

Leave of Absence

Friday, May 17, 1996

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, May 17, 1996.

The House met at 1.31 p.m.

PRAYERS

[MR.SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I have today received communication from the Member for Arouca South (Mrs. Camille Robinson-Regis) to the effect that she is unwell and has asked to be excused from today's sitting. This leave is granted.

PETITION

Saraswati Mandiram (Inc'n) Bill

Mr. Chandresh Sharma: Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition on behalf of the members of the Saraswati Mandiram of Trinidad and Tobago who are desirous of constituting their organization into a corporate body by private legislation.

I now ask that the Clerk be permitted to read the petition and that the promoters be allowed to proceed.

Petition read.

Question put and agreed to, That the promoters be allowed to proceed.

PAPERS LAID

1. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts and financial statements of the Environmental Protection and Rehabilitation Programme—Loan Contract No. 857/SF-TT for the year ended December 31, 1993. [*The Attorney General (Hon. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj)*]
To be referred to the Public Accounts Committee.
2. Community Development Fund Programme—Loan Contract No. 872/OC-TT between the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and the Inter-American Development Bank. [*The Minister of Planning and Development (Hon. Trevor Sudama)*]
3. White Paper—A Consumer Policy for Trinidad and Tobago. [*The Minister of Consumer Affairs (Hon. Mervyn Assam)*]

4. Annual Report and Annual Audited Statement of Accounts of the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago for the year ended December 31, 1995.
(*Hon. M. Assam*)

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

**National Carnival Commission
(Issuing of Invitations)**

5. **Mr. Patrick Manning** (*San Fernando East*) asked the Minister of Community Development, Culture and Women's Affairs:

Could the Minister kindly state:

- (a) What is the criteria for the issuing of tickets by the National Carnival Commission for the VIP section of the Grand Stand during carnival celebrations?
- (b) Were the Imam Abu Bakr and other members of the Jamaat-Al-Muslimeen invited guests to the VIP section during the carnival celebrations of 1996?
- (c) If the answer to part (b) is in the affirmative, would the Minister please state by whom the invitations were issued?
- (d) If no invitations were issued to the Imam Abu Bakr, would the Minister please state whether security arrangements were in place to ensure that unauthorized persons would be excluded from the VIP section?

The Attorney General (Hon. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj): Mr. Speaker, may I announce that the Government will answer all the questions on the Order Paper. I have spoken to the Opposition Chief Whip and with respect to question No. 4, it has been agreed by us that that question will be answered after question No. 14.

The Minister of Community Development, Culture and Women's Affairs (Sen. The Hon. Dr. Daphne Phillips): Mr. Speaker, in 1996 the criterion for the issue of tickets by the National Carnival Commission for the VIP Section of the Grand Stand for the duration of carnival celebrations was to follow as a precedent the list which was previously used. This list comprised of the following persons:

The President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago;

The Prime Minister and all other Ministers of Government;

Parliamentary Secretaries;
 Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the
 House of Representatives;
 President and Vice-President of the Senate;
 The Chief Justice;
 Leader of the Opposition;
 Permanent Secretaries of the Ministries of Finance,
 Education, Works and Transport;
 Community Development, Culture, and Women's Affairs;
 Heads of Divisions of the Ministry of Community
 Development, Culture and Women's Affairs;
 Commissioners of the National Carnival Commission;
 Chairpersons and Members of the National Carnival Commission Committee;
 National Carnival Commission Staff Members;
 Past Chairman and Secretary of the National Carnival Commission;
 All sponsors, all mayors, Chairman of the Tobago House of Assembly;
 Budget Supervisors of the Ministry of Finance; Comptroller of Accounts;
 Comptroller of Customs and Excise;
 Chief Immigration Officer;
 Commissioner of Police;
 Chief of Defence Staff;
 The Chief Fire Officer.

Abu Bakr and other Members of the Jamaat-Al-Muslimeen were not invited guests of the National Carnival Commission to the VIP section of the Grand Stand during the 1996 carnival celebrations.

In relation to (c) in light of the answer just given that question does not arise. Normal security arrangements were in place at all entrances to the VIP Section and the area around this section.

Mr. Speaker, Parliament would note that the National Carnival Commission assumed full responsibility for the administration of carnival. The Minister does not issue tickets nor is responsible or carry out control for security. When the presence for Abu Bakr was noted in the VIP Section the Minister requested an enquiry into the obvious breach of security. For this, a committee was set up to investigate, and the committee issued a report which was submitted to the media in the form of a press release; I quote from this press release:

"With respect to the presence of Mr. Abu Bakr in the VIP enclosure on Saturday February 17, 1996 the National Carnival Commission wishes to inform the public that it has carried out extensive investigations on the matter and the following conclusions are drawn:

- (1) There is no record of any official invitation being issued to Mr. Bakr or any of his colleagues.
- (2) Tickets issued to invitees for the VIP area are transferable and not name coded. Consequently, non-attending invitees could have passed on their tickets to other persons not specifically invited.
- (3) The security system in place on the afternoon of Saturday February 17 had broken down but once discovered steps were taken to have this remedied for Sunday February 18.
- (4) The new NCC would take steps to ensure that a more effective security mechanism would be in place for carnival 1997, which would preclude the occurrence of any similar incident in the future."

Mr. Speaker, this statement was given to the press on March 11, 1996. I would assume that since this explanation was available in the press more than two months ago and since this was followed or predated by various debates in the press one would assume that most Members of this honourable House would have been aware of the reports. Mr. Speaker, this question at this time is a bit irrelevant.

I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Manning: Mr. Speaker, a supplemental question. Would the hon. Minister be kind enough to tell this honourable House whether Abu Bakr and Members of the Jamaat were indeed, in possession of valid invitations or not?

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, Standing Order 19(2) states:

"After the answer to a question has been given, supplementary questions may, at the discretion of the Speaker, be put for the purpose of elucidating the answer given orally, but the Speaker may refuse any such question which in his opinion introduces matters not relative to the original question, or which infringes any of the provisions of Standing Order No. 18 (Contents of Questions) and may in that case direct that such question be not reported in the Official report."

It is in my view that these questions having been asked, and having been answered in the manner in which they were, it was made quite clear and in which it was pointed out, that they were not among the list of invitees but that the tickets were in fact, transferable. I think that the question as posed, as I understand it, whether the Minister would advise—surely one could do me the honour of listening to what I am saying—I do not think really it arises.

Mr. Manning: Would you allow me, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker: Yes, I would allow you.

Mr. Manning: Mr. Speaker, one was not clear from the answer of the hon. Minister whether Abu Bakr and his colleagues in fact, were in possession of valid invitations. That is most important. For obvious reasons, that was the question we asked and we would like to know. Was it that they were invited directly or, was it that the tickets were transferred? We do not know. Were they in possession of valid invitations or not. That is the question we are asking.

Mr. Speaker: I think, with the greatest deference, that is really begging the question. She has indicated, as I understand it, who were the people issued with invitations. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Manning: Mr. Speaker, would you permit me leave.

Mr. Speaker: I would give you leave.

Mr. Manning: Mr. Speaker, the hon. Minister also said that the invitations are transferable, and what we are trying to find out is whether they were transferred or not. We do not know.

1.50 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: The supplementary question, such as has been posed, asked the hon. Member whether she was in a position to say whether they were in fact in

possession of a ticket. *[Interruption]* whether they had a ticket which was transferred by somebody.

Hon. Dr. D. Phillips: Mr. Speaker, that is a new question which I request be answered at a later date.

Mr. Manning: In the light of the fact that tickets for the VIP section are numbered, could the Minister also be kind enough, when she answers, to tell us to whom the tickets were issued in the first place?

Mr. Speaker: We will deal with the supplemental question and when that has been answered, if another question arises, we will also deal with that. I do not think that posing another supplemental question before the Member gets an answer is the way we should go.

Mr. Manning: Nor should you “breaks” for the Jamaat.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, we have a full gallery, but what the Leader of the Opposition has just said, that I, as Speaker, should not “breaks” for the Jamaat, is not in order. The hon. Member just said to the person occupying this Chair, that he should not “breaks” for the Jamaat, and that is completely out of order. I ask that it be withdrawn.

Mr. Manning: I apologize, Mr. Speaker. The statement is withdrawn.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, notwithstanding that we have a very full gallery here today, there is absolutely no reason why we, as Members of this House, should not observe a certain norm in behaviour as expected of hon. Members of this House.

Minister Extraordinaire
(Terms and Conditions of Employment)

6. Mr. Patrick Manning (*San Fernando East*) asked the Hon. Prime Minister:

Could the Hon. Prime Minister kindly state:

- (a) Whether the terms and conditions of employment of the Minister Extraordinaire differ from those of other Ministers of Government?
- (b) If the answer is in the affirmative, would the Prime Minister please state whether the terms and conditions of the Minister Extraordinaire were recommended by the Salaries Review Commission?
- (c) Would he also outline the terms and conditions?

