

Joint Select Committee

Friday, May 24, 1996

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, May 24, 1996.

The House met at 1.32 p.m.

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE

Integrity Legislation

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I wish to advise that I have received communication from the Vice-President of the Senate dated May 22, 1996 which reads as follows:

“Dear Mr. Speaker,

Resolution - Joint Select Committee

With reference to your letter dated May 9, 1996, I wish to inform you that at a sitting held on Tuesday May 21, 1996, the Senate agreed to the following Resolution which was moved by the Leader of Government Business, Sen. The Hon. Wade Mark:

“WHEREAS the Green Paper on Integrity Legislation was tabled in the House of Representatives on Friday, February 2, 1996, and in the Senate on Tuesday, February 6, 1996:

BE IT RESOLVED:

That a Joint Select Committee of Parliament be established to receive and consider the comments of members of the public and to submit the recommendations to Parliament thereon.”

The Resolution is accordingly returned with the concurrence of the Senate.

Yours respectfully,

Vice-President”

Hon. Members, one would expect in the circumstances that the Motion would be forthcoming before the House sooner or later.

Condolence

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CONDOLENCE

(MR. JUSTICE EVAN REES)

Mr. Speaker: The other announcement that I want to make to hon. Members is that we should simply take note of the death of the late Mr. Justice Evan Rees who was, indeed, an Officer of Parliament, he having been the first Ombudsman of this country; and that I took the liberty on behalf of hon. Members and myself to despatch a letter of condolence to his widow. I simply want to bring that to the notice of the House; and I am sure that all Members of the House would like to be associated with that.

PAPERS LAID

1. Report of the Auditor General on the Accounts and Financial Statements of the Rehabilitation of Access Roads and Reconstruction of Bridges Programme for the year ended December 31, 1995 as required by Loan Contract 700/OC-TT between the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and the Inter-American Development Bank. [*The Attorney General (Hon. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj)*]

(To be referred to the Public Accounts Committee)

2. Annual Report of the Tobago House of Assembly for the year ended December 31, 1994. (*Hon. R. L. Maharaj*)
3. Conventions and Recommendations to the Competent Authority in accordance with Article 19 of the Constitution of the International Labour Organisation. [*The Minister of Labour and Co-operatives (Hon. Harry Partap)*]

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Ammonia Plant

(Point Lisas)

7. Mr. Patrick Manning (*San Fernando West*) asked the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries:

- (a) Would the Minister please state whether the Government intends to enter into any arrangements with Arcadian which would include fiscal and other incentives for the establishment of another ammonia plant at Point Lisas?
- (b) If the answer is in the affirmative, would the Minister indicate the terms of those arrangements?

- (c) Would the Minister also indicate how these terms and conditions differ from the special concessionary terms and conditions granted to Farmland for the establishment of the first ammonia plant at the La Brea/Brighton Industrial Estate?

Minister of Energy and Energy Industries (Sen. The Hon. Finbar Gangar): Mr. Speaker, Arcadian commenced business operations in Trinidad and Tobago in March, 1993 with the purchase of the Government's and Amoco's shareholdings in Fertilizers of Trinidad and Tobago Limited (FERTRIN). The Company currently operates two ammonia plants at Point Lisas with a third plant due to come on stream in the second quarter of 1996.

Arcadian proposed the establishment of a fourth plant at Point Lisas, with a capacity of 600,000 tonnes per annum, and has received Government's approval for the project. A package of fiscal incentives was the subject of negotiations prior to this Government's approval of the Arcadian project.

With regard to fiscal incentives for the proposed project, agreement has been reached between the Government and Arcadian that the same terms and conditions which applied to the third plant be extended to the new plant. It should be noted that the terms and conditions for the third plant were negotiated by the previous Government.

1.40 p.m.

The agreement offered total relief from corporation tax and customs duty together with loss offset in accordance with the provisions of section 24 of the Fiscal Incentives Act, Chap. 85:01 for a period of five years. Arcadian was also granted import duty concessions on equipment temporarily imported for use in construction of the plant.

In the case of Farmland, based on the siting of the plant at La Brea a comparable package of fiscal incentives was agreed with regard to exemption from customs duty, import duty concessions, loss carry forward, exemption from corporation tax and relief of tax on dividends and other distribution out of exempt profits. The duration of the tax holiday for Farmland extends for seven to ten years conditional upon excess profits tax as compared to five years in the case of Arcadian. In view of the proposed resiting of the plant from La Brea, based on M. W. Kellogg's rejection of the site, the package of fiscal incentives is now being revisited.

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In summary, the stipulated and effective tax holiday durations are crucial differences between the two packages of incentives.

Mr. Manning: I thank the hon. Minister for the answer he has given. Would he be prepared to give us the exact figure that has been agreed upon in respect of both companies for the gas price?

Hon. G . Singh: Mr. Speaker, that information will be provided to the hon. Member for San Fernando East.

Road Improvement Fund (Revenue Allocation)

8. Mr. Patrick Manning asked the Minister of Works and Transport:

Would the Minister please state:

- (a) The revenues anticipated under the Road Improvement Fund for 1996?
- (b) The portion of these revenues which has been allocated to Tobago?

The Minister of Works and Transport (Sen. The Hon. Sadiq Baksh): Mr. Speaker, this is the first time that I am speaking in this House and it would be found wanting of me if I do not pause at first to pay tribute to the distinguished and honourable Speaker of this House.

I wish to express my congratulations to you on the dignified and impartial manner in which you have been conducting the affairs of this honourable House. When seemingly controversial decisions have to be taken, you always display an attractive detached spirit of disinterested objectivity under your experienced and wise guidance. I feel I expressed the unanimous sentiments here when I say that your integrity and character tower above us and we shall continue to enjoy lively and learned debates to the best interest of all the peoples of Trinidad and Tobago.
[Applause]

Mr. Speaker, as a friend, you have continued in a fine professional tradition and I would like to extend my congratulations.

The road improvement tax expected to be collected and placed in the Road Improvement Fund for 1996 is approximately \$8 million based on the level of receipts so far of approximately \$4 million per month. However, only the sum of

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\$23 million of the \$48 million is available for use by the Ministry of Works and Transport in 1996.

The anticipated revenue had been reduced because of the following, and I ask you to take note, Mr. Speaker:

(1) Over-spending by the previous administration in 1995 in the sum of \$13 million in their attempt to win the last general election. The sum of approximately \$12 million is estimated to be used as counterpart funding for the National Highways Programme.

The Government has allocated \$2 million to the Tobago House of Assembly. Using the same ratio of allocation in 1995, this sum represents 33 per cent more than 1995 allocation to the Tobago House of Assembly.

Road Improvement Fund (Repairs)

9. Mr. Patrick Manning asked the Minister of Works and Transport:

Would the Minister please state:

- (a) The roads scheduled to be repaired under the Road Improvement Fund in 1996?
- (b) The roads attended to under this Fund since the beginning of the year?

The Minister of Works and Transport (Sen. The Hon. Sadiq Baksh): Mr. Speaker, the roads scheduled to be repaired under the Road Improvement Fund in 1996 number approximately 106 and would be identified according to districts—St. George West, to the value of \$2.5 million; St. George East to the tune of \$3 million; Caroni, \$3 million; St. Andrew/St. David, \$2 million; Victoria West, \$3 million; Victoria East, \$3 million; St. Patrick, \$3 million and Nariva/Mayaro, \$3.5 million.

However, before proceeding any further, I wish to point out that this Government has no intention of conducting business like the previous administration did, paving roads one day, digging them up the next day, laying mains the next day. Prudent management demands that we take all relevant factors into account in planning our programme.

It is in this context that I advise the hon. Members of this House that implementation of the scheduled programme which I just detailed will, to a large

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extent, depend on WASA's main laying programme as it affects our roads to be repaired.

