of National Security.

- (a) Could the hon. Minister 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 countries they were deported?
- (b) Could the Minister state whether persons from Caribbean countries are being detained for deportation pursuant to action taken by his Government saying how many, and to which countries it intends to deport them?

The Minister of National Security (Hon. John Eckstein): Madam Speaker, during the period December 16, 1991 to June 20, 1995 deportation orders were executed against 417 persons from Caribbean countries as follows:

Guyana	384
Grenada	6

Oral Answers to Questions
[HON. J. ECKSTEIN]

Friday, July 28, 1995

St. Vincent	11
Barbados	7
Jamaica	3
Suriname	1
St. Kitts	2
St. Lucia	3

At present, a total of 26 persons from Caribbean are being held in detention prior to deportation as follows:

Guyana	15
Grenada	3
St. Lucia	1
Barbados	6
St. Vincent	1

The following question stood on the Order Paper in the name of Miss Hulsie Bhaggan:

**Crime Escalation—Central Trinidad
(Remedial Steps)**

165. Would the honourable Minister indicate whether any steps have been taken to deal with the escalation of crime in Central Trinidad?

The Minister of National Security (Hon. John Eckstein): Madam Speaker, the Leader of Government Business had asked for a deferral of this question. The answer to this question is not ready.

Question, by leave, deferred.

**Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex
(Financing and Service Costs)**

166. Miss Hulsie Bhaggan (*Chaguanas*) asked the Minister of Health:

Would the hon. Minister indicate:

- (a) The number of patients/clients and the total amount of money required to be raised by persons who underwent surgery at the Eric Williams medical sciences Complex in the years 1992, 1993 and 1994?

- (b) What assistance, if any, is available to persons who cannot afford to raise the finance for surgery at the Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex?

The Minister of Health (Dr. The Hon. Linda Baboolal): Madam Speaker, during the years 1992 to 1994, procedures were performed on patients at the Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex as detailed hereunder at the costs specified:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number of Patients</u>	<u>Value</u>
1992	996	\$369,000.00
1993	2,036	\$829,000.00
1994	2,611	3,411,183.00

It is to be noted that the increase in the value of procedures performed in 1994 represents the shift to major surgery procedures.

The Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex Authority established a Patients' Trust Fund on September 14, 1990. The fund receives contributions from the State, covenantors and other donors and from fund raising events. Aid is given to necessitous patients of the Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex towards payment of their fees. Patients are referred to an Assessment Officer of the Trust by the Customer Service Representative of the complex. These patients are then interviewed by the Assessment Officer, who on finding the patient to be necessitous, gives the patient a voucher for part or all of the fees to present to the Customer Service Representative.

A patient is assessed on the following criteria:

- (i) the patient's assets and liabilities;
- (ii) the patient's needs—current and future;
- (iii) other sources available to the patient, for example, insurance policy, lending agencies, employees' health plan, church, club/association, relatives;
- (iv) fund raising activities which the patient had initiated, proposed to arrange, or could be encouraged to have organized.

The fund has disbursed, since its inception, the sum of \$2.2 million.

Dr. Singh: Madam Speaker, a supplemental question. With the increase in surgical procedures in 1994 to 2,611, could the Minister state who performed these operations? Was it staff from the hospital, or otherwise?

2.00 p.m.

ARRANGEMENT OF BUSINESS

The Minister of Education (Hon. Augustus Ramrekersingh): Madam speaker, I beg to move that we deal with the following matters under Private Business-Motion—on the Order Paper Nos. 11 and 12, and No. 13 on the Supplemental Order Paper.

Question Proposed.

Question put and agreed to.

SELECT COMMITTEE REPORTS

Adoption

Olympic Committee (Inc'n) Bill

Mr. Desmond Allum (Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West): 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 Trinidad and Tobago Olympic committee and for matters incidental thereto.

Seconded by Mr. H. Bereaux

Question proposed.

Question put and agreed to.

Report adopted.

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

Bill accordingly read the third time and passed.

Kala Bhairava Foundation (Inc'n) Bill

Dr. Rupert Griffith (Arima): 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 Glory Church and for matters incidental thereto.

Seconded by Mr. R. Palackdharrysingh.

Question proposed.

Question put and agreed to.

Kala Bhairava Foundation (Inc'n) Bill

Friday, July 28, 1995

Report adopted.

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

Bill accordingly read the third time and passed.

Glory Church (Inc'n) Bill

Mr. Jarette Narine (*Arouca North*): 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 Glory Church and for matters incidental thereto.

MARKETING FACILITIES (VENDORS)

[Second Day]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question [June 30, 1995]:

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.
[*Mr. R. L. Maharaj*]

Question again proposed.

Mr. J. Humphrey Madam Speaker, on the adjournment on the last occasion, I believe I had used up five minutes of my time. Is that correct?

Madam Speaker: Yes.

Mr. J. Humphrey: I was then attempting to strengthen the preamble to this Motion by referring to another part of the Constitution because this Motion is premised on Chap. 1, dealing with fundamental human rights and freedoms. I believe the preamble is structured in such a way as to demonstrate the commitment of the people of Trinidad and Tobago to a certain kind of civilization and society. It could be accepted as a form of social contract. Where the operation of the economy is concerned, the preamble says that the people of Trinidad and Tobago:

“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;”

Marketing Facilities (Vendors)
[MR. HUMPHREY]

Friday, July 28, 1995

The resolution of this Motion is for the Government to take immediate steps to ensure that suitable markets and marketing facilities are immediately provided for vendors of Trinidad and Tobago to market their goods. But that could just as well say for vendors and the general public.

2.10 p.m.

The principle of marketing includes the purchasing and selling of goods. Those who purchase goods do so because they have a particular need, and if facilities are established to facilitate those who sell the goods, obviously those facilities would be enjoyed by those who purchase the goods. So, we can, in fact, expand the resolution and say “both for the vendors and the general public”.

This People’s National Movement Government has made certain promises that are contained in its manifesto which was presented to the electorate for the election of 1991. We always hear that this Government has a mandate to rule. That mandate is a constitutional one because they won the majority of seats in this House. Constitutionally, they have the mandate to rule, but not on the basis of their own whims and fancies.

Every Member of this House took an oath upon accepting service to the people of this country. That oath says, in clear terms, that each of us must uphold the Constitution and the law. Therefore, the Members of the Government have sworn to uphold the Constitution and the law.

The Constitution is explicit when it deals with how the economy should be managed, and in whose interest. It should be managed in the interest of all the people of Trinidad and Tobago and not just a few. It is only a blind person who would not see that the result of the management of the economy by this regime is benefiting a few. The rich are becoming super rich and the poor are becoming desperate.

This Motion is timely because it is calling on the Government to get back on its own rails. Let me quote one little paragraph on page 6 of the PNM’s manifesto for the 1991 general election, under “VISION”:

“There can be no rest until poverty is completely eliminated, until all are housed, all clothed and fed, all educated, all find meaningful employment and all feel a sense of security and belonging to the family of Trinidad and Tobago.”

I know that Members on this side all subscribe to that, but if efforts are not made to alleviate poverty and achieve distributive justice in Trinidad and Tobago, this Paragraph can be rephrased as follows:

“There will be social unrest unless poverty is completely eliminated...”

That is what Trinidad and Tobago faces today—prospect of social unrest. In fact, the Parliament cannot be excluded from the society. I believe that some of the things that have transpired in this Parliament are a manifestation of the frustrations of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

The frustrations come as a result of there being distributive justice; that the economy is not being managed in the interest of all the people of Trinidad and Tobago. In our courts the process is bogged down and matters take too long to be adjudicated upon, and so justice suffers.

We have seen in other parts of the world what can result when society reaches that very sad state of unrest. Today, ancient societies are embroiled in civil war. I am sure that if one asks any member of those societies why they are killing one another and destroying cities that took hundreds of years to build, they honestly could not say. They really do not know why, but they are doing it.

Every society has within it the seeds of dissent, division and self-destruction. This society is not immune to that. This society has a history that has sown those seeds. Those seeds were sown very carefully by the colonial masters.

As Members of Parliament, we should be more conscious than anyone else of the dangers of allowing these things to get away from us. This Motion is timely because it deals with that fundamental issue of the economy and distributive justice.

This is a very wealthy society. We are a small community of 1.3 million citizens on an island that is abundantly endowed by the Creator. It could not be more ideal than it is for producing food. We have a tropical climate; we have abundant rainfall; the topography of the island—the Northern Range of mountains—gives us a wall of defense against hurricanes, although we are in the hurricane zone.

In addition to that, there are flat lands that can be readily used for the production of food. We have the soil and all that we need for the process of physical development.

Marketing Facilities (Vendors)
[MR. HUMPHREY]

Friday, July 28, 1995

We are an island which is located in, perhaps, the most strategic way that any island on the face of the planet is located in terms of its marine life. The Gulf of Paria is almost a living salt-water lake.

Marine life could abound in that gulf of Paria to the extent where it could be harnessed, and fish farming is a practical consideration because the Gulf is a completely stable marine environment. It would never change. The ocean currents would not change the marine environment and the fish life that exists in the Gulf of Paria, as it does for example, in the Gulf of Mexico.

In addition to that, we have a very vast continental shelf—an exclusive economic zone—and the seas around Trinidad and Tobago are nurtured by major rivers on the South American continent. The Orinoco influences the seas on the east coast of Trinidad and there is abundant marine life as a result of this. Ships come from every part of the world to exploit that abundance that is available for our enjoyment.

2.20 p.m.

But in addition to all of that there is oil under the ground and vast resources of natural gas. When one puts all of this together—and I have not even spoken about real wealth that is Trinidad and Tobago; I would come to that—we are indeed, a naturally endowed, very, very wealthy little nation. There is something that we have in little Trinidad and Tobago that I have certainly not seen anywhere else, and that is, a population of people who put God first and who are not far from recognizing that they are indeed members of a human family. That is what I have discerned.

The people have an attitude to one another that I have never seen anywhere else. It is an attitude of tolerance and caring. If one is to find the principle of any human being his brother's keeper, I think one can find it here before anywhere else.

We have seen, for example, attempts being made by the leaders and representatives of the great religions in this society to unify their resources in the interest of the people, and conflict has been removed from religion. Religion, you would remember, Madam Speaker, is one of the causes of social fragmentation. To some extent, even in the politics, it is found that efforts are being made to unify our people.

