

Leave of Absence

Friday, October 4, 1996

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, October 4, 1996

The House met at 1.30 p.m.

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I wish to announce that I have received communication from the hon. Prime Minister who is out of the country on official business and he has asked to be excused. He is excused. I have also received communication from the Member for Arouca South (Mrs. C. Robinson Regis) who is ill and has asked to be excused from today's sitting. She is excused.

**JOINT SELECT COMMITTEES
(COMMUNICATION)**

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I wish to indicate that I have received communication from the hon. President of the Senate, the first of which is dated September 26, 1996, and it reads:

“Hon. Speaker,

I refer to your letter of September 20, 1996 and inform you that at a sitting held on Tuesday September 24, 1996 the Senate agreed to the following resolution which was moved by the Minister of Public Administration and Information:

Resolved that the report of the committee appointed to review the constitutional and legislative arrangements for Tobago be referred to a joint select committee of Parliament established to consider the report and to submit its comments and/or recommendations thereon to Parliament. That the Joint Select Committee has power to send for persons, papers and records and receive and consider the comments of the public on the report; and that the Joint Select Committee be required to submit its report to Parliament no later than October 15, 1996.

The resolution is accordingly forwarded for the attention of the House of Representatives.

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Yours sincerely
Ganace Ramdial
President of the Senate.”

The second piece of correspondence which I received from the hon. President is dated October 2, 1996, and it reads as follows:

“Dear Mr. Speaker,

I wish to refer to the following resolution, which was agreed to by the House of Representatives at a sitting held on Friday August 09 and by the Senate at a sitting held on Tuesday September 17, 1996.

Whereas the working paper on equal opportunity legislation was tabled in the House of Representatives on Friday February 16, 1996 and in the Senate on Tuesday February 13, 1996;

Be it resolved that a joint select committee of Parliament be established to receive and consider comments from the members of the public and to submit a report to the Parliament thereon.

I also wish to refer to the following resolution, which was agreed to by the House of Representatives at a sitting held on Friday September 20 and by the Senate at a sitting held on Tuesday September 24, 1996.

Resolved that the report of the Committee appointed to review the constitutional and legislative arrangements for Tobago be referred to a joint select committee of Parliament established to consider the report and to submit its comments and/or recommendations thereon to Parliament;

that the Joint Select Committee have power to send for persons, papers and records and receive and consider the comments of the public on the report; and that the Joint Select Committee be required to submit its report to Parliament no later than October 15, 1996.

In accordance with the agreement of both Houses of Parliament, at a sitting of the Senate held on Tuesday October 01, 1996, the Senate agreed to appoint the following Senators to serve on the two committees.

On the Joint Select Committee to consider comments from members of the public on the working paper on equal opportunity legislation:

Mr. Philip Hamel-Smith

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Mrs. Deborah Moore-Miggins

Mr. Wade Mark

Miss Penelope Beckles

Prof. Eric St. Cyr

Prof. Kenneth Ramchand

On the Joint Select Committee to consider the report of the Committee which was appointed to review the constitutional and legislative arrangements for Tobago:

Brig. Joseph Theodore

Mrs. Carol Cuffy-Dowlat

Mr. Nathaniel Moore

Mr. Orville London

Dr. Eastlyn Mc Kenzie

Prof. John Spence

Accordingly, I respectfully request that you cause this matter to be brought to the attention of the House of Representatives at the earliest opportunity.

Yours sincerely

Ganace Ramdial

President of the Senate"

It may perhaps be useful to indicate that the appropriate motion with respect to this would be taken at a later stage of the proceedings.

PAPERS LAID

1. The Immigration (Amendment) Regulations [*The Attorney General (Hon. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj)*]
2. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts and financial statements of the National Settlements Programme for the year ended December 31, 1995 as required by Loan Contract 584/OC-TT between the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and the Inter-American Development Bank. [*Hon. R. L. Maharaj*]

3. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts and financial statements of the Restructuring Support Unit (RSU), Ministry of Planning and Development (the executing agency) in respect of the Business Expansion and Industrial Restructuring Loan (BEIRL) Project for the year ended December 31, 1995 as required by section 4:01 (b) (i) of Loan Contract No. 3432 TR between the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD). [*Hon. R. L. Maharaj*]

Papers 2 and 3 to be referred to the Public Accounts Committee.

4. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Trinidad and Tobago Solid Waste Management Company Limited for the year ended December 31, 1993. [*Hon. R. L. Maharaj*]

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

1.40 p.m.

POVERTY LEVELS IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

The Minister of Social Development (Hon. Manohar Ramsaran): Mr. Speaker, I lay on the Table a report on the determination and measurement of poverty in Trinidad and Tobago. I now make a statement on the said report.

In 1987, the then Ministry of Social Development and Family Services, in its paper entitled, "Economic Management in the Household in the Process of Structural Adjustment", highlighted the need for the analysis of factors leading to poverty and its resultant effects on the family. It was subsequently agreed that the findings of the paper were important enough to warrant further investigation to facilitate the preparation of a plan of action to address the apparent social problem. In its plan of action for 1991, the Ministry proposed that the focus of activities should be on programmes which addressed issues related to poverty, the child and the family.

In 1991, the Ministry initiated *inter alia*, the research project entitled, "A Survey of Poverty in Trinidad and Tobago to identify a meaningful poverty line which would accurately distinguish the poor and to design a poverty map identifying socially depressed areas for developmental attention." The project utilized data from the survey of living conditions organized by the Social Sectors Unit of the Ministry of Planning and Development.

The primary objective of the report tabled here today was to obtain a realistic picture of poverty levels in Trinidad and Tobago and to devise measures related to these. For the purpose of the analysis, the approach used to measure poverty was an integrated measure, incorporating the use of the convention poverty line method, as well as the new unsatisfied basic needs approach. The method used combined indicators which measured recurrent consumption patterns among households as a proxy for income, as well as determined the extent to which basic needs were not being satisfied. Several quality-of-life indicators were used to measure standards of living based on the extent of access to services and the degree to which basic needs were met. The variables used included access to clean water and sanitation, education and access to and use of health services.

The report indicates that poverty increased substantially over the decade 1982—1992 and that the social situation of the population declined with the difficult economic conditions experienced. The main findings of the report are *inter alia* as follows:

- Variable poverty rates within the population which can be divided into classes of poor;
- 35.9 per cent of the population within households were adjudged to be poor constituting:
 - individuals and households who had long fallen into a state of poverty—the historically poor;
 - individuals and households which had more recently become poor as a result of changed economic circumstances, for example loss of jobs and reduced wages—the new poor;
- Intense poverty among some households, measured in terms of shortfall in income needed to support household needs;
- The highest incidence of poverty was located in the areas of:

San Juan/Laventille	12.7 per cent
Tunapuna/Piarco	9.7 per cent
Princes Town	9.0 per cent
Diego Martin	8.2 per cent
Chaguanas Borough	7.9 per cent
Siparia	7.7 per cent

- Poverty measured in terms of access to a variety of basic social services revealed a lesser incidence than indicated by the poverty line;
- Some 90 per cent of the population shared in the income redistribution between 1988 and 1992, but in actual terms, benefits were not evenly shared. Lower income groups commanded only 17.3 per cent of the income shared in 1988 and 15.7 per cent in 1992.
- Households demonstrated the widely observed pattern of expenditure outstripping income.

It should be noted that the report is dated and reflects social conditions up to 1992. Steps are now being taken to update the report.

Meanwhile, Mr. Speaker, the Government with the support of United Nations agencies has embarked upon a holistic and collaborative approach to the problem of poverty eradication, as indicated in statements previously made to this honourable House.

This holistic approach calls for the establishment of a Change Management Unit and National Social Development Council with the Minister Extraordinaire as chairman, to provide this country with a permanent structure to facilitate national dialogue on the development of an inter-sectoral approach to poverty eradication policies and programmes and to strengthen our capacity to plan, manage, implement and monitor poverty eradication strategies.

A recently instituted project is the Community Development Fund Programme which is an integral part of Government's efforts to mitigate the situation of the poor and vulnerable, providing bridge support while more long-term reforms are being developed. This programme will channel important resources quickly to disadvantaged groups through existing community-oriented programmes. It will also serve as an efficient mechanism to respond to community needs in areas such as small infrastructural works and social assistance services.

The Government is deepening the involvement of non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations in the poverty reduction process, through units within line ministries such as the Social Help and Rehabilitative Efforts (SHARE) programme in my Ministry and the National Commission for Self-Help in the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and Women's Affairs to work specifically with these institutions. Through the provision of Government subventions and grants, NGOs have been assisting

Government in the delivery of social services such as feeding programmes, counselling, drug rehabilitation, adult literacy, care for the aged and skills training for youth. Other government initiatives being undertaken to alleviate poverty encompass projects and programmes which include:

- Micro Enterprise Training and Development Grant Programme;
- Remedial Therapy Programme for Probationers;
- Riverside Walk-In Assessment Centre for Homeless Persons;
- Drop-In Centre for Socially Displaced Children;
- Remand Home and Probation Hostels for Young Offenders;
- Disability Assistance Grant;
- Senior Citizens Bureau;
- Civilian Conservation Corps;
- Geriatric Adolescent Programme (GAP);
- Community Care Programme.

Mr. Speaker, let me also point out that the Ministry of Social Development is in the process of restructuring the system of managing social services in Trinidad and Tobago. In this proposed new system it is anticipated that the various social partners will be placed into a network of inter-relationships to afford optimum benefits. We also anticipate that the Ministry's role will shift from actual delivery to overall policy formulation, thereby affording NGOs greater involvement in the provision of these social services.

1.50 p.m.

At the same time, the Ministry is in the process of strengthening its Research, Planning and Implementation Division (RPID) to enable it to better formulate and implement measures aimed at addressing the needs of the socially deprived in our society.

I wish to emphasize, Mr. Speaker, that the time has come for us, as a nation, to seriously pursue approaches which would ensure that economic gains on a national scale are passed on to all members of our society. In this regard, the present administration stands committed to facilitating the redistribution of our country's resources in an equitable manner and addressing the root causes of poverty to build a harmonious and just society.

ARBITRATION (FOREIGN ARBITRAL AWARDS) BILL

Bill to give effect in Trinidad and Tobago to the New York Convention on the recognition and enforcement of Foreign Arbitral Awards, [*The Minister of Foreign Affairs*]; read the first time.

**CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS
(REACTIVATION OF)
[THIRD 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. [*Mr. C. Imbert*]

Question again proposed.

The Minister of Works and Transport (Sen. The Hon. Sadiq Baksh): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to inform this honourable House that the latest figures coming from the Central Statistical Office reveal, that for the fourth quarter of 1995, the number of persons with jobs in the construction sector was 45,100, while the number without jobs was 26,000 and not 30,000, as stated by the Member for Diego Martin East.

Furthermore, I wish to apprise this House that the preliminary figures for the first quarter of 1996 indicate that employment in the construction sector, when compared with the same period last year, has increased, while unemployment in the sector has fallen. Let me share the figures with you, Mr. Speaker.

For the first quarter of 1995, employment in the construction sector was 35,800. For the same period in 1996, employment increased by 3,400 to 39,200 jobs. Unemployment for the first quarter in 1995 was 32,200, while for the first quarter in 1996 it dropped to 28,800.

From these figures, Mr. Speaker, I believe the Members on the other side should be complimenting this Government for creating employment in the construction sector as well as other sectors. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, as you are aware the construction sector embraces a wide range of services and activities. These include the construction and maintenance of residential and office accommodation, heavy industrial plants, factory buildings, warehouses, schools, hospitals, post offices, community centres, roads, bridges and water supply systems. The supply of ancillary services such as quarrying, the manufacturing of blocks, the transporting of construction materials and the provision of professional and technical services are also components of the construction sector.

Because of the broad spectrum of activities that characterizes the construction sector there has always been a debate as to whether the construction industry is a catalyst for the economic activity, and therefore, a stimulus of economic growth, or whether it is merely a reflection of what is taking place in other sections of the economy.

No doubt, the debate stems from the fact that this sector has the potential for utilizing a vast range of labour from professionals to skilled and unskilled workmen. What has not been previously factored into the debate is that the new technological advances now introduced into this sector has an adverse impact on employment. In reality, they have reduced the employment potential of the construction industry.