There has been no expenditure from the Road Improvement Fund on actual road improvements in 1996 so far because all moneys collected to date have been expended in paying outstanding debts accrued by the previous administration for work done in 1995.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION
(Conventions and Recommendations)

The Minister of Labour and Co-operatives (Hon. Harry Partap): Mr. Speaker, I seek your kind permission to inform this honourable House that I had laid earlier on the Table 14 conventions and 11 recommendations which were adopted by the International Labour Organizations (ILO) during its 74th to 80th and 82nd sessions held in Geneva over the period June 1987 to June 1993, and in June, 1994. These International Labour Organization conventions and recommendations are instruments on various subjects which are adopted at the annual conference of the ILO and which represent the standards to be met by member states as they relate to workers and employers.

The two classes of Instruments differ in that, conventions on being ratified, attain the force of treaty obligations, whereas recommendations, while subject to ratification, provide detailed guidelines which member states are expected to follow in their pursuit of social and economic development.

Mr. Speaker, Article 19 of the ILO Constitution makes it an obligation on member states to bring the conventions and recommendations before the competent authority within whose competence the matter lies for the enactment of legislation or other actions. The competent authority is the Parliament.

1.50 p.m.

Article 19 requires that member states of the ILO must submit instruments within 12 months, and not later than 18 months of their adoption, to the competent authority.

Mr. Speaker, Trinidad and Tobago became a member of the ILO in 1963 and it was unfortunate that steps were not taken previously to comply with the ILO's constitution even though the procedure does not commit governments to ratify the conventions and recommendations.

I must point out that governments have complete freedom to make any proposals to their parliaments concerning recommended action on conventions and recommendations.

Mr. Speaker, this lack of initiative had, in a sense, black-listed Trinidad and Tobago in the eyes of the ILO. Indeed, the ILO's Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations has in its 1996 Report III, Part 4A, listed Trinidad and Tobago as a country with "a special problem" because of the backlog which has been created over the many years of not submitting the ILO's conventions and recommendations to the Parliament.

Since coming into office, this Government of national unity has appointed the ILO's Convention 144 Tripartite Committee and we propose to refer these conventions and recommendations to that committee for study before a final decision is taken with respect to the ratification of the conventions, or acceptance of the recommendations.

Mr. Speaker, the delay in bringing the backlog of conventions and recommendations to Parliament is an embarrassment to the Government and people of Trinidad and Tobago. By bringing this backlog of conventions and recommendations to Parliament, we are taking effective steps to redress this delinquency. Allow me to briefly indicate the conventions and recommendations which I have laid on the Parliament's table this evening.

The 74th session of the ILO held in 1987 adopted Conventions Nos. 163, 164, 165 and 166 and Recommendations Nos. 173 and 174 dealing with the welfare of seafarers. The 75th session held in 1988 adopted Conventions Nos. 167 and 168 and Recommendations Nos. 175 and 176. These dealt with the safety and health of workers in the construction industry and the employment, promotion and protection against unemployment.

The 76th session in 1989 adopted Convention No. 169 which concerned indigenous and tribal peoples in independent countries; the 77th session in 1990 adopted Convention No. 170 and Recommendation No. 177 which dealt with safety in the use of chemicals at work, while Convention No. 171 and Recommendation No. 178 dealt with night work.

At the 78th session in 1991, the ILO adopted Convention No. 172 and Recommendation No. 179 concerning working conditions in hotels, restaurants and similar establishments. The 79th session in 1992 adopted Convention No. 173

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and Recommendation No. 180 concerning the protection of workers' claims in the event of the insolvency of their employer.

At its 80th session held in 1993 the ILO adopted Convention No. 174 and Recommendation No. 181 concerning the prevention of major industrial accidents. At the ILO's 81st session held in 1994, Convention No. 175 and Recommendation No. 182 were adopted. These instruments dealt with part-time work. And, at the 82nd session held last year the ILO adopted Convention No. 176 and Recommendation No. 183 concerning safety and health in mines.

The last regime, by a Cabinet decision last year, had referred Convention No. 175 and Recommendation No. 182 on part-time work for further study by the 144 Tripartite Committee. This decision was never implemented because the last regime did not put the mechanism in place to appoint the 144 Tripartite Committee.

I am pleased to announce that this Government of National Unity has appointed the 144 Tripartite Committee and it will have as its first task to study all 14 Conventions and 11 Recommendations. After these discussions, a statement outlining a definite course of action would be enunciated.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Valley: Mr. Speaker, I wonder whether you would allow me a question for clarification from the Minister?

Mr. Speaker: Questions are not permitted.

Mr. Valley: Just a question on clarification, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Questions are not permitted on statements.

Mr. Valley: Just a point of clarification, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Okay.

Mr. Valley: Mr. Speaker, I merely wanted to know whether the hon. Minister had given this committee a deadline for reporting.

IMMIGRATION (CARIBBEAN SKILLED NATIONALS) BILL

Bill to remove the restrictions on entry into Trinidad and Tobago of skilled nationals of qualifying Caribbean Community countries, [*The Minister of National Security*]; read the first time.

UNITARY STATE OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

[FIFTH 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. [Mr. P. Manning]

Question again proposed.

Mrs. Camille Robinson-Regis (*Arouca South*): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join in the debate of this Motion which I support in its original form. The amendment, as I see it, only serves as a clear example of semantics.

It is not unusual for us on this side to bring a Motion of this nature regarding Tobago, as our history has shown the patent need for governments to state quite clearly what is their intent for, and commitment to Trinidad and Tobago.

2.00 p.m.

Recent history of the NAR in Government and the UNC in Opposition, and now the UNC/NAR in Government has left us to wonder at the true commitment to Tobago and its development as an integral part of the unitary state of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, permit me to take this opportunity to give a brief outline of that recent history of which I speak and indeed, to make some comparisons where necessary.

I am sure you will recall that on nomination day for the last general election the PNM fielded 36 candidates in the 36 constituencies of Trinidad and Tobago. The UNC fielded 34 candidates although it was a general election for Trinidad and Tobago, and at the time as far as we were aware in Trinidad and Tobago there was no coalition and there was no accommodation. No candidates were fielded from a political party which now forms the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. That party did not think it necessary, apparently, to include Tobago if they were to form the Government on their own. If they only fielded 34 candidates clearly, the Tobago interest was not their interest. At that time those two political parties which now form the coalition were at war, and we have now their marriage of convenience.

It would have been thought that the bigger party in the coalition really should have cared about Tobago but that was not the only indication that they did not care about or have any true commitment to what took place in Tobago.

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As an example of that, I would like to quote from what the UNC calls a manifesto. I am quoting from page 27 of their own so-called manifesto under the rubric "Tobago". But before I quote, let me just point out that the information or vision of the UNC for Tobago is contained in this so-called manifesto in eight lines and 65 words and six of those words are repetition of United National Congress. Let me quote what part of their vision says on Tobago.

"We are aware of the substantial initiatives taken by the Tobago House of Assembly to facilitate economic, social and human resources development programmes in Tobago."

Mr. Speaker, they say that the UNC Government commits itself to reinforcing and accelerating these initiatives. In those eight lines they have encapsulated what their vision was for Tobago and that is why we must be concerned about the true relationship or the true commitment that this coalition has in relation to the Unitary State of Trinidad and Tobago. Apart from that history, we also have a history which has shown quite clearly that the relationship between Trinidad and Tobago is the furthest thing from the minds of the Members of the coalition.

When the political leader of the PNM was Prime Minister and attained Government in December, 1991, by January 7, 1992, the political leader paid an official visit to the Tobago House of Assembly which is the authoritative body which administers the affairs of Tobago. That was approximately two weeks of being Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago. On that occasion the political leader took the opportunity to extend the olive branch to the Tobago House of Assembly to indicate to the Tobago House of Assembly what the vision of his Government was for Tobago and the Tobago House of Assembly, a vision which was eventually played out in the negotiations which took place between the Tobago House of Assembly and the Government of the day.

However, let me give you an idea of the actions of this coalition Government which leaves us to wonder about their commitment. The very first visit by this current Prime Minister, the Member for Couva North was purely political when he addressed a meeting at Scarborough when we saw the very first signal of the end of the freedoms which we once enjoyed.