My involvement in the politics of this country is certainly towards achieving that objective of reversing the trend that the British established which enabled them to rule without the presence of marines.

If we could achieve unity in our politics, then the real value that is Trinidad and Tobago will emerge—and that is its people. Our people—and I can attest to this because in my professional life as an architect I can tell of many occasions when young, unskilled people applied for menial jobs as labourers and in just a few months attained the skills of their more experienced counterparts on the job sites. Inexperienced young people of this country have an inherent talent that I have not found elsewhere.

I have found in more developed countries than ours that people tend to do simple repeated jobs that do not require any degree of talent or skill, but in this country our people have the talent and, when given the opportunity, they express it and they develop skills in very short order. Because of this, I honestly see no reason why Trinidad and Tobago should be in the position it is today where so many of our people, especially our young people, live a life of hopelessness, not seeing the prospect of ever engaging in economic activity to fulfil personal objectives.

This is the fact, as I see it, and I believe the reason for it is mismanagement of the resources of our country. This government boasts of being a very caring and competent Government, but the proof of the pudding is always in the eating. Anyone who goes around the country today will see that there is suffering, as never before, among more than ever before. The published statistics have indicated that there are more and more of our people below the poverty line. With the kind of abundant wealth that exists in this country, there is no excuse for that.

This Motion asks of this Government to apply some of its resources to enable little people to participate in the economic life of this country. If one drives around Trinidad—and Tobago to some extent, but not as much in Tobago—one would see a proliferation of shopping plazas. One would have thought we would have had enough by now, but that is not so. More and bigger shopping plazas are being erected. These are facilities that the private sector is providing to facilitate businessmen.

Vast resources are being invested in these projects—massive buildings with all the infrastructural requirements of accommodating cars, and making life enjoyable for the shopper who will visit these plazas. These people are being given every encouragement by this Government. In fact, this Government has given tax incentives to facilitate that sort of development. When those tax incentives are exploited by those who are already rich, they do not manage their resources in the interest of the many. They manage those resources in their own self-interest. Profit is the motive.

Marketing Facilities (Vendors)
[MR. HUMPHREY]

Friday, July 28, 1995

More and more of our people cannot avail themselves of the facilities of these sophisticated North American style shopping plazas. If one does not have money one is not welcome in those plazas. One has to have money to buy the goods in the fancy shops that exist in those plazas. The other thing is that those plazas are stocked with goods, most of which are imported. Very few of the goods sold in those plazas are produced locally.

In total contrast, there are the little people seeking to vend all kinds of produce that they or their communities produce or are produced generally in Trinidad and Tobago. The treatment meted out to those little people by this Government is nothing short of inhuman. It is something I could never understand. The Government boldly says, under the balisier, "We care about you" and then it proceeds to treat little people like dirt. That is not caring. Big people are treated quite differently.

This Motion is calling on this Government to deliver on its manifesto promises to enable little people to enjoy the benefits of the vast resources of Trinidad and Tobago, that are managed by the Government.

This Government came into office and inherited billions of dollars of capital worth in the state enterprise sector. The Government gave its assurance to the people that where it divests its shares in that sector, the funds derived from the divestment programme would be reinvested in the interest of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. It has divested over TT \$1 billion in enterprises, and has not invested a penny in new enterprises. In fact, what we see today is spending that is politically motivated. I can give an example.

2.30 p.m.

The Government recognizes that the constituency of Barataria/San Juan is a marginal one which it might not be able to win in the next general election, so it is putting up 300 apartments to select people to change the balance of the electorate in its favour. That is how the Government cares, Madam Speaker.

I hope that it does not cut down all those beautiful samaan trees that have been there for hundreds of years. Leave the trees alone and plant the buildings at the back of the trees. I know that this Government will cut down every tree. If it invests a fraction of what it intends to spend on that apartment project in building lay-bys in strategic locations on the highways of this country, the farmers would be able to sell part of their fresh produce to the motoring public under safe conditions.

The farmers, therefore, would benefit by being able to bypass the middleman and gain more profit from their efforts. It would enable them to reinvest and expand their production so that the country would produce more food. It would also enable the motoring public to purchase food items fresh from the farmer, in a safe environment, and at a cheaper rate.

The NAR manifesto promised to provide lay-bys and I can tell you that it is a very simple facility. In effect, it is only a widening of the highway in a particular location to enable cars to come off and re-enter the highway safely. When they are off the highway, it enables the people who are being transported to do their purchasing.

The Government does not even have to conduct a survey to find the most suitable locations for these lay-bys. The farming and vending communities have done that already. Wherever one sees the people putting up these little stalls, it is quite obvious that they have determined that these are suitable locations for vending. All the Government needs to do is to take those very locations and develop them to an acceptable standard, so that they facilitate the farming community and the motoring public in one fell swoop.

But these are not the only vendors. There are others. It is a great pity that other Members do not enjoy the number of years that I do. I recall the vending on the streets, especially the streets of the city, which occurred when I was a young person. I recall, for example, a vendor riding a bicycle with a sharpening stone and a handle attached to his bicycle, shouting "Sharpening knives and scissors!" offering that useful service to people. People would come out with their knives and scissors and he would park his bicycle and proceed to sharpen the people's knives and scissors.

I recall a most interesting vendor. I do not know if anyone here remembers a little Chinese gentleman who walked so fast around the Savannah that he got the nickname "Mile-a-Minute". He used to sell salted nuts and was loved by everyone, especially the women because he was very, very 'fresh', in a friendly way, with all the young ladies. He vended salted nuts and he was welcome.

I remember mobile units. Even now, in my mind, I can hear the ball bearings of these carts of fresh fruits and vegetables being pushed from house to house. Of course, the carts of the water-coconut vendors in those days were drawn by donkeys or mules, but they were very much in existence then. We have historically a tradition of encouraging the custom of vending. How is it that this Government comes along in this day and age encouraging shopping plazas to

Marketing Facilities (Vendors)
[MR. HUMPHREY]

Friday, July 28, 1995

mushroom all over the place—one, I understand, is even owned by a senior Minister—and is discouraging the little people from plying their trade? It cannot be on the basis of law because law has to be based on social custom, or it is not valid. The social custom in this society is that the little people have traditionally vended their merchandise.

I remember many years ago going down the Eastern Main Road and seeing countless little pavement shops of people producing a wide range of items—cooking utensils—produced by hand on the pavements in towns like Tunapuna and San Juan. These things we cannot find anymore and quite obviously our people's talents, especially today, can support these things if they had the encouragement of the Government.

I remember tailoring establishments where one could have had fancy clothes sewn by really experienced tailors. I remember the barber shop pole in every little centre of the population. However, these things are going from us and the Government is saying that the little people cannot be permitted to vend because of the laws of the land. Well, I do not understand those laws. Perhaps the Member for Couva South, when he is winding up, will explain to me how the laws are preventing our people from enjoying a tradition which goes back to the very foundation of the society.

Let us take downtown Port of Spain as an example. Frederick Street, by tradition, is the most exclusive shopping area of the city. We notice that that tradition has remained alive. It is a very vibrant shopping district because so many of our people go there to make their purchases. Because of the fact that there is a market—that is, that there are purchasers there—little vendors seek to ply their trade as well. But the storeowners are complaining that they have expensive properties; they pay taxes for those properties and the little vendors, who do not pay any tax and who do not own the land, are competing with them and preventing their customers from making their purchases.

2.40 p.m.

If those storeowners, with the help of the Government, were to get together and recognize the value of lower Frederick Street, they could achieve both objectives: the objective of still maintaining an exclusive clientele, and supporting the small vendors in plying their trade. It would not be a very costly project, certainly not more costly than the beautification of Independence Square, and I applaud the initiative. Today, Independence Square is becoming a very beautiful place; not long ago it could not be so described.

With similar resources, a space-frame can be put over the lower part of Frederick Street to protect the Street and pavement areas from the rain and sun, and that roof could be supported by the buildings on each side of the street thereby turning that whole street into a pedestrian mall. Within that mall small booths and spaces could be provided where small vendors could vend their merchandise.

There is another thing the Government could do within the involvement of the private sector, that is, to convert what is known as Salvatori Building—certainly the first two floors—into a shopping mall, because that is what it is designed for. The ground floor and first floors of the Salvatori Building are connected by escalators. I think both escalators are still there and although they have been closed off with panelling, I think they could be brought back into service.

If those two floors are re-established for commercial activity, little shops could be built there which could then be rented to the small vendors. Those two floors would be an extension of the pedestrian-way of lower Frederick Street right across to Henry Street. The Government could easily do that, and I think that would fit into the resolve of this motion:

“...that it take immediate steps to ensure that suitable markets and marketing facilities are immediately provided for vendors...”

With a little imagination and with the application of resources that are readily available to this Government, the vendors could very easily be facilitated in their trade. If this is done, then there would be no problem of having to call the city police to chase people away from the spots where they open their trays and try to sell their meager merchandise. Many of our people who cannot find the means of supporting their families would have those means made available to them and that would be one step in the right direction.

The other thing that could be done by the Government, since we have all these shopping malls, is to approach the owners and managers of those malls with a view to providing facilities to enable little people to ply their trade. In many countries there are flea markets—these are temporary markets, which are established to enable little people to sell merchandise in very large shopping malls.

In fact, in the United States the flea market concept has caught on to such an extent that investors are investing in providing permanent facilities to enable little people to sell merchandise. We could take a leaf from that book and the Government could take the initiative of approaching those shopping malls to

Marketing Facilities (Vendors)
[MR. HUMPHREY]

Friday, July 28, 1995

accommodate the small vendors. I do not expect that this Government would do such a thing. The United National Congress government would have no difficulty whatever in doing these things.

I support this Motion and seek to persuade Members of the Government to put their heads together and open their hearts to the little people of Trinidad and Tobago before the eve of the next general election, when we know that hearts are open wide.

Any airport is a ready market for selling because of the number of people who pass through. What I have seen happen at Piarco International Airport is, instead of the government facilitating the little people and enabling them to participate in the enterprise of the airport, it has done exactly the opposite: has come down on the little people. Some facilities have been provided but certainly they are not adequate, and vendors there are being treated differently from other users of the airport. There is discrimination.

In an airport where there is a restaurant, usually the prices are very high. Those high prices do not adversely affect the foreign traveller who usually uses foreign currency where there is an exchange advantage in Trinidad and Tobago, but they do affect the locals who use the facility.