The Prime Minister (Hon. Basdeo Panday): Mr. Speaker, the terms and conditions of employment of the Minister Extraordinaire and Minister of Tobago Affairs differ from those of other Ministers of Government. The terms and conditions of a Minister are set out by the Salaries Review Commission. The Minister Extraordinaire and Minister of Tobago Affairs is also a former Prime Minister, a Senior Counsel and leader of a political party in coalition with the Government and is normally resident in the island of Tobago.

Cabinet Minute No. 29, second session, dated November 23, 1995, agreed that the Hon. A.N.R. Robinson receive the undermentioned allowances and facilities in respect of his appointment as Minister Extraordinaire and of Tobago Affairs and Adviser to the Prime Minister, in addition to the existing remuneration package approved for Cabinet Ministers:

A duty allowance of \$5,000 per month taxable.

A housing allowance of \$2,500 per month taxable.

The provision of the services at approved rates of one maid and one cook for a Trinidad residence.

The provision of an official car for use in Trinidad and access to appropriate transport arrangements in Tobago.

Adequate security arrangements including the provision of a police escort vehicle as and when required.

Mr. Robinson's pension as former Prime Minister is no longer payable during the period that he is a Minister and he is not free to accept private employment and/or to engage in the private practice of his profession.

It should be noted that the hon. Leader of the Opposition, who is free to accept private employment and/or to engage in the private practice of his profession, receives remuneration as indicated hereunder:

Salary	\$8,000 per month
Part pension	\$3,250 per month as former Prime Minister
Total	\$11,250 per month

The other terms and conditions include:

Transport: A maximum loan of \$100,000 at a rate of interest of 6 per cent per annum to facilitate the purchase of either a locally-assembled motorcar with

full exemption from motor vehicle tax and value added tax; or an imported motor vehicle with full exemption from customs duty and import surcharge.

A loan to cover the cost of motor vehicle insurance premium.

Entitlement to a personal chauffeur.

A travel allowance of \$1,900 per month, which replaces a special travel allowance and the commuter travel allowance.

A subsistence allowance at a rate of \$350 per month where residence is beyond a radius of 10 miles—16 kilometres from Port of Spain.

A rate of \$450 per month where residence is beyond the radius of 10 miles—32 kilometres from Port of Spain.

Entitlement to the cost of accommodation and meals in the event that the office holder is required to stay overnight as a result of late sittings of Parliament provided that he resides beyond a radius of 10 miles—16 kilometres from Port of Spain.

Entertainment expenses to be met from an official entertainment vote controlled by the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

Provision of official stationery and entitlement to free postage within Trinidad and Tobago for all correspondence relating to the business of his or her constituency.

Retiring allowance and/or gratuity to be provided in accordance with the Retiring Allowance Legislative Services Act, Chap. 2:03.

We regard him as a senior statesman and we offer to him the same thing he offered to the former Prime Minister, that is if he behaves himself we will consider...*[Inaudible]*

Mr. Manning: Is there any other Minister of Government whose terms and conditions differ from the terms and conditions approved by the Salaries Review Commission, and are the terms and conditions of the Minister Extraordinaire approved by the Salaries Review Commission?

Hon. B. Panday: I thought that the answer to the latter was clear. On the former part of that question, I shall seek information and let the hon. Leader of the Opposition know.

Mr. Manning: In the light of the fact that the hon. Prime Minister sought to include in his answer, the terms and conditions of employment of the Leader of the Opposition *in toto*, is he prepared to outline the complete package of terms and conditions of the Minister Extraordinaire for the benefit of hon. Members?

2.00 p.m.

Hon. B. Panday: Mr. Speaker, I thought that is what I just did.

Hon. Members: No. You did not do that.

**Public Servants
(Payment of Arrears)**

10. Mr. Eric Williams (*Port of Spain South*) asked the Minister of Finance:

Could the Minister kindly state:

Whether there are any categories of Public Servants excluded from benefiting from the \$90 million allocation made in the 1996 budget for the payment of arrears of income?

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister of Consumer Affairs (Hon. Mervyn Assam): Mr. Speaker, among the mechanisms for offsetting arrears of remuneration owed to the public sector employees is a cash option for which provision was made in the 1996 budget. A total amount of \$90 million was allocated for the payment of these arrears.

To give effect to the payment of the cash option, Minister of Finance's Circular 4 of 1996 was issued on March 21, 1996. At paragraph 2 of the said circular, it is expressly stated as follows:

“(a) All persons who are owed arrears will be eligible to access the mechanism.”

In other words, Mr. Speaker, all categories of public servants are entitled to benefit from the cash option. In this respect, a public officer who wishes to utilize this option can apply on the appropriate form.

**WASA
(Income and Expenditure)**

11. Mr. Eric Williams (*Port of Spain South*) asked the Minister of Public Utilities:

Oral Answers to Questions
[MR. WILLIAMS]

Friday, May 17, 1996

Could the Minister kindly state:

- (a) The amount of money collected by the Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA) on a monthly basis over the last six months?
- (b) Would the Minister also state the monthly expenditure over the same period?

The Minister of Public Utilities (Hon. Ganga Singh): Mr. Speaker, the amount of money collected by the Water and Sewerage Authority on a monthly basis over the last six months, as well as April, 1996, is as follows:

Period	Income	Expenditure
October 1995	16.1 million	28.5 million
November 1995	16.2 “	45.5 “
December 1995	15.4 “	43.0 “
January 1996	17.4 “	29.6 “
February 1996	11.7 “	23.8 “
March 1996	17.6 “	32.8 “
April 1996	19.6 “	—

**Government's Policy
(Management of State Enterprises)**

12. Mr. Kenneth Valley (*Diego Martin Central*) asked the Hon. Prime Minister:

Could the Prime Minister kindly state his Government's policy with respect to continuity of employment of chief executive officers/managing directors nor general managers of state enterprises?

The Prime Minister (Hon. Basdeo Panday): Mr. Speaker, the Government has not adopted any policy with respect to continuity of employment of chief executive officers, managing directors or general managers of state enterprises.

The matter of determination of the tenure of executive management in state enterprises is the responsibility of the respective boards of directors. The boards, in the context of the enterprises' corporate objectives, are responsible for ensuring that the enterprises are suitably managed and are empowered to take appropriate action where it is deemed necessary.

Government, in the appointment of the boards, has taken steps to ensure that persons so appointed possess the necessary competence and expertise to properly execute their responsibilities.

Mr. Valley: Mr. Speaker, would the hon. Prime Minister inform the House whether any directives were given to the boards relating to Trinidad and Tobago Television, National Gas Company and Tourism Industrial Development Corporation with respect to the termination of services of the chief executive officers?

Hon. B. Panday: Mr. Speaker, I regard that as a separate question and if the hon. Member needs the answer—we have nothing to hide—I shall make the necessary enquiries, find out whether this has been so, and I shall lay the answers before him and this honourable House.

Mr. Valley: Mr. Speaker, I am asking the Prime Minister whether it is within his knowledge that directives were given to any of these boards with respect to the termination of services of these chief executive officers.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I was about to get up before the Prime Minister rose to say something on the supplemental question. As I said before, the Standing Orders provide that I approve the supplemental questions. Indeed, I do not think that the supplemental question that you have raised—which the Prime Minister has told you he will advise you on—hinged on the question such as you asked it. In the circumstances, I do not think it would be correct to ask a further question or clarification on what the Prime Minister has said.

Mr. Valley: Mr. Speaker, if I understood what the Prime Minister was saying, he said that there was no general policy with respect to the boards on the appointment or termination of chief executive officers. I am now asking whether there were specific instructions coming from the Cabinet. I thought that followed from the question.

Mr. Speaker: I understood the hon. Prime Minister to say that Government has no policy with respect to that—which is what you asked—and that the boards take decisions with respect to that. I think that what you have said should be answered in the way in which it has been suggested.

Hon. B. Panday: Mr. Speaker, the question was: Has any specific directions been given to the boards by the Cabinet? The answer is no.

**Keystone Property Developers Limited
(Overpayment)**

13. Mr. Kenneth Valley (*Diego Martin Central*) asked the Minister of Finance:

Could the Minister of Finance kindly state:

- (a) Whether Keystone Property Developers Limited, a company of the Maritime Financial Group, has demanded to be paid the sum of \$60 million overpayment for the construction of the Golden Grove Prison?
- (b) If the answer is in the affirmative, would the Minister please indicate whether the Government has agreed to pay this sum or any part thereof to Keystone Property Developers Limited and the terms and conditions of the arrangements for payment?

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister of Consumer Affairs (Hon. Mervyn Assam): Mr. Speaker, Keystone Property Developers submitted a claim of \$59,876,887.00, plus VAT of \$8,981,533.00 above the original contract sum of \$200,296,808.00 VAT inclusive for the Maximum Security Prison at Golden Grove Arouca.