You will recall, I am sure, that it was on that occasion that there was a very small protest and do you recall how those protesters were man-handled, how their placards were destroyed? From that time on, as the Prime Minister has said, he has been at war with the media.

Last week we even witnessed the curtailment of demonstration around the Red House and we consistently witness the arbitrary manner in which citizens of this country have been sent on the bread line. It is interesting that one of the last persons to be sent on the bread line was Major General Ralph Brown. The fact that the Member for Tobago East is even alive today, maybe attributed to the work of Major General Ralph Brown.

2.10 p.m.

As all these things proceed, the Member for Tobago East continues to sit silently with the sanctimonious air of a praying mantis, whilst a man's career and life are being savaged and history is being rewritten. Yet they continue to ignore the people of Trinidad and Tobago. The history of their lack of commitment continues.

The second visit was at the request of the Seventh Day Adventists. The Prime Minister accepted and went to Tobago. The third visit was when the Tobago House of Assembly finally met officially after numerous complaints on their part, almost six months after the Member for Couva North assumed prime ministerial responsibility for the people of Trinidad and Tobago. What was the role of the Member for Tobago East, the Minister Extraordinaire and the Member for Tobago West? Both were silent during the visit. They claimed to be the representatives of Tobago but they continued to say nothing about the relationship between Trinidad and Tobago.

Miss Nicholson: They love Sister Pam!

Mrs. C. Robinson-Regis: I do not deny that the people of Tobago love Sister Pam. As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, my husband comes from Tobago West, the area which Sister Pam represents. I am sure he did not vote for Sister Pam, but I am sure that the people of Tobago love Sister Pam. Mr. Speaker, just as an aside, the people of Tobago have a very gentle way of showing their love for Sister Pam or Sister Camille, or even Brother Rowley. I have been the recipient of that Tobago love. *[Laughter]*

Mr. Speaker: I just want to understand that there is no connection between your husband who comes from the same area as Sister Pam, and this being the recipient of this Tobago love. *[Laughter]*

Mrs. C. Robinson-Regis: Mr. Speaker, I would not take this time to clarify that situation.

The comparison which I would like to make and continue with is one which shows quite clearly that even though there is apparently a Minister for Tobago Affairs, in the person of the Member for Tobago East, we are hearing very little about the situation involving Tobago. I would point out that when the PNM formed the government during the period 1991—1995, there was a clear commitment to ensuring that the relationship between Trinidad and Tobago would consistently and continuously be improved. That commitment was shown when the government initiated the formation of two teams to work out an improvement in the relationship between Trinidad and Tobago.

The government's team was headed by Sir Ellis Clarke, a former President, a former Attorney General, an eminent attorney and above all a gentleman who had a major role in the authorship of our Constitution. The Tobago House of Assembly's team was headed by another eminent legal mind, Mr. Karl Hudson Phillips SC, a former PNM Attorney General and indeed a former deputy political leader of the National Alliance for Reconstruction, a man who came from the womb of this marriage of convenience.

The objective of the two teams was to work out the constitutional relationship between the Tobago House of Assembly and the government and to improve the THA legislation. At present, there is a situation where the existence of the Tobago House of Assembly can be snuffed out by a simple majority in the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago. The intention was to ensure that the existence of the Tobago House of Assembly was enshrined in the Constitution, so that it could only be removed by a special majority of the Parliament. That was of utmost importance because the Tobago House of Assembly consistently complained that they needed to have certain constitutional guarantees. The initial objective was to ensure that the existence of the THA was enshrined in the Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago.

Additionally, the second piece of legislation would have been the THA legislation which would have outlined its function to ensure that it played a more critical role in the development of Trinidad and Tobago, and more particularly, the development of Tobago, so that policy decisions could have been initiated by the THA.

2.20 p.m.

They would have had responsibility for certain specific areas—and may I point out, Mr. Speaker, that those areas span the broad spectrum of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, leaving out only matters of national

security and foreign affairs. Indeed, the objective was to ensure that Tobago, through the THA had a more definite role to play in the management of the affairs of Tobago.

I would like to point out that over the years of the development of Trinidad and Tobago, particularly under the People's National Movement, there has been an unquestioned attempt to ensure that Tobago was developed, and developed to its fullest potential. I take this opportunity to go through the PNM's record of achievement in Tobago and to indicate, through that listing, that the PNM has consistently been committed to the unitary state of Trinidad and Tobago.

It was under the PNM that the THA Act came into being in 1980. It was under the PNM that the Member for Tobago East became the first chairman of the THA. It was under the PNM that the Claude Noel Highway was developed despite those who wanted to stop this project by lying on the proposed highway. It was under the PNM that the Scarborough Mall and the administrative centre of Tobago was developed. And, indeed, Mr. Speaker, three purpose-built libraries were built in Tobago under the PNM: the Scarborough Library, the Roxborough Library and the Charlotteville Library.

I am hearing some asides and I am saying that the Scarborough Library was a purpose-built library. There is no such library in Trinidad, and when the attempt should be made to build such a library, that is not being done by this Government. Trinidad does not have a purpose-built library.

Under the PNM, the Hall of Justice and the international airport were built, although people were told to stay away from the sod turning. But when the Prime Ministership of Trinidad and Tobago went to the Member for Tobago East, the airport was opened again.

That is the kind of thing which has taken place in Tobago. When I say "the kind of thing", I mean the series of things that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, under the PNM, has done for Tobago. Whenever the PNM forms the Government, they are the Government of all the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

I would like to refer again to the situation when the Claude Noel Highway was being built and persons were encouraged to lie across the Highway; when the international airport was being opened and persons were encouraged not to support the opening. Persons, it is said, were encouraged by their parliamentary representatives for the areas, Tobago East and Tobago West. *[Interruption]* I am sorry. The Member for Tobago West is saying that she was not there.

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The Member for Tobago West continues to say she was not there, so it must have been the Member for Tobago East—and I phrase my words very carefully—it is alleged was the one who encouraged people to lie across the highway. That is particularly interesting because the Member for Tobago East, in his contribution to this very debate, said:

“So my political positions are taken on the basis of principle ... and my record is there, and I have great pleasure in standing in this Parliament today and saying the same principles that I espoused when I marched for independence in 1961, in 1962 and for federation, are the principles that I espouse as I stand in this Parliament today. They are principles I will espouse to my dying day whether it be by natural causes or by gun fire, my principles will be the same.”

Mr. Speaker, I am left to wonder about the political principles of the Member for Tobago East, who, when Tobago is being developed, allegedly encourages people to attempt to stop the development.

Miss Nicholson: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Can a Member use alleged statements, tarnishing parliamentarians, to make a point in this House. I would like you to rule on that, please.

Mr. Speaker: The Standing Orders are quite clear and do not permit people to make attacks on the character of Members of the House. Indeed, the Speaker will try to discourage attacks on the character of people who are even outside the House and cannot defend themselves.

We, however, have to be careful in allowing Members to talk in a Parliament and not restrict them too very much. The English language is perhaps the most imprecise. When a Member, and it is assumed that all Members are honourable and responsible, says that something is alleged outside, it is not that the Member is supporting it. If indeed that allegation is correct, we have a problem. One has to be careful about how far one takes that because one can say that it is alleged that one has done something corrupt and dishonest and in a way get away with it.

I can really do no more than appeal to hon. Members in the use of the English language and in terms of the freedom to talk which they have in Parliament, to consider these things and refrain as much as possible from doing anything which would have undesirable effects.

2.30 p.m.

Mrs. C. Robinson-Regis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I will continue by saying that in circumstances such as these, we on this side must display some concern for the commitment of the coalition Government to the unitary state of Trinidad and Tobago. I will take this opportunity to quote again the words of the Member for Tobago East. These words were in his contribution in this debate. He said, and I quote:

“So do not question my loyalty. My loyalty is to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. I can only characterize as the height of impertinence, the conduct of anyone who seeks to question my loyalty to Trinidad and Tobago.”