The majority of the locals who use the airport cannot afford to go into the restaurant and the bar. The workers at Piarco find themselves in that same position. It is therefore desirable to have a dimension of marketing at the airport. It would cater for the local traveller, to the employees at the airport, and to those who ply their trade and make a living from it.

Again, I appeal to the Government, instead of viewing Piarco as some foreign controlled and owned edifice and trying to see it as some imagined hub of activity in the hemisphere, view it as a facility for the enjoyment of our people. And if it is so designed and our people enjoy it, then others would enjoy it as well. We need to put the emphasis on the people of Trinidad and Tobago and use Piarco—again, in response to this Motion—to provide suitable markets and marketing facilities for the vendors to enable them to market their goods.

The same holds true of any airport where there are many passengers. The ferry port between Trinidad and Tobago is an example. People from Tobago come to Trinidad to buy merchandise to return to Tobago to sell it. If those people were facilitated by the Government by providing a wholesale shopping facility at the Port of Spain and Scarborough ends of the ferry service, life would be much more convenient for those who are involved in plying that trade and, I might add, costs

would be diminished and therefore the people of Tobago would have to pay slightly lower prices than they are paying now, so everybody would benefit. That is another proposal.

2.50 pm.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Member, your speaking time has expired.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. J. Humphrey: Madam Speaker, wherever one finds people congregating, there is a potential market. If one drives around the Savannah on any evening one is going to find hundreds of people using the savannah for one purpose or another, and one is also going to find a tendency for vendors to establish facilities there. Coconut vending is something that supports the coconut industry. If we did not have the vendors selling water coconuts, the coconut plantation of this country would have perished long ago. That is a main outlet for the product of the coconut plantations. That is an industry to which we are accustomed.

But if the Government stepped in and provided attractive, tropical-coloured shelter and some facilities, both for the vendors and for the purchasing public, that would be enhanced. Perhaps it could go a step further and provide that type of facility for other types of activities and encourage more use of that part of the city.

I remember when I was a little boy my parents taking me to Government House on weekends to the bandstand where the police band serenaded the public with beautiful music for hours in the evening; that attracted the crowds and everybody enjoyed it. That could be encouraged. We could do something similar for our steelbands so that on an evening a given band could use the facility and serenade the public.

The visitor to the Hilton, for example, what does he do to find recreation and enjoyment? He goes to the beach; there is very little nightclub life, there is very little of the cultural expression of the society available for the casual visitor to enjoy. Certainly the Carnival visitor gets it—he gets, perhaps, more than he can really digest but for the rest of the year no efforts are made to facilitate the people who are in the performing arts to offer their arts for the enjoyment of customers. That could be considered, not only for the savannah but wherever there is a steelband emerging out of a community, the Government should go in there and work with the community and steelband to provide a pan theatre.

Marketing Facilities (Vendors)
[MR. HUMPHREY]

Friday, July 28, 1995

The pan theatre could be multi-dimensional. It could be a place where pans are tuned, where the band practices and where the band, of course, plays. It could also be a place where the culinary arts of that community are given expression, so that there could be a little bar and restaurant appended to it. These facilities would not be very costly, but I know that all the steelbands, every one in the country, would welcome such an initiative by the Government.

This Government says that it is not going to be responsible for participating in the economic life of the society; it is going to rely on private enterprise to provide the jobs for the unemployed and to get the economy more productive. This is contrary to what the People's National Movement set about to achieve.

The fundamental documents of the People's National Movement contain what I think is extremely important and that is the People's Charter. That certainly expresses the philosophy of the founding fathers of that movement. There was an exercise undertaken at Chaguaramas where the People's Charter was revised and renamed the Chaguaramas Declaration, and that spelled out the commitment of the PNM of the economic life of Trinidad and Tobago.

That document identified three sectors of the economy: the state sector, the private sector and the people sector. In that document one will see a vision of a society in which the Government—and it was assumed that it would be a PNM Government—would encourage the emergence of a people sector in the economy by providing the facilities and the wherewithal to enable it.

The concept was one of mini capitalists being encouraged and the “Drag Brothers” that were on Independence Square up until two years ago, resulted from that concept—encourage little people to set up, to manufacture their handicraft and to sell where the shopping public was to be found. That is how that came about. The People's Mall on Frederick Street emerged as a result of that concept. But the present PNM is deviating with such considerable intensity from that concept, that I wonder sometimes how people who have a heart and who really care about other people could remain associated with this regime.

The Prime Minister rubs shoulders only with the rich and the powerful. He meets with them where they make billion dollar deals and says that democracy is alive and well in Trinidad and Tobago. The democracy in Trinidad and Tobago is under siege: its existence is being threatened like never before by this regime.

I would like to appeal to Members on the other side to “catch themselves” before it is too late for them and for the people of Trinidad and Tobago, because we are not immune to the terrible price other societies have to pay when they fail

to deliver on the needs of the people. This society will have to pay that price, too. I am hoping that we can keep the democratic institutions alive until the next general election, when the people will have another opportunity to try another group of politicians as a government. I am hoping that then they will get the kind of government that I think the people of this country really deserve—that is, a government that will serve their best interests and the interests of the members of the Government and their rich friends in the society.

Madam Speaker, with that contribution I want to support the member for Couva South in this Motion and to ask 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.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Mohammed Haniff (*Princes Town*): Madam Speaker, I rise in support of the Motion so ably moved by the Member for Couva South and to compliment other Members on having participated in the debate, especially the Member for St. Augustine, who made positive recommendations as to what steps should be taken to ease the needs of vendors, who should be given proper facilities.

3.00 p.m.

Listening to the Member for Arouca, one got the impression that the Government is satisfied with the existing facilities. I say that because I did not hear him mention any facility that was put down during the term of the present Government. But things are far from okay, especially in a situation of mass unemployment and continued retrenchment both in the public and private sectors.

There is urgent need for us to examine what is happening, what has happened, and what steps ought to be taken so that we can improve the quality of life, especially of those people who are forced into vending. I say forced into vending because it is not secret that in recent years the vending population has increased, and it continues to do so and there is only one reason for that—persons in their respective fields are losing their jobs and they must try something in order to survive.

One popular area where people can try to earn a dollar is that of vending. Some go into other areas, many try small farms and become small agriculturists. If one looks at the statistics, one realizes that there seem to be more people employed in the agricultural sector. Statistics may or may not be right. However,

Marketing Facilities (Vendors)
[MR. HANIFF]

Friday, July 28, 1995

if it is true that more people are employed in the agricultural sector, that is only because they go into small holdings to eke out survival. So the need for establishing better facilities for vendors has been long recognized.

The fact that the hon. Member for Couva South had to bring this Motion before this honourable House is an indication that we have been looking at the existing situation and have not found that Government is doing anything to try to improve the required facilities in order to make both the vendors and purchasers a little more comfortable.

This is no simple issue as I see it. There needs to be more examination of the issue itself, and the provision of the kind of facility that would put the vendor in a dignified position and so, too, the member of the public who goes to purchase the goods.

The Member for St. Augustine was very articulate when he pointed out certain things. Certain people, based on their earnings, can go into the big malls and shop; others cannot go. Certain vendors who have grown from small businesses into larger businesses can provide themselves with the required facilities; they can set themselves up comfortably.

Unfortunately, a very high percentage of people in this country cannot reach the upper class, neither the middle class. As a matter of fact, people from the middle class—that so-called middle class we used to hear about hardly exists nowadays—who continue to lose their jobs and properties are finding themselves in the same situation to which we are referring. Too many people of Trinidad and Tobago find themselves in situations where they have to look to vending to earn a livelihood.

The existing facilities are totally inadequate and if we examine them, we would find that most of the markets which fall under the Local Government system are very old and dilapidated. If I refer to Princes Town, the building itself is over 100 years old. While in recent times after much representation, certain repairs were done, it is very easy for one to recognize that the existing facility does not meet the required demand. We can go from area to area and find that that is the situation.

I therefore ask: is there any area where vendors do their trade that Government is satisfied that the facilities are adequate? As I said a while ago, I know nothing has been done in recent years, especially during the term of the present Government. We have had cause to look at some facilities. One I mentioned is the Macoya Market off the highway.

The market, as we recall, was built in response to demands for lay-bys and, unfortunately, what was done there has not served, is not at this present time serving, and will not serve the demand. I sometimes wonder if those in authority really go to see what is going on so that they can come to terms with what is happening and understand the requirements. It is not difficult.

Those of us who go to the market place and who drive around and use public facilities including the bus, realize that things outside there are so bad; people are struggling, and, perhaps, it is no wonder that many petty crimes are taking place. People are trying to survive. I am not saying that they should do that.

This Motion calls for adequate facilities. I submit that adequate facilities go a long way and since vending is an ongoing occupation and things change, the authorities need to take steps to cope with that situation. There is need to continue to establish facilities.

3.10 p.m.

I want to submit that we are not in agreement with the blockage of the highways and byways by vendors. At the same time, we are not in agreement with breaking down the stalls without providing the necessary facilities.

The appearance of stalls along the highways, roads, pavements and so forth did not start yesterday. It started many years ago and it has become the norm, so to speak, for persons who cannot do otherwise. In a situation where there is need to improve and give a better outlook to what exists we have to take stock of what is there; when it started, why it started and why it is continuing and getting stronger. If that is done, then we would recognize, today, that it forms a part of Trinidad and Tobago's way of life or culture, so to speak.

If that is the situation and we want to change it, then we must have the kind of study that is required, and take urgent steps to provide the facilities that would remove the vendor from the pavement and from the sides of the roads—those who might be disrupting traffic and so forth—and make proper facilities that are convenient to both the vendor and, of course, the customer.

I just asked and I ask again: Is any member of the Government happy, or comfortable, with the existing facilities? I have not heard anyone say so, and from all appearances the one member of the Government who spoke—it would appear that no one else would speak because the norm in this House is that after one Opposition Member speaks, a government Member would make a contribution so that they would further point out what steps are being taken to correct what is outside there.

Marketing Facilities (Vendors)
[MR. HANIFF]

Friday, July 28, 1995

It is in those situations of increasing unemployment; reduction of wages; lack of facilities at the existing markets and so forth—when one looks outside there with a view to coming to terms with what is happening in Trinidad and Tobago, one would recognize that we are living in a state of chaos. Every sector of this community is in chaos and confusion.