2.10 p.m.

This claim was submitted by letters dated August 29 and September 2, 1994 and the breakdown is as follows:

Item of Claim	Contractor's Offer	Ministry of Works' Offer
Increase in cost of builders' works due to flotation of the dollar.	\$24,415,185	\$18,987,956
Increase in provisional sum for security equipment due to the flotation of the dollar.	\$22,702,789	\$4,975,875
Increase in provisional sum for outfitting due to flotation.	\$3,500,000	\$3,500,000
Increase in the size of the dog kennels.	\$216,095	\$94,181
Increase in the size of general stores.	\$657,818	\$657,818

*Oral Answers to Questions**Friday, May 17, 1996*

Paving of courtyards.	\$1,085,000	Nil
Access road through existing prison.	\$1,500,00	\$1,400,000
Paving of roads from the Churchill Roosevelt Highway.	\$500,000	\$400,000
Boundary fencing.	\$5,000,000	Nil
Installation of telephone.	\$300,000	\$250,000
Subtotal	\$59,876,887	\$30,265,830
VAT	8,981,533	4,539,875
Total	\$68,858,420	\$34,805,705

The then Minister of Works and Transport, Member for Diego Martin East, under circumstances best known to himself, evaluated this claim which I just read to the Parliament and recommended to the Cabinet of which he was a Member, that an interim offer of \$30,265,830 plus VAT of \$4,539,875 be made to Keystone Property Developers Limited.

Cabinet by Minute No. 3201 dated December 7, 1994 accepted this recommendation. Subsequently, by letter dated January 13, 1995, the Ministry of Works and Transport conveyed this offer to Keystone Property Developers Limited, and all of the transactions mentioned above took place under the PNM administration while the Member for Diego Martin East was the Minister of Works and Transport.

The original contract was awarded by the Central Tenders Board to Keystone Property Developers Limited by letter dated December 4, 1991 and the formal agreement was executed on March 30, 1992.

The company has accepted the interim offer made by the Ministry of Works and Transport and negotiations between the two parties are continuing with respect to the final payment. The contractor resumed work in July 1995 and the handing over of the Golden Grove Prison to the Minister of Works and Transport is scheduled for September, 1996.

It is a matter of some mesmerism to this side that a former Member of the Cabinet in which the Minister of Works and Transport sat could ask this question.
[Desk thumping]

Mr. Speaker: Hon Members, I wish to point out that there are other questions on the Order Paper and having regard to the relevant Standing Order 19(7), at 2.15 p.m. I am obliged to adopt a certain course.

Hon. R. L. Maharaj: Mr. Speaker, I have spoken to the Opposition Chief Whip and we are in agreement that the two other questions be answered. May I formally move that the Standing Order be suspended in order to permit the two other questions to be answered.

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. Robinson: Unprecedented.

Mr. Manning: You could talk?

Miss Nicholson: Do not trouble him!

Mr. Speaker: I see the Member for La Brea is back.

Squatting on State Lands

14. Dr. Vincent Lasse (*Point Fortin*) asked the Minister of Housing and Settlements:

Could the Minister kindly state what steps are being taken by his Government to contain the proliferation of squatting on state lands?

The Minister of Housing and Settlements (Hon. John Humphrey): Mr. Speaker, the Government is not aware that there has been a proliferation of squatting on state lands. However, we are aware of a squatting situation on state lands which had developed over a number of years.

The squatting situation is as a direct result of the abject failure of the PNM government to address the acute housing needs of the population. This Government is in the process of formulating a land use policy which will deal *inter alia*, with the squatting on state lands. The intended legislation would provide squatters who occupy a dwelling house on state lands, on or before an appointed day, with a status of comfort, or assurance that their houses might not be demolished, but that they may be subject to relocation if necessary.

Additionally, a land banking system is also another of this Government's initiatives towards fulfilling the need for shelter for citizens who cannot afford to purchase lands in the open market. It is envisaged that the system of making land available to everyone at a minimal cost will curb the incidence of squatting throughout the country.

2.20 p.m.

**Slaying of Selwyn Richardson
(Investigation into)**

4. Mr. Patrick Manning (*San Fernando East*) asked the Minister of National Security:

Would the Minister please state whether or not the investigation into the slaying of Mr. Selwyn Richardson is still in progress?

The Prime Minister (Hon. Basdeo Panday): Mr. Speaker, the Government regards the murder of a former Attorney General, as indeed the murder of any person, as being extremely serious.

The Commissioner of Police has advised that from the time of the murder of former Attorney General, Selwyn Richardson, detectives were making inquiries. Thereafter, a special team from the Homicide Division was assigned to the investigations.

Investigations are continuing. To date, a number of witnesses have been interviewed and forensic examinations pursued in respect of several exhibits collected from the murder scene. The final forensic report was received by the Commissioner of Police on May 15, 1996.

Mr. Speaker, may I point out that the Commissioner of Police has further advised that the police were severely handicapped in their investigations because of a lack of modern technology and modern forensic facilities.

May I further state that the Government has taken steps to strengthen the capacity of the police and forensic science centre so as to improve the quality of investigations in cases such as these.

We are pleased to report that of the 39 murders committed during the period January 1 to April 30, 1996, suspects in 22 of these matters have been charged and are before the courts.

Oral Answers to Questions
[HON. B. PANDAY]

Friday, May 17, 1996

The Commissioner of Police has further advised that two possible suspects in the slaying of former Attorney General, Selwyn Richardson, have themselves been killed, and, the persons charged with their murder have been recently acquitted at the Preliminary Inquiry before the Magistrates' Court.

STATEMENT BY MINISTER

The Attorney General (Hon. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj): Mr. Speaker, the hon. Prime Minister will make a statement but may I respectfully ask that the statement be deferred to a later stage of the proceedings.

Assent indicated.

UNITARY STATE OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

[FOURTH DAY]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question [Friday, January 26, 1996]:

Be it resolved that this honourable House reaffirm its commitment to the Unitary State of Trinidad and Tobago.

Question again proposed.

Dr. Vincent Lasse (Point Fortin): Mr. Speaker, I rise to make a modest contribution on the Motion.

Before I deal with the substance of the Motion, I must first allay the fears of those who can only see evil shadows and sinister moves behind every action of those put forward a view contrary to theirs. This is a very sad situation. For this reason, permit me to quote from the *People's National Movement Manifesto, Election 1995* in order to allay the fears on the other side why this Motion has been put at this particular time. On page 43 of this document, it is stated:

“The PNM government remains committed to Tobago being an integral part of the unitary state of Trinidad and Tobago. Our vision is for the Central Government and the House of Assembly to work together, complementing each other in a productive and harmonious relationship.”

So, this Motion before this House emanates from a policy of the People's National Movement government.

Members on the other side should not become paranoid over a well-stated and entrenched policy and should not be mystified at this Motion being brought to this House at this time.

Mr. Speaker, this policy, as you are well aware, has served our nation well; a policy which has cemented our independence, protected our sovereignty as a nation and has caused us to consolidate our national and maritime boundaries. Here I must refer to the concept of the archipelagic state. This has served the unitary state of Trinidad and Tobago in good stead and this Motion before this House, among other things, is designed to preserve the territorial sovereignty of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, it is a well-known fact that the main part of the territory of a state consists of the land within its boundaries. The area is usually termed “land territory” in international law, and includes the sea-bed and subsoil of the territorial sea.

The jurisdiction of a state over its territory is called “territorial sovereignty” and the possession of territorial sovereignty is one of the essential elements of a state’s independence. This is why we on this side would be concerned with any attempt to tinker with the archipelagic state concept of the unitary state of Trinidad and Tobago. Any separation would result, as it were, in a massive decline of our territorial sovereignty.

I say this with first-hand knowledge because while serving as the head of the Legal and Marine Affairs Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs during 1990—91, I resisted an attempt by the then administration to negotiate away part of the territory of Trinidad and Tobago.

2.30 p.m.

It was an agreement of delimitation between the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and the government of Venezuela. The Member for Tobago East may well wish to laugh at this, but I was punished for resisting that attempt. I found myself working on assignment in the office of the then prime minister, because as a civil servant I resisted the selling-out of part of the territory of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Robinson: Mr. Speaker, this is fascinating history. May I ask for more information? Would the hon. Member be pleased to disclose more particulars of the occasion since it is the first time I am hearing about it?

Dr. V. Lasse: Mr. Speaker, I remind the Member for Tobago East that he journeyed to Venezuela to sign that agreement. At least he should remember that. [*Desk thumping*]

Unitary State of Trinidad and Tobago
[DR. LASSE]

Friday, May 17, 1996

Therefore, as I said before, any attempt to tamper with the unitary state of Trinidad and Tobago, or at cessation will not only affect our stability as a nation, but would drastically affect the delimitation of the maritime boundaries of Trinidad and Tobago. *[Interruption]* I am hearing gruntings at the back. This is a motion trying to obviate the occurrence of such an instance in the future. *[Interruption]* Senility is creeping in.