We are all aware that in days gone by many persons were required for mixing concrete for large as well as small projects. Now, to even the most modest residential building, the supply of pre-mixed concrete is a must. Other functions, for example, digging of trenches and holes, previously undertaken manually are now done with excavators, thereby reducing labour requirements. While there are financial and other reasons for this today one thing is clear; that from start to finish, the labour cost of any project has been significantly reduced compared to what it used to be a few years ago.

Let us, for a minute, examine the typical construction project for TT \$20 million and see the kind of employment it utilizes. In the planning stages this project will employ no more than 20 persons directly. Construction of this project will probably last from about six months to one year. At the peak one would have, at least, 80—100 persons employed maximum. The other eight to ten months will see less than 75 persons on the project. What happens to the persons who work on the project, let us say, for four months and then have to leave because the project no longer requires their services? Mr. Speaker, they would either have to look for work at another construction site or in other sectors. What this tells us, Mr.

Speaker, is that semi-skilled labour and unskilled labour are mobile and gravitate to those sectors where there is a slack. It also tells us that the ability of the construction sector to create sustainable employment is not as high as some would have us believe.

I wish to note, Mr. Speaker, that if our people are to gain financial independence, then sustainable employment is needed. Should the Government get involved in construction just to provide employment? Should projects be undertaken because of the value and quality of life of our people? Or, is there some optimized combination of these two? That is the question the last government should have asked before embarking on some of the most scandalous construction projects in Trinidad and Tobago.

In many instances, what the last government was embarking on was not construction. In fact, it was total madness. I will give you a few examples. Let us look at La Brea. The last government, by Cabinet Note No. 692 of 1992, approved the establishment of an industrial estate for large petrochemical plants at La Brea. Mr. Speaker, I wish you to note, large petrochemical plants at La Brea.

2.00 p.m.

Money like water was flowing. There were to be new roads, a new water supply and new ports, \$250 million was to be spent and after exorbitant sums were spent, they realized that the money was just going into a hole and the leaking gas and the soil problem could not be solved.

Mr. Speaker, do you know what they did? They sent for Amoco and asked them to bring their best experts in the world to help them solve the problem. I shall quote the terms of reference from a report *Plug and Abandonment Project (Review)* by Amoco which states:

“Can spending additional money resolve the problem of oil and gas seepage to surface at the proposed LNG site in both the near and long term?”

Mr. Speaker, no amount of money under the PNM could solve any problems in Trinidad and Tobago. The answer was an absolute “No”. On one hand, they did not have any money for police vehicles, but on the other hand they had no problem wasting money in La Brea. They did not even have the honesty to give a copy of the Amoco Report to Farmland. Instead, they suckered them into believing that they could build an ammonia plant on that site and now the La Brea Industrial Estate establishment is a national disaster courtesy the People’s National Movement.

Miss Nicholson: Manning, Manning! That is why Rowley wants to beat him.

Hon. S. Baksh: While hundreds of millions of dollars were being wasted, that was not enough, they were on a roller coaster. Enough just was not enough. They conceptualized a new airport and I read from the *People's National Movement Elections 1995 Manifesto* at page 35 which says:

“A new Short Takeoff and Landing Airport (STAL) will be constructed at Sea Lots in Port of Spain to provide a direct air link for domestic travel and cargo transport between our Capital City and Tobago as well as Venezuela and Guyana,...”

This was another idea about construction.

Mr. Manning: What is wrong with that?

Hon. Member: There is nothing right about it.

Miss Nicholson: This week is your last. Keep quiet!

Hon. S. Baksh: Mr. Speaker, they did not get Pride No. 1 off the ground but in fact, they were ready for Pride No. 2. Do you know where they were planning to locate it? In the middle of the garbage dump in the Beetham, in swamp land. Just picture an arriving visitor, an evening in the mangrove, accompanied by french perfume from the dump and decorated by roosting birds as the sun sets in the evening. That was the ambiance of Pride No. 2, and they expected this Government to implement those same ideas. This is the highest level of intelligence and construction that we got from the last regime.

This UNC/NAR Government of national unity recognizes that there are projects which must be undertaken and we have sought to commence and continue those projects. We recognize that drainage is also one of the important components and as such, a \$400 million World Bank-funded drainage and flood control programme is being continued by the Ministry of Works and Transport. Consultants have been hired for the first phase of this project and the short term works are due to commence by the third quarter of 1996.

The roads and highways is another area where this Government has continued with a project known as the National Highways Programme which started before 1995. It has a positive impact on national development in Trinidad and Tobago and seeks to rehabilitate almost 600 kilometres of our road network. It also serves to conduct proper maintenance on approximately 27,000 kilometres of roads and to

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construct approximately 50 kilometres of new roads. Funding in the amount of US \$300 million or TT \$1.8 billion will be spent over the next six years on this project. One will therefore realize the considerable amount of money that will be spent by this subsector over the next four to six years.

The Rural Access Roads and Bridges Project is undertaken by the Ministry of Works and Transport on behalf of the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources and the first phase was completed in 1995. Phase II commenced in 1996 and it consist of 13 contracts which comprised 8 roads amounting to 67.2 kilometres and 4 bridges in Trinidad, and one road equivalent to 7.4 kilometres and three bridges in Tobago. The total cost of this phase is TT \$95,000. Construction work is underway on all projects and approximately \$37 million has already been spent as of July 1996.

Construction of buildings will continue. May I now turn your attention to the construction of major buildings under the Ministry of Works and Transport which have started, or are about to commence.

The construction of the new head office of the Ministry of Works and Transport which started in May 1995 and is progressing as scheduled and is due for completion early in 1997. The estimated cost is \$43 million and this is being administered by the Ministry of Works and Transport. There have been no changes in the status of this project.

The new Industrial Court in Port of Spain is being implemented by NIPDEC and construction started in 1995 and it is progressing as scheduled. The estimated cost is \$30 million and there have been no changes in its status.

NIPDEC was given the responsibility to procure the project at the Chancery Lane Development in San Fernando for Government and the Ministry of Works and Transport is presently looking at the fee claimed by NIPDEC for works that were completed previously. The estimated cost of this project is \$100 million and according to the programme, they are still in the planning stage, with construction scheduled for 1997.

The Harris Promenade Development Project in San Fernando is to be implemented by the Urban Development Corporation of Trinidad and Tobago and it is proceeding with it. Government has allocated some \$600,000 for designs, and it is to secure construction funding in keeping with the company's mandate.

With respect to the new city centre programme in Port of Spain, the National Library Building, to date, new design works have been completed. The foundation

has been constructed with an expenditure of some \$10 million and Government is now looking at various options for funding the completion of this project, originally estimated to cost \$125 million and the construction will resume in the not too distant future.

2.10 p.m.

The Red House Restoration. Preferred consultants for design work was selected prior to November 1995 for infrastructure problems at the Red House, which are affecting users, including Parliament. The Ministry of Works and Transport is looking at options for proceeding with the implementation of this project. In fact, the original programme for construction is due to begin in the first quarter of 1997 at an estimated cost of \$30 million.

Mr. Speaker, you would have noticed that these City Centre Projects, as they were called, are mainly in the planning and design stage, with the exception of the National Library which was the only project where construction was actually started. As I indicated before, this project will resume shortly. Mr. Speaker, as you are aware, the Ministry of Works and Transport is also involved in a number of other projects in various parts of the country. The most notable is the Arima Judicial Complex on which work is due to commence at the beginning of 1997. This project is estimated at \$30 million.

Schools, community centres and health centres are now under repair or refurbishment, or in varying stages of completion. The value of work on these buildings is over \$350 million. Mr. Speaker, I wish to inform this House that our Government is committed to accelerating projects, not only in the construction sector, but also in non traditional construction in the energy sector. I am sure the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries will apprise us of the number of energy projects as far as construction is concerned. The employment to be created on these constructions is for over 14,000 persons in the energy sector projects.

Notwithstanding these projections, Mr. Speaker, I wish to let this honourable House know that the construction sector is much more than the Public Sector Investment Programme. There are many private initiatives being undertaken. This Government has been very careful in its management of this sector. Given the projects that are being implemented and which are due to come on stream in the near future, care must be taken to ensure that overheating does not occur in the construction sector.

An analysis of this sector revealed that there is a shortage of professional quantity surveyors, structural engineers, as well as skilled labour required to effectively deliver projects which are all due to commence in 1997. Therefore, projects must be timed properly, even the simple services of transportation could pose a serious problem if proper management is not exercised.

Mr. Speaker, I am appalled at the poor management practices that were being perpetuated by the last regime. Just imagine, projects were started without proper plans. Requests for variations were the order of the day. I suspect that many of these may have been designed to cause escalation in final price, but I am sure you are aware that the magnitude of work in the construction sector has increased rather than declined, and this is only in the public sector. In the private sector work has continued uninterrupted, and that is why our Government can boast of an increase of employment in this sector.

I am sure by now, Mr. Speaker, you are aware that the question posed by the Member for Diego Martin East is irrelevant. Moreover the figure quoted is erroneous and is in no way supported by the data released by the Central Statistical Office.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

Mr. Jarrette Narine (*Arouca North*): Mr. Speaker, I thank you for allowing me to join the debate at this time, and I am appalled by the Minister of Works and Transport. He really read out what they gave him to read here today, and he does not understand what is taking place in the Ministry of Works and Transport. As a matter of fact, he was proudly reading out the last quarter's report of last year and taking credit for it; and the over-spill of the first quarter for this year—it was the PNM that put that into place. [*Desk thumping*] Why did he not read the second quarter for 1996? Then he would have understood what is taking place with construction in Trinidad and Tobago.

It is very unfair to do that, Mr. Speaker, because all that was read out here are projects which the PNM had undertaken. He is very proud of the headquarters of the Ministry of Works and Transport that has continued on Richmond Street, but he did not even say that he should have thanked the last Minister, excellent, well qualified person from Diego Martin East. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Assam: Well qualified to wreck Manning's leadership!

Mr. J. Narine: Today, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Works and Transport is saying that we should not be in the public sector constructing schools, hospitals,

communities and areas like where we had planned to do work and he shut down these types of jobs in Trinidad in 1996 to come back in 1997 to take credit for it. All the plans that have been put in place by the People's National Movement over the last four years. Funding and everything became easier for them. Imagine in the energy sector it took Trinidad and Tobago almost half of the time that it took any other country, to start that LNG plant and to get Farmland going.

Mr. Manning: Less than half!

Mr. J. Narine: Today, he stood up and took credit for these things, but the last Minister of Works and Transport said that when we came into office in 1991 we looked at the construction sector and chose all those projects that were left by the last Government and we continued with them. Of course, we did not have anything to open from the NAR's time; but the UNC/NAR coalition—and I do not think it is a coalition anymore because I understand the NAR is distancing itself from the UNC now, so that the situation is that NAR will be very much apart.

Miss Nicholson: Next week you would not be here, you know.

Mr. J. Narine: All the projects that were started by the PNM that were supposed to have taken place this year, Mr. Speaker—projects like Chancery Lane and others—which were supposed to have been started in 1996, the Minister is not even giving a date now. He is saying they might start some time in 1997. Are we going to remain with that gaping hole here on the south of the Red House that they call the Library? People have forgotten it, because it has become part of the normal structure in Port of Spain. The landscape in Port of Spain has become natural because people are fed up passing there and just looking at it. Now they have their mind tuned that, maybe, something will happen when the PNM Government comes back, in the not too distant future, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the *Review of the Economy* in 1995 proved what the last Minister of Works and Transport was saying. He went to great lengths, speaking about the *Review of the Economy* of 1995 and what took place with the good statistics coming out of the Ministry. I would have really liked to see what happened in the quarter ending June this year; the Minister cared to stay from agricultural access roads, a programme initiated during the NAR's time. They took five years to do the planning and when we came in 1991 we just started to work, because we were a caring government and we did not say that that project was not a good one, but we did Phases I and II. As a matter of fact \$15 million out of the \$93 million was spent in Tobago, yet they stand and say that we have not taken care of Tobago.