If one looks at any of the ministries, be it the Ministry of Local Government, Ministry of Works and Transportation, or Ministry of Health, one sees that there is that situation reaching to the point where it would soon boil over and, perhaps, explode. Therefore, it makes it so much more urgent for those in authority to take steps, as mentioned in this motion.

We are at the point where we are hearing new promises concerning local government. We have grown accustomed to over the years—an election is nearby and we start hearing promises. Local elections are due by September and as a result, what do we hear? Improved facilities and conditions for local government. We have heard that every so often during the past years, and again we are hearing the same songs—improved conditions and more autonomy.

Markets and abattoirs fall under the control of local government. When the Member for Arouca North spoke, he said so, reminding us that it is the local government bodies, which must provide these facilities. He went further to state that it is members of the UNC who control certain areas such as central and south Trinidad and as a result, they are the ones who have fallen short in providing the necessary facilities.

I want to point out that that cannot be so. There are two reasons why, which is the very point I am trying to make. Firstly, financing. These local government bodies have an allocation that barely does what the routine maintenance calls for. It cannot do that, properly provide far less to improve facilities and take care of the demands of the increasing vendor population, or people wishing to earn a living.

I heard the Member for Arouca North pointing out that the local government bodies can go to Nipdec, raise funds and build new markets. Quite naturally, the other part of that is to raise funds thereafter to repay the loan.

The vendors are at this time paying for facilities, which are in very bad condition, and so they are asking why they should continue to pay to use the facilities provided which are in the worst possible condition.

In many cases there is no water, electricity and security; the walls are falling down and all sorts of things are happening. Only yesterday I walked through that

mall in San Fernando that was provided by the local government body, when they wanted to get vendors off the streets. The vendors there, in my discussions with them, complained that whenever it rains they and their goods get wet. There is no security and, to tell you the truth, if one walks through that place—before one peruses the area—one is likely to become intoxicated by the strong scent of marijuana.

Therefore, what does one find? One finds that people other than vendors are taking over the mall. I therefore, point out the importance of security. What is happening? That is only one reference. People would not go a place to purchase goods if the environment is not safe, and clean.

When I went there I said, “Oh my God, these conditions still exist in the heart of San Fernando; next door to the police station; not too far from the Borough Corporation; just at the bottom of High Street?” That is the second city of this nation. What I have mentioned gives an indication of the kind of security that is needed.

I spoke about the leaking and wetting conditions. The construction of that building is such that when it rains and the wind blows, the goods throughout the building get wet. I spoke to yet another vendor who once occupied the facility but who is now selling at the roadside. She informed me that if one wished to sell in that facility I just referred to, one must first pay \$150 for the first month, when one might sell approximately \$25 or \$30 per week; then one must continue to pay on a monthly basis.

However, she told me of an example of a vendor who took the chance to sell on the street and was fined \$800 in the court for blocking the footpath.

I do not feel that any one in this House is comfortable with that situation and would wish that situation to continue. However, I am not aware whether any steps are being taken to improve those conditions.

3.20 p.m.

All of us know that the San Fernando market has been there for many years and needs better facilities. If one goes there on weekends when there are many vendors and people moving around, there is a situation where the police must call on vendors to remove their goods from point to point.

It is reported, based on discussions, that the vendors must carry their goods on their backs up a stairway to as far as Prince of Wales Street. That means, the condition of the market does not facilitate proper movement all because it was

Marketing Facilities (Vendors)
[MR. HANIFF]

Friday, July 28, 1995

built a long time ago and one did not foresee that conditions would come so crowded. The extension that took place was uphill and, as a result, makes it very difficult indeed.

Let us take the Port of Spain market. I had cause to visit that market many years ago and I still go there to look at the conditions. There are reports coming out of that compound that there are robberies and thefts daily. Vendors lose their goods and money. People who go to purchase lose their money. People are mugged in that area and so forth.

The facility, though relatively new—maybe 15 to 20 years—in comparison with many others has already outgrown its demand. Therefore, the very bye-laws which the hon. Member for Arouca North spoke about are outdated. The Member himself pointed out that these bye-laws need to be upgraded because they came into effect since 1905. Who are we to blame for that? I am not blaming the member for that. I am saying that in Trinidad and Tobago, regardless of who was in Government, steps have not been taken to continue to upgrade the required facilities and laws that govern vending, and, as a result, they have reached the point where they are extremely bad and need urgent attention.

I remember when the Member for Diego Martin Central was the Minister of Local Government, he visited Chaguanas to look at the condition of the market. He also visited Princes Town and came to this House and said, in a reply to a question that I raised, that he was looking forward to the report coming out of Chaguanas after setting up a committee so that they could form their policy on markets and marketing.

On a continuing basis, thereafter, I sought to enquire from the then Minister of Local Government what was government's policy on marketing. Has it arrived at a point where it knows, based on any survey, how it would deal with the issue of marketing vendors, goods and so forth? To date, we have not heard of any policy coming out of what it said it was studying: about what sort of recommendations are needed to be put in place to improve the general situation.

Quite naturally, the existing facilities cannot cope with conditions there and, therefore, we should like to hear from the Government what plans it has, if any, since it seems that it has no plans except to stand here and make wild promises so that people would live hoping. And we have grown used to those kinds of promises over the years, knowing that those promises were never fulfilled and there is no reason for us to think that those promises will now be fulfilled.

Trinidad and Tobago nowadays is not as it used to be where in each area there was a little town and everybody went to that town. These small towns and villagers have expanded to the extent that they are almost self-sufficient in many ways. When they are not self-sufficient they can become more and more self-sufficient where they can take care of themselves. As a result, the old policy of central markets needs to be examined. Therefore, we are recommending that we go into these villages.

In the busy areas lay-bys have been recommended but we have not seen government putting down a single one to get rid of the traffic jams on the busy highways and, at the same time, cause less congestion. In the more rural villages people need to be encouraged to put down small facilities if there is government assistance.

I was looking at one aspect of Government's operation and do you know what I came up with, Madam Speaker? Since the URP came on stream I have seen workers at some of our schools. In a particular school, three, four or five workers work each day a week, and continue for eight months of the year tending 11 plants.

I am therefore making the point that if there is an Unemployment Relief Programme and people are being employed, could we not put that same labour to more productive use so that we may provide some facilities? While these people are employed, we can think of providing the kinds of facilities that will facilitate the vending community and make life convenient for both vendor and customer. I recommend that Government look at it in that context.

If there is a workforce of five, six or seven persons are we to expect that people will continue to be paid for going to a school compound for three and four years only to tend a few plants? Ten or eleven plants to be tended every day?

The other aspects of the school compound are not attended to; if the grass needs cutting it is not attended to; if the yard needs cleaning it is not attended to. I am saying, therefore, that there is need for us to examine areas of expenditure that could be better utilized so that some facilities could be provided.

Recently, the Member for Couva South spoke about the situation at Rio Claro. The existing market is not utilized and, as a result, one finds that the marketing area is not as active as it used to be. If one goes to other areas—every single area—I passed through Couva about three weeks and I spoke to as many as five or six vendors in that area. I asked them: Where is the market in Couva? They told me that there is a building somewhere at the back, which is vandalized, and

Marketing Facilities (Vendors)
[MR. HANIFF]

Friday, July 28, 1995

no good. It is nothing more than a total shame to see what operates in Couva where vendors have to sell their goods, in this day and age.

I was amazed, Madam Speaker. Do you know that passes in Trinidad and Tobago as the norm where people would put their goods in small booths, some on plastic bags or whatever on the ground and that is where our people must shop? Vendors and other citizens have to survive there, not those who can afford to go to the big malls, of course. I am talking about those who have to survive and look for the cheaper stuff. It is a burning shame and scandal to see our citizens having to shop in those conditions.

3.30 p.m.

We are hearing from the Government that it cares and that it knows what is required. During the 1991 election campaign the Government said it had all the answers. Presently, we are hearing from all quarters of Trinidad and Tobago about worsening conditions. What are we seeing?

We are not seeing the Government taking heed of those cries for improvement in conditions. So the situation continues. I do not know if or how it will end; what I do know is that if we do not take urgent steps to improve every single aspect of the Government's operations, something unbecoming may happen. The public at large is crying out.

There was a wholesale market constructed in Debe. No sooner was it constructed than, we understand, it was used for fetes and other public functions. Will someone explain to this House the reason for that? Will the Government tell us what its findings have been? If it has done a survey on the issue, will it tell us what the recommendation is? Tell us. We want that new facility operational.

Will someone tell us of the plans the Government has to improve the situation? This debate is taking place in an atmosphere where the Government sits, listens, and does not think and does not care to think. The situation continues to get worse and it uses its time to make public statements as if the public would depend on Government's promises year after year with nothing to come. Everyone knows that will not last long.

I have visited certain markets and have found that where meat, fish and vegetables are sold in the same market, the conditions are not what they ought to be, to say the least. We ought to be looking at those conditions with a view to separating the sale of fish and meat from the sale of vegetables. The conditions

are extremely bad, and that is a recommendation of those who operate in those facilities. In certain areas they are separated, but not in others.

The repairs of the Princes Town market took place about a year ago after many years. Do you know what happened? The already congested market that cannot accommodate the number of vendors in the area, was re-designed and the stalls made smaller and less accessible.

As a result the market while it can now accommodate more vendors, can accommodate fewer shoppers because of the congestion and the way it was laid out. I wonder who were the technical people. I can tell you that they are not necessarily those who are attached to the local government body, because they go to the ministry to get advice. This is one case where the market is badly laid out. On weekends the place is congested, which makes it very uncomfortable for vendors and shoppers.

There is need to establish as a policy—the Member for St. Augustine spoke about it—the closure of certain streets on market days, making them accessible only to vendors and shoppers, as pedestrians so to speak. There might be situations where that can apply and other situations where it cannot. We definitely need to look at that situation.

In Siparia, an old situation exists that is as uncomfortable as any other area. The Member for Arouca North spoke about the People's Mall on Frederick Street. I do not believe that the Members on the other side have been to that mall. What I do know is that the place is frightening; it is congested. But the idea was good. Perhaps one recommendation would be to make more such facilities available but eliminate the kind of congestion and other bad conditions, which exist there. It is totally inadequate and, therefore, we need to know whether there are any plans from the Government.

