

Leave of Absence

Friday, July 26, 1996

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, July 26, 1996.

The House met at 1.30 p.m.

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Members, I wish to advise that I have been sent communication by the hon. Member for La Brea (*Mr. Hedwige Bereaux*). He would like to be excused from today's sitting of the House, and this leave is, indeed, granted to him.

I also have information from the hon. Member for Diego Martin East (*Mr. Colm Imbert*) who, apparently, is going to be late. In fact, he seems to have been involved in some accident; and we do have a letter from the hon. Member for San Fernando West (*Mr. Barendra Sinanan*), who had asked to be excused up to today because he is out of the country.

PAPER LAID

Loan Contract No. 932/OC-TT between the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and the Inter-American Development Bank National Highway Program dated July 12, 1996. [*The Attorney General (Hon. R. L. Maharaj)*]

**PORT OF SPAIN GENERAL HOSPITAL
(INADEQUATE ACTION)**

The Minister of Health (Dr. The Hon Hamza Rafeeq): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to bring the Parliament, and indeed the national community, up to date on the situation at the Port of Spain General Hospital.

The Junior Doctors at the Port of Spain General Hospital embarked on a work-to-rule on Monday last, in an effort to highlight the issues they wanted addressed.

Mr. Maharaj: You have to pause. [*Mrs. Robinson-Regis arrived in traditional African dress*] [*Desk thumping*]

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Thank you.

Mr. Maharaj: Welcome to the Leader of the Opposition!

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Thank you to the Leader of the Government!

Dr. The Hon. H. Rafeeq: These are issues, Mr. Speaker, which the Junior Doctors have been raising for the last five years, and which remained unresolved when we took office. We have inherited them.

On Monday, July 22, 1996, I met with the management of the Port of Spain General Hospital and on Tuesday morning I met with the representatives of the Junior Doctors' Association and officers from the North/West Regional Health Authority and the Ministry of Health. At that meeting the Doctors raised certain issues, most of which were similar to those raised before. The issues are as follows:

1. Pagers
2. Medical/Legal Indemnity
3. Permanent Employment
4. Gratuity
5. Maternity Benefits
6. Car Loans
7. Salaries
8. Overtime Allowances; and
9. Working Conditions

Mr. Speaker, as the person who, for the time being, has the responsibility for health in this country, and as a medical practitioner myself, I must admit here, as I did to the junior doctors, that these grouses were very reasonable and needed attention.

We do not claim that the working conditions at the hospitals in our country are ideal. In fact, we may never be able to achieve or provide ideal conditions. However, we will strive continuously, under the constraints of financial and other resources, to improve the conditions so that both workers in the health sector, and the population at large, can be better served.

Mr. Speaker, on the issues raised we give the following responses:

Pagers: The Doctors wanted to have access to pagers while on duty. We have no difficulty with this request. However, some of them have already purchased their own pagers and would like Government to pay for the air time. I gave

them the commitment that the Regional Health Authority would be mandated to provide this service. My information is that the Regional Health Authority has since looked at various options and decided that they will accommodate this request of the doctors.

Medical Indemnity Insurance: The Regional Health Authority has been mandated to negotiate with the doctors with a view to contributing to the payment of the Medical Indemnity Insurance Scheme.

Permanent Employment: Mr Speaker, some of the doctors have short-term contracts, and for various reasons, for example, to access car loans, loans, visas and so forth, they wanted to have permanent employment. We agreed with them on this issue and indicated that the Regional Health Authority was now in a position to offer them permanent employment. However, in response, they also said that some of them needed to have short-term contract employment with gratuity payments, since they wanted to pursue post-graduate work. This we also agreed to.

Gratuity: On the question of gratuity, they wanted to have gratuity included as part of their short-term contract. We have asked the North West Regional Health Authority to address this issue positively.

Maternity Benefits: The junior doctors who were on contract, were concerned about maternity benefits. The RHA Board has been authorized to make available maternity leave to contract officers on the same basis as their public service counterparts. In computing the service, their temporary employment will be taken into consideration.

Car Loans: Regional Health Authority employees with permanent employment wanted to have access to car loans. I have given a commitment to the Junior Doctor' Association that I will be pursuing this matter on their behalf.

Overtime: Mr. Speaker, the doctors wanted to have their overtime rate increased. At present, a doctor is expected to work 40 hours per week for his basic monthly salary. In addition, he is required to work an extra 56 hours for 28 days for 30 per cent of his basic salary. Any additional duty to this is paid at the rate of \$100 per eight-hour session. In some of the disciplines, a doctor may be called out many times and is sometimes required to work for the entire eight hours. We recognize, Mr. Speaker, that this is totally inadequate—\$100 per eight-hour session—and it is an injustice that has gone on for too long. I

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have, therefore, authorized the Regional Health Authority to negotiate an upgrading of the overtime rate for the junior doctors.

Salaries: On the question of salaries, Mr. Speaker, we are not in a position at this point in time to move the salary upwards. However, there is an inter-ministerial committee which has been appointed to look after public service emoluments. The matter of salary increases is being considered, and some guidance will be given to the Minister of Health, so that the Board of the Regional Health Authorities can be guided in their negotiations on this issue.

Working conditions: The authorities at the Hospital have identified 12 rooms which they have made available for Doctors on call. They are at present in the process of acquiring the necessary furniture to equip the rooms. Secondly, the Management of the Authority has instructed the security of the Hospital to institute frequent checks on the Doctors' Common Room, an issue which has been raised by the junior doctors. Thirdly, the Management will attempt to provide refreshments that are possible within their budgetary constraints to doctors on call. Fourthly, the RHA has been mandated to enter into discussions with private companies which are willing to provide cafeteria facilities at the Hospital. As soon as negotiations have been completed, a contract will be awarded for the provision of this service.

Equipment and Supplies: Mr. Speaker, these are being continually upgraded. However, I have asked the hospital authorities to provide a list of the urgently needed equipment and supplies, and we will attempt to address these expeditiously. In terms of providing junior doctors with the rotation they require in order to fulfil their post-graduate requirements, we have indicated that we will try to accommodate these requests as best as possible, based on the special requirements of the services we provide. Where the requirement dictates that the doctors' request cannot be accommodated within a specified period, we will be willing to accommodate these over a longer period.

1.40 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday a meeting was scheduled between the Regional Health Authority and the junior doctors to continue negotiations, and more specifically, to address the issue of overtime, in order to arrive at a settlement. This meeting, however, did not take place because of the unavailability of the PSA representative. However, the RHA and hospital authorities stand ready to meet with the junior doctors at any time in an effort to resolve this matter amicably.

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In the interim, the authority at the hospital and the senior doctors have been attempting to do their best to put contingency plans in place to deal with emergency cases.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS

[Second Day]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question [June 28, 1996].

Be It Resolved that this Honourable House condemn this action by the present Government and urge the Government to reactivate the construction projects which have been suspended, terminated or cancelled; and

Be It Further Resolved that this House also urge the Government to present to this House a credible policy for the initiation and development of public sector construction programmes for the generation of employment in that sector and for the refurbishment and/or upgrading of the national physical infrastructure.

Question again proposed.

Dr. Vincent Lasse (*Point Fortin*): Mr. Speaker, I rise to support the Motion tabled by the Member for Diego Martin East, which states among other things, that the—

"...People's National Movement (PNM) administration, had allocated resources and had undertaken the required preparatory work for a number of major construction projects to commence and/or continue in 1996; and

Whereas the present Government..."

the UNC/NAR coalition administration

"...has suspended, terminated or otherwise cancelled several of these projects, thereby reducing the potential for employment in the construction sector;

Be It Resolved that this honourable House condemn this action by the present Government and urge the Government to reactivate the construction projects which have been suspended, terminated or cancelled;

Mr. Speaker, let me state from the outset that in my contribution I shall be dealing specifically with construction in the housing sector. As such, reference will be made to certain projects which had been started by the PNM administration and which are now suspended, terminated or cancelled by the UNC/NAR administration.

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Before doing this, let me assure the Member for Oropouche, who is not here today, that contrary to what he said in his contribution on this Motion, housing construction was a reality under the PNM administration. For this reason he can ask the Minister of Housing and Settlements, because his Government is considering to sell the John John Towers which were constructed for fire victims and the people of John John by the PNM administration.

The Member for St. Augustine made the point to the effect that the units were too good for poor people. While it was too good for poor people, his Government was prepared to sell the units.

Mr. Humphrey: On a point of order. The Member for St. Augustine never made any such point. The Member for Point Fortin is misleading the House and telling a blatant untruth.

Mr. Speaker: I will try to maintain the strategy whereby in respect of points of order, you first of all identify the points of order. Indeed, the issue which you have raised is to indicate to him that you could clarify the issue by his not doing that, but in future, could Members on both sides try to allow me to elicit the point of order before we go into what the offence is? Thank you.

Dr. V. Lasse: Mr. Speaker, the present administration is about to sell the John John Towers to the Football Association for less than \$3 million. The Minister continues to confuse me, and I presume the nation also, on his concept of housing construction.

In the *Trinidad Guardian* of December 21, 1995 in an article headlined "Humphrey: housing project was planned as a boost to PNM", under the section "Poor People", Mr. Humphrey said:

"If we continue to build expensive shelters and then virtually give it away for political considerations, sooner or later you have no resources to continue the process,..."

1.50 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, from what the Minister said here, it is logical to assume that he thinks it is bad to give away to the poor, but good to give away to the rich. [*Desk thumping*] I ask, for what consideration does he intend to give away the John John Towers for half the price to the Football Association and not subsidize the units at the same amount to the persons for whom the units were built? [*Desk*

thumping] Of course, the fire victims and the people of John John are prepared to pay for it. Will the Minister of Housing and Settlements answer this question at the appropriate time in this debate?