“The height of impertinence”, Mr. Speaker.

Is an example of loyalty to the people of Trinidad and Tobago, and particularly, to the people of Tobago, being displayed when the Cabinet of the day sits with the Members for Tobago East and West and they take a decision to remove the Easter Monday holiday and nothing is said by them until there is a hue and cry from the very people of Tobago, to whom the Member for Tobago East said he is loyal? Is that a display of loyalty? That is a clear situation of being oblivious of the significance of Easter Monday to the very people whom they represent.

Is it an example of loyalty when, as I outlined previously, the Member for Tobago East, who made the difference and ensured that the Member for Couva North is the Prime Minister today, did not ensure that early in the days of this administration the Prime Minister pay an official visit to the Tobago House of Assembly? Is that an example of loyalty, Mr. Speaker?

I am also concerned about loyalty when, for the first time in the history of the elections of this country we have a situation of 17:17:2, where the country was in a state of flux and a state of suspense. We are now seeing that the negotiations which took place between the Member for Couva North and the Member for Tobago East were negotiations to ensure that the Member for Tobago East's salary was higher than the very Member for Couva North, who is apparently the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago. Is that an example of loyalty and commitment to the people of Trinidad and Tobago, particularly, to the people of Tobago? If that is an example of loyalty and commitment to the people of Trinidad and Tobago, I prefer not to be loyal in that way.

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Mr. Speaker, we can continue to question the loyalty as the silence continues, and as more and more things take place to erode the democracy of Trinidad and Tobago, and indeed, to erode the relationship between Trinidad and Tobago. I also question the loyalty, when the Member for Couva North justifies part of that payment by saying that the Member for Tobago East is being paid because he is the leader of a political party. Well, Mr. Speaker, if that is the theory on which that payment is being made, may I inform the Members opposite that they have a big back-pay for Hulsie Bhaggan, Lloyd Best, Makandal Daaga, Raffique Shah and Abu Bakr, all former leaders of political parties. Mr. Speaker, the commitment leaves much to be desired.

We continuously hear the Member for Tobago East indicate that he marched for independence and for Chaguaramas. Mr. Speaker, it is not only in his latest speech on Tobago that he indicated his times of marching, but in a debate dealing with internal self-government for Tobago, he also talked about his marching for independence and so on in 1977 and 1978. Yet, he has not, on any of those occasions—when he had the opportunity to talk about his commitment and what he wanted for Tobago—indicated what he wanted for Tobago and for the relationship between Trinidad and Tobago.

2.40 p.m.

That is why we on this side must ask the question: “Is there a commitment to the unitary state of Trinidad and Tobago?” We have on several occasions demonstrated that commitment, particularly during the term of the last administration where every effort was made to ensure that the perception which Tobagonians had existed that they were not fairly treated in the relationship between Trinidad and Tobago would be dispelled.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the hon. Member’s speaking time has expired.

Motion made, That the hon. Member’s speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [*Hon. P. Nicholson*]

Question put and agreed to.

Mrs. C. Robinson-Regis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I particularly want to thank the Member for Tobago West. Just what I said, Mr. Speaker, “Tobago love in action”. [*Desk thumping*]

I continue by saying that particularly, apart from the list of developmental items which I pointed out earlier in the debate, the attempt to improve the

administrative situation in Tobago was made by the last PNM Government and very briefly, a Cabinet committee was appointed to make recommendations re the commencement or improvement of the delivery of government services to Tobago. There was a list of things which were recommended and initiated. I would not go through the entire list, but I would like to point out that with regard to medical services, the recommendation was that the Tobago Regional Health Authority should address the matter of providing specialist services in Tobago, and in the interim, there would be a rebate for persons who had to travel to Trinidad to seek medical attention not available in Tobago.

There was also a situation where persons had to come to Trinidad to obtain agricultural permits and licences with regard to animal and plant quarantine. The recommendation was that that service should be provided in Tobago. A similar situation existed with regard to licences from the Ministry of Trade and with regard to registration numbers for persons who needed them from the Bureau of Standards, and the recommendation was that those services would be provided in Tobago. Additionally, with the services of the Food and Drug Division of the Ministry of Health, it was recommended that people would no longer have to come to Trinidad to access those services because they would be provided in Tobago.

There were several other recommendations made and implemented and the concrete attempt was made to ensure that persons from Tobago who may have had to come to Trinidad to access certain services, would no longer have to do so.

I would like to take the opportunity to also point out that in the last budget which was prepared by the UNC/NAR coalition, we saw a clear decrease in the budgetary allowance for Tobago. Contrary to that, was the fact that in the 1994 budget, there was a clear and significant increase in the budgetary allowance to Tobago and we are therefore left to wonder what is the intention of the coalition with regard to Tobago and the relationship between Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, the commitment of the PNM is unwavering and unquestioned when it comes to the relationship between Trinidad and Tobago.

Miss Nicholson: And we have to struggle so hard.

Mrs. C. Robinson-Regis: I would like to make the point that there has been an antagonistic relationship—which it has been alleged—is being fostered by the representatives of the people of Tobago and I would indicate the type of relationship that has been fostered.

The DAC Manifesto of 1984, talked about the President of the Republic emphasizing that the Act was passed so that the islands of Trinidad and Tobago could stand side by side and not one behind the other; but while the President of the Republic has always been scrupulous in his observation of the proprieties, the Prime Minister and his Ministers of the PNM have broken every cannon in their dealings with the people of Tobago and the House of Assembly.

2.50 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, this manifesto says the PNM government refuses to implement the provisions of Act No. 37 of 1980 or to permit the people of Tobago to take decisions concerning their development.

I have taken the opportunity to quote from this manifesto because it is one on which an election was fought. These are the types of antagonistic statements that were consistently made to the people of Tobago about the PNM government of Trinidad and Tobago.

A manifesto is usually built on principles and projections, not on fostering unfortunate and antagonistic relationships between persons who form the unitary state of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, I can assure you that no manifesto of the PNM would make these kinds of antagonistic statements about any political party which is fighting an election. I am not saying that statements would not be made about the policies of the particular Opposition but there would be no personalizing of the political campaign. *[Interruption]*

Mrs. C. Robinson-Regis: Mr. Speaker, I am saying that based on the personalizing as seen in the manifesto of 1984, there had been a conscious decision to continuously undermine the relationship between the people of Trinidad and the people of Tobago, not on principle but on personalizing situations.

Miss Nicholson: That started in Trinidad.

Mrs. C. Robinson-Regis: Mr. Speaker, may I state categorically, that is clearly unfortunate, and that can never be the way persons who exist in one country should relate to each other, and definitely should not be the way a manifesto to fight any election should be couched. That is why we on this side must ask for a reaffirmation of the commitment of the Government to the unitary

state of Trinidad and Tobago. History has shown that that question must be asked of this coalition Government.

The PNM, as I have stated quite clearly, has much to be proud of in its relationships with the people of Trinidad and Tobago. No where in the world have all the people of both islands been given the opportunity to succeed and to make the most of themselves as in Trinidad and Tobago under the PNM.

We must assure that despite the type of history of antagonism and the recent history of apparent ignoring of the interest of the people of Tobago, that this Government reaffirms its commitment to, particularly, the development of Tobago and ensuring the survival of the unitary state of Trinidad and Tobago.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Hedwige Bereaux (*La Brea*): Mr. Speaker, I rise to make a short intervention in this debate on the Motion:

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

All the Members on the Government side who spoke in this debate sought to reduce the importance and relevance of this Motion by pointing out that the present coalition Government consist of 17 members of the UNC and two members of the Tobago faction of the NAR. They did not mention the triumvirate of financial adventurers but we know that that is the other portion of the coalition.

I must confess that their proposition was put with such vigour and conviction that I found myself almost believing them. They said that because of this coalition it was a given that there was a commitment to the unitary state of Trinidad and Tobago; but action speaks louder than words.