We are accustomed to hearing Members on the other side attacking the Member for Couva South on his legal representations. The Member for Arouca North went on to say that vendors are lawless people and that the Member for Couva South was representing them. I ask whether the legal practice of this hon. Member or any other Member is under attack in this House. It is clearly understood, be one a member of this House or not, that one is free to practise one's trade or profession.

This is a natural issue at this time. People are being retrenched from all quarters. We need to set some standards for ourselves as citizens. That is one good area where we can start.

Marketing Facilities (Vendors)
[MR. HANIFF]

Friday, July 28, 1995

I do not know, now that elections are not too far off, whether we shall hear some pronouncements from the Minister of Local Government, or anyone else, about Government's intentions to give to the local government bodies the resources, autonomy and authority that would cause us to have improved conditions in this country.

Transportation is another major problem affecting vendors. The cost of transportation generally continues to increase. People go out, park their vans and trucks, trying to make a living. The police come in and they have to move from that point.

Is it not possible for us to look at these various areas of operations of the vendors and make lay-bys along the roadways so that even these trucks and vans can be parked? We have not observed any genuine concern and action on the part of Government, with a view to bringing relief to those who have to face these difficulties on a day-to-day basis.

One goes to these existing markets and what does one find? There are no storage facilities whatsoever. If there is a fridge, it is not functioning. If there are other facilities, they are not functioning and, as I said, one would find that the allocation for upkeep is reducing rather than increasing, so the condition worsens. It is a straight case that the infrastructure at the existing facilities needs to be improved.

3.40 p.m.

Having served at the local government level for 11 years, I can say that it is a very frustrating exercise. People come to you on a regular basis: taxi-drivers, other business people and the population at large—speaking about existing conditions which cause congestion in the markets; and we continue to live under those conditions year after year without any improvement.

Citizens of this country have been travelling all over the world. I am of the view that we are not short of ideas, or people to implement them, but for some reason or other, those in charge of controlling the purse in the country do not see it fit to give priority to these situations and, as a result, we continue to be the laughing stock of people, even our Caribbean friends next door.

When our Caribbean friends come here, they are surprised, knowing that Trinidad and Tobago is said to be so developed. They see garbage on the streets because vending in the markets and other places is not attended to. People put goods on the ground—a very backward situation—and we hear nothing from those in authority about wanting to improve that situation.

Toilet facilities are either not working or are non-existent; the storage facilities are inadequate and security is a major problem. These types of complaints continue in different parts of the country. Today we are here to debate it, and I cannot help observing a trend. Who is going to respond? No one got up after the Member for St. Augustine spoke, so it would appear that the Government intends to allow this issue to just pass by, maybe, without saying what its intentions are.

I sought to make the point that because of the unemployment situation, more and more people take up vending with market goods, clothes and every possible thing. When one drives down the highway and the traffic lights turns red, one sees people running out with all sorts of goods to sell.

That is not a likeable situation. What are we doing to prevent that? We need to provide the facilities so they can continue to do their trade in the nearby area and continue to survive, for they cannot find employment. We are not hearing anything about that sort of relief.

In many cases, the markets are situated in certain places where people do not go. We know that some of the markets are not utilized adequately and we should wonder why that situation continues to exist. I would like to hear whether the Government has plans to deal with that situation. We hear that there are plans for jobs for all; "every person will be employed" but we do not know where and when that would come about.

If we were to hear details as to when and how these people will be employed, then people would become confident that things will happen. But since we have no further details, do you know what is the general comment, Madam Speaker? We continue to hear comments from very responsible senior Ministers and the Prime Minister, like, "Hold on; things will improve." We have been hearing that all the time but we are not seeing any action taken for things to actually improve.

We are sending our children to school, to universities and so forth, and there are no jobs. The present rate of unemployment in this country is in the vicinity of 19 to 20 per cent according to the official statistics. I am of the view, based on other information, that the unemployment rate is much higher than that. You see, people have become so frustrated that they do not even go to the ministry of labour and other areas to register for jobs any longer because that is another waste of time. When one registers, nothing happens. If one wants a job on the URP one must first get money to join the PNM. That is the kind of situation that exists. As a result, people are becoming more and more frustrated.

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. M. Haniff: Madam Speaker, vendors, like most others, get some small capital—not much. They do not need to put big properties at risk and get large amounts of funds. Some people in this country cannot put their hands even on very small amounts of money to go to the wholesale market to buy some goods to start selling. I ask, therefore, in that kind of situation, whether Government has set up any kind of facility for persons who wish to do vending. We know in small business, one must prepare a plan and when one goes for a small loan and presents one's plan, they say, "No, it would not work," or they may say, "Yes, it may work" therefore one may be successful.

In the case of vending, one needs to have some small capital. Are there any facilities established by Government during this current term where any one can go to get a small loan, even to start a small business as a vendor, even if it is to sell snow cone, or nuts, or whatever?

That is a major area of concern. That is why we on this side recognize the importance of understanding what is on the ground and therefore starting urgently to deal with that situation. It is very frustrating, I can tell you, because we, as Members of Parliament, go down there. I have no doubt that Members on the other side get complaints, but we do not hear them coming to this Parliament and stating the type of complaints they get, because I would imagine they are not allowed to do that as it might affect their policy.

So we take the opportunity to come here and voice the complaints of the people on the ground. There are thousands of people in this country who live without knowing where the next meal is coming from. What is the agricultural policy of this Government? Do we have access roads being developed in those areas where there is agriculture taking place?

We have heard of a vast amount of funding coming from international sources, loans and so forth, for agricultural access roads. It has not reached down to the small farmers, who are planting the land and who have to bring out their produce; to buy small vans or pieces of equipment, so they can help themselves. That trend must change. That is the point I am trying to make. If one lives in a far-off agricultural area and one has goods to sell and one cannot get a loan to

purchase a vehicle, one may as well reap one's goods and have them there: for one cannot get the required transportation to reach the market.

3.50 p.m.

According to the official statistics, some 18 or 19 per cent are unemployed, but as I said thousands more will be unemployed and we need to encourage those people, especially the youths who are coming out of school. Long ago, there used to be relief employment when one came out of school or university, but we do not hear about that anymore. There are few opportunities and they are being taken up so quickly, that if you do not know someone you would be left without some little job during the holiday season.

Now, while I recognize that the other side has been listening to the complaints and suggestions coming from this side, I really hope that their intention is to make some pronouncement today, to participate in the debate, so that we can understand what their thinking is, "We," meaning the Members on this side, but, in truth and in fact, the country. We are all looking and listening to what is taking place as far as this is concerned.

There were times when vendors marched around this Parliament. There were times when their frustration had reached the point where they were getting themselves together and taking action. Are we not to expect that these people would become so frustrated that they may react against the society? Therefore, we on this side ask the Government to take heed to our call for better facilities.

The motion reads:

"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."

As I said, we need to find out from Government whether it has looked at the situation at all; whether it knows what is happening. Nowadays, many people are going to the malls; but many others cannot afford to buy. As a result, we need to recognize, in a very significant way, the situation that exists in this country—the frustration of the small man so to speak, the lack of facilities, the lack of funds to meet everyday demands of himself and his family.

When that frustration continues to grow, all kinds of things cross the mind: suicide, crime, theft, robbery, et cetera. At some point we, as citizens of this country who hold responsible positions, must take time out to look at these situations and try to come up with plans to deal with them.

Marketing Facilities (Vendors)
[MR. HANIFF]

Friday, July 28, 1995

I must submit that I am not at all satisfied that we are in an atmosphere in Trinidad and Tobago where anyone can be comfortable. We therefore call on the Government and the authorities to examine the lack of facilities for vendors. And that having been dealt with, then we could go on to other areas, but for today's purposes we are looking at the matter of increasing the number of vendors who come out there daily. Larger numbers come out during the weekends and the existing facilities cannot accommodate them.

It may not be necessary to put up additional massive structures, but rather to put down smaller ones in many different parts of the country. We can start making some headway by indicating to those who fall into this category that this Government and the Members they have elected to govern in this Parliament care about their concerns and are, in fact, taking steps to improve their lives now and in future. This situation is one that needs urgent attention, and, as I said, I must commend the mover of this Motion. We wait patiently for the response from the other side.

Let me make just one more point before I close. There is a situation where many public workers in this country went home for different reasons: some, because they had reached the age, others on early retirement, and others on VSEP and so forth. We come in contact with these people every day; they come to us for advice.

I was amazed when I heard about the contract that was negotiated by the authorities. They are paid in bonds, they get 10 per cent of their bonds, starting in 1995, but that will mature two years later. They will get five tranches and the last is in 2001—moneys owed to these people from 1987. Many of them have reached the age of 65 and may very well die before they receive that money. That is unjust and unfair, especially to the workers who have retired. They have families and themselves to take care of. There will be an increasing number of people becoming vendors overnight for all sorts of reasons.

We on this side make this call, conscious of the fact that Trinidad and Tobago is, at this time, in all sorts of difficulties. Every aspect of operations in this country is in trouble. Vending is in even more trouble and we are not seeing steps being taken by those on the other side to take care of the situation. As such, we await their response hoping that will recognize the situation and immediately take some steps to deal with it before it is too late.

Madam Speaker, I thank you for this opportunity and hope that we get the kind of response from the other side that will satisfy the suffering masses of this country.

Mr. Gideon Hanoonmansingh (*Pointe-a-Pierre*): Madam Speaker, so far, I think all the presentations from this side of the House have dealt with most of the issues dealing with the quest for better vending facilities in Trinidad and Tobago. I wonder if I should be repetitive and enunciate some of the issues that have already been enunciated. I feel, for one reason or the other, that it may be prudent for me at some point in my contribution to make passing reference to some of these things.

How do we expect this Government to perform when it appears that it lacks leadership, it is visionless, and it has no creativity? How do we expect this Government to perform in a manner that represents a nation like Trinidad and Tobago? If we look back at earlier happenings in this House today, we would get the impression that this Government does not even have the moral authority to deal with the business of the people of this country.

The argument in favour of better facilities for vendors has been on the cards for quite a long time. If I may recall growing up as a teenager in the mid-sixties the issue was discussed in the Parliament, not only as it pertains to proper vending facilities, but interrelated with its genesis, the farm gate. I am sure even before 1966 voices were raised enunciating the need for proper vending facilities.