2.20 p.m.

I am saying, Mr. Speaker, that very soon, you are going to hear Tobagonians saying that they were treated better under the PNM than they have been treated by any other government of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Places like Penal, Paramin and Aranguez—the agricultural access programme throughout Trinidad and Tobago. The extension of the Solomon Hochoy Highway—I know that the Minister comes from South very often and I am certain that he passes in front of the San Fernando Civic Centre. If he had started that project, maybe by now we would have been well on our way to coming in from Cross Crossing, San Fernando. They just keep putting it off. I passed there last week and even the maintenance that is supposed to be done on that stretch of road is not being done. The road is like the waves at Maracas. I do not know if he still lives in San Fernando, because I understand that he is in the East/West Corridor very often, but time will tell whether he belongs to the East/West Corridor or deep south. So that we have that extension of the Solomon Hochoy Highway.

Construction in health—he has said nothing about construction in health. Who is the autocrat in your Ministry who wrote that for you?

Mr. Assam: What kind of rat is that? Autocrat? No, no, no. He is talking about Rowley and Manning—autocrat.

Mr. J. Narine: Normally, Mr. Speaker, when the Member for St. Joseph has a problem, he tries to bawl himself out in this House. I am not going to reply to him because I am accustomed to him. Since 1983 he has been doing that in the St. George East County Council and other places—talk down when people are on their feet. No problem. He is like that. The arrogance flows every time.

We talked about the health facilities in Arima.

Miss Nicholson: Technocrat!

Mr. Assam: Or bureaucrat!

Miss Nicholson: Technocrat or bureaucrat would be better words. I am just trying to help you.

Mr. J. Narine: I would help you just now.

The health facilities in Arima were opened in certain phases. It seems as though the present Government is fed up cutting ribbons for projects that the PNM left, so that it started some health facilities in Arima which were completed and our

government was waiting for the equipment to be installed before opening the hospital—a beautiful building. I hope they would say that when it is inherited. It is a facility that Arimians are very proud of and I am an Arimian.

Dr. Rafeeq: We did not cut ribbons there.

Mr. J. Narine: No. There are a number of projects for which they stopped cutting ribbons. We talked about the mandir in the sea and the Preysal pavilion, but you know what happens.

Mr. Imbert: Preysal pavilion?

Mr. J. Narine: Yes.

Mr. Imbert: But that was finished since June, 1995.

Mr. J. Narine: They are ashamed now to open most of the projects nearing completion in San Fernando, Central, Sangre Grande, the Tunapuna Home for the Aged—health centres all over Trinidad and Tobago in a four-year period of performance by the PNM government which was great, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

When we look at the regional administrative centre complex programme in Tunapuna, the people in Tunapuna are saying, “Thank God”, that we started that project near the local government entrance at Centenary Street, because if it were not started, they would have had to wait. Buildings are being rented in Tunapuna for the court house and so forth. Mr. Speaker, I am certain that you, too, would be very proud of that Tunapuna complex when it is completed because you have an interest in Tunapuna.

The programme was stopped. The Minister spoke about the Arima judicial complex. Some of his investors in Arima who have hardware businesses brought down millions of dollars in material waiting there on the ground, so that he may have to start that project because the bank is planning to foreclose on them. I am telling him that his people in Arima will put pressure on him to start the project or they would have problems. I am saying that they did that because they knew that they would have a say in starting these projects and they have already brought down materials. They may be fortunate because the exchange rate is escalating and they may have saved a lot of money by bringing the material before.

When one goes to the food stores of those same people in Arima, the prices have gone up already and they have not imported anything new. I was there last week. Food prices are going up and the exchange rate is over TT \$6.00 to US

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\$1.00. Are they going to wait until next year when it is over TT \$10.00 to start construction? That is being penny wise and pound foolish. So that they are starting construction at a time and playing politics—the “Ministry of Trickery”.

The Minister started in Laventille one Saturday morning at 9.00 o'clock holding a trowel, walking with his public relations people; by 10.00 o'clock he was in Arouca opening an adult education class; 11.00 o'clock he was in Valencia; 12.00 o'clock he was in Sangre Grande. So all week timely releases. Monday it seemed as if he spent the whole day in Laventille. Tuesday it seemed he had spent the whole day in Arouca. The other ministers should learn from him. He should tell them what trickery he is doing with the media in Trinidad and Tobago—go about for half day on a Saturday and timely releases every day in the newspapers for the week. Imagine that! These are the kinds of ministers we have.

Mr. Manning: I thank the hon. Member for giving way. I want to suggest to the hon. Minister of Works and Transport that perhaps he ought to consult Mr. Randolph Burroughs. There are pitfalls that lie in the way of those who operate in that manner. Just a friendly piece of advice.

Mr. Assam: It was your PM that appointed him. Your PM Williams that appointed him as Commissioner of Police.

Mr. J. Narine: The people of Arouca saw that. I did not attend the function because I felt that after the Prime Minister called my teachers, “criminals”, the people who made me what I am today, I would not attend any function that the Minister of Education was attending. I am following TTUTA in that respect. I respect them, and I am following TTUTA in that respect.

Mr. Assam: And you will continue to be in a state of miseducation.

Mr. J. Narine: Mr. Speaker, I am hearing some voices in the background and I am wondering where they came from.

Mr. Assam: The foreground!

Mr. J. Narine: In the foreground. I am saying that people who do not belong to a certain organization for long enough are confused people. They moved from one political party to another and they do not know to which they belong. He is claiming to be NAR inside here; he is also claiming to be UNC.

Mr. Assam: That is why Rowley knocking the PNM today!

Mr. Speaker: I would suggest to the hon. Member that if he directs his contribution to the Chair, he might avoid some of the problems. The Standing

Orders suggest that you should speak to the Chair and not to Ministers, Members or else. I think it would be much easier if you do that.

Mr. J. Narine: Mr. Speaker, I always direct myself to the Chair, but when I have interruptions like that, I feel that maybe I should be protected.

Mr. Speaker: I am suggesting to you that even then you should direct yourself to the Chair.

Mr. J. Narine: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I am saying that when one looks at what is happening to the coalition today with one faction distancing itself because of some incident that took place and tapes flying all over the place, the situation is that—

Mr. Assam: That is how Rowley distancing himself from Brighton Estate!

Mr. J. Narine: Mr. Speaker, I have no problem with that. They will self-destruct not too long from now.

2.30 p.m.

Schools were being built all over the country. I had the opportunity to go as far as Matura and Sangre Grande. I was very fortunate that in Arouca North after all the confusion during the NAR regime, the D'Abadie Government School was built. Today it is an asset to the community of D'Abadie. They are very happy about that, because we were taking care. Then the Member for Diego Martin West was going all over the place trying to get a school for Carenage. It cannot start as yet. They have given so many promises. The Minister of Health made another promise here a month ago about the junior doctors in the hospital, but today it is confusion and bacchanal in the hospital. I am asking him: where is that programme now?

The urban renewal programme—they talk about the Brian Lara Promenade, but the Members on the other side who spoke ill of that area so many times while they were in opposition, are now going there to take photographs, to listen to pan and to hug and kiss people, and so forth. I wanted to tell the Prime Minister—not the acting Prime Minister—that where he stood on that Brian Lara Promenade was the site of the drag brothers a year or two ago. So that the PNM has done its work intelligently and I am appealing to the Government to take our plan and carry it forward for the benefit of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

The Mount Hope Medical Complex, the Judicial Complex in Port of Spain, the National Stadium, were all spoken ill of by Members on the other side at one time or the other. I remember when the Member for Tobago East was the Prime

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Minister, he took the Venezuelan President to the Mount Hope Medical Complex and showed him the fine facilities that we have in Trinidad and Tobago. Of course, it was built by the PNM.

Today we have a National Stadium of which we are proud. Bishop Desmond Tutu went there and was very surprised to see that Trinidad and Tobago was so well developed. In 35 years of PNM rule we have done wonders with this country. We have taken this country forward. We have only had two setbacks; one in 1986 and the other in 1995. But this country is going to move forward, have no fear.

They spoke about the national library. Are they not ashamed to come in this Parliament to speak about that? They are depriving the same people they call "criminals" from getting our children out of the quagmire they may be in. We are going internet. The highway of computers is here for us. That library would have made it possible for our children to get on the internet and access information throughout the world. So the longer they wait for that library the worst it would be for the same teachers they call "criminals" to teach our children in this country.

The ACS headquarters—I do not know if the persons at the Ministry of Works and Transport are hoping that it might be completed next year for them to move in. I do not see that. I am seeing that they may be disintegrated before that.

Mr. Speaker, I passed by Four Roads a few days ago and was very proud to see the Four Roads Police Station being built, which was started by the People's National Movement. I want to know who is going there to cut ribbons. In 1994, under the *Public Sector Investment Programme*, a sum of \$1 million was allocated to start a police station at Five Rivers Junction next door to the pavillion. In 1996, that was removed and the additional sum of money which was supposed to go to the Arouca Police Station, went to the Cunupia Police Station. Now they are going to start the Cunupia Police Station. But it is credit to the Member of Parliament who represented Arouca/North that a great deal of work was done on the existing police station so that our police are still comfortable in Arouca. So we will wait patiently when we get back into office—if they do not do it we will do it and use the other facilities for other things. Arouca is a town that has to be developed but we are waiting. We will get ours in time.

The cultural facilities for Laventille—Desperadoes; what a proud project. The Member for Laventille West spoke about that project on the hill. I remember a few years ago we had our carnival celebrations televised worldwide. When they went up on the hill with the cameras, many people in Trinidad and Tobago, including

myself, felt that we were exposing the worst part to the world. When that complex is completed, I would invite the same man from England to return there to have a look at Desperadoes to see what we have done through the vision of the PNM. I know it will be completed and the Member for Laventille West will play an integral role in that development.

The Tacarigua multipurpose indoor facilities— *[Interruption]* This is all you can speak about, those small trivialities. He cannot do the Ministry's work. The price of chicken is \$5.00 per pound today, but he is talking nonsense here.

Mr. Speaker, I am speaking about hockey facilities where a world tournament will be played in Tacarigua in the not too distant future; this is a credit to the People's National Movement. The Member for Tobago West is very proud of that project. She was a Minister for five years in another regime and did not build one single house, but she is now proud of that complex in Tacarigua. As regards housing, when the NAR was in office they did not build one house. The National Union of Government and Federated Workers to which I belong, built more houses than the NAR Government and I am saying they are going to outstrip this Government by building more houses. They have already started in Arouca. We have 450 houses to be built in Arouca and already we have about 60 on stream. So although the Government has taken away the President of the union and confused the members in the union by giving him a senatorial appointment, we are going to deal with that in the not too distant future. Because of that a UNC councillor opened his own union. But the people in the trade union are very intelligent people and they have seen through that already. So there is nothing in housing.

I can tell you in Point Fortin they are very proud of the last Minister of Housing and Settlements. He did work all over this country. He made it quite clear many times in this Parliament about his performance as the Minister of Housing and Settlements.

Let us not talk about the mess that the Minister of Works and Transport has made with URP. Every day, up and down the country, throughout the length and breadth of Trinidad and Tobago, there is confusion. Even the Member for Ortoire/Mayaro is calling upon him to do something about it. He is doing the recruitment in Mayaro but he is calling upon the Minister to do something about it. The Member for San Juan/Barataria also has a problem with that. He does not know how to administrate that programme.

2.40 p.m.

Through that programme of 1992 and onwards, by now we would have had 400 construction projects. The reason for choosing construction projects for the

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\$120 million given in allocation for the Unemployment Relief Programme was that the work of the Ministry of Local Government would not be duplicated. We always had that problem when the DEWD programme was in place. When programmes within local government involved the cleaning of drains and so on the DEWD people would then be sent in before to do that job, so the local government workers had nothing to do. This Government has damaged the construction industry in the Unemployment Relief Programme.

Mr. Speaker, we were very happy when Government opened the Siewdass Sadho Mandir out in the sea, the pavilion out at Preysal and the police post at Valencia. It came across as if UNC had built a police post in one month. That was built by us. One must not take credit for these things. One must talk in general.

The Biche Community Centre is one of the best community centres on the east coast and was opened by the then Prime Minister.