The Member for Oropouche, the hon. Minister of Planning and Development had the audacity to question the bona fides of the Member for Point Fortin, a man who has spent 20 years in the service of his country and who has now come to spend another 20 years at another level. His bona fides were questioned by a man who has never been able to hold any job for more than two years, other than the one which the Member for Couva North gave him and which Sadiq Baksh will take from him shortly.

The Member went to great pains and spent an inordinate length of time in trying to convince this House of the unitary purpose of his government to the people of Tobago. But as I said before, action speaks louder than words.

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Mr. Speaker, there is a parcel of land in new Scarborough in Tobago on which the state gave a lease for the purpose of building a drive-in cinema. The leasee of that parcel of land is from Trinidad and apparently is well-known to the Minister of Planning and Development. What happened? When this Government came into power, he by-passed the Tobago House of Assembly and the Minister of Tobago Affairs and went to the Minister of Planning and Development and got the permission changed to put down a Mall.

The Minister of Planning and Development spent his time here saying that they are so respectful of the people of Tobago and so in sync with the unitary statehood of Trinidad and Tobago when in fact he is guilty of the most blatant disrespect for the Tobago House of Assembly and, by extension, the Minister of Tobago Affairs.

3.00 p.m.

I can well understand that. I am sorry that the Minister Extraordinaire is not here because the Minister Extraordinaire was the person who threw him out of the NAR Cabinet and I am sure he retained this animosity for him and that is why he has treated Tobago like that.

Mr. Sudama: Bereaux has nothing to say.

Mr. H. Bereaux: Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, I do not like to make comments about persons when they are not in this honourable House, but it would appear that the Minister Extraordinaire and Member for Tobago East is uncomfortable with his perks and salary and to be quite honest, I think a man of his capability would get a much larger salary if he was working. Because I do not believe that a Minister's salary necessarily needs to be small. I would be the last person to say that. I think they should receive handsome salaries, provided they work. *[Interruption]*

As I was saying, Mr. Speaker, once the Ministers have performed well, I have no objection to their receiving handsome salaries, but unfortunately the performance of the Minister opposite—

Mr. Sudama: I take objection to that.

Mr. H. Bereaux: The point I am making is that the relationship between Tobago and Trinidad is that they are two islands, both comprising the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago; the unitary state of Trinidad and Tobago. They are separated by water and the very nature in which the union came into being has

engendered a certain attitude of superiority on one hand and an attitude of resentment on the other. As I said, not without cause. There is another situation where Trinidad, being larger and more populous has more economic activity and Tobago has its own peculiarities.

There is a need, because of the separation by water, to have duplicated certain services in Tobago which rural constituents in Trinidad are able to access by going from one place to the other by road; whereas in the event that persons have to come from Tobago, they would have to travel by sea or air with the attendant expense and inconvenience.

In this House I have heard the Member for Tobago West, in particular, articulate this situation time and time again. Successive governments have sought to address this problem. The PNM Government in 1988 sought to address it via the Tobago House of Assembly Act, 1988, and other governments came on and they sought to address it by putting persons belonging to Tobago, residents of Tobago, on statutory boards; or seeking to make them directors of state companies whose activities would have an impact on Tobago.

Notwithstanding all this, there still remains an area of discontent in terms of the relationship between Trinidad and Tobago which has, from time to time been exploited by persons seeking political office or seeking to maintain their political agenda or political support. When we look at the situation with the Government as it is presently constituted and make a commitment to Tobago, to the unitary state of Trinidad and Tobago, we make it against the background of things which persons have done and said in the political arena.

Time and again, Mr. Speaker, a number of persons who are involved in the politics of Trinidad and Tobago, and more particularly, in Tobago, have sought to encourage a disunity, a parting of the ways between Trinidad and Tobago; and I want, for the record, to refer to a situation which occurred in 1983 when the hon. Member for Tobago East was the Chairman of the Tobago House of Assembly. At that time, Mr. Speaker, a Motion was made before the Tobago House of Assembly “For a just and acceptable union between Trinidad and Tobago” by the then Deputy Chairman, Dr. Jefferson Davidson.

I am just going to read the Motion—as I would say, the active part of the Motion:

“BE IT RESOLVED that this House of Assembly take all proper and necessary steps to terminate the present unjust union of Tobago with Trinidad and to

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secure either its replacement with a union based on terms and conditions acceptable to the authorised representatives of the people of Tobago or THE FULL INDEPENDENCE OF TOBAGO WITH SECURE TERRITORIAL BOUNDARIES.”

Miss Nicholson: This was fully certified.

Mr. H. Bereaux: It was passed by the House of Assembly and by a 10 to 4 majority; certified by the Secretary of the Tobago House of Assembly; the Chairman of the House of Assembly, the present Member for Tobago East, absent Member and Minister Extraordinaire. [*Interruption*] He wrote a letter dated March 18, 1983 to the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago and he says:

“I have the honour to transmit the attached Resolution, Appendix A, which was passed at the sitting of the Tobago House of Assembly on Thursday, February 24, 1983 by an overwhelming majority of 10 to 4. I, as Chairman of the Assembly, did not vote in favour of the Resolution.”

3.10 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, I wanted to put this on the record of this honourable House just to show that there are good reasons. You see it today. Unlike in previous situations, whether the Member for Couva North recognizes it or not—and I am sure he recognizes it—the Member for Tobago West and the Member for Tobago East have the ability to call the shots and we are concerned that they do nothing without the concurrence of the people of Tobago to damage the unitary relationship between Trinidad and Tobago, and therein lies the reason for bringing this Motion.

The Motion is even more relevant today because of developments which are taking place in Trinidad and Tobago at this very time and have been taking place for a while. I refer to the conference which is taking place in Trinidad and Tobago at this time, and I think around now they are having the final luncheon in Pointe-a-Pierre. I speak of the Conference of the Association of Latin American Petroleum Companies for reciprocal assistance.

In 1977, the Member for Tobago East, in his campaign booklet, caused a map to be drawn of Trinidad and Tobago and he mispositioned the acreage of Occidental, Deminex and Teneco in those gas discoveries, and he drew what he purported would be a pipeline from those discoveries to Point Lisas and said that the Government of the day was intent on misappropriating Trinidad and Tobago's

gas in Trinidad and utilizing it for the industries which exist at Point Lisas in Trinidad.

Now, some people may say that by itself, is a mere campaign statement, but I want to look at this a little closer and to deal with the entire situation. At this present time there is an LNG plant—every time I think about ammonia, I—but I do not see the Member for Couva North; I see the Member for Oropouche. There is an LNG plant to be placed in Point Fortin and the owners of that LNG plant are British Gas, Amoco, Cabot and NGC owning 10 per cent. British Gas owns the fields that were formerly owned by Occidental, Teneco and Deminex. The person in charge of British Gas in this country has said that since all the production of the proposed LNG plant for Point Fortin had already been sold with the first train, he expects that they would be able to utilize their gas which has been mistakenly said to be Tobago's gas, for the second LNG train.

I say that, being concerned that there is a likelihood—like it was said elsewhere, although Farmlands made a representation in a newspaper on April 29 that they were still doing the plant in La Brea, it was removed, and I am suspicious that this Government may even seek at this late hour to remove, for vindictive reasons solely, the LNG plant from Point Fortin. But I know the Member for Point Fortin will deal with them.

So I am saying that we are concerned. I am sorry that the Member for Tobago East is not here because we need to find out from him whether he has changed his view or whether at the last moment he is going to take his marbles and go home and frustrate the second train of the Point Fortin LNG plan. There is good reason for that. In 1990, the Member for Tobago East, when he was the head of the NAR Government, as the Member for Point Fortin explained, rushed quickly to Venezuela to sign an agreement to cede some of our territorial waters to Venezuela, in what has now become the notorious and nefarious, *Salida del Atlantico* Treaty. In English it means the outlet to the Atlantic. This is what Venezuela had been looking at for a number of years. A number of persons wondered why the Member for Tobago East would do something like that. It is said that the agreement is in Spanish; he does not understand Spanish but he still signed it in Spanish. The map is in Spanish.