It is not surprising to me that in this modern and technological age, at the dawn of a new century, we are still looking at providing better vending facilities for our people. It speaks loudly, the level of importance we attach to the people's needs, most specifically of persons who are categorized as underprivileged members of society whose voices, it would appear, are of little significance to the powers that be.

It must be a case of mindlessness for any Government to ignore the cries of the socially dispossessed who are trying to make an honest living—to put food on the table for their families and to keep themselves and their children away from the evils of illicit drugs; to provide for the society a service at the risk of their own lives but, nonetheless, providing that vital link between the supplier and the consumer.

How could we as a nation turn a deaf ear to the cries of these people who seek only an opportunity to earn a livelihood in an honest way? How could we sit back and continually say that these people are breaking the law of the land? How could we treat these people with contempt as though they are criminals?

4.00 p.m.

This is the difficulty that I have with the Government's mission statement that it is a caring Government. That is far from the truth. It is easy to come up with all

Marketing Facilities (Vendors)
[MR. HANOOMANSINGH]

Friday, July 28, 1995

kinds of nice-sounding clichés, but in reality, what is the truth? Does this Government really care for the small man and woman of this country? Perhaps only at election time when that vote is critical; they make all kinds of promises that very often remain unfulfilled.

The need for proper vending facilities is not a favour to the people; it is incumbent on the State to provide these facilities and we must understand that as a Parliament, and as a Government, we must take cognizance of that—like the duty of the Government to provide proper roads for people in every constituency in this country, whether it is represented by the Opposition or the Government. These are not favours that we grant to the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

The State has the authority and must take that authority seriously and provide all the amenities for the people of the country. Potable water is not a favour when it is given to the people. It must be done. As the Minister said quite recently, water supply should not be a political issue, and I agree with him fully.

What do we expect of this Government? We expect this Government to do unto the people what the people deserve. Electricity, water, or vending facilities—these are the issues people are talking about. They want proper health facilities and jobs. When we consider that people have to be on the streets of this country plying a trade, it is not that they want to be there because they feel it is a bed of roses.

When we see little children running to cars trying to sell someone a bunch of chennets, or a corn, or some other consumable item on the streets of the country, it is not that they like being there; it is simply because they do not have the facilities, and secondly, because of the tremendous human traffic interacting with the purpose for which they are there—they are there selling their items.

I have heard the Member for Arouca North talk about the Macoya lay-by and I do not know if the point has been forcefully made that whilst that might have been a respite for the people who sell on the streets, it is ill placed. The people who leave the eastern areas of Trinidad and Tobago coming into the city, would not stop on their way to the city to use the facilities.

Where is this Macoya lay-by? It is a facility that is used by the people who have access to mobility, and who can afford a higher cost. The farmers have to sell their items at a higher cost in order to break even sometimes.

So, this argument about the lay-by in Macoya is not in my opinion convincing. We can say that people are breaking the law; they are not utilizing the

facilities at Macoya and that that is the reason the Government has no choice but to break down the shacks of people who sell at the sides of the roads and highways.

If, for instance, the Government had considered for one moment a proper lay-by in the Aranguez area that would have facilitated people—the convenience, the culture, the mindset of the people in Trinidad and Tobago will forever seek convenience, and if a proper facility is set up in that Aranguez area, I am quite sure that it would take many people off the streets, especially in that stretch leading up to the Uriah Butler intersection.

The argument has been advanced that these roadside shops have caused fatalities. That is not so. Fatalities are the result of the negligence of our motorists. It would appear that the people of this country do not observe the golden rule anymore; they are not interested in looking after the needs of their brothers and sisters. They are ready to go at great speed, going nowhere very quickly and it would appear that they do not care what happens.

Even if a lay-by is constructed with all the health facilities and safety requirements, if people continue to disregard life, it would make no sense. That should not be the reason why the lay-bys are not there.

The shacks of people are broken down and all kinds of promises are made that lay-bys will be built. Where are these lay-bys? I appreciate that it would take the Government some time to establish these lay-bys, but, what happens in the meantime to these people who have been displaced—people who are trying to make an honest living; who do not want to go to the drug trade; who feel that they have a responsibility to cater for the needs of their families and young children?

These people have to provide school uniforms, books and other amenities for their children, and all they do is try to make an honest living. And what do we hear from the Government? That they are lawbreakers! It is unfortunate that we have to reach the stage of calling these people lawbreakers.

Now if the facilities were there and the people were stubborn or continued to break the law, then I could understand that, but we do not have the facilities.

The matter of denial in a society like ours is not a sin, but it could become sinful. The PNM, as an administration, a government and a political party must remember that with regret. Because one of its members fell prey to the same question of denial. And what did he do? He used a gun as an escape, not only on himself, but also on his family. Denial in this society is a serious issue and that is

Marketing Facilities (Vendors)
[MR. HANOOMANSINGH]

Friday, July 28, 1995

what we are facing in the society almost daily. That is why poverty is so rampant in the society. Desperation—when one makes promises and cannot fulfil them, one knows what happens.

Five years ago yesterday, I remembered sitting in a place and waiting for five days and dying a thousand deaths every hour, waiting for the escape, the opportunity to be relieved, to be released from captivity; and every moment that came, after we were told that we would be released after the next hour, and that hour did not come, all kinds of things went through my mind.

4.10 p.m.

Denial is a serious issue in this society and I am asking this Government to take cognizance of it. What could happen is that somebody at some point—not long from now—would think that the opportunity is here once again to do something again because of the dilapidated social conditions and decay in this society.

I pray to God that that day does not come in the history of this country again, but it is possible. It is possible simply because when one neglects to listen to the cries of the people, like these simple vendors who are at the side of the streets selling to make an honest living, what happens? We are all thrown into a situation that we would all regret.

We are looking at the future of Trinidad and Tobago, and it is a future that obviously must have with it a government that takes initiatives to deal with the problems of the small man and woman in the society. Obviously, we have to categorize the vendors in that area of social development because that is all they are trying to do, and it would appear that this neglect has come about because of an attitude that existed for so many years.

What happened to this Government, in my opinion, is that in terms of agriculture it has concentrated on a one-item economic base. It has concentrated on petroleum and the petroleum sector. There is nothing wrong about that because that is where the money is; that is where the money comes from for development. But when one neglects other areas of development, like a second commodity, that is where the problem lies. What happens when the oil boom goes, as it has gone? Now there is a gas boom and when that goes—even though, perhaps there are supplies, I was told, for another 300 years—what happens?

When there is a situation that one cannot get money from the oil or the gas, where is the second commodity? Agriculture should be that, but agriculture is a

stepchild of the Government. Agriculture has never been a priority of the regimes of the PNM. It has never been. As a matter of fact, we all know that the nail in the coffin of agriculture was driven when the DEWD programme was opened in this country.

We cannot drink the oil or gas, but we have to eat. When there is no money left from the oil and gas, though we have reserves, what would we do? We have a food import bill of \$1 billion. Can we not produce the food in this country to supply the nation? The Government's stated policy has always been that we want to be self-sufficient in food—how realistic is that when it does not pay attention to the agricultural sector in a meaningful way?

Look at the statistics, the records and the reports and one would see—access roads. What has the Government done about access roads? It is acquiring a loan from the IDB, I understand, to look after reinstating some of these roads to facilitate agriculture, but in a sense, where it is not meaningful at all to turn around agriculture.

What kind of emphasis are we placing on export markets and the export trade? What are we telling the people of this country? We have the capacity to produce; we have some of the best soil in this part of the Caribbean. What are we telling the people?

Are we telling them that we do not have the capacity to produce for the foreign markets? There has never been an emphasis on that. That is the reason. Other islands in the Caribbean thrive on agriculture because they do not have another real national income so they depend on agricultural export and they sell to Trinidad and Tobago. Jamaica is a perfect example.

Jamaica is pursuing the pure stand system of cultivation as in the case of St. Vincent and St. Lucia where there are hundreds of acres of one-type crop. We can do that in Trinidad and Tobago, can we not? But the emphasis has not been there. If the emphasis is not there then the encouragement is not there.

How are people expected to produce? What happens in this case is that people produce short crops to have a quick turnover of income. It is important for us to look at that and if we did, I am sure that many more people would get involved in agriculture in a more meaningful way, therefore, we would keep many more people off the streets.

If this is the concern of the Government, to keep the people off the streets, there must be ways to do it. That is why I say the Government lacks creativity. It

Marketing Facilities (Vendors)
[MR. HANOOMANSINGH]

Friday, July 28, 1995

must come up with creative ideas, and not only with respect to the people on the streets, but also other areas of national life. That is so very much distant from the mind of this Government.

If a packing house has to be arranged in terms of agriculture on a large scale, what does it do? There are certain requirements. One has to do sorting, fumigating, washing and sorting and things relevant to the operations of a packinghouse. Therefore, employment is created for quite a number of people, especially women. We can get rid of much of the social ills if we think that way.

Why can we not organize agricultural farm malls in the society? The Member for St. Augustine referred to the utilization of some of the current malls; some space in these malls where one can put the produce. Why can we not use the old Central Market in Port of Spain to develop a mall of that nature which would accommodate people on a larger scale?

It can be done. If we can do it in Port of Spain, we can do it in other parts of the country. I am quite sure that it is a thought that the Government should consider in order to get people off the streets. There are no facilities, but what does the Government do? It pounces on them; breaks down their shacks and denies them a sense of integrity.

Madam Speaker, when we continue to make these salient points it is simply because we understand what it is to be out there in the society and going through the pangs of denial. We understand what it means not to have, because many of us grew up at a time in this country when one got a meal and one did not know if one would get another. That time has returned to this country even though we had so much money in the national treasury.

At one point, I remember a former prime minister talking about throwing \$100 bills outside a window, and how many days or years it would have taken to exhaust the amount of money that this country had. We have reached the stage today where people do not have food. We have reached the stage where today we are talking about making Trinidad and Tobago the financial capital of the Caribbean, when people do not have water in their taps; where people still use outhouses at the dawn of a new century.

The people of this country must take cognizance of these facts and they must understand that they have been taken for a ride for far too long—for 35 years they have been taken for a ride.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Member, please concentrate on the debate at hand.

Mr. G. Hanoomansingh: Madam Speaker, I was just making an interrelated point because we are talking about vending and the social ills of this society. That is why I mentioned that.

4.20 p.m.