If the Minister of Housing and Settlements was interested in construction, he would have invited the Football Association to utilize that \$3 million to commence construction and probably, as a sensible Minister, he may decide to allocate a parcel of land from his land bank for the construction. Probably also, Mr. Speaker, he may choose to select a site where there can be some playing field so that the footballers may practise. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of Housing and Settlements is not interested in housing construction and that is why so many projects have been suspended, terminated or cancelled. By his own admission, the hon. Member for St. Augustine is not even interested in the Ministry of Housing and Settlements. I read in the *Trinidad Guardian* dated November 11, 1995, on page 4, where the Member for St. Augustine said:

“Humphrey, the MP for St. Augustine, dismissed the need for a Ministry of Housing. He said, 'I don't see the need for a Ministry of Housing. I see the need for a Ministry of Construction. To me, housing should be managed by individuals who want to build their own homes, and by private enterprise, and not by the State'”.

So as far as the Minister of Housing is concerned, the state should not be involved.

Mr. Speaker: May I simply remind the hon. Member that in quoting, kindly identify the source of your quote? It would help us.

Dr. V. Lasse: Mr. Speaker, I said in the *Trinidad Guardian*, dated November 11, 1995.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you.

Dr. V. Lasse: Mr. Speaker, we on this side, are convinced that construction is an indication of economic growth. We are also convinced that construction is an indication of the generation of employment. Having recognized this, the PNM administration put in place mechanisms and strategies to ensure that construction would continue. But it is sad to say that this UNC/NAR coalition administration intends to frustrate the construction sector.

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The Ministers of Housing and Settlements and Planning and Development are not saying the same things as the Minister of Finance, who, in his budget presentation on Wednesday, January 10, 1996, said:

“Government will expand and strengthen the housing sector. We will fast track the National Housing Authority \$30 million construction programme...and begin the Ministry of Housing and Settlements \$214 million accelerated housing construction programme.”

It seems to me that the Minister of Housing and Settlements has totally ignored the Minister of Finance in this regard. Eight months have elapsed and nothing positive was done in housing construction in Trinidad and Tobago.

Again, Mr. Speaker, with reference to the *Medium Term Policy Framework, 1996—1998*, page 25, which relates to housing, it has been said:

“Over the medium term, Government will implement a comprehensive approach to housing.”

This approach to housing was laid down very carefully by the PNM administration. I continue to quote:

“This will entail the continued provision of fully serviced lots; construction of core houses and rental apartments, community facilities on housing estates; subsidised mortgage and construction financing; technical advice on owner-construction dwelling units.”

Again, Mr. Speaker, there was no positive response from the Minister of Housing and Settlements after eight months, although it was specifically stated in the budget presentation and the *Medium Term Policy Framework* that the UNC administration would fast track the accelerated housing programme which was put in place by the PNM administration.

The importance of the construction industry to the well-being of Trinidad and Tobago should never be underestimated. Now, with specific reference to construction in the housing sector, this serves not only to provide housing which is sorely lacking—and I speak here of affordable housing—but it would also work to generate employment. We are all fully aware of the shelter needs of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. Permit me to refer to a study which was commissioned by the Ministry of Housing and Settlements and submitted to the Permanent Secretary on July 4, 1995. I am sure the present Minister of Housing has that report in hand, because he came to this House at an earlier date and quoted from it.

Mr. Speaker, one does not have to travel to Istanbul, wasting taxpayers' money and talking about the origin of the steelband to understand the needs of housing in Trinidad and Tobago. *[Desk thumping]* It was a total waste of taxpayers' money.

Mr. Assam: But you spent millions to go to Hong Kong to find out this is a world class society!

Dr. V. Lasse: I read one-third of a statement at the Habitat Conference dedicated to the steelband. I am hearing a grunting somewhere, Mr. Speaker—

2.00 p.m.

Permit me to refer to the *Strategic Implementation Framework & Programme For Land, Settlement and Shelter Development 1995—2005 Vol. I* which was prepared by PADCO. I refer to characteristics of housing demand and supply. Page 2 states:

“Projected Effective Housing Demand 1995—2000

PADCO/Laughlin & Associates estimates that 115,000 new housing units will be required in Trinidad and Tobago during the ten-year period between 1995 and 2005...Our analysis of effective housing demand shows a potential demand for about 36,500 minimum complete housing units and another 29,000 minimum core units which are unsubsidized. An additional 50,000 units, however, would require some degree of subsidy in order to be built to current standards...and to be affordable to the target population.”

I must refer to the John John Towers, the Bath Street apartments and the Ramdial Mahabir Lands apartments which would have fallen under this 50,000 units which ought to be subsidized. That was the report which was commissioned and is now in the hands of the Minister of Housing and Settlements.

The report went on to state:

“Assuming that full PEU costs are used for all housing with no reduction in standards or costs, the total housing investment required during 1995—2005 period is estimated at about \$18.6 billion TT.”

The report continued to give an estimate about the land space which would be required in order to satisfy this. It mentioned that about 14,944 acres would be required. The report also indicated what was taking place during the administration of the PNM. Page 4 states:

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“GOTT Priority Programmes 1995—1997

Production Targets

The Ministry of Housing and Settlements settlements and housing programmes are directed to increase the supply of low income housing. Current public sector programmes—sites and services, direct housing construction and high density apartments are expected to produce about 6,000 shelter units...In addition, the Ministry is developing the Accelerated Housing Programme (AHP) to increase the supply of low income housing and generate about 30,000 temporary jobs in the construction sector.”

The report indicated what the PNM Government had been doing in the field of housing construction and identified the number of units which had been targeted. Page 4 states:

“TYPE	NO UNITS
NHA Housing Construction Programme	271
PEU/Min. H & S Sites & Services	4,437
Joint Venture—Design/Finance/Construct Project	100
High Density Apartments—Direct Construction	813
Private Sector—Selected Proposal	300
Shelter Units on Existing Serviced Sites— Joint Venture (AHP)	1,270
Joint Venture to Acquire/Service and Construct Units by Joint Venture	2,600”

If these programmes are not suspended or terminated by the end of 1997, about 9,791 units should be constructed. This is relevant to the motion before this House.

I now turn to the details of the Housing Construction Programme under the PNM administration. I must lament the fact that although most of these programmes had been agreed to and contracts had been signed, in some instances the present Government has stopped or abandoned most of them. In dealing with each project, I would highlight the number of units to be constructed and the job creation arising therefrom. I would also highlight the projects which were stopped.

Before the Member for Tobago West—although she is not here—accuses me of taking credit for what she did, I state very clearly that the Member for Tobago West was responsible for negotiating the IDB loan for the Assisted Programme. Apparently, time did not permit her to develop that programme efficiently. However, I wasted no time. In three years housing units were constructed all over Trinidad and Tobago. I must put on the record that the hon. Member had absolutely no input in the Housing Construction Programme to which I would now refer.

On assuming office, the PNM administration, in keeping with a comprehensive approach, embarked on a multifaceted construction drive embracing construction of detached dwelling units and high density apartment complexes. I shall elaborate. One of the construction thrusts of the PNM Government was the \$30 million housing construction programme which went well; 271 units had been realized from that construction project. This project was being administered by NHA. It is sad to say that although contracts had been signed in some instances for the construction of houses along with the \$30-million project, some of them have been cancelled.

2.10 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, under the \$30-million housing construction programme, 52 units were constructed at Point Fortin, 61 units were constructed at Bon Air, 30 units at Buene Venue, 60 units at River Estate, 17 at Charlieville, 31 units at La Horquette/Glencoe and 20 units at Medine Street in San Fernando, a total of 271 units constructed under the \$30 million housing construction programme. This ought to have been continued, but I lament the fact that most of these projects have now been stopped.

Mr. Speaker, under the PNM, 100 houses were constructed under a joint venture arrangement at Valencia. As far as the Accelerated Housing Programme is concerned—and the Minister of Finance in the presentation of his budget said that he would fast track that programme—today eight months down the road nothing has happened.

In September 1994 the PNM Government approved the implementation of an accelerated programme of housing construction during 1994 to 1996 by the NHA. The programme was based on a three-prong approach: high density apartment construction under the public sector investment programme; high density

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apartment construction through turnkey arrangements with the private sector; and mortgage housing through joint venture, again with the private sector.

The PNM government recognized the critical role of the private sector in the construction industry, and had made provision for the inclusion of its input in the Accelerated Housing Programme for the period 1994 to 1996.

Mr. Speaker, under the High Density Apartments Public Sector Investment Programme, the PNM Government put in place the mechanisms for the construction of 112 units at Almond Drive, Morvant, and it is sad to say that on assuming office, the UNC/NAR administration has cancelled the contract on these apartments. One hundred and twelve units ought to have been constructed at Almond Drive. Infrastructure work was already completed and all that was left was the construction of the units.

At Ramdial Mahabir Lands, on leaving office, 48 units had already been completed and the commencement of another 48 units had begun in Phase II.

Mr. Speaker, I now turn to a very sad situation, that is the Cook Street John John apartments. This site yielded 25 units, and today we have a situation whereby these units, which were constructed for the fire victims and persons in John John, may well go to the Football Association. I am happy that they are interested in getting involved in housing, but, as I said earlier, I thought it would have been a better prospect, had the Minister of Housing and Settlements invited the persons concerned, to use that \$3 million to build some units instead of utilizing the units which had been built for the fire victims.

Thirty units ought to have been constructed in Alexis Street Morvant, and today eight months down the road, nothing on this. In addition to what I have mentioned above, other projects had been earmarked for Mount Hope and Barataria and together they would have yielded 129 units. To date, no word on it.

Mr. Speaker on completion of the above projects, had the present Government continued, approximately 392 units would have been added to the housing stock of Trinidad and Tobago. When we calculated the amount of employment that would have been generated from the projects I mentioned above, some 20,000 temporary jobs would have been obtained in the construction sector.