Mr. Partap: How much did it cost?

Mr. J. Narine: How much did it cost? Mr. Speaker, it cost about \$600,000 over two years, giving all the people in Biche labour. Right now there is nothing going on in Biche. The people are being sent back to planting marijuana and selling drugs in Biche.

Is the Member for Nariva a representative of the people? I have a lot of information here—I do not know if time would permit—and I would deal with what took place in 1994: retaining walls, 51,678 feet of work. I am waiting patiently for the next budget to find out what happened in the Unemployment Relief Programme. The Government took the programme's money and started to clean Wallerfield. They burst 30 truck tyres in Wallerfield, spent \$5 million out of the programme's money and, today, if one goes to Wallerfield one would not know where was graded.

In Manzanilla it is the same thing. We had the county council to do those things, but the Government has damaged the funding. Right now the people who supply material for the Ministry of Works and Transport have stopped doing so because they are owed over \$15 million for URP material. The Government is building the Balmain Police Station which is really an office for the Member for Couva South. An office for the Member for Couva South is being built off URP allocations. *[Interruption]* I go to Couva. They termed the project differently.

Slipper drains, only 28,000 feet. You had curb walls only 7,362 feet. This was only for one year; curb and slipper drains, 36,000; rubble wall, almost 22,000 feet.

[Interruption] I am saying that the Ministry of Local Government did a lot of this work long ago.

Mr. Partap: Where did you get your statistics?

Mr. J. Narine: My statistics are from the information I received in 1994 from the Ministry.

Mr. Partap: Did you collate it?

Mr. J. Narine: Not me. Just as how the people in the ministry wrote the speech for the Minister today, the engineers sent a report at the end of the year. This is an authentic report. This is not what the Member for Nariva used to write in the newspaper not knowing what he was saying. Today he still does not know what he is saying. *[Laughter]*

Pavement and suspended footpath, 27,000 feet; pavement, 35,000; box drain, 72,000 feet. Mr. Speaker, I do not want to call all out, but I would go on and talk about the drains with base only, 32,000 feet. That is only for one year. We had road repairs and patching, almost 100,000 feet; gabion baskets, 300,000 feet; fencing, 1,471 feet; we had prevented 32 landslips; box culverts, 22; bridges with a 33-foot span—this was only for URP in 1994—28 bridges in the Unemployment Relief Programme; bridges for pedestrian crossing and walking, 31; recreation grounds and hard surface courts, 47. We have built facilities for the young people of this country in a matter of four years that this Government would take a lifetime to do. *[Interruption]* We built them all over Trinidad and Tobago, even in Rio Claro. That wall that the Member inherited where the surface courts are supposed to go down was built by the Unemployment Relief Programme.

We speak about culture and pan, and for years certain people said nothing; nothing was done. We built 11 pan theatres during that very year 1994, putting the people who are in culture first in this country. Community centres and government buildings that were repaired were 50 in number in that one year, 1994. *[Interruption]* It seems as though the Member does not know his own constituency, he should go and see. The Tableland Police Station was refurbished by the Unemployment Relief Programme—the roof, floor, the whole area. Has the Member ever visited that police station since he became a Member of Parliament? He does not know it. He would not know.

School maintenance, 385 schools in number. We did maintenance in the schools and we had people working in the schools. This is why the Minister of

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Education is having so much difficulty. He is not being buttressed by other ministers who should do some work for him in those areas, especially the Minister of Works and Transport; he is sabotaging him. Three post offices were built at that time, one in La Horqueta, one in Maloney and I cannot remember where the other one was at this point in time.

That was only in 1994, but there were the 1992, 1993 and 1995 programmes. I do not have the statistics for 1995 but I have for 1993 and I can assure you that the 1994 programme was like that. You had places like Couva South where the Railway Road footpath and Balmain footpath were built; the Calcutta footpath, Isaac Settlements drainage works; the Dow Village footpath. We were all over this country. Today it is so partial.

Dr. Mohammed: Your present Minister of Works and Transport is all over this country.

Mr. J. Narine: Mr. Speaker, while the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources is speaking, I saw this in the newspaper, while people in this country are suffering I am seeing where UNC party groups are to collect cheques from the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources. It is in the *Daily Express* of Thursday, June 27, 1996: P22504283, UNC party group, P22532958—UNC party group to collect money from the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources. This is what it says here. While people cannot send their children to school, while people cannot get money for uniforms, while people cannot get money for food, while people have to be aware of the crime situation in Trinidad and Tobago, the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources is giving money to UNC party groups.

I am saying to you today, Mr. Speaker, it is a ridiculous state of affairs; it is right here in the newspaper of June 27, 1996.

Let him come back here and explain to the nation how that got in the newspaper. Is that correct or incorrect?

2.50 p.m.

The Minister does not know about the publication in the newspaper coming from his Ministry. It seems as though the Minister does not know about many things coming out of his Ministry. Even the Nariva Swamp matter the Minister does not know about. Probably, the Members opposite do not read the newspapers, but they come with fancy talk and fancy PR to talk about a little slip in

the English language. I am no exponent of the English language, but when I speak, I speak of things that are on the streets in Trinidad and Tobago [*Desk thumping*] What is happening on the outside.

In 11 months the people of Trinidad and Tobago are waiting to change a government, like what happened during the time of the NAR government. They took away the cost of living allowance, they took away the 10 per cent from salary and increment and they come and talk about—a trade union leader is running Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I need to remind you that the *Hansard* reporters do, in fact, have to record faithfully what is said in this Chamber and it is difficult to do so if we continue the way in which we are going.

Mr. J. Narine: Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister of Works and Transport what happened to Tapaná. When we were elected to Government in 1991, Tapaná was supposed to have been sold by the NAR government for \$2 million to a company in Trinidad to take that Wash plant up the islands to produce aggregate. They did not even understand that Trinidad and Tobago exported aggregate up the islands from our Wash plant. We took the plant, we refurbished it for \$2 million and made \$4 million in the first year of its operations in 1994. Today the Government is sitting on a building boom because it has now started its preparation works for Farmland and for the Liquid Natural Gas Plant. When construction begins I am saying that it would be difficult to produce aggregate. The National Quarries will be under real pressure. Do you know what happened? They closed it down because parts were not ordered on a timely basis from England and there was no maintenance. The Ropa company in Trinidad had ordered parts on a timely basis to have that Wash plant running to be able to produce aggregates for the 400 projects that we had. After 1993/1994 not one single ounce of material was bought for the Unemployment Relief Programme. We had supplied materials at a lower cost. At that time the National Quarries had reduced the cost of providing materials for the private sector because we were supplying them with good grade material at a cheaper rate.

Today the Minister of Works and Transport does not know anything about Tapaná, because it is closed down. He wanted to give it to a group of religious people to run—I think they might have to run in the near future instead of giving the plant to run. For four years people were being trained under the Unemployment Relief Programme at Tapaná and at the same time on the job training was carried out at the Secondary Roads Company. There was a whole policy, programme and plan and the present Minister has benefited from my work

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because he has seen the results. I noticed that he has been reading what I wrote in 1993 and 1994; marked 'programme manager'.

At that time we were paying persons who were being trained \$65.00 and \$70.00 a day, not the amount of money that is being paid to the Government daily-paid workers and not what is being paid by the private sector. I noticed that they have maintained the same structure that we had put into place for the wages and salaries for people of the Unemployment Relief Programme. What has happened today is that they are paying those same workers who were trained for four years, \$30 a day on another training programme. Ten days have now been reduced to five days.

A friend of mine from Sangre Grande called me and said his son got a 10-days but he came home after 5 days, so he ended up on a five-day programme and not a 10-days programme. The Member for Caroni Central was boasting on his platform that his party was going to give 40 days, and not 10 days. I passed by one of his political meetings in 1995.

Mr. Speaker, there is a multiplier effect, when money is spinning in a community—I remember the business people in Sangre Grande called to find out if we could have paid every week. Every other week when the programme pays its salaries, Sangre Grande suddenly had activities on that weekend. Of course, the system was computerized and it was done on a fortnightly basis. The payroll for the URP was put in place when we were having difficulties and people could not have received their salaries on time.

Mr. Partap: Would the Member give way?

Mr. J. Narine: I only have a little time left. One talks about materials and equipment—

Mr. Partap: I just wanted to ask the Member if he is aware that for the same period last year that the URP employed only 78 persons in the constituency of Nariva. This year over 600 persons were employed.

Mr. J. Narine: Mr. Speaker, it is clear to me now that the Member does not know his constituency. I am certain they had more than 10 fortnights down so that would have been 140 persons alone in 10 fortnights in Cumuto. There was the Alcala Estate in Cunaripo which employed 20 persons per fortnight. That would have been 200. I am counting for the Minister because he cannot count. Mafeking Footpath which is in the Member's constituency was done last year and they started—

Mr. Assam: Fabricated!

Mr. J. Narine: Fabri what? I can carry the Minister and show him that it was only last year that the Biche Community Centre was opened. Cunaripo, Cumuto, Coryal. The community centre in Coryal was refurbished last year. I used to be on every project in Trinidad throughout the year. I would know. When I speak I do not have to go—I will give way after. When I did that, I visualized all where the projects were in Rio Claro and Mafeking. We did an interlock drain in Poole Village, we did works in Cumuto, the very work in Cumuto that was not finished. The Minister said 78 persons. So it seems as though this Minister cannot even count. How was he going to be my Minister of Labour? Fifteen fortnights passed at 14 projects but the Minister is saying 78 persons were employed.

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

I wish, just for the sake of the record to clarify a point. While the Member was on his legs he gave way to the Member for San Fernando East, and I wish to point out, lest it be thought that it could be done again, under “Interruptions” Standing Order 35:

“A Member shall not interrupt another Member except—

- (a) by rising to a point of order, whereupon the Member speaking shall resume his seat and the Member interrupting shall simply direct attention to the point which he desires to bring to notice and submit it to the Speaker or Chairman for decision; or

(which is important),

- (b) to elucidate some matter raised by that Member in the course of his speech, provided that the Member speaking is willing to give way and resumes his seat and that the Member wishing to interrupt is called by the Chair.”

I would ask Members please to observe the Standing Orders because things could get sorely out of hand if it is done like that. Under normal circumstances, it is usual that points of elucidation are done in a slightly different way and are directed to the person who is in fact, speaking and not to a Member opposite.

Thank you.

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

Question put and agreed to.

3.00 p.m.

Mr. Assam: Thirty minutes of more diatribe.

Mr. J. Narine: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I learnt from you. You were my chairman for four years. Your eloquence does not fool anybody in Trinidad and Tobago. Chicken costs \$5.00 per pound but you are talking fancy. Fancy talk on television would not bring down the price of chicken.

The Member for Nariva said that 78 persons had worked by this time last year. There were 41 projects. I have information which comes to me from all over. Ask the Member for Chaguanas how many projects he has. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I once more bring to your notice that it is becoming more and more difficult for the *Hansard* reporters to record faithfully what is being said. I ask for your co-operation.

Mr. J. Narine: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Today there are 41 projects in Caroni and four in Arouca North. We do not mind that. They have been working in Caroni and we have worked tremendously. The most amount of money which was spent on construction and resurfacing of roads was in Caroni with the 5 per cent gas tax. We had spent \$28 million of the \$50 million in the first year on roads in Caroni. The URP budget has been cut by \$25 million. That is in the statement of Trinidad and Tobago abstract, showing 1994 actual expenditure.

When \$5 million is taken from that and given to the political investors to bring trucks to move garbage and clean drains, then the programme would be under pressure for the entire year. The persons who are supposed to get the fortnightly salary were not given employment.

In my constituency there are persons who could not send their children to school when the new school year opened. They were dependent on the Unemployment Relief Programme. I am certain there are more persons in other constituencies who were depending on the Unemployment Relief Programme for employment so they could buy uniforms and school books for their children. There was a programme for single parents. In constituencies with a large population, only a small number of persons work.

If one visits certain areas during the week one would see that children who should be at school are at home. They do not even have the uniform to go to

school to get the meals to which they are entitled. They cannot do that any longer. They do not have books. I am appealing to this Government to start construction in the construction industry so that employment would be created for unskilled persons. The Minister of Works and Transport knows that out of every 10 persons who visit a constituency office, nine of them are unskilled. When the construction industry kicks off, they would be employed. They are mainly in the labouring section.