Moreover, the map impinges on the territorial integrity of Guyana, Barbados, Grenada and Trinidad because the map has a statement in it saying, "*Zona En Reclamacion* in Guyana." The situation as it exists and the importance of it is this, that we ask ourselves why was the Member for Tobago East so anxious to give

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away Trinidad and Tobago's property and rights. But I just want to remind people that at that time there was a proposed LNG facility to be placed in Cristóbal, Colón in Venezuela and that was in very close proximity to the gas fields that he claimed to be Tobago's gas. In fact, his behaviour was to give the Venezuelans what they have been looking for, for a number of years so that he would be able to get a deal with them when that LNG plant in Cristóbal, Colón came around. He would just take his marbles and carry Tobago with him. But as fate would have it, the Cristóbal, Colón plant is now years behind the Point Fortin plant.

3.20 p.m.

More important than that, I want to quote the Member for Couva North—I am afraid to call the name of the newspaper but it is one which he has reduced to a cipher and is now afraid to print, but I appeal to that newspaper not to be afraid to print things, and I am sorry if they would get in trouble for my quoting this—when he said this as reported in the *Trinidad Guardian* of Monday May 6, 1996:

"Government was able to re-negotiate the 1991 20-year Amoco-NGC gas contract.

Under this agreement the NGC had to buy gas at a much higher price than that paid by investors.

...If that situation were allowed to continue the National Gas Company would inevitably have gone bankrupt... By re-negotiating a lower gas price for Amoco gas this four-month-old Government has saved for the peoples of Trinidad and Tobago over \$240 million per year..."

If the Government, as led by the Member for Couva North, was able to re-negotiate a contract which was signed by the NAR government when they were going out of office in 1991; a contract which it is alleged they hurriedly signed—not alleged, but hurriedly signed—in 1991. Today, it turns out that gave Amoco a benefit of \$240 million per year. It is a 20-year contract and four years have gone already. The NAR government, as led by the Member for Tobago East, gave away TT\$960 million to Amoco over a period of four years. This is not because I said it, but because the Member for Couva North said it. If that contract had remained, it would have cost the Government and people of Trinidad and Tobago \$5 billion.

I know that the Member for Tobago East is not stupid. He is well educated and he is not negligent. I know that the persons who advised him on that contract were competent people, therefore, I have to come to the conclusion that what he

did was wilful. He wilfully gave away \$240 million of Trinidad and Tobago's money as stated by the Member for Couva North in the *Trinidad Guardian*. I also know that an LNG plant, given the large reserves which Amoco has, was always on the cards.

I am suspecting that the reason they were given this sweetheart contract was because he wanted them to back off from having an LNG plant in Trinidad, so when he was ready to set up his deal with Cristobal Cologne in Venezuela, it would go through. That is why I want here today *[Interruption]* I am putting it on record, that it is either the Member for Couva North who is not speaking the truth or it is that the Member for Tobago East, and his government, did something for which they should apologize to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. They cost us US\$960 million over a four-year period. *[Desk thumping]* *[Interruption]* Yes, the famous gas contract. They did it within months.

Mr. Panday: What are you quarrelling with yourself for?

Mr. H. Bureaux: The Member for Couva North should not worry. I am annoyed, and I am entitled to be annoyed for the way in which you all threw away—

Hon. Member: Watch your blood pressure!

Mr. H. Bureaux: Do not worry about my blood pressure, all I could do is die.

Mr. Speaker, finally, I want to read again from that newspaper that the Member for Couva South tried to reduce to a cipher.

Mr. Maharaj: Which newspaper is that?

Mr. H. Bureaux: I am afraid to call the name. The vindictiveness of this Government is so rampant that I am afraid for the newspaper.

Mr. Maharaj: What is the name of the newspaper? Is it the *Independent*?

Mr. H. Bureaux: I would tell you the name of the journalist. It is Mr. Anthony Wilson writing in the *Trinidad Guardian* of May 23, 1996. He quotes the Prime Minister as saying:

"The new thrust includes production-sharing contracts for five blocks that are located east and south-east of Tobago..."

I am saying that before we invite people to come to bid, and we do not know when Mr. Robinson—sorry, the Member for Tobago East, Minister Extraordinaire—and his—

Hon. Member: Cohorts.

Mr. H. Bereaux: I cannot refer to the Member for Tobago East like that. We do not know—

Miss Nicholson: You drank some grog before you came here?

Mr. H. Bereaux: I must tell the Member for Tobago West that the councillors and people of Siparia told me that she is the lady I said she was, based on the apology she gave.

In any event, I am saying that unless the Government of Trinidad and Tobago is able to get a commitment from all the parties in that coalition to the unitary state of Trinidad and Tobago, we would be making a laughing stock of ourselves by putting out blocks for bid in the south-east of Tobago when, in fact, we are not sure. And, by the behaviour of the Member for Tobago East, it may well be on the cards that any time now he could take his marbles, go home and make a laughing stock of the Member for Couva North, the same way he was made to turn sod somewhere and the place was closed down.

Mr. Speaker, I support this Motion which was moved by the Member for San Fernando East in which he is asking that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago re-affirms its commitment to the unitary state. I am wondering if the Member for Couva North will now correct that statement he made in the newspapers.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Patrick Manning (*San Fernando East*): Mr. Speaker, this Motion, the debate on which I propose to bring to an end today, has been the subject of deliberations in this House for a number of months. I must say that some very useful contributions were made in this debate by Members of both sides, and I thank them very sincerely. My disappointment, of course, was the contribution of the hon. Member for Oropouche.

3.30 p.m.

I had initially contemplated responding to the hon. Member but I thought, in the interest of maintaining a high level of debate in the Parliament, to leave that contribution severely alone. In time, historians will come to their own

conclusions as to the state of mind that would have produced a contribution of that nature.

Mr. T. Sudama: Your political demise is very imminent.

Mr. P. Manning: When we had filed this Motion we were seeking to elicit from the Government their approach to the Tobago situation, in the light of public utterances condemning the agreement that had been entered into between the last Government which I had the pleasure to lead and the Tobago House of Assembly, an arrangement that led to two items of legislation. One was an amendment to the Constitution that deeply entrenched the Tobago House of Assembly and secondly, a piece of legislation that sought to update existing arrangements and to give Tobago that greater measure of autonomy to which the people of Tobago subscribe, the necessity for which has been acknowledged by all of us.

It would have been nice if I could have said this afternoon that we succeeded in identifying the Government's position. Regrettably, we have not. It is either the Government has not as yet formulated its own position or the Government does not feel duty-bound to reveal a position at this time. Whatever it is, we are emerging from this debate without a clearly defined position of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

I think it was the contribution of the hon. Member for Tobago East that, on more occasions than one—and I think the view was also echoed by some of the hon. Members opposite—made reference to the Seemungal draft.

Mr. Speaker, may I remind you and hon. Members that after the Motion by the hon. Member for Tobago East was debated in this Parliament in 1977, that the Parliament was involved in an exercise designed to arrive at some kind of definitive conclusion in respect of new arrangements between Tobago and Trinidad; and Mr. Lionel Seemungal drafted, as part of that process, a Bill which did not find favour with the Parliament at that time, but which remained as a draft and to which reference had been made from time to time in this debate by hon. Members opposite.

The conclusion that I drew from what was said was that even if a definitive position of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago could not have been identified, the Seemungal draft to which reference has been made on so many occasions perhaps, may harbour within it the germ of a position that the Government might in the future wish to adopt. It was to the Seemungal draft that I chose to direct my attention subsequent to the contribution of hon. Members.

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Mr. Speaker, permit me to direct the attention of hon. Members of this Parliament to page three of that draft Bill which was entitled “an Act to make provision for, and in connection with the Internal Self-Government of Tobago, and all matters incidental thereto.”

On page three of that draft clause 7 goes as follows in part’;

“The Membership of the council shall consist of... and where it goes to see the Members of the House of representatives for the electoral district of Tobago.”