Mr. Speaker, I can go on and on, because the PNM Government had put in place a mechanism, that wherever there had been land which had been developed by the NHA, we were inviting joint ventures, and these were arranged for Mayaro,

Rio Claro, Debe, La Romain, Palo Seco, Point Fortin, Sangre Grande and Belle Garden in Tobago. All these had been put in place only for the present administration to follow.

Added to this, when we calculated all together, adding what would have been contributed through the IDB Assisted Programme, which would have delivered 4,200 dwelling units, we would have been able, by the end of the four-year period, to arrive at close to 8,200 dwelling units in Trinidad and Tobago and this would have generated some 30,000 jobs.

Mr. Speaker, apart from the comprehensive programme in housing construction, which had been tabled by the PNM Government and which was doing well, in a Cabinet Note dated October 2, 1995, a strategy for the delivery of 5,000 housing units per year was put in place. This strategy would have permitted 5,000 units per year, from the year 1996 to the year 2005. That was in place. The strategy, of course, was derived, again, from the report which had been done by PADCO/Laughlin and Associates. The proposed strategy, derived from the critical review of ongoing programmes and projects, identified achievements which would have been possible in the housing construction.

2.20 p.m

The strategy of creating 5,000 housing units per year also took cognisance of the demand/supply imbalance and, of course, the question of affordability to the targeted groups. The land requirements, availability, programme cost and financing had been worked out carefully.

Mr. Speaker, based on this strategy, as far as low income persons are concerned, some 48,000 units would have been constructed; middle income, 45,800 units would have been constructed; and high income 21,071 would have been constructed. Thus, in the low income category, approximately 50,000 housing units would have been constructed during the period 1995 to the year 2005. Again, we tied that in with the \$30 million housing construction programme which should have yielded 271 housing units.

Under the Inter-American Development Bank assisted sub-programme, a yield of 4,300 units were possible. Under the Sugar Welfare Committee, 105 units would have been realized and, of course, we had been putting in place the Accelerated Housing Programme which should have yielded 820 units.

As far as the construction of high-density apartments was concerned, under a turnkey arrangement, 497 units would have been realized. Again, on construction of detached units, another 560 units would have been possible.

Having made these points and having established, beyond any doubt, that the PNM Government had put in place the strategies for a progressive housing construction programme over the years, it is lamentable that at this stage, after eight months of this Government being in office, we have not seen signs of this. This Motion is relevant as it pertains to housing construction.

I ask the Minister of Housing and Settlements to state the policy of his Government as it relates to housing construction when he takes part in this debate. All I read about the housing policy of this Government is that the Minister is more concerned with the provision of lands to individuals instead of the construction of houses. I dare say that the Minister of Housing and Settlements, for a second time, would have realized that land by itself does not really facilitate housing construction. For that matter, if he continues to give away land all over Trinidad and Tobago to persons who do not have the means of constructing housing units, we will end up with a series of shanty towns all over Trinidad and Tobago.

I believe there should be a mix in his approach. On the one hand, he may wish to continue his programme of allocating land to the landless, but also, I believe, it is imperative that the Government should continue its housing construction programme in order to provide affordable housing to persons who would not be able to construct their own units.

Once more, it is lamentable that the present Government is not continuing the housing construction programme as started by the PNM Government. That is why this House should urge the Government to present to this House a credible policy on the construction sector which would assist with the generation of employment.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you very much.

The Minister of Housing and Settlements (Hon. John Humphrey): Mr. Speaker, all I can say is, thank God this country is free of that Member who was Minister for Housing and Settlements and that regime that was the government. The whole contribution was “coulda”, “woulda”, “shoulda”. The fact is that when he was Minister, he did not initiate a single project except the high-density apartment complexes which were intended to shift the electoral balance in favour of the PNM, total waste of public funds.

It is totally untrue to say that the Ministry of Housing and Settlements has discontinued projects. In fact, the vast majority of projects that had commenced under the NAR regime, that had continued under the PNM regime, are continuing under the UNC/NAR coalition.

The IDB funded programme which is delivering the majority of service lots and houses stalled. They delivered the service lots, but the housing component stalled because the programme was not geared to meet the needs of the lower, middle-class in the society. There was no way that the people, having extended their resources to acquire the land, could have continued to provide houses for their families. We have had to reform that programme completely. It took much negotiating.

Mr. Speaker, if anybody listened carefully to what the former Minister of Housing and Settlements said, they would realize that the need for housing is phenomenal. In fact, he quoted some of the figures from the PADCO/Laughlin Report. There is no way, given the existence of the development pattern as we have it today, that we can provide adequate shelter for our society. No way! Already, the roads are over-burdened, and the infrastructure generally is over-burdened. We cannot dispose of human waste far less encourage more waste to be generated.

When I took over the Ministry of Housing and Settlements, I virtually had to start from scratch to do the basic work that is required to provide adequate shelter for the people of Trinidad and Tobago. That work had not been done. Let us, first of all, look at land. Mr. Speaker, the department of Government which is responsible for land delivery is in a state of absolute chaos. That regime had done absolutely nothing to enable that department to get the necessary resources required to, first of all, identify and manage land. In total chaos! People cannot even get deeds for their properties. In the NHA, mortgages are illegal, because the land has not yet been transferred from the state to the National Housing Authority to enable the mortgagees to have legal documentation. That is the situation that exists.

Mr. Speaker, certain work has to be done in order to deliver adequate shelter for the people of Trinidad and Tobago. Some work was done 10 years ago in identifying 100 plots of land throughout Trinidad and Tobago which was suitable for housing. Since then, no planning work has been done to identify further lands suitable for housing.

2.30 p.m.

We have to start virtually from scratch. This was recognized when we went to the electorate and we presented a manifesto. There is a section in the manifesto headed "Construction". Let me share this once more with this House and with the national community, because if we do not do the things that are stated in this manifesto, there is no way that we can come to grips with the critical shortage we have inherited and the ongoing provision of shelter for the society as it matures. I quote from the manifesto.

"No physical development projects can commence without proper planning or proceed if obstructed by government bureaucracy. The Town and Country Planning Division will be reformed and decentralized to speed up the process of plan approval as well as to provide the capacity for controlling unauthorized development.

The UNC will appoint an independent National Physical Planning Commission which will be given the responsibility for:

- Developing a Comprehensive Physical Plan for Trinidad and Tobago;
- Developing a Code of Appropriate Standards;
- Monitoring of the professionals who would be responsible for ensuring adherence to both the requirements of the National Plan and the Code of Standards. Appropriate penalties will be applied to ensure compliance.

The three main priority areas in project formulation will be:

- Repair and enhancement of the existing road network;
- Infrastructure for agricultural production;
- Adequate shelter with emphasis on housing.

It is anticipated that by directing and mobilizing all the resources of the nation's construction industry towards building an adequate infrastructure for food production and human settlements, there will be massive job creation and an improvement in living standards.

In this regard a UNC Government will adopt the following proposals:

- Roads and bridges will be constructed on a large-scale basis, giving access to unutilised areas of the country. Two major highway projects will be

- undertaken. One is a link between San Fernando and Mayaro and the other is an extension of the Churchill Roosevelt Highway to Toco. A North Coast road will give access to the entire North for development—for settlements, tourism, agriculture and for fisheries. This North Coast road will give another much needed access to Chaguaramas;
- A ferry port linking Trinidad and Tobago will be made between Toco and Matura at the most appropriate natural location;”

Which happens to be Toco.

- “A massive road maintenance and improvement programme will be initiated with an instant response division being established to prevent pot holes from becoming craters in the nation’s roads;
- New settlements and those that will be expanded and enhanced will be based, in so far as it is feasible, on a philosophy where the land for development purposes is vested in the communities and organized in co-operatives.”

Mr. Speaker, the purpose of that strategy of provision of infrastructure was to open up the part of the country that is not now settled and utilized productively so that we could begin to plan communities and to settle our people in new areas. The fact is the pattern of settlements in past PNM regimes has created very severe problems that cannot be resolved. I will give you an example.

The pattern of settlements imposed on this country by former PNM governments emptied the City of Port of Spain of its residential community and resettled that community up what is called the East/West Corridor. This is what has happened. There is no longer a residential community in the City of Port of Spain. In the evening the city empties and in the morning, it fills, but if one goes up the East/West Corridor in all the housing projects that they squandered all the petroleum dollars in providing, in the morning they are empty and in the evening they are filled. Now to enable this transfer of people there has to be transportation. The consequence of that is that the roads are over-burdened with traffic jams. Wherever one tries to go, there is a traffic jam. That is highly unproductive. People are spending more time on the roads trying to get where they need to go, than they are spending at work producing goods and services for the development and the welfare of this society.

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Mr. Speaker, if we continue on the pattern that the PNM regime was trying to impose on this country, what we would have is total strangulation of the transportation system and a total breakdown of the services that are required to support communities. That has to be redressed.

Now, initiatives are being taken in that regard. When one starts from scratch, it takes a little time to get going and in certain regards we are starting from dead scratch. We do not have, for example, identification of land that can enable the delivery of the number of houses that was identified by the PADCO/Laughlin study. The land cannot be identified. It means, therefore, that we have to start planning. I wonder what was ever done in previous times, certainly in that Ministry of Housing and Settlements.

Let me correct something. I am on record as saying that the Government does not really have to have a Ministry of Housing because there is the National Housing Authority. The National Housing Authority certainly needs a degree of ministerial direction and intervention, but that is an autonomous authority which can in fact, if properly organized and managed, satisfy the mandate that is given to it. What the Government needs is a Ministry of Settlements.

Dr. Lasse: I thought it was construction.

Hon. J. Humphrey: Settlements.