There is always the tendency to provide organized market facilities in the towns of this country. What has been ignored is the fact that much migration takes place. That has become a way of life in Trinidad and Tobago. Housing developments are going up everywhere and land and floor space are at a premium. Yes, whilst the Government must be congratulated on establishing some of these outlets in the city areas, it must be borne in mind that not everybody can find space in one of these malls in the city to ply their trade. Therefore, it is necessary for the Government to rethink its position and organize such other facilities in other parts of the country.

There is a place called Marabella, which is in the constituency of Point-a-Pierre, and the market there is almost the yard of the Member for Tabaquite. We know for a fact that that is an excuse for a market. There are shacks in that market that are commonplace in shanty towns; there are rodents and stray dogs; and there is no security. There is a lack of water and many other facilities in that market. This condition is not new and I am not saying this only because I am a Member of the Opposition and I represent the constituency called Point-a-Pierre.

I remember, as a TV reporter, doing many stories on that Marabella market; its facilities have not changed since. It is not a question of standing here and saying the facilities are inadequate.

Apart from the lack of security not only at that market but also at other markets, there is the inadequacy of basic amenities such as water, electricity and toilets—facilities which are relevant in the context of the sale of food. Invariably, there are all kinds of distractions. What happens is that people are moving from one area to another and this is expected, and obviously when people move from one area to another they do so because there is congestion.

There are no restrictions in this country, so the person who lives in San Fernando if he can find people in the San Juan area to buy his produce, would go there. We are saying that if there are adequate facilities in various parts of the country to satisfy the needs of the farmers and vendors, then there would be no need to move from San Fernando to Port of Spain or from Sangre Grande to

Marketing Facilities (Vendors)
[MR. HANOOMANSINGH]

Friday, July 28, 1995

Arima. I feel very strongly that the Government should take note of this type of problem.

When the hon. Member for Arouca North spoke about the corn vendors and the lack of sanitary facilities for these people I said, yes, that is a fact. But why are they there? They are there simply because they have no choice. They are there simply because they want to make an honest living, small as the living might be. I will not condone the selling of food in an unhealthy and insanitary environment, but at the same time, we have to take into consideration the risk that these vendors run with their own lives.

To sell on the streets is not an easy task. To sell anywhere is not an easy task. The practice of trade is one that we are so familiar with. While at one level one does trade in the comfort of air-conditioned rooms and fine wines and sometimes even blondes, one has to understand that these people too, do trade. When they do their trade they need facilities just the same. They need to be facilitated in a decent way and that is why we are arguing the point with some measure of urgency for these facilities to be made available to these small farmers and small entrepreneurs of the country.

They are risking their lives when they stand on the side of the highways. And not only that, it is also a risk to consume what they sell. When one considers the intake of lead, because of the exhaust fumes from motor vehicles into meats and vegetables—no matter how much lead, small or great it is not good for human consumption. So they both commit crimes in that sense.

But why are they there? Why are the vendors there? They are there for a reason. Why are the consumers buying? They buy because of convenience. The whole quest is to get them off the streets. I have no problem with that. But I argue in support of this Motion by the Member for Couva South that we must provide adequate facilities to enable vendors to make a living.

I remember the hon. Member for Arouca North—he seems to be coming up very much in the debate—made the point in both his contribution to this debate and in his contribution to the Motion of no confidence in the Prime Minister—he flashed what he called a fancy letter-head from a Member of Parliament from the Opposition on which were names of people who were trying to get URP jobs. He said we on this side criticized the URP but here it is we are applying for jobs. Is anything wrong about that? We criticize the URP because of the corruption that is involved in that project.

Mr. Narine: Madam Speaker, on a point of order. I never said that. I was referring to a Motion in the House in 1993 where the Leader of the Opposition stopped Members on the other side from applying for URP jobs for anyone.

Mr. G. Hanoomansingh: Madam Speaker, I am sorry if I misinterpreted or misrepresented what the Member said. We have been always looking at the question of fair play and justice. We have come across situations where there is an element of corruption. I say that there is an element of corruption in the URP and the time would come when the facts will be laid bare in the Parliament.

I have been making the point that there is growing joblessness in the society and we must not be chided for wanting to seek the rights and privileges of our constituents, but we must not at the same time condone any measure of corruption in any kind of project whatever and we will not do it. It has been the policy of this party. Yes, we will seek jobs for the people because it is not the PNM's money; it is the people's money, and we have to ensure that the people are the beneficiaries of the finances of the State. They are the ones who must benefit. Everybody, not only one group of society which belongs to a particular party that is in power. That is morally wrong.

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Education (Hon. Augustus Ramrekersingh): Madam Speaker, before I move the adjournment of the House, I wish to inform Members that there are two Motions on the Adjournment which we shall take after the tea break, by agreement.

Secondly, when the House next meets we shall be proceeding under "Government Business—Bills Second Reading", in the order in which the Bills appear on the Order Paper.

I now beg to move that this House do now adjourn to Friday, August 4, 1995 at 1.30 p.m.

4.30 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.11 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Doctor of Dental Surgery Degree (Problems of Graduates)

Mr. Ramesh L. Maharaj (Couva South): Madam Speaker, this Motion is to bring to the Government's attention, and cause them to respond to, the inability of graduates of the Faculty of Medical Science, School of Dentistry at the University

Doctor of Dental Surgery Degree
[MR. MAHARAJ]

Friday, July 28, 1995

of the West Indies, to use the Doctor of Dental Surgery degree obtained from that institution to pursue postgraduate programmes and/or specializations abroad, and their inability to get the approval of the Dental Council of Trinidad and Tobago for full registration to practise as dentists in Trinidad and Tobago with the said degrees.

The school of Dentistry forms part of the Faculty of Medical Sciences of the University of the West Indies at Mount Hope. The graduates of the school of Dentistry are unable, on completion of their Doctor of Dental Surgery degree (DDS), and one year internship, to get full registration by the Dental Council of Trinidad and Tobago. This is in spite of the fact that when they entered the institution, they were assured that on the completion of their course they would get full registration by the Dental Council of Trinidad and Tobago.

The first intake of students to the school of Dentistry was in September, 1989, and they were enrolled for the degree of Doctor of Dental Surgery. They were required to pay fees of approximately \$215,000 for the programme. Some of the students obtained loans from the Student's Revolving Loan Fund, which became repayable in October 1995, with interest.

According to the 1989/1990 registration booklet of the School of Dentistry, it was represented to these students that the programme was for a period of 4 1/2 years, plus one year internship; that on being awarded this degree, that is the DDS degree, they would be enrolled in a one-year, supervised, pre-qualifying internship at the clinical department of the School of Dentistry. During that period of one year, they would attend to patients under the guidance of experienced practitioners.

Upon completion of the DDS programme and the one-year internship, graduates would be entitled to full registration by the Dental Council of Trinidad and Tobago. I stress that, because when they paid their moneys to undertake the course, they were assured that they would be able to get full registration by the Dental Council of Trinidad and Tobago.

But this has not happened and during the period 1989—1995, the School itself had problems because of the standards and matters which obtained there. Many of the lectures left the institution and the quality of the lectures as well as the intellectual environment were not conducive. The students graduated and were unable to get full registration in Trinidad and Tobago.

In or about April, 1995, the graduates were informed by the Dental Council, which is contrary to the representations which were made to them in the

registration booklet, that they would have to submit to a further examination in or about November 1995, in order to be assessed to obtain a licence by the Dental Council of Trinidad and Tobago.

They were further informed that the reason for this was that they did not possess a recognized basic dental degree. They are unable, with their degree, to get equivalent status abroad and those who want to do postgraduate work, I am told by the students who made representations to me, have been unable to get acceptance abroad.

This is a matter which I think is very serious because students were led to believe that if they pursued a certain course of training they would be able to get a status in Trinidad and Tobago which would enable them to earn money, not only in the pursuit of their vocation, but also in order to repay the loans they took to be educated. I hope that the Government give us some response to this matter.

I thank you.

The Minister of Education (Hon. Augustus Ramrekeringh): Madam Speaker, there are two issues here. The question of the eligibility of the graduates of the Dental School for postgraduate work of specialization, and the second is the question of full registration. I will take them in that order.

Eighteen students were in the first group of dental students. Seventeen of them passed their final examinations in November 1994. One student was referred. The 17 students who passed their final examinations have been pursuing a one-year internship programme which is due to end in October, 1995.

I want to deal with the question of standards as they relate to postgraduate work. The external examiners who participated in the October 1994 examinations reported positively on the good performance of the students and the high standard of the examinations. In spite of—as the Member correctly mentioned—difficult conditions in the early days.

The examiners further compared UWI students to their own students and openly stated that they would be willing to accept some of these graduates to pursue postgraduate work at their respective universities. Indeed, in July 1995, four of these interns, using the UWI DDS degree as qualification, applied for and were admitted to universities abroad to do postgraduate work. I shall mention them.

Doctor of Dental Surgery Degree
[MR. MAHARAJ]

Friday, July 28, 1995

5.20 p.m.

Two graduates have been admitted to the University of Kansas, Missouri. A third has been admitted to the University of Belfast, England to pursue the Ph.D. degree in Oral Medicine. A fourth student has been engaged as an Honorary House Officer at the University of Glasgow in Scotland. Our information is that four students from this first group have already been accepted for postgraduate work, so that it is not correct to say that the DDS from UWI is not recognized for purposes of specialization of postgraduate work.

As one would know, not every student who obtains a degree is accepted for postgraduate work. Our information is that four of the students have already been accepted for postgraduate work at reputable universities.

I now come to the second part, the registration. The Dental Profession Act (1980) specifically provides at section 15:

“The Council may in order to be satisfied that the qualification of an applicant for registration is sufficient to assure the possession by the applicant of the requisite knowledge and skill for the efficient practice of dentistry—

- (a) grant temporary registration and make recognition of the qualification conditional upon satisfactory performance during the period of temporary registration; or
- (b) make the recognition of the qualification conditional upon the passing of an examination conducted by the Board of Examiners by the Council under section 12.”

The Act clearly states how full recognition may be given. What has happened is that the Dental Council seems to have focused on (b), the examination. Dialogue has been taking place between the University and the Dental Council. Indeed, at the final examinations in 1994, representatives of the Dental Council were invited to participate in the process so that they could have seen the clinical competence of the graduates in their final years, thus, through that process to arrange for full registration without the necessity for a formal examination.