I am appealing to this Government to reconsider what it has been doing this year and forget the politics and trickery that it is trying on the population. Open up the construction industry and allow the people to live in the country. It happened in 1990. I am not going to make any big warning statement. I am saying to the Minister of Works and Transport that sharing of food and money is not giving employment and would not create any situation which he would like in the future. The dignity of our people is to work for their salary. We still have that dignity. We are not waiting on handouts. I am appealing to the Minister to open up the construction industry so that people could be employed. We would be a happier people in Trinidad and Tobago both in government and opposition.

Thank you.

**EQUAL OPPORTUNITY LEGISLATION
(JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE—APPOINTEES)**

The Attorney General (Hon. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj): Mr. Speaker, by agreement and with leave I beg to move that the following Members of this House be appointed to serve with an equal number from the Senate on the Joint Select Committee to consider and report on the Working Paper on Equal Opportunity Legislation.

Mr. T. Sudama

Mr. J. Humphrey

Dr. F. Khan

Mr. C. Sharma

Mr. R. Boynes

Mr. J. Narine

Question put and agreed to.

3.10 p.m.

**CONSTITUTIONAL AND LEGISLATIVE ARRANGEMENTS
(JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE—APPOINTEES)**

The Attorney General (Hon. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the following Members of this House be appointed to serve with an equal number from the Senate on the Joint Select Committee to consider and report on the Report of the Cabinet-appointed committee on the constitutional and legislative arrangements for Tobago.

Mr. A. N. R. Robinson

Mr. R. L. Maharaj

Miss. P. Nicholson

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar

Mr. P. Manning

Mrs. C. Robinson-Regis

Question put and agreed to.

**CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS
(REACTIVATION OF)**

The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries (Sen. The Hon. Finbar Gangar): Mr. Speaker, I wish to express my thanks and appreciation for allowing me to participate in the debate on this Motion which was brought to this honourable House by the Member for Diego Martin East. I must confess that having read the substance of this Motion and having due regard to the results of the thrust of this administration, I had some serious misgivings on its applicability. I am even more confused at this time, having heard the contributions on the previous occasions—July 26 and before—from the Members for Diego Martin East, Port of Spain South and today from the Member for Arouca North.

Mr. Speaker, before I get into the substantive aspects of the Motion, there seems to be some divergence of opinion as to what constitutes the construction sector. There is divergence of opinion between what we in the Government consider construction and the utterances of the Members on the other side. This Government considers the energy sector to be a major contributor to employment

in the construction industry, that is why we are so concerned about the meaning and intent of this Motion. Thus far we have heard no particular contribution which has dealt with the Government's thrust in the energy sector. However, as I said, before we deal with the substantive aspects of the Motion, it is important that we in the Government restate some of our primary approaches and objectives as they relate to the construction industry.

We, the Government, recognize the importance of the construction sector as a major source of employment, albeit of a temporary nature. We would also like to advise that Government's direct funding of major mega projects such as the Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex, the Financial Complex, the Hall of Justice and other such projects which were enumerated by my Friend, the Member for Arouca North, can no longer be practically funded in view of our decreased resources.

In view of this, the Government is working toward the development and implementation of an integrated planning policy which will ensure that there will be structured, planned development rather than that of a haphazard nature. We on this side have taken the better part of our short term of office thus far to ensure that the appropriate planning process is in place. We have done numerous studies which have indicated that the planning, or lack of it, has severely impacted upon the implementation process of various projects. We have spent considerable time in developing proper plans and practices so that when we come to the implementation stage, we will not have very many problems.

Government recognizes that by itself it cannot develop such a policy. In this regard, we are engaging in meaningful dialogue with the private sector. We feel that we can learn much from them in terms of technical innovation and financial ingenuity. Also, the Government is committed to private sector-led expansion and growth in the economy and we intend to have proper optimized use of both state and Government resources. Our Government is also committed to preserving and enhancing our environment and we recognize that no one likes to live in an ugly, pothole-ridden, diseased-prone, polluted and decrepit environment. Finally, the approach of the Government is that we would use the energy sector as one of the prime movers of employment in the construction sector.

I have encapsulated the basic approaches of the Government as they relate to the construction industry. As I said, we intend to use the energy sector as the prime mover of construction and employment generation in the construction industry. We are all aware of our thrust over the last 11 months in this regard.

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When one considers the energy sector as a whole, one has to understand why employment generation is such a major component. These energy sector projects are by themselves highly capital intensive; they are characterized by generous tax incentives, low permanent employment and they are concerned primarily with monetizing our gas reserves. Fortunately, they are also characterized by a very high level of construction employment, and that forms the genesis of our policy as it relates to generating employment in the construction industry.

Over the last few months, there has been rapid and phenomenal growth in our natural gas energy-based sector investment in this country. Of course, we all know that the sum total of investment thus far has totalled approximately US \$2.65 billion. That we will not go into today, but what I want to emphasize is the contribution of these projects and the effort which it has taken this Government to bring them on stream with one of the prime considerations being to generate employment and lessen the unemployment burden which currently plagues this country.

The First Quarter Report of the Central Bank has been liberally quoted. It states quite clearly that of the non-petroleum goods producing sectors, construction registered the strongest performance, expanding by 2.8 per cent in response to heightened activity in the energy-based sector of the economy.

3.20 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to submit to this honourable House that within a very short space of time our policies and practices are already working. [*Desk thumping*]

With regard to the various projects, my colleague, the Minister of Works and Transport, made reference to the dismal failure of the La Brea Industrial Estate project. However, I do not intend to use this particular forum to deal with that subject. But in a very short space of time we will all know the true story associated with the La Brea Industrial Estate project. [*Interruption*] I will deal with you on that one. Mr. Speaker, as I have said, I will deal very shortly with the La Brea Industrial Estate project, including the comments made by the Member of Parliament for La Brea.

After spending in excess of \$125 million we had to relocate from that particular site. It is worth noting and it is to the credit of this Government that in dealing with the Farmland/MissChem project that six months were lost by shifting the ammonia plant three times in La Brea. We eventually had to re-site the plant in

the northerly extension of the Point Lisas Industrial Estate. It was estimated that the company incurred approximately US \$3 million extra in plant site-related expenses.

However, the Government was of the view that every effort should be made to retain the Farmland/Mississippi Chemicals Ammonia Project in Trinidad for the following reasons: We are committed to the expansion of the ammonia industry in Trinidad and Tobago. The operation of the plant will lead to the sale, by the NGC, of 65 million standard cubic feet of gas per day, taking advantage of the very favourable terms negotiated by this Government with Amoco on the gas purchase contract. This is the most important point, Mr. Speaker, the generation of temporary jobs of 1,200 people during the plant construction, and permanent employment of 150 persons for the operation and maintenance of the plant. In order to ensure that the jobs would, in fact, be there after Farmland had to be removed from the La Brea Industrial Estate, the Government acted in an expeditious manner to preserve these jobs and to ensure that this nation's standing in the international community would not be damaged by the incompetence of others.

I am pleased to report that at this early stage our efforts on the Farmland/MissChem Project have already started to bear tangible fruit. At this point in time, site preparation, piling and foundation work are already in progress. The number of persons already employed on this project is 350 after two months of construction. This number is to be gradually increased and to peak at 1,000 persons by the third quarter of 1997. This is just one example of how the Government's thrust in the energy sector is contributing, significantly, to alleviate the unemployment situation in this country.

The Arcadian Project was also approved by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. At this stage, similar to the Farmland/MissChem Project, tangible evidence is being produced with respect to the generation of jobs in the construction industry. On the Arcadian Project, as of yesterday's date, site preparation is completed, piling is in progress, the number of persons employed is 300 and this is to be gradually increased and then to peak to 1,000 by the third quarter of 1997.

With respect to the Clico Methanol Plant in Point Lisas which was also approved by this administration, construction is already in progress and significant employment is being generated in that field. The site preparation is completed, piling is complete and foundation work is in progress. The number of persons

employed in the construction of this plant, at this point in time, is 400. This is to be gradually increased and to peak to 1,000 by the third quarter of 1977. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, that is not all. We all know about the Atlantic LNG Project for which several persons are claiming credit. If they want to claim credit for it, why did they not do it? It brings us back to the expression, “coulda, woulda, shoulda”. The Member for Point Fortin is in the press as taking credit for that project and giving credit to his pro tem political leader for bringing it into Trinidad and Tobago. My point is, if they want to take credit for it, why did they not sign the agreements when they were in office? But that is beside the point, work is already in progress. Preparation of the site and access roads are in progress; the construction dock is completed; the entrance channel is completed and in use; soil attesting; soil upgrade work and pile load testing are in progress, and 350 persons are being employed.

These are the four projects which started during the reign of this administration. Within three months of starting construction the number of persons employed has already reached 1,500. Employment is expected to increase to 3,000 persons by the end of the year and then to peak to 8,000 towards the end of 1997. That is the level of the construction industry in this country.

Approval has also been given to Cleveland & Associates for the construction of the DRI Plant at Point Lisas. This project is to employ 650 persons, peaking at the end of 1997. Ground-breaking on this particular project is carded to take place on October 16, 1996. That project is expected to further add to the level of construction personnel being involved in the industry. We are currently in the midst of other negotiations with respect to bringing other natural gas-based industries into Trinidad and Tobago.

Negotiations are in place with respect to the Titan Methanol Plant, the Ispatt Company for an extension to its plant and the Aluminium Smelter. Two groups are expected to build aluminium smelters in Trinidad and Tobago. We had a detailed presentation from one of the groups this week. We are working towards a shareholder’s agreement towards the end of 1996 with a start of construction at the beginning of 1998. This would generate an additional 3,000 temporary jobs in the construction industry and 800 jobs on a full-time basis.

3.30 p.m.

I have been advised again this morning by the partners of Atlantic LNG that they will be submitting proposals to the Government of Trinidad and Tobago for a second train of LNG in Trinidad. Also associated with the Atlantic LNG, is another US \$6 million worth of investment which is needed to bring in the gas for Atlantic LNG into Point Fortin. There will be a pipeline from Picton to Point Fortin with construction which is supposed to begin at the end of the first quarter of 1997, and this will employ about 500 persons. While we have placed a significant emphasis on bridges, roads, highways, schools and hospitals, we are also using the construction in the energy sector as a prime mover of the economy.

We are now in the midst of development plans for an ethylene based petrochemical industry in Trinidad which, of course, will also add to the construction industry and we intend to continue with plans for modernizing our refinery at Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Speaker, what I have outlined to you is that we expect at the end of 1997, between 6,000 and 8,000 jobs with these projects in the petrochemical sector of the construction industry which would go right on into the first decade of the 21st Century. That is what is called, planning, vision and foresight. [*Desk thumping*] In order to supplement our thrust in this area, as I have said, because of the failure of the La Brea Industrial Estate, we have had to expand the Industrial Estate north of Point Lisas and we are in the process of finalizing our master plan for that at this time, and the Government is currently working on plans for a new Industrial Estate for heavy gas-based industries which would also generate significant employment.

We are also looking at other projects seriously, for example, bringing in natural gas for domestic use, a project which the PNM administration consistently rejected while they were in office. The scenario is clear. We are putting our highways programme in place and the Minister of Works and Transport has been working assiduously on that and Cabinet has recently approved it and there are unique plans for a new highway from San Fernando to Princes Town with the view to commencing work in the dry season of 1997. So when people talk about our not doing anything about construction, I wonder whether they are participating in the same debate as I am.

There are also spinoffs associated with the thrust in the energy sector. As all of us know, Amoco is committed to a partnership where it is building its headquarters in Trinidad at a cost of \$100 million, and I will use the opportunity to make a comment on that at this particular time. One aspirant for the Minister of Energy

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and Energy Industries and for leadership of the other party—if what I read in the newspaper is correct—made a statement on June 22, 1996 in the *Trinidad Guardian* that Trinidad is not important to Amoco, but Amoco is important to Trinidad. One thing with which I would agree is that I am very happy that the person is not, or was not the Minister because he demonstrated crass ignorance about what the energy sector is all about. If one reads what is Amoco's position, one would see that it is Trinidad at this point in time that is the third most important profit centre for Amoco worldwide and by the year 2000, is expected to be the most profitable centre of operation for Amoco. That shows how important Trinidad is to Amoco.