That is what Mr. Seemungal had included in this draft. If this item of legislation had been subsisting today, then the hon. Member for Tobago West would have been a Member of the Tobago Island Council now called the Tobago House of Assembly and the Member for Tobago East, the hon. Minister Extraordinaire would have also been a member of the Tobago Island Council. There are many questions that arise, but one of the questions that arise is this: Since that would have constituted additional responsibilities for the Member for Tobago East and Minister Extraordinaire, I wonder what it would have meant in terms of the package of emoluments which he now gets. May I remind hon. Members what that package is as outlined by the hon. Prime Minister last week—and for those who could add, please add.

A basic salary of \$12,000 per month, a duty allowance of \$5,000.00 per month, a housing allowance of \$1,000 per month, an additional housing allowance of \$2,500 per month. The total of \$20,500 is where it has reached. In addition to that, a travelling allowance of \$2,300 per month; that is \$22,800 leading so far only with the direct cash items as of now. He can also claim entertainment. I do not know if he takes a subsistence allowance but under the arrangements as agreed by Parliament, he is entitled to about \$700.00 per month. The Minister Extraordinaire is entitled to free medical benefits at any state-owned institution in Trinidad and Tobago. That includes medicine.

In terms of transportation the hon. Minister Extraordinaire is entitled to a maximum loan of \$100,000.00 at a rate of interest of 6 per cent per annum. We can quantify what that means. I have not sought to do that nor have I quantified the value of the perk that the Minister now receives where a cook and a maid are provided for a residence in Trinidad.

Miss Nicholson: Because his home is Tobago.

Mr. P. Manning: I am not arguing. I am merely stating the facts as was stated by the Member for Couva North. I have not quantified what the Member gets by way of assistance in his constituency. I have not gone into that nor have I gone into the quantification of vacation leave. Everybody is entitled to vacation leave.

I am saying that with direct cash emoluments of \$23,800 at this time plus perks, if the Seemungal draft had subsisted and if Members of Parliament were members of the Tobago Island Council, would the Minister Extraordinaire have been entitled to additional emolument, over the \$23,800 in cash that he now receives on a monthly basis and the numerous other prerequisites, the value of which I have chosen not to quantify?

The Seemungal draft also raised another related issue and at page 22, at paragraph 52, under the heading Chief Secretary it says:

“In addition to having all the powers, privileges and immunities of the other Secretaries, the Chief Secretary shall

(a) have the rank and status of a Cabinet Minister without however, the right to attend meetings of the Cabinet.”

It also went on to say:

“Provided that he may, if invited so to do, attend meetings of the Cabinet with the right to speak on matters affecting Tobago...”

3.40 p.m.

A fundamental issue is: Should members of the House of Assembly be allowed to sit in Cabinet and should Members of this House be allowed to sit in the Tobago House of Assembly? We will have to address this fundamental issue. I do not propose to address it at this time because it is not before us. *[Interruption]* Tantie Pam why do you not give me a break? Perhaps I should rephrase that. The matter is not before us, but it is a fundamental one. It was one of the issues on which there was a basic disagreement in 1980, that led to a renegotiation of the position as it related to a legislative framework for the relationship between Tobago and Trinidad. That was fundamental.

The *Seemungal Report of Tobago (Internal Self-Government) Bill* also caused problems in a number of other areas. I do not want to go into all of them but with your kind consideration, permit me to raise one or two other such areas. Page 27 states:

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“Tobago Council Laws

68. Subject to the provisions of this Act, the Council may make laws to be known as Tobago Council Laws.”

In other words, this report was saying that the House of Assembly as it is constituted today will be authorized to make its own laws, not bye-laws.

It goes on further to state:

- “71. Every Tobago Council Law shall take effect from the date specified in it for that purpose.”

There was no other constraint. That is one of the reasons we had put into the Motion the question of the unitary state. If as the report had advocated that the Tobago Island Council or House of Assembly, call it what you will, was free to pass laws on its own without reference to any other body in Trinidad, particularly the national Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago, then this would have represented a fundamental departure from the model of the unitary state of Trinidad and Tobago to which we are now subsisting. The question that we have to ask ourselves is: Who would have funded all this?

Permit me to raise another element in this Bill that was a source of concern to the Parliament at that time. It was not just the government. Parliament agreed on something else. In respect of finance this is what the report says. Page 43 states:

- “113. The Council shall notify the Minister of Finance of any proposals for the initiation or imposition of any form of taxation in, or with respect to Tobago, such notification shall be by way of a resolution duly passed by the Council and transmitted to the Minister.”

In other words, if the Tobago Island Council wanted to impose a new form of taxation, perhaps, it merely had to pass a resolution in the Council and notify the Minister of Finance. The implications of that should be evident to hon. Members.

It continues to state:

- “114. Subject to such notification as aforesaid, the Council may introduce legislation to give effect to such proposals.”

In short, it was a federal arrangement which was being suggested. The benefits went in one direction without the obligations of a federal arrangement being properly addressed in a document of this nature. It was for that reason that in

putting this Motion to the Parliament at the time we did, that we specifically included, “reaffirm its commitment to the unitary state of Trinidad and Tobago”. The dangers are very evident with such a phrase being left out.

The report went on to state:

“115. The Council may, within the confines of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago borrow any sum or sums.”

The Island Council was free to borrow money within the confines of Trinidad and Tobago. In other words, if it is that the Island Council felt it was short of money, there was no obligation in this law placed on it for fiscal prudence or prudent financial management. It merely authorized the Council by law to borrow moneys in Trinidad and Tobago, without any limit being placed on the amount of money which could have been borrowed.

One begins to understand why reservations developed not just on the government side in 1980, but also on the opposition. I think you were independent in those days. The reservations developed in your mind also. You were part of the final agreement which emerged from it. It does not say where the obligation lies to repay the loans which are being borrowed. Mr. Speaker, I am certain that you saw that in 1980 and that is why you had the reservations which you did. I had it and all the Members of Parliament had it, including the Member for Couva North and the Member for St. Augustine who were Members of Parliament at that time. The Member for Oropouche had no view. He merely went along. He was incapable of thinking on his own at that time.

This report as it was advanced in 1980 was not only lopsided. We considered it at the time to be downright dangerous to implement legislation framed as this was, in the context of the relationship between Tobago and Trinidad. It could not work. I shared the view and I compliment the Parliament of 1980 in rejecting the *Seemungal Report*. What transpired were discussions between the government and opposition at that time on the basis of a draft piece of legislation which was framed by the hon. Attorney General. He is no longer with us. God bless his soul! Mr. Selwyn Richardson was the Attorney General at that time. It is to the eternal credit of the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago in 1980 that in circumstances which were difficult and at times appeared impossible in the context of a solution, that we were able to come to a conclusion which received the approbation of hon. Members and all sides of the Parliament at that time.

3.50 p.m.

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Consensus was reached against the background of the process through which we had gone. The process began in 1977 with a resolution being tabled by the Member for Tobago East. He was not as handsomely paid at that time, but he put the resolution forward. It culminated in Act No. 37 of 1980.

I took the time to go through that process. As negotiations took place different points of view came up, but at the end of the day, once consensus was reached, that was the end of the matter. In the light of that process, I cannot understand why, in this debate, the hon. Member for Tobago East kept raising this question of the Seemungal draft. That has caused me some concern; not only his raising the question of the Seemungal draft, but the Government not stating a clearly defined position on where it wishes to take the arrangement between Tobago and Trinidad.

In 1983, the Member for Tobago East, now Minister Extraordinaire, was Chairman of the Tobago House of Assembly. In that capacity, he addressed a communication to the then Prime Minister, Mr. George Chambers, entitled, "Resolution of the Tobago House of Assembly for a just and acceptable union between Trinidad and Tobago". All that memorandum need not detain us, but permit me with your kind permission to quote clause 4 of the memorandum.

"I wish to assure you, Prime Minister, that our primary desire is to obtain a just settlement within the union of Trinidad and Tobago. It is only if this proves impossible that we will consider ourselves forced, regrettably, to pursue the alternative of the independence of Tobago."