Mr. Speaker, the concept of cessation is not new or novel, and for this reason, with your indulgence, I would recount an actual situation which transpired during 1973/74 or thereabouts. At that time I was the representative of Trinidad and Tobago to the United Nations in New York, as you are well aware. I was also representing Trinidad and Tobago on a committee of 24, known as the Committee on Decolonization. That committee was entrusted with the task of monitoring the gradual move of territories towards self-determination and independence.

While serving on that committee, in the capacity of rapporteur, I was approached by a former Member of Parliament for Tobago who was seeking information and guidance as to what steps could be taken for Tobago to secede from Trinidad.

Mr. Sudama: He was seeking that from you?

Dr. V. Lasse: As rapporteur on the Committee on Decolonization I was approached by a former Member of Parliament for Tobago who was seeking information on the steps to be taken—

Mr. Robinson: Name the Member! Name the person!

Mr. Assam: Name the Member and tell us what you did!

Dr. V. Lasse: Mr. Speaker, my advice to him, and to anyone now is that territories that have been under colonial yoke, so to speak, had to fight battles in many instances to secure their independence. Once that status is achieved politicians who have their personal agenda to complete, or their self-fulfilling prophecies, should never tamper with the wishes of a people to move towards independence and self-determination, and also to consolidate that.

It is to be noted that it is the people as a whole who must seek to move from a colonial status to independence and not the wish of any political party or individual who may appoint himself to do such.

The member state, having responsibility for such territories, would always regard the wishes of the persons or inhabitants of the territory as paramount. It is the people themselves, not a political party or an individual who should make a request, or agitate for moving towards self determination and independence.

Mr. Speaker, in the case of the unitary state of Trinidad and Tobago, the people have spoken a long time ago and the backward step in this direction is totally out of the question. I submit that following the decolonization process it has been the attitude, if not all, of most states, to consolidate and galvanize their independence, and the unitary state of Trinidad and Tobago has been in the forefront of this march.

I want to touch a bit on the integration movement. For some 10 years, while I served at the United Nations in New York and Geneva, I had the good fortune to receive first-hand information on integration movements, and integration had become the order of the day. Integration was taking place in Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America. It has been said, and I confirmed this, that integration is possible because today we are all living in what we consider to be a shrinking world.

While I am on the question of integration, I wish to make a point that integration was also taking place—as far as the Caribbean states are concerned—at another level. In major capitals of the world where some Caribbean states do not have diplomatic missions, moves have been afoot in Geneva, London and Brussels to have joint diplomatic representation. This was done without prejudice to the sovereignty of the states concerned. This again, was another attempt towards integration of a sort.

2. 40 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, with specific reference to small island states—and Trinidad and Tobago ought to be considered in this category—small island states in various parts of the hemisphere have been working steadily toward integration, not separation nor secession.

The Motion before this honourable House is designed, among other things, mainly to preserve our unitary state status which in many ways would help to foster this whole concept of integration. On the other hand, where unions are broken up or where part of a state seeks to secede the logical conclusion as history has taught us, has always been civil strife. It is not for a few to decide on the question of self-determination and independence; and as I said before, it is not

Unitary State of Trinidad and Tobago
[DR. LASSE]

Friday, May 17, 1996

for a political party to decide on breaking up a union or interfering with a unitary state status.

The hon. Member for San Fernando East dwelt at length on the evils and the ills of separation; it leads to unrest and wars. A case I must recount is that of Nigeria when the Biafran state wanted to go its separate way due to a political decision which did not take into consideration the views of the majority of persons, as a result of this, we witnessed in modern history, a most bloody war being fought with brother against brother. At the end of all of this, there were no winners, there were simply losers, and of course, there was a senseless loss of lives, not to speak of the economic situation which followed many, many years after that bloody war.

We on this side have given in clear and precise terms how and why this Motion was brought. The contribution of the Member for Tobago East, Minister Extraordinaire, baffled me because the hon. Member is a very knowledgeable man. I want to use his own expression which I shall quote from *Hansard* dated February 23, 1996. The Member for Tobago East said:

“We, on this side of the House, are mystified as to why this Motion, in these terms, has been brought at this time.”

The hon. Member, Minister Extraordinaire, then amused himself by throwing picong at this side, urged on by some Members on the other side whom I was not sure whether they were laughing with or at him. I kept silent, listening of course, for the reason for the hon. Member for Tobago East being mystified, but after dwelling on the provisions of the Constitution, and I believe a greater part of his contribution had been interpreting parts of the Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago, I discovered that the hon. Member for Tobago East had a problem, and the problem he had dwelt with the fact that the Member for San Fernando East did not, as he said, refer to the provisions that, and I quote:

“The Republic of Trinidad and Tobago shall be a sovereign democratic state.”

I am confident that the hon. Member for San Fernando East would deal effectively and efficiently with that matter in due course. The Member for Tobago East, in my humble view, was playing with words and, of course, concepts not really saying any thing, with due respect to him.

2.50 p.m.

The Minister Extraordinaire who is acclaimed by some as an international jurist should not try to take us for a ride in this honourable House or mislead us by semantics. When he touched on the concept of sovereignty he gave us on this side yet another opportunity for research. Because of this I had cause to go back to my international law books. When I read Brierly's, *The Law of Nations and The Doctrine of Sovereignty*, I recognized that out of the new state which developed around the time of the reformation, there arose a new theory of the nature of states, and of course, the doctrine of sovereignty.

The doctrine of sovereignty was first explicitly formulated in 1576 in the publication *De Republica* by Jean Bodin. The concept of sovereignty then, became the central problem in the study of the modern state and the theory of international law. Since that time it was recognized by Bodin that unified states were emerging out of the loosely and compacted states of medieval times. Even at this early date, Jean Bodin was convinced that a confusion of incorporated or fly-by-night independent authorities must be fatal to the state, and there must be one final source and not more than one, from which laws must proceed.

Jean Bodin further concluded that the essence of statehood, the quality which makes an association of human beings a state, is the unity of its government. He went on to state that any government which lacks cohesiveness or unity would be simply like a ship without a keel. *[Interruption]* The Minister Extraordinaire has found his tongue once more.

As I draw to the end of my brief contribution, I become more convinced that a formidable case has been made from this side for the support of this Motion which was tabled in a timely fashion by the hon. Member for San Fernando East. This Motion should be supported. Those on the other side should refrain from opposing purely for the sake of opposing and should support this Motion which reaffirms the unitary state of Trinidad and Tobago.

Thank you.

Mr. Roger Boynes (*Toco/Manzanilla*): Mr. Speaker, I heard the Member for Tobago West speaking about the linkages between the families of the people from Toco and the people from Tobago, and I support that view. That is a fact. For instance, I do not know, the Member for Tobago West may be an aunt of mine. *[Laughter]*

Miss Nicholson: Mr. Speaker I would like the statement to be withdrawn. I have no connection with Toco. I am from a strong, moral Nicholson family. No Boynes!

Mr. R. Boynes: Mr. Speaker, I humbly withdraw the statement. It goes to show that the relationship between the people in the constituency of Toco/Manzanilla and Tobago is so close. For this reason, I rise to lend support to this Motion so that we can all reaffirm our commitment to the unitary state of Trinidad and Tobago. I listened a short while ago and heard the Member for Couva South mention that it should be subject to section 1 of the Constitution, pursuant to the amendment which they raised on previous occasions.

If I may indicate at this point that our commitment to the unitary state of Trinidad and Tobago and to a sovereign state cannot be questioned.

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Based on antecedents and more particularly on the last occasion in 1995 when the PNM administration went to Tobago and met with the people under the umbrella of the Tobago House of Assembly—and I understand certain members were invited and on one previous occasion one member was there—and that of the previous administration in implementing a draft Bill which I have had the opportunity of going through clause by clause, it has suggested to me that the PNM administration does, in fact, care about the people of Tobago and giving them self-government. There is no need for that amendment because based on our actions, we definitely subscribe to the sovereign state of Trinidad and Tobago.

3.00 p.m.

When we examine this very serious matter, we have to treat with it from a historical background. In 1888, the price of sugar dropped and the colonial government saw it fit to unite both islands, which was formalized in 1898 by the Trinidad and Tobago Act. It is instructive to note that part of the terms and conditions of that very instrument was that the people of Tobago must be satisfied and if there was any dissatisfaction, then Tobago would have to get out of that relationship. It is very important to understand that the element of dissatisfaction was very much discussed and was a term of the union.