Mr. Speaker, the concept of human settlement and human habitation has changed over time and the conference that I attended not long ago—

Dr. Rowley: I wish to thank the Member for giving way. Does he intend to resign the portfolio of Minister of Housing?

Hon. J. Humphrey: Mr. Speaker, if they interrupt, they should do so with sensible questions please. What stupidity! No wonder they are in a state of total chaos.

Mr. Speaker, I attended a conference in Turkey that was one of the social summits of the United Nations. All the countries represented at that summit grappled with certain fundamental things. One of the most fundamental was whether the human species is entitled, by right, to shelter for human families. They have not finally concluded that there is a fundamental right to shelter, just as there is the fundamental right to life. But in my mind, I concluded a very long time ago, that the human species cannot survive unless it breathes air and extracts the

oxygen; unless it eats food and drinks water; unless it is sheltered from the elements. So that is fundamental for the survival of the species and I have interpreted the Constitution of this country for a very long time to the point where I was in fact labelled quite crazy. They still do it, but I do not mind. Call me mad, it is quite all right. Call me stupid and I am insulted.

Dr. Lasse: Call you mad, that is all right.

Hon. J. Humphrey: Call me mad, that is quite all right, but do not call me stupid because that I am not. Shelter in my view and according to the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, is a fundamental right. That is why I have argued for a very long time that squatting was not the problem; inadequate shelter was the problem. Squatting was in fact a solution to the problem and if the state was responsible and recognized that the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago have a right to shelter, it would so manage the resources under its charge so as to make sufficient land available to all who needed it for shelter.

2.40 p.m.

That has been a continuous struggle which has brought us to this side of the House. I am satisfied of that. The reason they are no longer in office is that they never recognized that right. When little people put up shelters for their families, they broke down those shelters. They talk about who does and does not like poor people. That regime, Mr. Speaker, is the one which was inhumane and broke down the shelters of the very poor of this society to the extent where I had to put my life on the line and confront them. I was prepared to go all the way to prevent that inhumane group of people from preventing little people from enjoying their right to shelter.

If one listens to the Member for Point Fortin, one would really believe that he did some work in the Ministry of Housing and Resettlements. I assure the national community that he did no work whatsoever. He sat behind a desk and did nothing—incapable, in fact of doing that kind of work. Everybody in the ministry knew that he was *de jure* but not *de facto* Minister. The people of Trinidad and Tobago fired him and all his colleagues.

Mr. Speaker, if a person believes what these people say, they will have him totally confused. I want to expose the Member for Point Fortin for the total fraud that he is as a politician, a Member of Parliament and a former Minister. I will use just one example to demonstrate. He had a press conference very recently trying to

make political issue of a very important issue—lead poisoning in a place called Demerara Road. He tried to tell the country that the Member for Couva South, in opposition, prevented the resettling of the people of Demerara Road to an area which was developed to accommodate them and that if it were not for that Member, who is now the hon. Attorney General, the people in Demerara Road would long have had their problems resolved.

On July 1, this year, as Minister, I asked for a report from the National Housing Authority administration on the relocation of squatters at Demerara Road. Let me quote the report:

“Subject: Relocation of Squatters at Demerara Road

In 1993 approximately One Hundred and Forty (140) families were in occupation of the site.

The NHA has developed approximately 250 lots at Wallerfield as follows:

137 lots Phase I and 113 lots Phase II

Phase I: has been earmarked for the construction of 100 houses under the Joint Venture Program and is awaiting the completion of the sewer treatment plant design as well as its construction before houses can be built. The estimated time for the completion of sewer design and construction is six months. Approximately 37 lots are available for relocation of Demerara Road squatters and regularisation of existing squatters.

Phase II: comprising 113 lots is earmarked for the relocation of squatters and work has already been completed with respect to road works and drainage and water reticulation. No sewer treatment plant is designed for this phase.

T&TEC has been asked to provide an estimate of the cost of electrification about 1 month ago but has not completed the exercise. WASA has already tested and approved the water reticulation system but has not made the connection to date.

The estimated time for these works is approximately two months.”

Mr. Speaker, they told the national community that they had completed these projects and that the Member for Couva South had blocked them from removing the people from Demerara Road and relocating them. The truth is that even today the project is not ready for relocating the people of Demerara Road. In fact, it has come to our attention that we would not have to relocate the people of Demerara

Road. What is now emerging is that the PNM wanted them removed for reasons other than lead poisoning. We have to confirm that.

The Minister of Health is doing an investigation into the extent of lead pollution in that area, and if we are to believe the residents of that area, it is only one tiny stretch of road and one house lot on which the pollution has been concentrated. We will verify whether it is true or not. The residents of that area have alleged that certain friends of the PNM regime wanted that land for other purposes and used the lead poisoning as the excuse to enable it. Anyway, we will verify that. *[Interruption]* Mr. Speaker, I would believe anything said to me about the PNM, and I want to investigate every single allegation of fraud and corruption.

The projects which have been stopped are those that the PNM were fast-tracking. If their leader had not found it necessary to call early elections—by his own admission the reason he called them is that if he had called them earlier, they would have been worse off than they are today—and had been able to stay in power for a further year, then he might have been able to swing the balance of the electorate in certain marginal seats through this high density housing programme. I put a stop to that. I could easily have said that we would put our supporters to live there and swing the balance in our favour instead.

What we are doing is upgrading those projects and putting them on the market. A couple of them have not even started. When I saw the designs for high-rise, high-density buildings in the hills of the area opposite Mount Hope, I could not believe that any professional could produce that kind of work and I put a stop to it. I told them to redesign those, and redesign them so that they could go on the market. The one in Morvant has been redesigned and we have saved \$100,000 per unit in redesigning. But they are still too expensive. They would want to give a subsidy to a few people, which is virtually giving it away. But what about the rest of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago? They never considered that.

2.50 p.m.

With respect to the John John Towers, they are trying to make a lot of confusion on that. Mr. Speaker, the John John Towers were never built for fire victims. Each unit cost some \$272,000. The fire victims, who were very, very poor indeed, and who lost their little shanty homes in the fire, no way on earth could they have ever accessed that. They were built, in fact, for the PNM, not for fire victims. Like everything they ever did, spend the state's resources so as to keep their activists in control and to keep them happy so as to keep the PNM

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perpetually in power. That is what I found. And, Mr. Speaker, nobody in John John can afford to buy apartments in those towers; even with the subsidy they could not have afforded to buy those.

I consider it heaven sent when the Trinidad and Tobago Football Association came forward and negotiated to purchase those buildings. I do not intend to state what Cabinet will finally decide on the John John Towers. Cabinet will finally decide. But what I took to Cabinet and proposed is that we sell these towers to the Trinidad and Tobago Football Association for the establishing of an apartment hotel. The building that can be used, not only to house our national footballers when they are in training and put them in easy access of the National Stadium, and other playing fields where they can train, but could also house visiting teams, to facilitate the sport of football. But what I have asked my Cabinet colleagues to do, and it is still being considered, is to dedicate the money that is derived from the sale of those towers to the John John community.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: To do what?

Hon. J. Humphrey: Certainly not to put in the hands of the parliamentary representative to manage, but to organize the community and to identify projects that will lead to the long-term benefits of the community and use that as seed capital to fund those projects. That is what I asked my Cabinet colleagues to consider and, Mr. Speaker, I am hoping that they will agree with that. However, the Member for Oropouche has already indicated to me that if John John does not want the fund for the further improvement of John John he will be happy to get it for Oropouche. So if the Members opposite do not want it, I would have to go to Cabinet to recommend that my Friend gets it for Oropouche.

You see that is what their so-called representatives are pushing the Government to do.

Mr. Speaker, I do not know if you are listening to the remarks that are coming from the other side. I am glad if you cannot hear what is being said. Say it louder, put it on the record.

Mr. Speaker: You know, hon. Members, one gave a certain amount of latitude because we had come out of an election mood, and one gave even a little more latitude because we were going into a local election mood. But surely, all things being equal, elections are not due again until almost four years plus; so that

indeed hon. Members, we should be able to settle down again without the necessity for my suggesting that we do it.

One of the things that has been going through my mind is whether, indeed, the presence of the press so close to the end does, in fact, have the effect of drawing Members out to make asides, while other Members are speaking so that these could be picked up by the press for publication. If we are satisfied that is operating in the minds of Members, then quite clearly the Chair will have to see how we control that.

But, I appeal to Members to treat this place as a place that is deserving of adults; and as a Parliament of which all of us could be proud. There is a simple principle in law, hear the other side, *aude alteram partem*. There is absolutely no way in which this Speaker will prevent anybody from having his say. Listen in silence, have your say afterwards.

Thank you.

Hon. J. Humphrey: Mr. Speaker, when they cannot take the licks then they descend to insults. I told the truth. The truth should never be insulting. But you see, to suggest, as I speak more, the moon changes; I will speak differently, you know. That is really not a joke, it is not intended as a joke, it is an insult. And in fact, it is out of place in this House. They descend to that level, because that is the nature of the PNM beast.

Mr. Speaker, when I read from the manifesto for the elections, I presented a picture of the infrastructure that is needed to enable the solution in perpetuity to the shelter problems of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. I think it will be important to explain the concept of settlements in the modern context of human shelter. It has been recognized by the entire international community, and this came forward very clearly, Mr. Speaker, that we have reached the stage of human development where we have to start thinking in terms of settling our people in a self-sustaining economic environment. If we do not do it, planet earth is threatened.

Mr. Speaker, these things are perhaps far too high for the comprehension of Members opposite. Self-sustaining human settlements suggest that where people live, where they are settled, they do not have to go too far to be engaged in productive work; and they do not have to go too far to get the social services that are required for the supporting of communities, for example, schools, health

centres and hospitals. This requires an approach to planning that identifies land so as to enable communities to be productive, and quite obviously, the very first essential is to identify land for food production. So food is the very first essential.