Mr. Speaker, I must explain that when we talk about construction, it is not only labouring, it requires a number of requisite skills in order to be effective. It requires welding, plumbing, masonry and carpentry and one of the fears we have in light of our major industrialization thrust is that our skilled labour would not be sufficient to meet the demand. In this regard, we have instituted a very aggressive training programme which is about to be completed and would allow us to produce skilled craftsmen of a very high standard in order to service the very heavy level of construction activity which is geared to take place in this country from now until the year 2010.

I now close my contribution by commenting briefly on some of the contributions by Members of the Opposition. The Member for Diego Martin East quite lucidly dealt with what they would have done, could have done, or should have done for the next forty years were they still in power. As the Prime Minister has said, he would have to wait until the year 2015 to have his dreams realized. The Member made no significant contribution to the substantive aspects thus completely disregarding his own Motion.

The Member for Port of Spain South—I do not have my notes, but my memory is normally quite good—spent almost half his contribution lecturing to us on the benefits of the National Library in Point Fortin and his escapades in teaching persons about the internet.

The Member for Point Fortin has a standard speech. Every time I come here, I hear the same thing. It was made in his budget presentation, on the Rent Restriction Ordinance and again on July 26, 1996. He should probably consult with the Minister of Legal Affairs and see if he can patent his speech under the Intellectual Property Rights Legislation. *[Laughter]*

Finally, I come to the Member for Arouca North. I had great difficulty in following his arguments. He spoke about everything under the sun. He spoke about an advertisement in the *Daily Express* about cheques for URP, about growing marijuana in Nariva and all sorts of things, so I could not really follow his arguments in a consistent, coherent manner. Maybe his contribution was deliberate in that it was—to use his words—in a very autocratic manner so that we would not be able to follow the argument.

I do not know if I can comment on the merits and demerits of the Motion, and I would not impute any improper motives to the Member for Diego Martin East for bringing this Motion. However, I would not say it was frivolous or vexatious, but based on the level of contributions by the Members of the Opposition I would say that they were misguided and misinformed.

Thank you very much.

3.40 p.m.

Mr. Hedwige Bereaux (*La Brea*): Mr. Speaker, my voice is not what I would like it to be—

Mr. Assam: It never is!

Hon. Member: It will improve.

Mr. H. Bereaux: I had not intended to take part in this debate at this time. However, I understand that in my absence certain comments were made by the hon. Minister of Works and Transport; and in my hearing just now, the hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Industries also made certain strange comments. But I will get to that in due course, Mr. Speaker.

The debate is on the Motion: “Whereas the construction sector is one of the largest contributors to employment in Trinidad and Tobago...” and it is common knowledge, Mr. Speaker. Notwithstanding all the statements which the hon. Members on the other side have made, it is said “the taste of the pudding is in the eating” and the second quarterly report of the Central Bank shows that the unemployment figures in Trinidad and Tobago increased by 1.4 per cent.

Mr. Imbert: What! You making joke.

Mr. H. Bereaux: No matter how they produce lists of jobs created, or are likely to be created, none could beat the fact that unemployment has increased. It is a plain fact, that since this Government came into power, unemployment has gone up.

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Mr. Speaker, another point is that there is a situation in the country where a number of projects—and I know the former Minister of Works and Transport pointed them out, the Library Project and a number of others—were in train when the PNM left office. Before I get to that, I want to congratulate the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries. I heard him speak of Arcadian, LNG, Farmland, Titan and a number of other projects, and the only good thing about it is that those projects were ongoing from the PNM administration. At least he showed good sense, since he has followed on with the projects left by PNM. Good sense. I give him an 'A' for following, and that is about all he could get.

Mr. Speaker, the same thing cannot be said for the Minister of Works and Transport and, in particular, the Minister of Planning and Development, the Member for Oropouche—vicious and vindictive against La Brea and any PNM area. I am disappointed in the hon. Senator and Minister of Energy and Energy Industries to allow a person as vindictive as the Minister of Planning and Development to lead him astray, and he now comes here to try to use an excuse and a smokescreen to say that it was some good technical reason that caused them to remove the industrial estate from La Brea. But I am going to come to that.

The Minister of Planning and Development, in his vindictiveness, went around the country closing all the projects that were set up by the PNM—all the projects in the PNM areas.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: That is not true.

Mr. H. Béréaux: It is to the credit of the Minister of Works and Transport who has now decided to rehabilitate some of those projects. I understand they intend to bring back the Library Project even larger.

Mr. Manning: That is talk.

Mr. H. Béréaux: There is some claim, Mr. Speaker, that they are going to deal with the PRIDE Project, but I am going to come to that, because I know for a fact that one of their big backers, Steve Ferguson, of Maritime, is going around all over the place calling on people to give him contracts because he has the Airport PRIDE Project sewn up.

Hon. Member: He is calling names!

Mr. H. Béréaux: Yes, I could call names. That is why I am here, to speak the truth and speak it ever, cost it what it will. I grew up hearing that and practising it.

So Mr. Speaker, they are talking about development and about those projects. I notice that the hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Industries went on to speak lightly about roads and bridges and the civil part of construction. We recognize that there is mechanical and civil construction and in those instances, Mr. Speaker, I listened to the hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Industries and what he said was: no one likes to live in an ugly pot-hole ridden environment. If one does not like to live in an ugly, pot-hole ridden environment, then civil works must be done.

For instance, we have a Road Improvement Fund, a fund to which all of us who buy gasoline and travel in vehicles contribute and no money has been disbursed from that fund since this Government has come into power—and they talk about pot-holes! The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries is down in Point Fortin every day and has to go through La Brea. When you call on the Minister of Works and Transport, time and again, to repair the roads there he does not do anything; and to show how vindictive they have been, Mr. Speaker, I want to list a number of projects that were ongoing in the La Brea constituency that are now growing in bush. There is one in Salazar Trace; in Point D'Or; there is a basketball court in Sobo, La Brea, where Gus Logie came from; where Anthony Rougier came from; where Philbert Jones came from. We are trying to fix the sports facilities there, and this vindictive Government had stopped *[Interruption]* I started it.

Hon. Member: You stopped the funding.

Mr. H. Breaux: No, no, it was ongoing until this Minister of Works and Transport came, and now he is like a thief in the night, walking around La Brea saying he wants to contest elections. Yes, let him come! Mr. Speaker, in Sobo, La Brea he stopped it. The Los Bajos community centre; he stopped it. The Dalley Village community centre. He stopped it. This is a man whose Ministry is practising the most blatant racial discrimination in this country!

Hon. Member: Not at all!

Mr. H. Breaux: Yes! And the Member for Fyzabad is his partner in crime in respect of that. *[Interruption]* We will go *TJ's* and wherever together, but when he treats the people badly he comes on the wrong side of me. *[Desk thumping]* You see, I travel along the road and I look—

Hon. Member: Racial discrimination.

Mr. H. Breaux: Yes, that is exactly what it is. The media is cowed, and they do not print that his own buddy, Sanderson, led a big march and protested about

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the same thing. When I pass by that URP office in Fyzabad I see people treated in the most inhuman way, and I see the most blatant form of discrimination, and people in this country talk about discrimination in clubs! They do not have to go to clubs to see it. People cannot eat, sometimes, when you all do not give them the jobs! *[Interruption]*

3.50 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, I am saying there are poor people there and they are stopping the projects in a constituency as large as La Brea where the unemployment is higher than the national average. They have four projects, and—

Mr. Singh: They are hiring people.

Mr. H. Béréaux: —even though they have four projects, they still seek to get political mileage and try to degrade and dehumanize the people trying to get a ten-days job. Then, the hon. Senator talks about wasted money in La Brea. When Point Lisas was built in 1976, they transported fill for more than a year to bring it up to the required standard. The hon. Minister is an engineer—the question of the taste of the pudding is in the eating; the quality of an engineer is in performance. We will deal with that subsequently.

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was saying the Member—

Mr. Sudama: Why did you buy land in La Brea?

Mr. H. Béréaux: I have the money to buy it. If you do not have, do not let anybody stop you. Do not be upset with me if you do not have. Get. Work hard. If you were not fired from Shell for laziness and incompetence, you might have had some now.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I was saying *[Interruption]* I am getting to that. I am coming to that.

Mr. Assam: Why did you mislead your political leader to build an estate in La Brea? Because you bought land there?

Mr. H. Béréaux: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have to seek your protection from the midget from Oropouche.

As I was saying, anytime this comes up, they try to pretend that the industrial estate in La Brea was an error, but as I was saying in 1976—

Mr. Assam: Rowley say so!

Mr. H. Bereaux: —the Government of Trinidad and Tobago transported materials for more than a year in order to bring the Point Lisas estate up to the required height.

We are in an age where we build platforms in the sea, where we send people to the moon and that Royal Engineers Tower in La Brea has been there for more than 15 years and it is still standing; the 100,000 barrel tank in Sobo is still standing and full with oil; and we are being told that Farmland could not put the plant there. No. That is not correct. I am saying to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Farmland drilled 93 bore holes and on the 94th they decided they could not put the plant. After they held a sod turning ceremony and made a laughing stock of the Member for Couva North, the Prime Minister. Wherever have you heard in engineering history that all studies are done, the sod is turned and then decide you cannot build? To whom are you speaking? Do you think the people of Trinidad and Tobago do not understand?

We understand very well that a large engineering firm will not arrange to turn the sod before it is sure that it can complete the building. Why do they not speak the truth to tell us that they were coerced into moving from La Brea to Point Lisas? I accuse this Government of coercing Farmland/MissChem to move from La Brea and go to Point Lisas. But I warn that the environmentalists have said that there is a heat sink over Point Lisas and that it is environmentally unsound to put any more large plants in Point Lisas, so the danger of that population is on their heads.

The Minister of Housing and Settlements is also on record as saying that it is environmentally sound and a danger to health. The Member for Couva South has also said that. He brought a Motion to Parliament about that.

Miss Nicholson: Environmentally sound!

Mr. Assam: You are right, environmentally sound.

Mr. H. Bereaux: Environmentally unsound.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Would the Members please direct their comments to the Chair.

Mr. H. Bereaux: The environmental scientists at the University of the West Indies, the Member for Couva South and the Member for St. Augustine have all indicated that it is environmentally unsound and dangerous to health to continue to

put large plants in Point Lisas, but still, in order to victimise La Brea, they have gone ahead and put the plant there.

There is a Minister of Health who cannot settle the doctors, would not deal with typhoid, he cannot even lead anything. He sits there totally unable and incompetent, but for the fact that the Member for Tabaquite and Minister of Education has already had the name Caligula's horse, which is the worst political appointee since Caligula Caesar made his horse a Roman Senator, I would have called him Caligula's horse, but I now call him Caligula's mule.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Member for La Brea, this is just done to point you back in the direction of the Motion that is under debate right now. Please stick to the Motion.

4.00 p.m.

Mr. Béréau: I hear you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I was speaking in response to two statements that were made. The Minister of Works and Transport, I understand, referred to the fact that \$258 million was wasted in La Brea, and the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries started in that same direction but wisely moved from it. So they all spoke on that, and I am speaking on it now. I am comparing the site on which they put the MissChem plant and the site on which they should have put it. Therefore, I am just rebutting. With all due respect, I am not wishing to, in any way, have any conflict or not follow your ruling, but I want to say, most respectfully, that I am responding to the statements which were made by the hon. Members. *[Desk thumping]* *[Interruption]* I take that statement from the hon. Member for St. Joseph with great respect and I accept it, seeing the nature of his name. *[Laughter]* If pronounced in a different way it could be very embarrassing. I would not do it.

Mr. Assam: Awkwardly put, but quite nice.

Mr. Béréau: You see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this attack that is being made time and again on the decision of the PNM Government to put an industrial estate in La Brea and to create work for the people of La Brea and its environs, even the people of Oropouche—the point has to be made that La Brea has the only all-weather deep water harbour in Trinidad and Tobago. During the hurricane season you can come in there very well.