At that time, pursuant to that very instrument, Tobago was made a ward of Trinidad and Tobago. In some quarters, it was felt that it was a ward of Trinidad, thereby being a dependent of Trinidad. Even a ward of Trinidad and Tobago would suggest a certain amount of dependency. A county is even larger than a

ward, so that at that particular time the seed of discontent was sown. The colonial government saw that particular model as being appropriate for the functioning of business for the people of Tobago. Even if that model was not in the best interest of the people, it was felt that it was the best model that could have been arrived at, and if it did not work, the whole situation could be revisited.

In 1977, the hon. Member for Tobago East saw it fit to pass a resolution for a debate in this Parliament. Arising out of that, Parliament approved House Paper No. 6 of 1978, and from that policy position Act No. 37 of 1980 was approved by this very Parliament.

When bills come before this Parliament, they are debated by the representatives of the people and at the end of the debate, if the legislation is approved, it is approved by the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago.

STATEMENT BY MINISTER

The Attorney General (Hon. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj): Mr. Deputy Speaker, pursuant to what was decided, I wonder whether the Member would give way for the Prime Minister to make a statement.

Assent indicated.

Local Government Elections

The Prime Minister (Hon. Basdeo Panday): Mr. Deputy Speaker, according to the laws of Trinidad and Tobago, local government elections ought to have been held some time in November or December, 1995 when the term of office of the existing local government representatives came to an end.

It is now history that instead of calling the local government elections as ought to have been done, the Government of the day, now snugly entrenched in the Opposition Benches, decided to call general elections instead on November 6, 1995, although general elections were not due until December, 1996. That turned out to be one of the most brilliant political decisions the incumbent PNM ever made—Napoleonic almost, Sir.

On assuming office, the new Government of national unity was informed by the Elections and Boundaries Commission that it would not be possible to hold local government elections in December, 1995, because of a shortage of electoral ink. In the circumstances, the new Government of national unity sought and obtained legislation to extend the time for holding of the local government

Local Government Elections
[HON. B. PANDAY]

Friday, May 17, 1996

elections by nine months, which have almost gone, and which period expires on June 27, 1996.

When on May 5, 1996, the UNC held its annual conference, speculation ran high that the occasion would be used to announce the local government elections. We did not think that we should insult the Parliament and the population, as has been done in the past, by making such an announcement on a clearly partisan occasion. Instead, we promised the nation that elections would be held according to the law, even if it meant seeking another extension so as not to clash with other uses of the schools, which are to be used as polling stations.

Our main concern in this regard has been our nation's children who would be taking the CXC and GCE examinations during the months of May and June. We do not wish to do anything which may in the slightest militate against their total well-being, particularly where their education is concerned.

To make doubly sure that our decision on the elections would not adversely affect our children, we have been in touch with the Elections and Boundaries Commission to find out whether the holding of local government elections would interfere with our children's examinations. We have been assured by the Commission that alternative arrangements could be made if the Commission had sufficient time.

This Government of national unity wishes to break with the tradition of wickedness, where games are played with the Opposition and elections come as a "thief in the night". We prefer to be fair and to give the maximum time and opportunity to all parties to campaign for the election.

Having been assured that our children will in no way be affected, I wish to announce to this Parliament and to the electorate that the Local Government Elections will be held on Monday, June 24, 1996.

3.10 p.m.

UNITARY STATE OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Mr. R. Boynes: Mr. Deputy Speaker, let it be known that we in Toco/Manzanilla have been looking at June 24 with a keen eye. We are ready, willing and able to go to the polls on that day.

The Parliament, at that time, did not only comprise of Members under the umbrella of the People's National Movement; other political parties were also represented. I understand, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that even the Member for Couva

North, himself, supported that particular piece of legislation. I find that strange. However, when I read the contribution by the Member for Couva South, he said, and I quote:

“...effective devolution of powers; and that is what this Report is talking about. That is what the PNM did not want to give to the people of Tobago. Can the Member say why his PNM administration rejected the Seemungal draft?”

The Member said that and his party supported and approved that piece of legislation. However, they now come in this honourable House and speak as though the PNM approved that legislation. Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is very misleading.

I am suggesting and submitting that whereas in the past, various models and structures have been tried to ensure the best working relationship between the peoples of Trinidad and Tobago, this was yet another model that was supported by the Prime Minister. During the 1898 period when Tobago was a ward of Trinidad and Tobago, if that situation was not in the best interest of Tobago then it could have been revisited, as it was, in 1977.

With respect to this piece of legislation, it was felt, in certain quarters, that it was not enough and it was not in the best interest of development for the people of Tobago, because it did not give them a clear autonomy. Several sections were, in fact, problematic. I would make reference to one of these. I quote from section I of the Act:

“The Assembly shall formulate and implement policy on all matters referred to it by the Minister.”

It was felt, Mr. Speaker, under that particular piece of legislation, that Tobago does not have the autonomy that should be in the interest for development of the people of Tobago. Under the PNM administration, in 1995, this apparent dissatisfaction with that model was met head-on. It was the PNM that met this situation and attempted to correct it. The People’s National Movement put forward a model that was in the best interest of development for the people of Tobago.

As far as I understand, the Member for Tobago West was part and parcel of those negotiations.

Miss Nicholson: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

I have dealt with that matter comprehensively in my discourse when other Members on that side raised it. I asked, then, that it be withdrawn and I am asking, again, that this Member withdraws that statement.

Mr. R. Boynes: Mr. Deputy Speaker, if I may qualify. It is my understanding that the Member for Tobago West sat in a meeting with the Government of the day and the Tobago House of Assembly with respect to this particular draft Bill. Whether—and this is important—it is the Tobago House of Assembly that invited the Members of Parliament; whether it is the Government of the day that invited the Members of Parliament; whether it was the Government of the day that did not invite the Members of Parliament, the fact remains that it is very important for the Members of Parliament for Tobago to make sure that they present themselves to deal with the business of the people of Tobago.

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

I remember recently when two Ministers and a Parliamentary Secretary visited Toco. They did not invite me; the Toco Foundation invited me. They came to my house, Mr. Speaker, and in the best interest of the people of Toco/Manzanilla I made sure I presented myself to give them representation. [*Desk thumping*] That is representation! What we are dealing with is not Members of Parliament but with members of personalities.

Mr. Assam: It is the Toco Foundation who invited the Ministers. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, when you shout across to the Member who is on his legs it causes him to raise his voice even more. I am sure Members do not want that. Please!

Mr. R. Boynes: Thank you very much for your kind intervention.

Mr. Speaker, it is very important to understand that representation is important. I am new to Parliament and it is my understanding, as a citizen of Trinidad and Tobago, that a representative must represent the people through thick or thin. They must represent; that is their function! [*Interruption*] I have looked at the issue as it surrounds Tobago from 1888 to the present time and the issue, basically, is a clash of personalities. Mr. Speaker, it is personalities that are the cause of the problem. Unless the Member for Tobago East did not spearhead any model, he is going to strike it down. Unless he, Napoleon, that particular

individual, is not the chief cook and bottle-washer of a model, it cannot work. *[Desk thumping]* I am suggesting that in the best interest of the development of Tobago, we should forget the games.

3.20 p.m.

The Government, the Opposition, the Tobago House of Assembly and the people of Tobago should all unite and seek what is in the best interest of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Assam: And you do not want national unity?

Mr. Hinds: Yes, we want national unity, but not that sham, real national unity.

Miss Nicholson: Laventille, you should be ashamed....

Mr. Hinds: We love unity, but not that sham. The real thing.

Mr. R. Boynes: Mr. Speaker, for instance—*[Interruption]* the PNM administration led at that time in 1995 by the Leader of the Opposition, none other than the powerful person of Mr. Patrick Manning led a team to Tobago *[Interruption]* and out of those negotiations—

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, it is becoming a bit difficult to hear the Member and for our Hansard Reporter to perform her functions. Please.

Mr. R. Boynes: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. I certainly did not want to raise my voice louder than I was doing, so I thank you for your kind intervention.

As I mentioned a short while ago, Mr. Speaker, under the PNM administration negotiations took place, a draft bill was completed, it was not law, but it reflected a model whereby the House of Assembly was to be given some legislative powers where the executive council was to be like the executive. The analogy to that being the Cabinet of Trinidad and Tobago for instance.

That whole separation of power and the many items that are contained in that particular draft legislation leave one to understand that the devolution to which the Member for Couva South referred was contained in that said document and there was much devolution of powers. The relationship between two islands is very different, and the draft model was to come to Parliament for us to discuss and debate. Arising out of that debate, one would have found a model that was best suited for the people of Tobago.

Unitary State of Trinidad and Tobago
[MR. BOYNES]

Friday, May 17, 1996

After examining that particular piece of draft legislation, I ask the Members on the other side to study it very carefully and I am calling and appealing to them to use it as a guide. Do not discard it because it was drafted by the PNM administration, but use it and build on it. That is the only way the people of Tobago are going to experience the right to self-determination.