By letter dated July 7, 1995, the Dental Council has advised the University of the West Indies and the interns that they would be required to sit a formal examination in November 1995 in order to obtain registration to practise dentistry in Trinidad and Tobago. The university is concerned at this development and, as I said, will pursue further dialogue with the Dental Council with the hope of resolving the matter satisfactorily.

One may say that it is sometimes not unusual when a course is being done somewhere for the first time, that there are initial difficulties about acceptance. If I may take it at a lower level. In 1978 when the CXC Examinations were introduced there was the question of: Would this certificate be recognized by universities? Of course, one would have to see the examinations over a period to assess the standards. Today we do not have that problem.

We hope that the matter before us would be resolved by the continuation of that dialogue and by convincing the Dental Council that the quality of the work and the graduates is enough to ensure that full registration would take place automatically, as we have, for example, in medicine. But therein lies a nuance, because we have been doing medicine for many years at the University of the West Indies, and it must be remembered that that university started off as a college of the University of London, so that recognition was quite easy.

The present is not a satisfactory situation and it is a matter that has to be resolved between the university authorities and the Dental Council. We are optimistic that it will be resolved in the near future.

Mr. Palackdharrysingh: Madam Speaker, on a point of clarification. Is the hon. Minister saying that, apart from those who have been accepted for postgraduate work, some other universities are insisting upon some sort of experience that could only come if one is registered by the Registration and Dental Clarification Board? Is that also an added requirement of postgraduates in some universities?

Hon. A. Ramrekersingh: Madam Speaker, the information I have relates to the four persons who have actually been admitted as postgraduates. I have no other information. But it is not unlikely that universities set different standards for acceptance to do postgraduate work, not only in medicine, but also in any other area.

Caroni Cremation Site (Maintenance)

Mr. Krish Jurai (*Nariva*): Madam Speaker, my Motion deals with the failure of the Government to maintain the facilities at the Caroni Cremation Site and the urgent need for the Government to provide crematoriums at strategic locations throughout the country.

The Caroni Cremation Site comes under the control of the Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation. A number of Hindu organizations, in particular, have been

Caroni Cremation Site (Maintenance of)
[MR. JURAI]

Friday, July 28, 1995

seeking the assistance of the corporation to upgrade the facilities at the cremation site but without success, hence they have me to raise this issue this afternoon.

As I have said, there are a number of problems affecting the functioning of the facilities at the cremation site. I was there twice during the past week. I recall that on Friday last there was cremation of members of two prominent families and there was total chaos. The car parks are totally inadequate. There is need to expand the parking facilities and to have proper signs directing motorists in order to prevent chaos in the area.

This cremation site was established some 10 or 12 years ago and the parking facilities have not been extended to any great extent; the land area is there and the parking facilities need to be expanded. What I have noticed within recent times, however, is that materials were delivered on site for filling up the area for extension of the car park, but in spite of the purpose of those materials, trucks have been taking the materials elsewhere. It seems that something is amiss there.

The other concern is that since the parking facilities are not extended, the area is very grassy; shrubs have surrounded the area and it is very insecure for people who come there to conduct their services and so forth. The building there to serve as a shelter, is a flat-roofed concrete structure and it is, perhaps, 15 to 20 feet wide but whenever it rains, the rain blows throughout the building, so it is not really serving the purpose for which it was intended. It is very good during the sunshine; it provides adequate shade. What has been suggested to me is that an eave be extended on the southern side of the building to prevent the rains from blowing in.

5.30 p.m.

Another area of concern is that there is always a shortage of water and the water tanks there are dry most of the time. I know the Minister took some action recently and he had the tanks filled up, but this only happened when I presented the Motion to this House. As you know, during cremation there is need for much water and I am suggesting that the pipeline be extended and the reserve tank provided used as a back-up when there is a shortage in the line.

With respect to the toilet facilities, they are non-functional. I looked at them myself last week and I urge the Minister concerned to have repairs done and have someone there at all times so that people could have access to the facilities because I have noticed, and people have complained, that these facilities remain closed and no one is able to use them.

Also—and the Member for Arouca North will bear testimony to this—URP had been engaged in preparing new pyres but, for some reason, they abandoned the project for quite some time now; whether they are now completed, I cannot say, but the instruction given is that no one should be allowed to use the new pyres. The old ones are in a dilapidated state; there are pools of water surrounding the old ones, so people are having great problems in using that facility. It is either they repair the old ones or complete the new ones if they are not fully completed.

Garbage collection is sadly lacking in the area. I think I should stress that the area needs to be fenced. I know in the past that area had been one of the popular stripping grounds for motor cars; if it is fenced, perhaps that might curb the car stealing to some extent as that area is very deserted at night-time. People have to use the river embankment to go down to the river. Steps are provided, but the embankment itself is in a dilapidated state and there is need for it to be repaired as people could slip and fall into the river.

There are a number of cremation sites throughout the country—Caroni; Mosquito Creek, San Fernando; Mafeking Village, Mayaro; Felicity Village; and Waterloo, Carapichaima. The ones that are more utilized are Caroni; Mosquito Creek; and Waterloo to some extent. One of the problems people complain about is that when it rains they have problems in cremating the bodies, it delays the process and as a result there is pollution of the air and so forth.

People are asking that crematoriums be sited at the utilized sites such as Caroni, Waterloo and the Shore of Peace in San Fernando. Also, if crematoriums are established it would perhaps help, to some extent, in preserving the trees and forests. What we have noticed in recent times is that a number of people are specializing in providing lumber for cremation, and it means that if it continues they would encroach on the forests.

I am suggesting that the Government erect crematoriums side by side with the open fires until such time as people are willing to go fully to the crematoriums. I have had discussions with some of the religious organizations and they said at present they are using wood but if a crematorium is established they can use selected pieces of wood for religious and symbolic reasons, so it should not be a problem if we shift from one system to another.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Member, you have 15 more minutes.

Mr. K. Jurai: I am almost through, Madam Speaker. As I said, these crematoriums that are established in the areas outlined are sited near to existing gas lines so I do not think it should add significantly to the cost.

Caroni Cremation Site (Maintenance of)
[MR. JURAI]

Friday, July 28, 1995

Madam Speaker, by and large, these are the problems and I hope that the Minister concerned would look into the matter very seriously and rectify these problems. I have been asking for a cremation site to be established in Sangre Grande but not much has been done. I raised this during the committee stage of the budget and the Minister promised to provide funds but, to date, I have not heard anything. However, I hope that the Minister concerned would also look into this matter.

Thank you very much.

The Minister of Works and Transport and Minister of Local Government (Hon. Colm Imbert): Madam Speaker, it is unfortunate that once again the Member for Nariva has brought inaccurate and misleading information to this Parliament—like the imaginary corbeaux, the non-existent boulder, and many other figments of the Member's imagination. The information given to this House today is simply not correct. This PNM Government expended some considerable funds over the last three-and-a-half years in upgrading the facilities at the Caroni Cremation Site, contrary to the statements made by the Member for Nariva.

Based on a request from one of the largest Hindu organizations in the country—the Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha—the Ministry of Works and Transport, through the Unemployment Relief Programme, has done considerable work at the Caroni Cremation Site. The project began in September 1993—this is for the benefit of the Member for Nariva who seems to be totally unaware of this—and was completed in September 1994.

5.40 p.m.

An amount in excess of \$300,000 was spent. As a matter of fact, it is closer to \$400,000 and the work involved the construction of seven new cremation pyres; refurbishment of the building on the site; extension of the existing car park; paving of the car park; improvement work on the access roads to the site; construction of ramps, steps, and so forth.

For the first time in many years, improvement work has been done on the Caroni Cremation Site by this Government. The Member's information is not correct, and—

Mr. Jurai: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I did not say work was not carried out. If the Minister is saying the pyres are completed, why are they not allowed to be used? I am saying the building is there, but because it lacks an eave, the rain blows throughout the building. The car park is extended only somewhat; there is need for further expansion.

Hon. C. Imbert: Madam Speaker, I took careful notes. The Member said that a number of Hindu organizations have been seeking assistance to upgrade the facilities at the Caroni Cremation Site without success. That is the reason they allegedly went to him, and nothing has been done over the last 10 years to extend the car park facilities. I took careful notes. The fact is, this Government has spent close to \$400,000, within the last year or two, to do considerable upgrading work at the Caroni Cremation Site. The Member has misled this House.

We will continue to work in partnership with the Maha Sabha and any other recognized organized organization, whether Hindu or otherwise, to improve community facilities such as cremation sites. We have had a very good working relationship with the Maha Sabha and I think they are quite satisfied with the work at the Caroni Cremation Site.

The local government bodies were given responsibility for burial grounds and cremation sites under the 1990 Municipal Corporations Act. The Caroni cremation facility was inherited by the Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation as a result of the passage of that Act—No. 21 of 1990—and the Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation is continuing to spend money and do maintenance and upgrading work on the Caroni cremation facility, contrary to the statements made by the Member.

May I also say that the whole question of sophisticated crematoria arises out of proposals which are presented to the Ministry of Local Government by the respective Regional/Municipal Corporations. As an example, the San Fernando City Corporation has presented a proposal for the establishment of a crematorium similar to that at Long Circular road, Port of Spain.

Recently, the hon. Member for Arouca North turned the sod to start construction of the new crematorium in San Fernando so that persons in the southern part of the island who wish to cremate their deceased relatives or friends will no longer have to come to Port of Spain. So progress is being made towards the establishment of sophisticated crematorium facilities in other parts of the country.

I would therefore urge the Member, if he is of the view that there should be other sophisticated crematorium facilities at other locations, to get together with the various local government representatives in his area and let them put forward, in the normal way, a proposal to the Ministry of Local Government. We will take them on board, do the necessary feasibility study—before the San Fernando facility was initiated, we had to do a feasibility study to determine whether it was

Caroni Cremation Site (Maintenance of)
[HON. C.IMBERT]

Friday, July 28, 1995

appropriate to locate this crematorium there. From studies, we will take it right through execution, once it has been determined that it is required in the Sangre Grande area.

I give the Member the assurance that once he does things in the proper way, and gets the Local Government Corporation to make a proposal to the Ministry of Local Government, I would do whatever I can to advance the proposal to ensure that his constituents get their just due as citizens of this country.

I thank you, Madam Speaker.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 5.45 p.m.