Even now, while they speak, work is continuing on the estate and I happen to know that a number of investors to whom I have also spoken are applying to NGC through Labidco, because they are trying to get sites on that estate. More

important than that, instead of the hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Industries trying to do his job and seeking to get the NGC to move forward quickly in populating the estate and encouraging people to come on the estate, what does he do? He was instrumental—I want him to doubt it if he can—in making sure that Northern Construction, Ish Galbaransingh's company, was given a large construction contract in the energy sector, although they were not the lowest bidder—they were number three—nor do they have any required expertise. Kellogg was told to award the contract to them although Seereeram was the lowest bidder. Corruption!

Sen. F. Gangar: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to totally denounce that allegation that was made and I would ask the Member to withdraw that particular allegation. I have never, in any way, interfered with the award of any contract. I do not know Northern Construction; I do not know Mr. Galbaransingh. I would like to denounce and deny that allegation and ask for a withdrawal by the Member of Parliament for La Brea if he cannot produce any evidence in this regard.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, according to Standing Order 36(5):

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

The Member for La Brea has been asked to produce proof of that statement. If you cannot produce proof at this point in time, could you please withdraw that statement?

Mr. Breaux: Mr. Deputy Speaker, are you saying if I am not able to get proof that Seereeram was the lowest bidder and that Northern was the third highest—*[Interruption]* Please, I am addressing the Deputy Speaker—and that Kellogg was given instructions to give the contract, I have to withdraw? Withdraw what? Withdraw the statement that Minister Gangar did it and Minister Kuei Tung did it, or withdraw everything I said?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: What I am saying is that the statement pointing allegations of improper motives to the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries at this point in time should be withdrawn.

Mr. Breaux: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on the last occasion when I was in this honourable House, I had cause to be in a most uproarious and upset manner. I do not want to get into any situation*[Interruption]* I am speaking to the Deputy Speaker and I am putting my statement in context. I do not want to get into any

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problems. To be quite honest, when I heard of it and I heard about the Ministers involved, I was more upset than they were, because I have great respect for them. However, I will withdraw the statement in respect of the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries and the Minister of Finance until I am able to bring the proof to this honourable House in respect of that, but I will not withdraw the statement in respect of Northern Construction, the company owned by Mr. Galbaransingh, receiving a large contract in the energy sector and not being the lowest bidder and there being interference with the award process by Kelloggs. I withdraw it in respect of the Ministers concerned because I take your point.

You see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you have claims being made about mis-spending of money, when in fact all they are doing—and this Government knows that very well in respect of La Brea—is to stop the project so they could restart it another time and in the mean time send the jobs to Caroni, and they are doing it to the detriment of Caroni and La Brea. It is a health hazard in Caroni and it is keeping away needed development from La Brea.

The Minister of Planning and Development, all through the election campaign, said that any time the UNC came into power, they would stop the developments in La Brea. *[Interruption]*

4.10 p.m.

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

That is right, and the people of Trinidad and Tobago would deal with the Member for Oropouche in due course. *[Interruption]* Mr. Speaker, I heard what the hon. Member for St. Augustine said, but it is Sadiq Baksh they would vote for, not him. They would not put Sadiq in La Brea just so.

Mr. Speaker, the hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Industries started off by listing a number of companies. He first listed the Farmland/MissChem project which they curtailed and had to fight to bring back. They brought it back in an area where their constituents who voted for them would get work, and wilfully discriminated against constituents of La Brea, Point Fortin and Oropouche. They speak of the Arcadian, Clico, Methanol and LNG projects, but everybody knows that projects of this nature cannot be developed in a day or two, a month or a year. They take a long gestation time.

I was present at the Farmland/MissChem sod turning when Farmland/MissChem "mamagued" the Prime Minister and made him turn the sod

and then said that they could not build. When the Government came into power and the hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Industries said that when they started to flex their muscles, one of the representatives of Farmland/MissChem was heard saying that the project predated the Government.

Additionally, Mr. Speaker, the LNG project has been in a gestation period for a long time and the only credit that this Government can take is that they had the sense to see a good project and follow up on it. Unfortunately, that one they could not move, but if they could, they would have.

Mr. Speaker, the Member said that lack of planning has had an adverse effect on the implementation process of various projects. If anybody knows about the adverse effect of lack of planning, or lack of proper implementation of projects, then the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries is the man who should know. He should know because of the job he did prior to coming into government. *[Interruption]* I do not know that as yet. He was a project manager, but the project he managed cannot come on stream to this day because of his incompetence, yet he has the audacity to come here and talk about incompetence. I am speaking about him because he was an energy project manager.

Sen. Gangar: Then why did you take voluntary retirement?

Mr. H. Bereaux: Because I wanted to be able to tell you that and you would not be able to do me anything. *[Laughter]* That is why. I wanted to come here to tell you that when you would be unable to victimize me. *[Desk thumping]* We would all know the truth. *[Interruption]* Anytime the Member talks I would too. It is not a question of being careful.

Mr. Speaker, the greatest incompetence ever displayed in handling any project in Trinidad and Tobago was in the handling of the refinery upgrade project under the management of the present Minister of Energy and Energy Industries, then project manager. Totally incompetent. *[Interruption]* I am not an engineer, I do not manage projects. *[Interruption]* There is evidence to show.

I got a letter from the hon. Minister of Works and Transport asking me to prioritize roads in my constituency upon which the Ministry would like to work; but the worst roads in my constituency have been left out. In an entire constituency they propose to fix less than two miles of road and they want me to make a comment on that.

Mr. Assam: What nonsense are you talking about? Why can you not be relevant and engage in good discussion?

Mr. H. Breaux: Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Assam: Stop bad-mouthing and be relevant.

Mr. H. Breaux: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Labour and Co-operatives is asking me to speak about Lavalin. I will answer the hon. Member and speak about it if he so desires.

Mr. Sudama: Speak about why you bought land in La Brea.

Mr. H. Breaux: I do not have any land in La Brea, but even if I did—

Hon. Member: It is in your brother-in-law's name.

Mr. H. Breaux: Does the Member think I am his father with all the rubbish trucks; who got the contracts?

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, it is clear that things are getting out of hand. I ask that we return to reason and the manner in which matters ought to be conducted in this House. I suggest to those who are doing it that you are doing yourselves a great disavour. I suggest to the Member for La Brea that if he would speak to me as opposed to responding to Members on the other side he would assist in this process; and in terms of responding to what somebody wanted him to, I simply ask him to bear in mind the relevance of the Motion before us.

Mr. H. Breaux: Mr. Speaker, I take your advice on that matter, but I do feel very concerned that the hon. Minister of Government has descended to vituperation when addressing me in this honourable House. I speak of the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries who sat in his seat and uttered vituperation at me. I believe that I am entitled to ask that he apologize.

4.20 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I have been pointing out to you the difficulty of the *Hansard* reporters picking up everything that has been said. I say to the hon. Member that what he has said, I have not heard.

There are many things said here which are not intended for my hearing and which very often I do not hear, therefore you should just regard what you think you heard as something which I did not hear. The Member may proceed.

Mr. H. Breaux: Mr. Speaker, if that is the stance you take, I am prepared to do the same too. I know the Minister is ashamed of what he said and, therefore, he would not want to repeat it. But just to put Humpty Dumpty back on the wall, the Motion says:

“Whereas the former Government, the previous 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 has suspended, terminated or otherwise cancelled several of these construction 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, in the energy sector there are mega projects; large projects which utilize large sums of money and from which a particular type of employment is created. Whereas it is all good to say one would like the energy and the gas sectors to be the engine of growth, it is not enough and definitely lopsided to think that the energy sector development alone would be able to pick up any major slack in employment, the reason being the nature of the construction project in the energy sector. There are civil works, mechanical works and some technical works and then they are finished, but while those projects are there, there are also drug addicts. The various social problems in the community can be addressed by other construction activities both from the standpoint of keeping people employed and not allowing the old adage to take place: “Satan finds mischief for idle hands to do,” and also from the standpoint of providing the necessary amenities such as schools, community centres and basketball courts and so forth so that the energies of the people could be dissipated and they could learn certain things. For instance, in La Brea I had initiated a school for craft projects. We were trying to get YTEPP to do it—and I must congratulate the Minister of Education for visiting the adult education programme. Although I was not there, I meant no disrespect. What has happened is that they have stopped the construction and that is the kind of issue that this Motion seeks to address.

I warn the Government that no number of laws that it makes and passes will deal with the crime situation in the country if it fails to address the social programmes. I heard the Minister repeating that all the time. The basketball and community centres which the Government has stopped are creating problems.

I just want to make a couple of other points with respect to some of the comments made by the Minister when he kept calling the number of persons who would be employed. When the Minister spoke of 1,000 persons being employed at

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these construction sites, it might be 1,000 for two weeks or a month—no big set of employment only during the normal civil infrastructure works.

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. H. Béréaux: I thank hon. Members for giving me this opportunity. I propose to use all of it. This Motion asks that this House 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. We are calling on the Government to do that.

While we are having all these various areas of discontent in the country, the Government is not coming forward with a policy. We hear the Government talking about laws. I agree we must update the laws but construction is the quickest generator of employment in the economy. More importantly, the level at which construction is carried out, the money moves through the population at a faster rate because the person who receives it is close to the grass roots. On a construction site one sees people selling food, the quarry makes money, the aggregate people, the block makers, the steel workers, everybody; and in that case the money starts to go around. The Member for Oropouche keeps telling me about the economy and he knows that money spent moves seven times in the economy before it disappears. I know that. One does not have to worry about its going outside because the currency movement is free now.

Mr. Speaker, before we take the tea-break, I want to deprecate the practice of this Government to postpone Parliament for weeks at a time so that Ministers can make their trips abroad while we are unable to deal with serious matters in the country.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, in accordance with Standing Order 10(2), the sitting is now suspended for 30 minutes.

4.30 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.05 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Mr. H. Béréaux: Mr. Speaker, when we took the break I was speaking about the nature of the activity which comes from construction. I am about to wind up, but before I do so I would touch on two matters.

The hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Industries spoke about the spin-offs which were gained from activities such as the headquarters which Amoco had committed to build and say that the Government had negotiated a favourable gas price. I ask him, through you, Mr. Speaker, if that is the same gas price which it was alleged saved the country \$20 million a year over a 20-year period and which the previous NAR administration was alleged to have negotiated? If possible, he would answer at another time.

Mr. Speaker, on the last occasion when I spoke in this honourable House there was what could have been construed, and properly so, as an altercation from me towards you. Although I still believe that the position which I took was morally correct, I also believe that it is possible to disagree without being disagreeable. When I looked at the film I believe that I might have been disagreeable on that occasion. For that I apologize.

Thank you.

The Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources (Dr. The Hon. Reeza Mohammed): Mr. Speaker, I rise in an effort to bring some clarity to the Motion moved by the hon. Member for Diego Martin East. The statistics for the first quarter of 1996 as they appear in the CSO Labour Force Bulletin Volume 16, No. 46 of February, 1996 indicate quite clearly that unemployment levels in—

Mr. Valley: Mr. Speaker, just one minute please. Could he quote the date of that bulletin once more?

Dr. The Hon. R. Mohammed: I am making reference to the last quarter of 1995 in connection with unemployment. It indicates that unemployment levels in both the national economy and the construction sub-sector have declined considerably when compared with the first quarter of 1995. This was clearly pointed out in the contribution made by the hon. Minister of Works and Transport.

The context of the construction industry as I understand it—from the Motion which was moved by the Member for Diego Martin East—is a little restrictive in that it confines itself mainly to construction by way of buildings. I would share with this honourable House the fact that if we are to take construction in a wider context and by way of a more comprehensive definition of the sector, there is a very close linkage between construction and agriculture. Like my colleague, the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries, I intend to confine my presentation to this honourable House within the framework of the contribution by way of employment in the agricultural sector *vis-a-vis* construction.