Mr. Speaker, going too far from that particular model may lend itself into the domain of confederacy. We understand from the debate that the other side does not have any intention of seeing Tobago secede—and we appreciate that fact—but in so putting together a structure and a model, one may end up seceding Tobago from Trinidad if one is not careful of the type of model and structure which govern relations between the two countries. That is one of the reasons why the hon. Member for San Fernando East saw it fit to bring this Motion before this honourable House to ensure that Members on the other side understand, appreciate and commit themselves to relations between Trinidad and Tobago, and utilize the amount of care that is required in ensuring a proper structure is put in place.

We all love Trinidad and we all love Tobago. I cannot imagine a Trinidad and Tobago team without Dwight Yorke playing on it. I cannot imagine intercol football without Signal Hill, or even Best Village. Trinidad and Tobago are so inextricably linked culturally, socially, economically and politically and I am suggesting that care must be taken in putting together such a particular structure.

With respect to the types of relations and the relationship that has been built up between the people of Toco and Tobago, one must appreciate that way back in the 1800's and into the 1940's there used to be what was known as the Coastal Steamers Company Limited and the method of transportation was via the boat and the people in Toco used this coastal service religiously from Toco to Tobago and vice versa. They would sometimes go to fish and return with a wife. *[Laughter]* We are so combined and unified and what God has put together, no man could put asunder, no man! *[Desk thumping]* Perhaps, under that climate Mr. Speaker, I was wondering out loud whether or not the Member for Tobago West was a relative of mine.

Hon. Member: Somebody went to fish. *[Laughter]*

Mr. R. Boynes: Mr. Speaker, at the Sangre Grande Regional Corporation, where I was the chairman—up to November 6, 1995 when I decided to come into Parliament—we recognized the close linkage with the people of our jurisdiction

and those of Tobago. I want to draw reference to this honourable House to the person of Mr. Lionel Robinson, the Member for Tobago East's brother who was one of the former Members of Parliament for Toco/Manzanilla and several of his family members had been on our side for a long period of time.

Miss Nicholson: All of us cannot be on the same side.

Mr. Narine: He was a good fellow, he was a PNM.

Mr. R. Boynes: Recognizing this close linkage with the people of Tobago, we had set out to try to link the two areas. We found it was so important that even the very religion that is practised in Toco, the Moravian religion is basically practised in Tobago also. There is a similarity with the religion, the language and the food.

3.30 p.m.

In the villages of Matelot, Grand Riviere, L'Anse Noire, Monte Video, Toco, St. Helena, one would find that many a Tobagonian would be living there and *vice versa*.

Bearing this in mind, it was our approach to link Toco to Tobago and that is why we had looked at the Seabridge Galleon Passage Project. We had looked at that at the Sangre Grande Regional Corporation when I was there and I made several trips abroad, at my own expense, meeting with experts to find out whether or not that particular project was feasible and whether it could receive international funding. At that time, the way in which we operated at the Sangre Grande Regional Corporation was to always spare central government from spending any money. That was our whole approach, the core, the principle of it all. With that in mind, we were able to meet with certain companies.

If the Members on that side would like to talk to me afterwards on the persons with whom I have had consultations and who have looked at the project and have been quite impressed and have expressed a desire to go with it—

Miss Nicholson: Careful with what you are saying because you would get licks.

Mr. R. Boynes: Mr. Speaker, it is important to understand that that particular project took into consideration the widening of the road from Toco to Sangre Grande; a coast guard port, a fishing port and a ferry service, among other things, from Toco to Tobago.

Unitary State of Trinidad and Tobago
[MR. BOYNES]

Friday, May 17, 1996

It was indeed under the NAR administration that that feasibility study was done and the project was developed. During the term that we were there, we looked at it and we did tremendous work on it; we had even contacted Mr. Lloyd Best to look at it but because of the fee arrangement we could not use his services.

Hon. Member: Too expensive!

Mr. R. Boynes: What came out of that, Mr. Speaker, was that the companies with which we were negotiating at that time had asked us to bring up the figures and the feasibility study to represent 1995 figures. That was the stage we had reached.

It is important to understand what the success of this whole project would have done to the relationship between the people of Toco and the people of Tobago. For one thing, we are looking at the widening of the road, a ferry service. What advantage could be derived from that project becoming a reality?

Goods and materials would now be able to go from Toco to Tobago very quickly. In Toco/Manzanilla, there are some of the finest quarries in the Caribbean and we understand the problem with Tobago and the sand on the beaches, and in order to protect the beaches, this would advance the material that could be taken from Toco to Tobago.

Miss Nicholson: That has a number of weaknesses. Do not talk about that.

Mr. R. Boynes: Mr. Speaker, it is instructive to note that this ferry service is estimated to take one hour from Toco to Tobago. Think of what this would do. The entire north-coast region would be opened up. The whole area would be opened for tourism. Hotels would be able to be constructed in that particular area and packages could be derived that would incorporate both Tobago and Toco.

Mr. Speaker, I know it is a lovely scenario but the whole thing about it is that if the people will something to happen, it would happen. And the people of Toco are close to the people of Tobago and they want that type of scenario to obtain; they will it to happen. They are our families across in Tobago—our brothers and sisters, our aunts. We will it to happen so it would happen.

Some people may think that could never happen. But the type of ingenious and creative ways that local government bodies could develop, could achieve so much to develop the entire region.

When the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre first came into office as the Minister of Local Government, I spoke with him and I mentioned to him the plans for the development of the entire region. The region being developed, there would be links to Tobago.

I explained to him that we at the regional corporation, as every regional corporation, are strapped for funds and under development programmes there is so much that can be achieved. In order to get projects done in that particular region, there must be creative ideas of doing things, hence we embarked upon the Toco land fill site where we did a recycling project with an international company.

I am pleased to announce that the Minister has approved same. It is estimated that \$600,000 per year would be generated in that project in Toco, to the regional corporation. When I was negotiating the contract, a fee of \$1,000 per month was estimated; I do not know what is the final fee.

Mr. Speaker, another one of the creative projects that we embarked upon was negotiating with PTSC, the Businessmen's Association and the regional corporation to build an administrative complex in the heart of Sangre Grande.

Mr. 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. F. Hinds*]

Mr. R. Boynes: I thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Also, I thank hon. Members for allowing me to continue my submission before this honourable House.

3.40 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to the administrative complex, it is the first time in the history of Trinidad and Tobago, that one finds a joint-venture-type relationship among PTSC, the Sangre Grande Regional Corporation and the Businessmen's Association in Sangre Grande coming together to recognize the fact that central government alone cannot fund every project in Sangre Grande and are pooling their resources together to develop the region.

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member would pardon me if I remind him that notwithstanding the extension of time, we still have to deal with the question of

Unitary State of Trinidad and Tobago
[MR. SPEAKER]

Friday, May 17, 1996

the House reaffirming its commitment to the unitary state of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. R. Boynes: Yes, Mr. Speaker, so that my relative would be able to be housed in the administrative complex every time she comes to Sangre Grande. It is very important to understand that what the Sangre Grande Regional Corporation has done, and is in the process of doing, is in the best interest of developing and enhancing the relationship between Toco and Tobago.

Several negotiations and discussions have been had with several banks in the area concerning the administrative complex. There is one particular bank which is predisposed to the idea, and I am pleased to indicate to the hon. Minister that the brief is completed and will be forwarded to his desk as soon as possible. I would ask him to support that particular venture because it has nothing to do with taking funds from central government as he would soon discover.

Mr. Speaker, it is very important to understand that the Sangre Grande Regional Corporation saw that Seabridge Galleon Passage Project as a very good one which would ensure that the relations between Toco and Tobago would be very much enhanced.

I do not know if some Members on the other side know that the east belt of Toco is one of the largest lobster belts in the Caribbean.

Mr. Panday: It is?

Mr. R. Boynes: Yes. By placing a proper fishing port there many fishing industries in that particular region would develop to a phenomenal level and a type of spin-off industry would develop benefiting both the people of Tobago and Toco.

Mr. Speaker, at the regional corporation there were several other joint-venture-type relationships that we got involved with, that we saw could enhance the relationship between Toco and Tobago, and the list goes on and on as far the eyes can see. One particular type of vision that was created, if I may even mention again, at the regional corporation which would enhance relations between the people of Toco and Tobago, for instance, is the problem with water—and I mentioned this to the Member for Caroni East. Several villages are without water. Bearing this in mind we took a decision at the regional corporation to create a policy and vision with respect to that.

One of the visions was that the amount of truck-borne water that would be allocated for the year in that particular region would be to the value of \$600,000. It was felt that if one allocated \$100,000 to each village for the season, with the assistance of the National Self-Help Commission, one can take that money and lay down the infrastructure for pipe-borne water. Then, that would be in the best interest of development. Several villages today have accepted that sort of vision and proposal and that is one of the reasons I am now waiting to speak to the Member for Caroni East to see what we can do with that.