In whose judgment will there be a determination of a just settlement? I can only assume that since this memorandum was written by the hon. A. N. R. Robinson, who was then Chairman of the Assembly, that he could only have been referring to his interpretation of a just settlement. If he felt that the settlement was just, then Tobago stayed in the union; if he felt that it was unjust, then Tobago pulls out of the union.

Today, Mr. Speaker, I imagine that the hon. Minister Extraordinaire continues to subscribe to these views. Today, try as we may to find out what he considers just or unjust, we have not been able to. Try as we may to find out what is his view and where we should go, we have not been able to find out. We have had no position from the Government, but we have had constant reference to this Seemungal draft, some clauses of which are clearly unacceptable in any unitary state arrangement in Trinidad and Tobago. There are references by the Minister Extraordinaire to this against the background of this memorandum he wrote. It

was unacceptable to him in 1980; it was unacceptable to you, Mr. Speaker, in 1980; it was unacceptable to the Member for Couva North in 1980; it was unacceptable to the Member for St. Augustine in 1980; it was unacceptable to the Member for Tobago West in 1980; and it was unacceptable to the hon. Member for Oropouche in 1980. Is it that it is acceptable in 1996?

When the Parliament, in 1980, approved Act No. 37 against the background of the process through which we had gone, we fully accepted that there were compromises; we fully accepted that as the nature of these processes are, nobody could ever really get everything. It is a clash of ideas and desires, but an accommodation of all these ideas in a piece of legislation that received the support of all hon. Members present.

The view at the time was—and you will recall it, I am sure, Mr. Speaker—that the new arrangement should be put to work and we should examine the arrangement over the years to see whether it had any deficiencies and, if deficiencies existed, or if the Act was not satisfying the requirement it was designed to satisfy, then in the fullness of time appropriate amendments would be made. That was the general agreement reached between government and the opposition at the time. So that it was clear almost from the word “go” that the Chairman of the Tobago House of Assembly at that time was determined to introduce new arrangements in Tobago that did not have a legal complexion in that law. But we left it.

In 1995, we concluded a revisitation of what began some time before. We came to certain conclusions which we felt took the cause of the relationship between Tobago and Trinidad one quantum step further. We thought it was a major leap and, indeed, Mr. Speaker, the good faith of the Government at the time was demonstrated to the extent that we had gone further than many expected that we would have because we felt we had a proper appreciation of what was required in terms of the relationship between Tobago and Trinidad. An opposition would have been that we put it in place and let it work and if over time it was found to be deficient in one area or the next, then it be amended. What is happening is that we are embarking on a process which, as we seek to fine tune it, we can arrive finally at a legislative arrangement that is working well and acceptable to all. That is the process. What took place in 1995 was what was expected to take place since the Act was passed in 1980. This took place in 1995 when we upgraded it and an agreement was reached.

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I spent some time, when the Motion was presented, going into some of the details of that Act. I do not wish to do it again. However, permit me to draw attention to one area which epitomizes what our intentions were and our appreciation of what was required. It is the area in public utilities and state enterprises, even though they report to a board of directors, which gives some flexibility. In fact, that draft law imposes an obligation to discuss the programme in Tobago with the House of Assembly and to come to some agreement, on an annual basis, on the programme that should be implemented. This agreement should be reduced to writing and whatever else the state enterprise or the public utility may do by way of reporting to its board of directors, an obligation is placed on the enterprise to report to the House of Assembly with the House being accorded a monitoring function in terms of the execution of any agreement that had been arrived at between them.

4.00 p.m.

Clearly, Mr. Speaker, that is a major advancement on anything that existed before and it represented a clear determination, on the part of the Government at the time, to put something in place that met with the approbation of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. After an agreement had been arrived at those two pieces of legislation were the subject of some public scrutiny in Tobago. In this debate we were accused of trying to hustle something on which the public did not have an opportunity to comment.

Mr. Speaker, in Tobago, the public did have an opportunity to comment. I remember being associated with citizens of Tobago where we convened meetings—we had no idea what their political persuasions were and we did not ask; at that time I visited Tobago in the capacity as Prime Minister and in no other—where we explained the contents of the laws to the people of Tobago who were assembled in those meetings. There were five or six such meetings I remember there was one in Calder Hall, Bon Accord, Lambeau, Charlotteville, Plymouth and there might have been one more.

Mr. Speaker, we took the time—the then Prime Minister spent a week in Tobago—to go to various parts of Tobago and to explain the contents of these two pieces of legislation to the people assembled in those meetings. While one can always argue that the matters should have been the subject of wider participation, the fact of the matter is that the people of Tobago were, indeed, consulted on this piece of legislation before we sought to do anything further with it.

The one final point I want to treat with as we bring this debate to a close, is the position of both the Members for Tobago East and West in the process on which we had embarked, culminating in the agreement of 1995. Mr. Speaker, if the Members for Tobago East and West were not involved in the discussions, it was by choice and not by chance. Indeed, the Chairman of the Tobago House of Assembly had indicated to the then Prime Minister that they were inviting the Members of Parliament for Tobago to be associated with the Assembly's position—a unified position in Tobago, Mr. Speaker; the Tobago House of Assembly invited the representatives of Tobago to sit with them so that they could agree on a common position. In fact, when the then Prime Minister held the first meeting with the Assembly's team in Trinidad, the hon. Member for Tobago West was present.

Miss Nicholson: Are you sure of that?

Mr. P. Manning: Yes. It is true.

Miss Nicholson: No. I never came to any meeting in Trinidad.

Mr. P. Manning: Mr. Speaker, perhaps I should reiterate as the hon. Member for Tobago West does not seem to be hearing well this afternoon. The hon. Member for Tobago West, Miss Pamela Nicholson, was present at one of the first number of meetings held at the political level between the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, presided over by the then Prime Minister and the Assembly's team headed by its Chairman. I understood that she was also present at a meeting which the Assembly held some time before.

Mr. Speaker, quite clearly, the Member for Tobago West had accepted the invitation of the Chairman of the Tobago House Assembly to be part of the Tobago team but for reasons best known to her, she chose to absent herself from subsequent deliberations involving the negotiating team of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

If the Member for Tobago East was not present, it was not that he was not invited—it is our understanding that he was, indeed, invited—it was because he chose to absent himself.

Mr. Speaker, I do not think we should delay this Parliament any longer. I think that this matter has been aired *ad nauseam* by the large number of contributions that have been made.

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At a time when the whole world is coming together, when in 1994, Western Hemisphere leaders met in Miami to discuss a free trade area of the Americas; an economic arrangement in the first place which many hoped would lead to a political arrangement of the future; at a time when Caricom, the regional integration movement, was the author of an expansion of that integration movement to involve non-English speaking territories, the Association of Caribbean States; and at a time when Europe has come together in a very powerful economic agglomeration that could lead to a political agglomeration in the future, Mr. Speaker, it would be a tragedy indeed if the unitary state arrangement that guides the conduct of relations between Tobago and Trinidad is the subject of a pulling apart, a watering-down, as it were, for something that is either more tenuous or worse; if the threat as outlined in this memorandum to the then Prime Minister by the Member for Tobago East, is carried out: The independence of Tobago.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, in accordance with Standing Order 32(3) I shall now put the amendment which reads as follows:

“That the following words be inserted at the end of the Motion, immediately after the word ‘Tobago’:

‘Subject to section 1 of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, which clearly and expressly prescribes that the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago shall be a sovereign democratic state.’”

Question, on amendment, put and agreed to.

Question on original motion, as amended, put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That this honourable House reaffirm its commitment to the Unitary State of Trinidad and Tobago, subject to section i of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, which clearly and expressly prescribes that the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago shall be a sovereign democratic state.

Motion made and question proposed, That the House do now adjourn to Tuesday, June 4, 1996, at 10.30 a.m. [Hon. R. L. Maharaj]

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

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Adjourned at 4.11 p.m.