3.00 p.m.

If you are going to identify land for food production in the context of settling people, then quite obviously you will want to settle those who will work the land on the very land that they are going to work. If you are going to do that, then that has to be in the context of a community that will support the agriculturists and the farmers. You cannot put them in isolation from the rest of the population. When you do that, first of all, you put them at a tremendous disadvantage. If, on the other hand, you plan these communities and the agricultural land is planned into communities, then the agriculturist can live on his land; he can optimize the production of the land and he can have the community support for his security to minimize praedial larceny, to enable him, in fact, to reap the benefit of his efforts.

He can then be close enough to the services that are planned, for the children to be able to go to school conveniently and not have to traverse half of the country in order to get to school at a cost which they cannot afford, which is what is happening now. Those communities must be supported with industrial areas so that you can have productive industrial jobs; with commercial areas, so that you can have the commercial support that is required for the human being, where you can go and get your groceries, your clothing supplies, your pharmaceuticals; where jobs are created through providing these services.

No planning has been done so far in Trinidad and Tobago to enable these rational settlements to emerge. What the Government has done is put together a committee which is working continuously—and I am hoping that we will be able to take a decision soon on it—to look at preparing a national physical development plan and for devising a code of appropriate standards for the construction industry. When this happens, then we will have started the process.

The other thing the Government has done is formed a standing committee of Ministers which includes all the ministers who impact on what is required for laying down a national infrastructure for settlements, and that is also in place. But what the Minister of Housing and Settlements is doing meanwhile, is working very closely with his counterpart, the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, so that we can pool resources to enable the land question to be addressed, as well as land information—extremely important—what land is suitable for what purpose.

Many years ago a comprehensive study was done on the soils capability of Trinidad and Tobago and all that data are available to us. But those data have never been used in guiding the planning process so that we could have planned the physical development of Trinidad and Tobago to enable the best use to be put of our land resource. We are now doing that. It is as if we are starting, virtually, from scratch. But it has to be done and we are going to do it. If we last 5, 10, 15 or 20 years, at least the work that we start will continue and whoever comes after us will be able to get the development process moving in earnest. We will have laid a foundation on which to build the physical structure of Trinidad and Tobago.

So these things are happening. Legislation is being drafted so that we can come to the Parliament and enable that physical planning process. Many of the good ideas emerged while that legislation was being drafted, but a PNM Minister of Planning and Development decided that he wanted to control the process of land distribution in Trinidad and Tobago so he took the proposals of the experts and refashioned them, and the legislation that we are looking at is the legislation that we inherited from the PNM. It is legislation that would have further entrenched, in the hands of a clique on that side, the distribution of land and the power to give approval for physical development. Our Government is seeking to ensure that no single individual is given power that can be abused in that way. So that is one of the exercises that is being undertaken.

My colleagues who are responsible for other areas that impact on the national infrastructure can say their piece. The Minister of Public Utilities who is responsible for water in all its dimensions, the supply and delivery of water, the management of waste water, the treatment of waste water, if one asks him what has been done; what did he find in place to enable these things to happen, he would have to admit to you, little or nothing.

One of the very important facets of infrastructure to enable a pattern of rational settlements to occur nationally is, in fact, the question of water, and what we have promised is that we are going to provide retention reservoirs and mini dams to be able to harness the water, to control it and to deliver it when it is needed, and to keep it back when it is not needed, so as to prevent flooding and to provide water when needed in the dry season for the land to be productive. So the resources that are required are being put in place to enable that.

In terms of the highways network, we promised a highway link between San Fernando and Mayaro in our manifesto. It takes a very long time to prepare for the

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construction of a highway because there are a number of surveys which have to be done. One has to do social surveys, environmental impact surveys, the topographical surveys, soils capability surveys, and all of these surveys take time. I discovered 171 sheets of details of a highway that was designed in 1979 to link San Fernando with Princes Town, just sitting there in one of the ministries. It took a great deal of difficulty to be able to get possession of the plans, but I have them in my possession today. Since 1979, the PNM paid through the nation's nose to have this work done. They had foreign and local experts working together to do the design for that highway, and they had the oil dollars then, but they did not build the highway. That is the first one we are going to build because the plans are ready, and we are putting in place all the resources necessary to continue the programme.

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. [*Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar*]

Question put and agreed to.

3.10 p.m.

Hon. J. Humphrey: Mr. Speaker, there will be, at least, the first leg of the promised San Fernando to Mayaro link. What I am putting in place at the same time—and it is not easy but it has to be done—is the capacity to plan properly the city of San Fernando and the township of Princes Town in conjunction with building this highway. In this regard, I saw something at Habitat II, which I want to share with the national community through this Parliament. In fact, I am well on the way to sharing this specifically with certain interest groups in the society.

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *in Chair.*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, a major European city was all but destroyed in a civil war that lasted for about 17 years. It is the capital city of Lebanon called Beirut. Beirut used to be described as the Paris of the Mediterranean. It was such a beautiful city but because of the civil war it was all but destroyed.

I visited the display which the city of Beirut had at Habitat II and I saw a scale model of the city centre that was to be rebuilt. The demonstration included a video tape which I asked for but they had none available. I have since received it from Beirut, and I am reproducing it many times over so that I can share it with anyone who is interested in development.

They have identified the centre of the city, which was almost totally destroyed, for redevelopment and they have done a very imaginative city plan. They passed special legislation to put that zone of the city almost under a state of emergency which enabled decisions to be taken which, perhaps, impinged on citizens' rights to the enjoyment of property and those rights not to be deprived except by due process. So they have put in place due process to enable the rational use of the land area.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in demolishing some of the damaged buildings they have been able to unearth 3,000 years of history under the foundations. So, they are recapturing and they are establishing an archaeological park in those areas that are found to be of historical value. They have taken what was the Mediterranean's biggest rubbish dump and they have designed that into this new development and are creating a beautiful green park on the water's edge for the enjoyment of the citizens of Beirut, the people of Lebanon and visitors to that city.

They are doing it with a development corporation that has as its shareholders, everyone who will be in any way affected by this. In other words, the original land owners are getting shares for the land, tenants are getting shares, squatters are being recognized as legitimate because many of the squatters had been displaced from their legitimate properties through the war and have gone there. So they are being recognized. Everyone who will buy shares in this corporation is welcomed. They have collected sufficient money to start the process.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I recommend it for the consideration of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. We have something that we have found called UDCOTT, the Urban Development Corporation of Trinidad and Tobago. What exactly is an urban development corporation? I suggest that we follow the pattern of the very successful development project of the re-construction of the centre of the city of Beirut and establish a Port of Spain development corporation, a San Fernando development corporation, a Scarborough development corporation, a Chaguanas development corporation, a Couva and an Arima development corporation and seek to get the political representatives of the people of these areas to engage in a process of mobilizing resources so that we can rebuild these centres and plan new centres and expand on the growth poles that already exist and start to improve our country for the benefit of, perhaps, not this generation so much, because we will lay the ground work for it, but for future generations until the end of time. This is what we are trying to put in place.

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I am going to visit very soon, the Mayor of Port of Spain to have a meeting with his Worship, the Councillors and the Aldermen to show them the video and to discuss the possibility of designing a plan for the development of Port of Spain on that kind of scale. I have already spoken to very powerful individuals in the commercial establishment who are very interested. In fact, I am going to have a meeting next week. This meeting is already scheduled with the Mayor, Aldermen and the Councillors of Chaguanas to look at what is possible for Chaguanas in that context; and San Fernando as well.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if the PNM wants to influence their councillors, their mayors and so forth, not to co-operate in this, I say fine, I have no problem with that. I will work with whoever is positive and who wants to see the development of Trinidad and Tobago go forward.

I invited the Member for Port of Spain South along with representatives of the East Port of Spain area and all he is doing is trying to create mischief and confusion. Let him continue on that course. It really does not bother me in the least that he wants to commit political suicide. He is a junior in this game and that is where he is headed. He is committing political suicide with the course that he is on.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, whether he wants to be involved in it or not, there is going to be a development plan for south/east Port of Spain and it is being put together. The waterfront area of Port of Spain is of tremendous worth and the planners are beginning to realize how valuable it is and they recognize that the effort and the investment that one puts into improving and upgrading something like the waterfront of a city, enhances the values of properties and recovers the investments in the enhanced value of the very properties that are impacted by it. So in the long run, it costs one nothing. One gets the return in the enhancement of the value of the development. This is true of everything that one improves in the physical construction area of development. These are the things that we are trying to put in place and it is not easy. We have to change a whole culture.

We have recently put in place something that they never thought of. The reason for it is that if you are asking people to serve the wider community by enabling the delivery of shelter and by facilitating the industries that provide shelter, then somebody should show consideration for the shelter needs of the people who are being asked to do it.

We have discussed with the union which represents the vast majority of the workers in the Ministry of Housing and Settlements and in the National Housing Authority a joint venture for the provision of adequate shelter for all of the staff and workers of the ministry. The union has expressed an interest in this and we are, right now, beginning to conduct a survey of needs, so we can assess the shelter needs of the people who work at the National Housing Authority and at the ministry.

3.20 p.m.

Dr. Lasse: That is a very good idea.

Hon. J. Humphrey: If they think they can come in there and make mischief by trying to appeal to sentiments other than what are sensible, which is what they are trying to do, then I think they are going to fail miserably with it, and next election they are going to fare worse than last election.

My advice to them is to accept the invitation to join with us in national unity, so as to mobilize the resources of the people of Trinidad and Tobago to improve the standard of life of all our people.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Are you still inviting us to join? We do not want to come.

Hon. J. Humphrey: That is my advice. I do not expect them to take it, because they prefer to drown alone than to share in the lifeboat and the life-ring that is extended to them. So I say, if they want to drown, drown! It is quite all right. The country will not miss any of them. *[Interruption]* Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are a number of other initiatives in place.