Mr. Speaker, it is very important to understand that we at the regional corporation tried to do so much that it would be in the best interest of development of the people of Toco/Manzanilla and our brothers and sisters in Tobago who we love and cherish, with no exception to the Member for Tobago West.

Mr. Speaker, at the regional corporation level, it was felt that by focusing on the infrastructure of that particular Toco region, the foundation for investors would be laid so an investor coming to lay down a hotel, for instance, would not have a problem with water, lights or telephone. These are the infrastructural areas that we targeted and focused on at the regional corporations. Now, it is instructive to understand that by developing the infrastructure of Toco—by laying the foundation for investors to come to Toco—we can present a nice package to investors from all over the world. One can get a nice honeymoon, for instance, in Toco or Tobago because we are inextricably linked.

We have eco-tourism in Toco. There are so many places that one can visit in Toco, that I would invite the Members on the other side to visit us in that particular region at any time, and they would not believe that such a place so beautiful exists in this country. I am suggesting that my Friend, the Member for St. Joseph, should come up to our particular region and see the beauty of the North Coast

Mr. Assam: My mother was born there boy, so I know it long before you. My mother from Turner! I know it better than you!

Mr. R. Boynes: Mr. Speaker, I am asking the Member to pay us a visit and see what we have done during our time in office. I am glad that the Member's mother was born there, but I am suggesting that the many honeymoons he had and wants to have, he could have them at Toco.

3.50 p.m.

I am glad my Friend from Princes Town mentioned the Monty Crystal Park.

Mr. Speaker: I am once more appealing to the hon. Member to treat us with a little more to that which concerns the matter before us.

Mr. R. Boynes: Mr. Speaker, I thank you very much for your intervention.

It is important for us to understand that we all stand to deal with this matter of reaffirming the unitary state of Trinidad and Tobago which is a serious matter. I, myself, have family in Tobago and I have business in Tobago, and it is very important for us all to find the correct solution in treating with the relationship between Trinidad and Tobago. I would never like to see a day when I would have to get a passport to go to visit my family in Tobago. I do not think this is what Members on our side would like. We are here simply to reaffirm the nation's commitment. We want to ensure that the Government of the day is reminded; we are not demanding anything from them, we want them to take note that the people of Tobago have been dissatisfied since 1888.

In 1977 they were also dissatisfied; they felt that they did not have the autonomy which they desired. We came with a team in 1995 and we addressed this dissatisfaction. We recognized the fundamental rights of the people of Tobago as the right to self-determination and that right is the right to ensure that they elect their representatives and that they implement policy decisions and implement the said policies as they concern their social, economic, political and cultural situation. They must be a part and parcel of the decision-making process and we recognize that fact. That is why we in Toco/Manzanilla have to ensure that the Government understand that by putting forward the correct model, it would preserve and nurture the relationships between the people of Toco/Manzanilla and the people of Tobago. If it does otherwise, history would be unkind to those Members and that marriage which has taken place between Toco and Tobago would be jeopardized. I am reminded that what God Almighty has put together, no man can put asunder. I am suggesting that care be taken in dealing with the relationship between Toco and Tobago.

In closing, I wish to reiterate the fact that when we come here time and time again, it is to do the people's business. We stand here before you, Mr. Speaker, to represent the people of Trinidad and Tobago because our brothers and sisters are living in Tobago and whatever we do here, will affect the citizenry of Trinidad and Tobago.

In closing, we want to say that we love the people of Tobago, we are married to the people of Tobago and what God has put together, let no man put asunder.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Interruption from public gallery.]

Mr. Speaker: For the avoidance of any doubt, it is to be made quite clear that there is to be no repetition of what just happened in this honourable House. The people who are sitting in the public gallery must understand that they are strangers in this House and they are here only insofar as they can conduct themselves in a becoming fashion.

In fact, there are certain things that could be visited upon the person who just dared to do what he just did. He obviously has absolutely no respect for this House and that will not be tolerated while this Speaker is in this Chair.

The Minister of Planning and Development (Hon. Trevor Sudama): Mr. Speaker, as you know these days I speak on very rare occasions in this House, but I need to make a brief intervention on this Motion brought to this House by the Member for San Fernando East.

I first want to comment on the relevance of this Motion in light of what the Member for Toco/Manzanilla has said. The Member spent much time in his speech talking about the people of Toco and indeed Trinidad; their interest and their loyalties are so inextricably linked with the people of Toco. He spoke about that unity among the people of Toco and Tobago, and indeed, the unity of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

If there is that unity, that sentiment existing among the rank and file of the people of Trinidad and Tobago what is the point in having this Motion here before this House? *[Desk thumping]* What is the rationale for having this Motion? The unity of a people comes before the unity of a state. It is a precondition to the unity of a state that you have a unifying sentiment among the people of a country.

The Member spent a lot of time talking about that sentiment of unity that subsists and exists. Therefore, why does this House need to reaffirm its commitment to the unitary state of Trinidad and Tobago when indeed there is this unity among peoples of our two islands in this sovereign state of Trinidad and Tobago?

4.00 p.m.

Unitary State of Trinidad and Tobago
[HON. T. SUDAMA]

Friday, May 17, 1996

The intent of this Motion is to preach unity, and to do so to a government of national unity is like carrying coals to Newcastle or indeed pitch to La Brea. It is totally unnecessary, irrelevant and superfluous to talk about reaffirming commitment to the unitary state of Trinidad and Tobago. The Member for San Fernando East has run out of government and now he is running out of ideas. I urge him that if he wants to talk about unity he should start at home. It is said that charity begins at home. He is preaching commitment to unity and yet the Member for San Fernando East by every statement he makes and act he performs is creating division and disunity in his very own party.

I understand that between the Member for San Fernando East and the Member for Diego Martin West there is a chasm which is wider than between Trinidad and Tobago. Indeed, I must applaud the Member for Diego Martin West for indicating publicly his availability for political leadership of the PNM. He is quite correct in his affirmation. If I may say, he has shown testicular fortitude by affirming his intentions. It is a challenge for the political leadership of the PNM. I see the grief which he is experiencing from witnessing the disintegration of that party. *[Interruption]* Are you going to make a useful intervention?

Mr. Hinds: Mr. Speaker, I have heard many a phrase. I just heard one for the first time, testicular fortitude. I would like to know whether the Member for Oropouche has ever demonstrated any of that.

Mr. T. Sudama: I do not know if the Member wishes a response to that. Do you really want a response? If you want a response to that meet me outside! *[Laughter]*

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members I do not know whether that is a threat but what I do know is that one is not entitled to make threats in this House.

Mr. Hinds: I do regard it as a very serious threat.

Mr. T. Sudama: That should be a warning. You should never get up to make such intervention.

I urge the Member for San Fernando East since he is the mover of this Motion that charity begins at home, to seek peace and unity in his own house before he tries to seek peace and unity in the national community. He is a bad role model and example when it comes to teaching about unity in Trinidad and Tobago. On every occasion when he opens his mouth he has nothing to say to the people of

Trinidad and Tobago. Now he is embarking on a course of provocation and preaching racial divisiveness and undermining the inter-racial solidarity. This is what he has descended to. He has become a pitiable figure in the politics of Trinidad and Tobago. As Selwyn Ryan has been provoked to remark, is he of any relevance to the PNM or the politics of Trinidad and Tobago? Is he trying to undermine and destroy an organization, the leadership of which he inherited for a very short period of time, and which I may say, he will never inherit again?
[Interruption]

Do you remember he spoke before the 1995 general elections and said that he would be here for 20 years as the leader of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago? That was very premature on his part.

Mr. Speaker: If the hon. Minister speaks to me rather than one of the Members or anyone else, I think that we might not provoke a certain type of uneasiness.

Hon. T. Sudama: I am not uneasy. I think the Member for San Fernando East is very uneasy. I really do not want to provoke further uneasiness on his part, so I would really abide by your ruling and address my remarks to you in this context.

The Member for San Fernando East has no moral authority to bring a motion of this kind to this House seeking to preserve the unitary status of Trinidad and Tobago. In his own right, and particularly with respect to the record of his party since 1976, the PNM cannot stand up to scrutiny when it comes to preserving the commitment to the integration and unity of the people. You would recall Mr. Speaker—I think you were in Parliament in those days—that the PNM lost in Tobago in 1976. The two parliamentary seats went out of their grip and control and immediately after that happened, in a moment of vexation and vindictiveness, the leader of the government of the PNM decided to dismantle the Ministry of Tobago Affairs, and to treat the people in a very sordid fashion as second class citizens of the island of the sovereign state of Trinidad and Tobago. It was intensified from 1976. The Member for Point Fortin spoke about the people. The people of Tobago sent the PNM packing.

Mr. Speaker: Again I am suggesting to the hon. Minister that if he addresses me we might be able to avoid the—

4.10 p.m.

Mr. T. Sudama: Mr. Speaker, the PNM, and particularly the Member for San Fernando East, has no moral authority to bring to this House, a motion about the relationship between Trinidad and Tobago; they have a history of discrimination against the people of Tobago.