Mr. Valley: Mad ones.

Hon. J. Humphrey: Yes, all mad. All mad initiatives, according to the Member for Diego Martin Central.

Mr. Valley: Ask Mr. Robinson.

Hon. J. Humphrey: Now, he knows what he is saying. What he is saying is to destroy a whole airline.

Mr. Robinson: Yes!

Hon. J. Humphrey: In his own personal self-interest, he destroys a whole airline. That is what he is saying!

Mr. Robinson: Do not take him on.

Mr. Valley: Mr. Deputy Speaker, would he really develop that point: “in his own personal self-interest?”

Hon. J. Humphrey: I think he knows what is his own personal self-interest.

Mr. Sudama: He meant you are corrupt.

Mr. Valley: Mr. Deputy Speaker, as we said, we obviously will have to allow indiscretions by persons who have certificates to prove that they are sane!

Hon. J. Humphrey: Well, you see it does not deter from the fact that when he was a minister he virtually destroyed the national airline. That is a fact. He did it with all his Cabinet colleagues at the time.

Mr. Valley: Mr. Deputy Speaker—

Hon. J. Humphrey: I am not giving way anymore.

Mr. Valley: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I can understand why, because the facts would show that BWIA, the national airline, is in good order.

Hon. Member: No, no. That is total indiscipline.

Mr. Assam: They do not respect the Deputy Speaker.

Hon. J. Humphrey: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the National Housing Authority is facilitating not only members of the commercial establishments of Trinidad and Tobago, but whoever is interested in joining with us in partnership to provide shelter. In that regard, we have had a number of meetings with a firm in Jamaica that was here before, which was not happy or proud of the legacy that was left by the PNM and their involvement in that. They are interested in developing approaches to enable poor people to get housing starts very economically and very practically.

I have asked them, particularly, to look at the project that enabled what is in the constituency of the Member for Diego Martin Central, where a Puerto Rican company built a number of starter units, very cleverly done. The walls and roofs of the starter units were so designed as to enable continuing expansion, both upwards and outwards, in every direction. If one goes to Diamond Vale, today, every single one of those starter units is contained within the houses there, but you cannot see them.

Mr. Valley: Built by a PNM government.

Hon. J. Humphrey: Well, built by a former PNM regime, led by someone who was capable of leading.

Mr. Assam: Built by CDC.

Hon. J. Humphrey: I have asked them to look at that model and to consider establishing manufacturing to be able to produce that. But I have done something more. What they considered was crazy previously, they are looking at the possibility of providing a factory to produce a service core—even more economical than a starter house. Service core. At the bottom, a septic tank connected structurally to a water tank—

Dr. Rowley: You come back to that? A latrine again?

Hon. J. Humphrey: Listen to them! Listen to them! Laughing again.
[*Interruption*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, Member for Diego Martin West, I just want to point you all to Standing Order 40, “Rules for Members not

Speaking”:

“40. A member present in the House during a debate—

- (a) shall enter or leave the House with decorum;
- (b) shall maintain silence while another Member is speaking, and shall not interrupt, except in accordance with these Standing Orders; and
- (c) shall otherwise conduct himself in a fit and proper manner.”

Thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Rowley: Thank you for your guidance, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But I just want to enquire if all of that applies to me. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It applies to everyone.

Hon. J. Humphrey: Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You are going to have to keep reminding them of that Standing Order continuously. I know that. Their attitude is, that anyone who keeps reminding them of something good, has to be a little “off”.

If a poor man could access a piece of land serviced with road, water, electricity; and, down the road, telephone and so forth, and have pipe-borne water,

an electrical supply and sewage disposal to his house, he has a chance of enjoying a decent standard of living. Because he can get water from the tap for his cooking, for brushing his teeth, taking a shower—

Mr. Sudama: No water in Oropouche.

Hon. J. Humphrey: So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if efforts are made to enable poor people to access these services, those are noble and worthwhile efforts. But Members on that side consider that those efforts are crazy. The fact is that a very serious industrialist with a joint venture partner from Trinidad and Tobago is seriously looking at investing millions of dollars to enable this. So that is how crazy it is. In addition, a company has come from the United States and offered a type of house that is very easily accessed in the United States, put together in kit form in containers and brought to Trinidad and Tobago and erected. Except that I have persuaded them that if they establish a factory here to do that, it would be more in the interest of the people of Trinidad and Tobago and, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they are very interested in that.

So we are bringing three sample houses from the United States in kits and we are going to put them on display; and I am talking to residents of Bamboo No. 3 in the Squatter Regularization Programme, who have land adjacent to the highway, to allow us to erect those houses on their lots. We would give them a discount on acquiring the houses, so that the public at large can access the houses and see if they would suit their requirements. So that is another one.

There is another one we are looking at, and Mr. Deputy Speaker, the houses which will be put on display are three phases: a starter phase, phase one after that, which expands it; and phase two which further expands it to a satisfactory middle-class type three-bedroom home. Those are the samples which will be put on display.

Another system that is being actively considered is a system where one builds a factory and produces components that are made from a mix of cement, sand and bagasse. So that is another one of the industrial approaches that we are examining

3.30 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are entering into a number of partnerships, and we have started several of them. In fact, we have directed the first efforts to those projects that were abandoned by the previous regime because they are saying that this Government is not continuing with their programmes. The fact is that they

abandoned several programmes where millions of dollars had been expended, so the partnerships are first being directed to resuscitating those projects.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have even spoken to the Member for Diego Martin East, who is an engineer in his own right, and who is capable of constructing houses, with a view to him coming into the NHA for talks to show how serious we are about this idea of partnership. *[Interruption]* I want the Member to stand up and deny that. He has not come in. He will not come in for some reason or the other. Perhaps his leader, the Member for Diego Martin West, tells him not to. Any citizen of Trinidad and Tobago who would like to come into the Ministry of Housing and Settlements and the National Housing Authority to talk about partnership in the delivery of shelter for the people of Trinidad and Tobago will be welcomed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, where the state owns half of the land in Trinidad and a little less than half in Tobago, quite obviously, the state is in a position to encourage such partnerships. Once one identifies the land suitable for housing one can then start the process of planning and developing that land.

I want the word to go out—and if the media would assist in this regard—to let the nation know that those who want to build shelter: houses, apartment blocks and town houses, and get involved in development, whether it is for the upper, middle or poorer classes, should come and talk to the National Housing Authority. We are in a position to facilitate that whole process of delivery, quite contrary to what occurred under the past regime.

I guarantee that this will not be a corrupt minister, and if there is the slightest sign of corruption in any of the dealings I would invite anyone to report it to me. as Minister, so that I could put an end to it before it even begins because there is a culture of corruption which I have inherited in that ministry; a culture of something for nothing; a culture of "gimme gimme". *[Interruption]* No, I never remember any such thing. *[Interruption]* No, I never said any such thing. *[Interruption]* Mr. Deputy Speaker, do you want to remind the Members opposite of that Standing Order?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Members, the hon. Member has asked for protection.

Hon. J. Humphrey: I really do not need protection, quite frankly. I can take all of them on together. *[Laughter]*

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Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was on the point of the corruption in the ministry—tremendous corruption; corruption in the allocation of the apartments and houses that were completed and ready to be delivered.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Why do you not say it outside instead of in the Parliament?

Hon. J. Humphrey: I have been invited by the beautifully clad Member for Arouca South to say it outside. I would be happy to say it outside. *[Interruption]*

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Then go ahead.

Hon. J. Humphrey: Of course I would say it outside.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the method of distribution of units was that the minister had the final say on who got a unit or not. That was the method. There was a short listing which came from the authority to the desk of the minister and he decided who got a unit or not. *[Interruption]* You tell me what that is. That is true because it was offered to me and I said I would have none of it, I am not going to continue these habits that have been entrenched by the previous regime! Mr. Deputy Speaker, a system for distribution is being put in place, but it is not easy because people are so steeped in these corrupt ways that it is very difficult to take the bad habit out of these people, but we are going to do it. Talk about corruption?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me tell you about another thing I found. A squad of young people, and a couple not so young, was assembled for the purpose of preventing further squatting. It was called a Squatter Containment Unit. It is amazing because the major squatting in the country is not in the Point Fortin constituency but 90 per cent of the people on that squad came from Point Fortin.

Dr. Lasse: That is not true.

Hon. J. Humphrey: When I called a meeting of all the young people he was very worried that I was going to fire all of them and, perhaps, put activists from St. Augustine in the Squatter Containment Unit, but I did not do that. I spoke to them and redirected them to the new mission of the Ministry of Housing and Settlements.

Dr. Lasse: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. The Member is misleading the House. He is not speaking the truth.

Mr. Assam: What is the point of order?

Dr. Lasse: The Member is not speaking the truth.

Mr. Assam: Is that a point of order?

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Yes. Look at Standing Order 36.

Mr. Assam: You all are in Parliament so long and you do not know the Standing Orders! You all are so dumb. How could you all run the country when you do not even know the Standing Orders?

Hon. J. Humphrey: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have the evidence, not here with me, but I would be very happy to present the evidence to the national community of the kind of corruption that I found in that ministry under the previous minister. I understand, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that my time has now—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I would give you injury time. May I refer the House to Standing Order 36(5) which states that:

"No Member shall impute improper motives to any other Member of either Chamber."

This is just done to keep proper order in the House. The hon. Member has about two minutes more.

Hon. J. Humphrey: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am not imputing improper motives to any Member of this House. I am giving this House the facts that a previous minister of government did things very improperly! I am not imputing improper motives.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I hate to end on a negative note because my contribution, by and large, has been positive, but sitting opposite to the Members in this House it is very difficult to remain in a positive mode because they are so absolutely negative.

I thank you.

Dr. Lasse: Mr. Deputy Speaker, under Standing Order 36(5) I ask that the statement by the hon. Minister be expunged from the records.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Exactly!

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member's allegations were not definitive so I would not take that into consideration right now. I do caution Members under Standing Order 36(5), to kindly keep their contributions in that manner. Thank you.

3.40 p.m.

Mr. Eric Williams (*Port of Spain South*): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am glad that Members of this House can still retain a certain level of humour in the face of what has just gone before. I continue to learn things in politics that sometimes I do not want to learn.

When one of my constituents heard of this Motion he said to me that he felt that this was a call for a return to some measure of sanity. This particular constituent was involved in the construction trade. He was a mason and sitting next to him was his partner, a carpenter, who would not speak. These are the individuals who are crying out because they are concerned. As their representative, it is not my job to bring my words to bear on matters such as this, as with other issues on which I have been speaking publicly.

I am bringing to the attention of this Parliament and the national community, the concerns of my constituents. When I am accused by an hon. Member of being involved in creating confusion and mischief, I want it to go on record that they are the concerns of the people of this nation which I am merely bringing to the fore because they have asked me to do so because they are being ignored.

I would read a letter to this honourable House. It was written to the hon. Minister of Housing and Settlements by some residents of John John. I had absolutely nothing to do with this letter. It is from the John John Development Committee which is a community-based committee that I met in place. They have spoken to me about a number of issues. They operate on their own in a number of areas. This letter was dated July 22. It states:

“The Hon. John Humphrey,
Minister of Housing and
Settlements,
South Quay,
Port of Spain.

Dear Sir,

We have noted with concern your public statement calling for the John John housing units to be sold or leased to the national footballers. We acknowledge your concern for the footballers' plight, but we do not share nor subscribe to the sale or lease of the units, since it constitutes a threat to the unity and stability of the John John community.

In urging you to demonstrate the maturity we believe you possess by withdrawing your call for the sale or lease of these units, we also seek to have an audience with you at your earliest convenience in an attempt to resolve the current impasse in a fruitful manner.

We have appointed a representative delegation comprising. . .”

I would not call the names of the people who are listed. One is the Captain of the Carib Tokyo Steel Orchestra, the President of the Spree Simon Co-operative Society Limited and the other person is the Chairman of the John John Development Committee. They have copied this letter to Sen. the Hon. Wade Mark and me.

These are the words of the community, but they are accusing me of mischief. That is not only unfair but also untrue. I continue to say that the words of the community are being ignored. I bring to bear the words of a wise man in Proverbs Ch. 17:14. It states:

“The beginning of strife is as when water first trickles from a crack in a dam: therefore stop contention before it becomes waste and quarrelling breaks out.”

I commend those words to the Members on the other side; Mr. Deputy Speaker, to dismiss the representative of the people of Port of Spain South as merely a junior who is unaware, is being insulting to the people of Port of Spain South.

With regard to construction in the society, I met with a representative of the Joint Consultative Council. That is an umbrella organization that incorporates professional engineers, quantity surveyors, land surveyors and, I believe, the Hardware Association; I am not certain about that. Generally, it is people who are involved in the construction industry. When I had occasion to have that particular conversation, I was seeking to consult as many persons as possible to try to get a feel to understand what is going on. My constituents expect me as their representative to have some idea and to be the bridge between them and the Government. I came to understand that this particular group which is representative of all the groups involved in construction is particularly concerned about the lack of activity in the construction sector.

They pointed out to me that the scope of public construction works, the type which is required to stimulate an economy is usually larger than that which private enterprise normally funds. What they pointed out to me is that—it is known

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worldwide—to stimulate the construction industry, it is the Government or governments who must be involved in public works—not just public works for buildings or for providing jobs. In fact, that is just one aspect of it, and I want to dwell on that for a while.

3.50 p.m.

They pointed out something to me called the “multiplier effect.” The multiplier effect says that when one of our average citizens, who is employed in the construction industry, who otherwise would not be employed, gets a job, the very first thing that comes out of his salary is his taxes. So that money goes back into the state’s coffers. The next thing he might do, assuming that it is not a Sunday and rum shops are open, is allow himself some sort of recreation. And, more importantly, and in fact which is far more the case, he will take his money home. His family can then go to the grocery store to buy some food. His children will be provided with the necessary clothing. If he goes to church and he pays tithe, his tithe will be paid. A number of activities flow back into the economy by the creation of jobs.

I am advised by the professionals in the industry, that the construction industry is one such industry that is known to be a key indicator of growth in any economy, because in fact, when the jobs are there, that multiplier effect causes the circulation of a lot more currency. It is only one of the areas; there are several others and we will look at some of them as we move along.

A healthy construction industry contributes significantly and positively to the gross domestic product. I think in a nation such as ours, the economists among us probably can go to town in much more detail on the significance of a healthy gross domestic product. For a layman in those areas such as myself, what comes across to me and certainly to my constituents is that a healthy GDP is a good thing. Therefore, a healthy construction industry will go towards a healthy GDP and is also a good thing. In fact, my constituents who have been awaiting jobs in the construction industry and those professionals who are awaiting jobs, and who were recipients of contracts which were cancelled by the Government, are also concerned about the slow-down, the near stalling of the construction industry. They are not the only ones.

I noticed on page 3 of the *Trinidad Express* of Thursday, July 25, there was a report from the Governor of the Central Bank. Another article speaks about how the Government revenue tops \$2.5 billion. That is true. In fact, if one is running a

shop, a grocery store, or some sort of business, a surplus, a profit is to be desired; nothing is wrong with that.

In a nation, there are other things that come to play. As I said, I am no economist, so forgive me if I say the wrong thing, but I am only speaking from my limited understanding. When the Governor of the Central Bank says to expect slower growth in 1996, that causes me to be a little concerned, notwithstanding other things that I am seeing. The bottom line is that growth will be slower.

It is reported here in the newspaper that the Central Bank Governor, Ainsworth Yearwood, has already indicated in an address last week that he expects economic growth to be less than 3.5 per cent achieved in 1995, which was itself lower than the 4.2 per cent growth rate enjoyed in 1994. So he is projecting a downward slide in growth.

Mr. Speaker, as I am now beginning to understand, a healthy construction industry has to do with growth, and I am told by experts that the construction industry has all but stopped; then this appears to be a warning that we should not ignore. I am not the only person who is concerned. He points out that output in the non-petroleum sector fell marginally by 0.4 per cent, particularly because of a 7.4 per cent decline in the agriculture sector, and a 7 per cent decline in the Government sector.

I asked a few people what is the Government sector; what is it that one would consider in the Government sector is much expenditure in the economy? And they told me the construction industry.

What we are seeing here from the *Quarterly Report of the Central Bank* is that Government expenditure—at least this is my interpretation of it—there has been a 7 per cent decline in the Government sector in this country, in this day and age when we are touting that we have a surplus of revenue, topping \$2.5 billion. So what are we doing with the money? If this was private enterprise and I had shareholders to account to; they have to get dividends, then I would expect a profit, in fact, I would encourage a profit.

Mr. Speaker, this is a nation in which people must live, they must be able to buy food and afford a particular lifestyle. What this is saying to me, is that we are holding the money, we are not spending it; in local palance, the cow is starving while the grass is growing.

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Mr. Speaker, I think I could be excused for being a little concerned in this regard. In fact, I can excuse my constituents when the Joint Consultative Council tell me that they are alarmed. They have been trying to meet with various Ministers of Government to discuss this very issue. So Mr. Speaker, I think there is cause for concern.

It has been said that many of the jobs being provided are in the Unemployment Relief Programme and that comment is interesting. When I spoke with members of the Joint Consultative Council, they pointed out to me that not only in their calculations, but in their experience, up to 40 per cent of those who are now seeking employment on URP jobs across the nation could be catered for in the construction industry. I am certain that my good Friend, the Member for Barataria/San Juan, would be glad if 40 per cent less URP workers were around, given what I have been seeing in the press. And even so, jobs in the construction industry, while they are not necessarily life time jobs—they go the lifetime of the project not the lifetime of the individual—certainly would provide more for those who are unemployed, than if they were to continue to seek occasional fortnightly employment.

Mr. Speaker, if we are talking about a multiplier effect, I am beginning to see this multiplier effect multiplying on itself, and becoming exponential as it were. The gravity of the situation then continues to come home to me in ways I never envisaged. When I saw this Motion, as I pointed out, Mr. Speaker, as did some of my constituents—they are not necessarily the most academically inclined people but they have common sense, and as we know common sense was made before book sense—when they saw this Motion they said at last this is a call for sanity to return, because they are suffering in ways which when they describe to me my heart goes out to them.

Hon. Member: How long have they been suffering, 35 years?

Mr. E. Williams: Mr. Speaker, no they have not been suffering for 35 years. They have indicated that they are suffering now, because of a lack of construction jobs.

4.00 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, because my constituency is Port of Spain South, it was not without passing interest that I looked at a statement attributed to a Member on the other side, that too much money had already been spent in Port of Spain. I was

deeply concerned about that statement because I thought that this was the capital of the nation of Trinidad and Tobago.

I like to listen to the simple man and, in this case, to a simple housewife. When a housewife in the Laventille area stopped me one day and said that she was offended by this particular statement, I stood and listened. She came across very angrily. I had to recognize that she was not angry with me, but was ventilating her anger, so I could understand how she felt about the particular situation.

She said to me in simple parlance, "Mr. Williams, I am a housewife. and when I am going to receive guests into my house, the room in which I am going to receive them—it is not the kitchen—the food-basket; it is not the bedroom—the urban communities; it is, in fact, the living room". She said, "when I am entertaining guests it is because of my pride of appearance and my politeness, manners and plain upbringing, that I make sure that my living room is presentable in a particular manner because it is the place where I am receiving my guests".