Before I come to what gave rise to this Motion, let me spend a few minutes asking a few questions of my Friend from Point Fortin, who said that it fell on him as a civil servant in 1991, when an attempt was made to sell out the interests of Trinidad and Tobago by a proposal to adjust the maritime boundaries of this country, to resist this direction.

Mr. Speaker, can you imagine the Member for Point Fortin resisting anything? He said he resisted the administration. Is he in a position and is he the type of person to resist a government if it were intent on going in a certain direction. I take with a grain of salt his assertion that he resisted anything at all. In my view, his capacity to resist anything at all is wholly questionable. It is therefore an attempt at self praise.

It raises a further question. It implicates some people in acts of treason to sell out the interests of Trinidad and Tobago and undermine the sovereign state of Trinidad and Tobago. Does he understand the charge he is levelling at certain persons? If I were he, I would have named those persons who were so intent at undermining the sovereignty and interests of Trinidad and Tobago. He should name them now. He is no longer a civil servant. He is now in a position to name the nefarious characters who were engaged in that kind of activity. But he has not, and therefore his credibility is greatly in doubt. He should not make unsubstantiated charges and say that they know themselves. He should name them because it is a serious crime against the sovereignty of Trinidad and Tobago for people to go the course he said they were going.

He further indicated that he was approached by a former Member of Parliament for Tobago, who was seeking guidance on what steps Tobago should take to secede from Trinidad. Mr. Speaker, I do not know anyone in his right mind who will seek guidance from the Member for Point Fortin. I do not know whether his expertise, or whatever else he has, so permits. It is a case of the blind leading the blind.

Mr. Speaker, this whole question of his membership on the committee for decolonization is an attempt to build up his credentials—to give credibility to

what he is saying. The decolonization process was to consolidate and galvanize independence. We have the independence of Trinidad and Tobago at stake and they are saying that someone wanted to reverse the decolonization process. *[Interruption]* Why was he fired from the Ministry of Finance?

Mr. Valley: Mr. Speaker, I was asking the hon. Member whether he was fired as a management trainee from Shell.

Hon. T. Sudama: Mr. Speaker, I was never a management trainee at Shell, so how could I be fired? *[Interruption]* He will find out what he will be in the PNM when Mr. Manning finishes with him. He will be worse than a messenger.

Mr. Speaker, this Government and a number of governments have been concerned with integration.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, may I, one more time, appeal for order and calm while we hear the presentation?

Hon. T. Sudama: Mr. Speaker, we can talk much about the competence of the Member for Diego Martin Central at Algico and at the Ministry of Finance and, indeed, in the former PNM Government.

This Government has indicated its commitment to integration. We have not only indicated our commitment to Caricom, but that has been expanded to a commitment to the Association of Caribbean States. This is all in the process of integration regionally and internationally and the Government of national unity is committed to the integration of all our peoples in Trinidad and Tobago. Our history and commitment has been a history and commitment for integration, for moving together in unity as a people. I cannot understand their charges that this Government promotes disunity and does not favour the solidarity of all our peoples, and is trying to set in process something which will separate Tobago from Trinidad. It has no credibility at all.

The Member for Tobago East has stated in categorical terms that this is the sovereign democratic state of Trinidad and Tobago. What does sovereignty imply as the Member for Point Fortin elaborated? Sovereignty implies that there is a unity between the various elements of the people who comprise a state. So if he says that it is a sovereign state, he is saying that it is a unified state. I do not see what issue he can take with that. There is no question that we are for unity, greater integration and keeping our people together. We are for integrating the economies of Trinidad and Tobago and for the integration of that national economy into a wider regional economy.

The Member for Toco/Manzanilla spoke at length about the integration of economic life between Toco and Tobago and we want to promote that by creating the infrastructure. Why does he not say that in view of the understanding and relationship between the people of Tobago and Trinidad, this Motion is totally irrelevant? As he himself has mentioned, what the people have put together, no man can put asunder, whether it is the Member for San Fernando East or anyone else. If the people of Tobago and Trinidad have that common understanding and sentiment, it stands to reason that no individual can disrupt that relationship and create division. This Motion is so totally irrelevant and superfluous, it shows that the Member for San Fernando East, who could have brought so many matters to this House, is totally bankrupt of ideas.

Mr. Speaker, the problem that has emerged between Trinidad and Tobago over the years has been one of the proper relationship which subsists at the socio-political level between Trinidad and Tobago.

4.20 p.m.

This Government, having seen and learnt from the lessons of the past, is attempting to deal with those relationships in a manner which would be satisfactory and acceptable to the people of Tobago and Trinidad. We are in the process of trying to put in place a mutually satisfactory arrangement, so that we could put, particularly, the administrative relationships between Trinidad and Tobago on a very sound footing. Indeed, having done that, we will endeavour to create a more harmonious understanding between our peoples. Mr. Speaker, this is what we are trying to achieve.

In this respect, one would have thought that if the Member for Toco/Manzanilla were so concerned about the relationship between Trinidad and Tobago, he should support any initiative on the part of this Government to put those relationships on a sound, proper, harmonious and amicable footing. Mr. Speaker, if that is his objective and intention, I wish to let him know that it is also the intention of this Government. The Member for Toco/Manzanilla is probably on the wrong side, as I told him before, and he is being misled into supporting a totally irrelevant Motion by the Member for San Fernando East.

Mr. Boynes: Mr. Speaker, I wish to indicate that I feel quite confident, as a young parliamentarian, to be under the umbrella of the People's National Movement. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Assam: Unless it is a leaking umbrella.

Hon. T. Sudama: Mr. Speaker, I see that cause has arisen for the Member's reaffirmation of his commitment, maybe there was some question of his commitment to the "umbrella" and, particularly, to the Leader of the PNM—for the time being—the Member for San Fernando East.

We are aware—as the Member for Point Fortin indicated—of the consequences of breaking up any kind of union. Mr. Speaker, nobody wants to create disunion and disunity. We do not want to get into that kind of syndrome. The whole problem is that a union subsists on the basis of understanding. If one is talking about a union, the parties to that union must have a common understanding; they must share the same values and so forth and when one has that common understanding and sharing then the union will subsist.

The Member for Toco/Manzanilla indicated that that has been in existence among the people of Trinidad and Tobago. Nobody in his right mind wishes to create conflict on a regional basis or on any other basis in Trinidad and Tobago. However, having listened to the utterances in the past few months of the Member for San Fernando East and the Member for Diego Martin Central, the fact is that they have come to the end of their tether. There is absolutely no new issue they can raise, so they just fall back on that old issue, on which they have so much expertise, that of trying to foment racial division in the society. *[Interruption]* The record is there! They say it privately and publicly and it is recorded in the newspaper as to what this Government intends to do with certain sectors of the population in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Panday: You mean the Opposition, not this Government?

Hon. T. Sudama: No, no, he is imputing motives to this Government that are very bad, motives that he should, in fact, impute to himself as to what he wishes to do with the unification, solidarity and the harmonious relationships that have subsisted between the people of Trinidad and Tobago. Mr. Speaker, the Member for San Fernando East promotes and incites all kinds of things by his statements. This is the man who brought this Motion for commitment to the unitary state of Trinidad and Tobago. However, he is doing all in his power to disunite his own party and to create disunity among the people of Trinidad and Tobago along ethnic, religious and other lines. As I said, Mr. Speaker, the Member has absolutely no moral authority to speak in this House and he is bankrupt of any ideas, political or otherwise. He has no credibility in the PNM; he is hanging there

Unitary State of Trinidad and Tobago
[HON. T. SUDAMA]

Friday, May 17, 1996

by a thread until certain Members on that side wish to take the initiative to do something about his incumbency of the political leadership of the PNM.

I rose to put our position on the table and to indicate that this Motion is of total irrelevance and it is a wastage of parliamentary time. We could have been discussing more crucial and critical matters but this Member brings a Motion to talk about unity and commitment to the unitary state of Trinidad and Tobago.

I want to reaffirm this Government's commitment to the unity of the people of Trinidad and Tobago to a sovereign democratic state. We intend to pursue that with all the vigour at our command so that now, and in the future, we will be at the helm of a Government which seeks to promote a sovereign, democratic state of Trinidad and Tobago.

ADJOURNMENT

The Attorney General (Hon. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this House be adjourned to Friday 24 May 1996, at 1.30 p.m.

May I, through you, Mr. Speaker, ask the hon. Opposition Chief Whip, what will be on the Order Paper on that day?

Hon. Member: What? *[Laughter]*

Mr. Valley: Mr. Speaker, obviously the Member is forgetting who is Leader of the House. *[Laughter]*

Friday next is Private Members' Day and there are two motions, the one that we are now debating and the other filed by the Member for Diego Martin East.

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: Would strangers please take their seats?

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 4.30 p.m.