Mr. Sudama: Now, we take full credit; spend all the money in the living room.

Mr. E. Williams: No. In this case, Mr. Speaker, does my hon. colleague want to put the toilet below the living room? In fact, the Minister of Health may not have to investigate lead poisoning, but he may have to investigate another type of poisoning that may result from contamination of our water supplies, given the particular architecture that is being suggested for housing. I say no more.

Mr. Speaker, to cut to the chase, the lady said to me that Port of Spain is the capital of Trinidad and Tobago, and she equates it to her living room—as modest as it was—and that the capital of the nation in which she lives should be presentable in a particular way, so as to speak highly of this nation of ours. So, when she heard this particular statement attributed to a Member of the Government, she was offended; it went against her very upbringing. *[Interruption]* Do not take issue with the bearer of the notes. I am bringing it to you live and direct.

Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, I have to come back to the business of the John John area, and the whole business of consultation that was offered, again, by the hon. Minister of Housing and Settlements. It is true to say that the hon. Minister invited me to his office and held a rather futuristic presentation. I was impressed by the technology that was presented there, notwithstanding the fact that it had been

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developed a little over 20 years ago. It was futuristic, and it attempted to portray a particular type of vision, so I was appreciative.

I was also interested when I was invited to consult with the Minister, invited to become a part of the process of developing John John, to be a part of a committee which would then utilize the funds that were generated from various projects, to assist in guiding how those funds should be spent in other projects in the community. I thank him. It is a one project—the John John Towers. The hon. Minister said a little earlier on, that he was not going to take funds from this project or any other project, and put them in the hands of Members on this side, and that, in itself, is a contradiction to the promise he proffered at the conference. I am sure if we get the tapes from TTT and TV 6, we would hear—in fact, when I went home that day my daughter said to me, "what happen, daddy, the Minister is your friend, because he is only calling you Eric and offering you the world?" I said, "Yes, he is." I said, "sweetheart, please, do not go on that length". In fact, even a child saw and heard what was proffered. So to hear what the hon. Member has said today, again, it is little distressing to me.

Mr. Sudama: You are a man of distress.

Mr. E. Williams: Yes. And, as my constituents are distressed by what you are doing.

4.10 p.m.

Hon. Member: We live in distressing times.

Mr. E. Williams: Yes, we live in distressing times. In all of this, Members on this side received correspondence from my good Friend, the hon. Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources. Again, I was pleased to receive his correspondence. I read it and thought it was an interesting effort. In fact, the same question that he spoke of in his correspondence, which I believe was to all Members, came up in an editorial in today's *Express*, Friday, July 26. In talking about "Plans for the economy still a mystery", it says here that:

"The question is, of course, what are the steps government plans to take to stimulate the economy while it waits for those projects..."

meaning the energy projects, and I see the hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Industries is here so we may hear some more about that.

"...to 'kick in'."

It also points out here that:

“The Manning administration had planned to do this, in part, by invigorating the construction sector. But the planned projects have been put on hold and we are none the wiser as to what, when, how they will be resurrected.”

The editorial writer goes on to say.

“What about agriculture? This is a sector one would have thought would long have been engaging a ruling party with a historic rural base,”

It went on to say a few other things. It is interesting because I think the hon. Minister pointed that out and it is quite laudable that jobs would be provided by stimulation of the agricultural sector, and I know he is working hard to do that. *[Crosstalk]* But when he asked me to look for suitable lands for agriculture in my constituency, I was at a loss. *[Crosstalk]* The nearest land that I could figure out for agriculture is the Savannah and that is not in my constituency.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, could I appeal to you to take it easy and allow the hon. Member to be heard.

Mr. E. Williams: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Moreso, the more I walk about in my constituency—because I keep close to my people—my constituents tell me they are looking for jobs in construction, not in agriculture. As laudable as that is, as honourable and as necessary as that is, the folks who come to me and those whom I go to, tell me they are seeking jobs primarily in construction. Take it for what it is worth, that is the voice of the people.

Beyond that, in terms of the business of construction projects, I was doing some research on another matter using my PC on the Internet, surfing the Net looking for something—*[Interruption]* Well, what do you expect geophysicists to do? Then I went to check at the library for a particular piece of literature. As I got into discussion with the librarian—

Mr. Sudama: That was with your constituents?

Mr. E. Williams: No, this was not in my constituency, this was a librarian. She pointed out to me—

Mr. Sudama: Another lady?

Mr. E. Williams: This particular librarian pointed out to me that my research would have been facilitated had there been the National Library in place—the research I was doing was not anything to do with politics and I did not want to get into that issue. It was in my constituency, yes, but she said, “No, no. It does not have anything to do with politics. You are doing research. You asked me to help you with your research. I am telling you that your research would have been facilitated had the library been in place.” I said, “Fine, tell me more.” And, Mr. Speaker, the Library Association told me a lot more. In fact, a number of fact sheets had been prepared because of, not my alarm, but their alarm, at the cancellation of that project, a project which, by the way, would also have provided construction jobs in this economy of ours.

They pointed out to me in their Fact Sheet No. 1 dated February 1996, that:

“The National Library is the *head* of a linked National Library and Information System. Its functions are distinct and cannot be replaced by ten (10) smaller libraries.

The National Library is one of a kind. No other library, not even one and certainly not ten, can take its place. A body needs one head, not ten.”

[Interruption] You see, even you understand the concept of a head.
[Laughter]

“But a headless body without established links between its several parts cannot function.”

It goes on to say that:

“The proposed National Library building is designed to house both the administrative headquarters of the linked national information system and a unique cluster of special services, together known as the National Library.

THE NATIONAL LIBRARY IS FREE TO THE ENTIRE POPULATION.”

Housed in such a National Library would have been the following services:

“Public Library. The National Library is not itself a Public Library, but is the administrative centre for co-ordinating all library and information services. However the National Library building...”

And it is speaking hopefully here:

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“...will include a public lending library for adults and one for children to replace existing cramped facilities at the corner of Duke and Pembroke Streets which serve residents...”

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

4.20 p.m.

Mr. E. Williams: In addition to a public library, the complex would have housed a heritage library.

“The Heritage Library is the heart of the National Library. It is the nation’s memory bank.”

It is not Port of Spain’s memory bank, not the East/West Corridor’s memory bank, but the nation’s memory bank.

“It stores and carefully preserves for current and future use, the printed, manuscript, audio and visual record of the nation’s intellectual and creative output.”

The nation’s intellectual and creative output engaged the interest of this House recently. We have been passing legislation on intellectual property rights. This is saying that to give meaningful effect to the legislation we have been passing in this House with vigour—which has been supported by both sides—a Heritage Library, which would have been a part of the National Library, is very necessary.

The Library Association went on to point out that a Heritage Library—

“...is the country’s collective treasure-house, servicing and sharing with the whole country and the world, national literary, musical and artistic gems and other expressions of the national self. It is a nation-building source of pride.”

In addition to those two facilities, there would have been an information network—

“The National Library acts as the major link between all library and information services—public, school, university, special and institutional through a computerized

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information network which provides ready access to all available resources locally, regionally and internationally.

In effect, a number of satellite locations in every nook and cranny, hamlet, town or borough of this nation would have had at least one area with one or two computer terminals allowing the residents to access, not only the national library with all of its resources, but the internet, with the guidance of trained personnel, to service the libraries of the world.

Mr. Speaker, much has been said about the need for 10 or 12 other libraries—again the need for construction. Somebody would have had to build those and I suppose jobs would then have been provided for those people. Much has been made about the business of constructing other libraries up and down the country to level the playing field. It is interesting, because I found out that there are three urban libraries: one in Port of Spain, one in San Fernando and one in Scarborough. There are 15 suburban branch libraries in Trinidad, ranging from Arima to Mayaro; St. James all the way to Siparia, Princes Town, Maloney, Couva and Diego Martin; and 2 in Tobago—one in Roxborough and one in Charlotteville. I have been to the one in Charlotteville.

There are two voluntary community libraries: one in Chaguanas and one in Felicity. In addition to that, there is a book mobile service facility with 22 points in Trinidad, and 26 in Tobago. All that is needed as those stand now, with the appropriate technology that is available today, is a personal computer with a fax modem, the appropriate speed, a telephone line and a service provider, and a person is on.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member would appreciate that I am allowing some latitude in terms of the content and in relating it to the Motion that is before us.

Mr. E. Williams: Mr. Speaker, I understand that clearly. I thank you for that intervention, but I am leading in my own way to the business of the necessary construction programme which was being put in place.

A Member on the other side said that one must plan before one executes. The point is that major construction projects such as the national library have been shelved simply because the opinion was expressed that the Government was spending too much money in Port of Spain or buildings were just being built for building sake, or to provide jobs for PNM hacks, which is not true. As this brief points out, projects such as the national library was not just about erecting

buildings in this nation, they were about building institutions that are necessary for national growth. Something which is a necessary spin-off then of building such institutions is the building of the physical infrastructure which will house and give effect to such institutions, and when one steps back to the multiplier effect or the gross domestic product, one sees that the cancellation of major public construction projects impacts significantly on our gross domestic product and our nation building.

To say “no” to construction is to say “no” to growth in the economy. It is to say “no” to the growth in gross domestic product and in job opportunities, not only in the construction sector, but in a number of other fields which will flow from the institutions which would have been built in this nation as a result.

In conclusion, I endorse this resolution and I commend to this House that it considers it seriously and that it considers where we are going as a nation. I am guided by the wise man in Proverbs, chapter 29:18, where he says, “Where there is no vision, the people perish.”

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Public Utilities (Hon. Ganga Singh): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this House do now adjourn to Friday, August 2, 1996 at 1.30 p.m., at which time we will deal with the Administration of Justice (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill and the Marriage (Amdt.) Bill.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned 4.30 p.m.