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Having said that, there is a very close linkage between the agricultural sector and construction. These fall within the framework of construction, rehabilitation and maintenance of rural access roads, drainage, irrigation, rural housing, dwelling houses, agricultural buildings, office buildings for staff, construction and maintenance, capital investment in state enterprises such as Caroni (1975) Limited and Tanteak; fisheries infrastructure, beach-landing facilities, sea walls, buildings, slipways, cold storage facilities, agro-processing plants (small, medium and large); forestry products, timber and roofing materials, marketing infrastructure; slaughtering facilities such as abattoirs; quarrying materials such as aggregates, oil-sand for building, construction of roads and clay, bricks and pottery.

In 1996, the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources began a number of construction projects of which the Member for Diego Martin East is aware. Suffice it to say that these projects employ a substantial number of persons and have contributed to keeping the unemployment rate down. If we look at the investments which were made during that period we would observe that the statistics have indicated an expenditure of approximately \$30 million being spent on the following developmental programmes. The first was the upgrading of the Caroni (1975) Limited sugar refinery; development of fishing centres and related activities such as Otaheite, Las Cuevas, Blanchisseuse; expenditure on the improvements for the sea centre building to house the staff at Macqueripe; expenditure on forestry access roads, the La Reunion Propagation Station and the development of its facilities and the provision of office facilities to the north region of the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources.

By way of road construction, this includes Plum Mitan, Vega de Oropouche, Princon Estate, San Juan Estate, Phillip Trace, Victoria and Kernahan in Nariva/Mayaro.

There is also expenditure generating employment as far as rice development is concerned with minor works on a county basis. There has been job-creation within the framework of construction and the agricultural sector. We are all aware of the fact that one of the limitations to the development of the sector is that there are serious deficiencies in the infrastructure which is required within that agricultural sector.

Since I am on the subject of the expenditure on rice development, I would take the opportunity to bring to the attention of this House information which I received concerning certain matters which took place in the Nariva Swamp during the reign of the last government. I prefer to refer to it as the financial construction

of the Nariva Swamp. It was drawn to my attention that a certain minister of the last government—and I expect many of us would have heard about the passing of the brown paper bags—received some substantial financial helpings from a particular family within the framework of the Nariva Swamp.

I also have in my possession a letter written by that minister in response to a letter sent by another family within the framework of the Nariva Swamp pointing out to that minister, that that family was aware of the fact that a certain family within the framework of the swamp was allowed to remain there because of the financial helpings contributed by that particular family.

5.15 p.m.

In response to that document, Mr. Speaker, that particular Minister replied to that family indicating that he would be putting that matter in the hands of his attorneys. I find it passing strange that up to today the attorneys of that Minister may not have received any documentation from that Minister.

Mr. Valley: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order according to Standing Order 36(5). The Minister is imputing improper motives to a former Minister.

Mr. Speaker: Standing Order 36(5) states that:

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

Is the Minister in fact referring to a Member of this Chamber?

Mr. Valley: Yes. [*Laughter*] It is clear, Mr. Speaker. He is speaking about the Minister who had responsibility for Nariva Swamp, the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources.

Mr. Speaker: Please. I am dealing with the issue you have raised. I would, in the circumstances, ask the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources to be a little more circumspect in his reference because I think it could be seen as referring to someone who is a Member of this House.

Mr. Valley: Mr. Speaker, please permit me. The Minister said that there is a letter on file from an individual. He has a letter from that Minister denying the allegation and stating that he would refer it to his attorney. Yet the Minister persisted in talking about “passing strange” and so forth. I think that the Minister ought to withdraw—

Mr. Speaker: With the greatest deference at this point. You have risen on a point of order. I have ruled that there is nothing which he has said so far which infringes it. However, I feel that he is getting dangerously close to imputing improper motives to someone who may well be, or perhaps who is, a Member of this House. I do not think it is necessary to go into it further. I do not think he has committed any offence so far, but he is getting dangerously close to it. I have simply asked him to desist.

Hon. R. Mohammed: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will be so guided.

Mr. Speaker, I turn now to the marketing infrastructure and, as I indicated earlier, one of the serious problems facing the development of the agricultural sector is the lack of proper infrastructure. In addition to the construction activities being undertaken by the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources by way of creating jobs during 1996, there is presently an exercise taking place at the Port of Spain market on the Beetham Highway where expenditure of \$10 million has been undertaken by NIPDEC for the refurbishing of the abattoir—\$2.6 million; construction of external walls—\$1.3 million; renovation of buildings B and C and other activities, all totalling roughly \$9.94 million. The kinds of jobs that are going on at present at the market, Mr. Speaker, are in themselves part and parcel of the construction industry and are generating jobs that are desirable under those projects.

In June 1996, Cabinet appointed an inter-ministerial task force to prepare proposals for the design, refurbishment and/or construction of municipal and regional markets and to ensure that marketing facilities are adequate to provide efficient and high-quality service to its clients. In addition to the benefits of these facilities to the agricultural sector, they will undoubtedly also serve to create jobs during the construction phase and beyond. Unlike the energy sector, as indicated by the Member for La Brea, it is during the civil works that the real employment will be created. However, it is the intention that within the framework of the agricultural sector and its contribution by way of the construction jobs to be done, it will not only limit itself to creating jobs through the construction phase, but also well beyond that phase.

I refer now to the spatial distribution of the project and I draw the attention of hon. Members of this House to the fact that construction projects being undertaken in the agricultural sector are not confined to any particular region but are taking place in both the rural and urban communities of Trinidad and Tobago. This is for no other reason than the fact that this Government has looked at the

spatial distribution of our projects and has modified them in certain respects on a rural/urban basis so that we have some degree of equability as to where they would go on, so that we would now have an even spread and not be accused of confining ourselves mainly to the rural areas of Trinidad and Tobago. We have taken a decision to have this degree of spread and equability as far as these construction projects are concerned within the framework of the agricultural sector. This in itself—and the Member for La Brea indicated the social implications—will have a positive effect on the quality of the lives of peoples in both the rural and urban areas of Trinidad and Tobago.

The Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources has put together an operational plan which would extend to the end of December, 1999. The Ministry has also put together a seven-year plan for agriculture and within the operational plan June 1996 to December 1999, there is a whole range of construction projects in an effort to enhance the infrastructural requirements within the agricultural sector, so that the peoples in both the rural and urban communities would be provided with facilities which will enable the agricultural sector to move forward.

To give some examples of these I would simply indicate those projects which are included for 1997. I speak here now of the rehabilitation of rural access roads and bridges. For the 1997 programme, these will include the rehabilitation of 100 kilometres of rural access roads, the maintenance of 310 kilometres of access roads, as well as parallel activities of the rural access roads programmes, for example, the construction of 14 crossings, the repair of 20 kilometres of drains and the construction of 10 sluice and 8.2 kilometres of drains.

5.25 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, we are informed by this Motion that this Government stands accused of having taken certain decisions which will restrict unemployment in the construction sector. And here it is, a government of social purpose and having identified the need to create jobs, we have put in place systems, by way of our policies and programmes, particularly our work programmes; as a function of an activity agenda; as a function of the quantum of moneys which are to be allocated as part of that activity agenda, to facilitate, precisely, the construction sector so that jobs created within the construction and agricultural sectors would not have a negative social impact on the peoples in both the rural and urban areas.

The Government's plan also deals with water for agriculture. For too long we have gone away with the understanding that if we have land and labour we can grow food; be it tree crops, vegetables and livestock-agriculture. We have

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forgotten that we could have as much land as possible and as much labour as possible, however cheap that labour may be, but if we do not have water we cannot grow any food at all.

The Government, therefore, has recognized the need for managing our water resources in Trinidad and Tobago to facilitate a supply of water, not only for agriculture, Mr. Speaker, but also for industry and domestic consumption. This Government is presently in the process of putting together a master plan for water. This plan would separate water for agriculture from industry and from domestic consumption.

In the present legislation the Water and Sewerage Authority has sole rights to every drop of water in this country. Farmers who require water for the production of crops and livestock are charged at the same rate at which domestic consumers are charged. This has been a disincentive to the development of the agricultural sector in Trinidad and Tobago. This Government, therefore, has seen it fit to develop a master plan for water so that we can now separate water for agricultural use, water for industrial use and water for domestic use.

Water for domestic use is high-cost water because of the many processes it must go through before it becomes potable and before it can be consumed by humans without causing diseases. Therefore, if we allow the charges which are being preferred presently, to the agricultural sector and similar rates for domestic water, then it is reasonable to understand why the cost of producing food in this country is so high.

In Trinidad, in particular, the major food-producing areas are in the lowlands. From a geographical standpoint we have three major watersheds in Trinidad. During the wet season we have an abundance of surface water. That excess surface water reduces our growing season by half. It is, however, the complete reverse during the dry season where we have a shortage of water. To this present time, Mr. Speaker, I do not think that anybody has seen it fit to harness that excess surface water during the rainy season, so that one would be able to control its volume which would then prolong the agricultural growing season. Once that water is harnessed when there is an excess, it will mean, by extension, that during the dry season when there is a shortage of rainfall one would have a supply of water which would enable one to continue to grow food.

During the NAR regime, my colleague, the present Minister of Housing and Settlements, spoke about the establishment of dams. Even at that time the concept was a correct one. However, if we had the wherewithal at that time to begin to

establish those dams, today, in Trinidad and Tobago, we would have had a system in place, by way of infrastructure—a supply of water—which would have allowed a continuous supply for domestic use, a continuous supply for industrial use, a continuous supply for food production, and, by extension, the furtherance of the development of the agricultural sector.

Mr. Speaker, the time has come for us to take a closer look at this system. Therefore, this Government of national unity is taking a serious view with respect to water for agriculture and the spin-offs that would be derived from this. In order to harness this water, one must develop one's drainage system by building dams. To my Friend from Diego Martin East, all of this involves construction. Mr. Speaker, construction projects to harness this water would create employment, not reduce it.

With respect to water storage system; wells and irrigation systems, we have a very insignificant quantum of land in Trinidad and Tobago which is under irrigation. The reason for that is because of the way we have managed our resources in the past. Of course, I have already spoken about our drainage system.

In the process of harnessing that excess water; by the construction of drains and water channels, we would be doing another fundamental project and that is flood control. In the constituency of Chaguanas, Caroni Central, flooding has been a perennial problem. Within the framework of this Government's master water plan, dams would be located in such a way so that we would be able to harness the flood water for future use and at the same time alleviate the flooding, if not totally, which has occurred on a perennial basis for the past 30 or 40 years.

This flooding also occurs in the Oropouche Lagoon. There are about 10,000 acres of land in the Oropouche Lagoon which have become unproductive and the reason is that resource, water, was not properly managed in the past to allow for the continued production of food within the Oropouche Lagoon.

In 1997, work will continue in the Oropouche Lagoon which will impact positively and directly on the construction industry. This will include the clearing and desilting of 108 kilometres of drains, the repair and maintenance of 10 sluices and 12 culverts—and this is only in the Oropouche Lagoon—the completion of the construction of 1 kilometre of embankment where one of the major channels is concerned, as well as an additional bridge and three sluices. This would be done as far as the Oropouche Lagoon is concerned during the 1997 work programme for the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources. It is hoped that some work will continue over the period 1998.

5.35 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, there are three major water courses within the framework of the Oropouche Lagoon. The watershed which provides the water for the lagoon lies to the east of that area, the watersheds by way of the southern range extend all the way in the east to Guayaguayare and it is because the major water courses which flow in an east to west direction, and which in the past were not properly maintained, when we have heavy rainfalls during the rainy season, the excess surface water coming all the way from Guayaguayare, through Barrackpore and Penal ends up in the Oropouche Lagoon. When that volume of water reaches the lagoon, it accumulates silt so that when it empties into the Godineau River, there is a bottleneck and the water tends to backup and as it backs up it now moves from west to east. On one hand there is a flow coming from east to west, and the mouths of these water channels are choked causing water to build up and remain on the land for a long period of time. Where there is that excessive surface water, it is not at all possible to grow any type of crops nor to raise any form of livestock. The end result of that situation is that 10,000 acres of land in the Oropouche Lagoon have become unproductive over the years.

This Government is doing everything that it can within the constraints of the finances available, to engage in construction works which would generate employment in that area in order to remove those bottlenecks and to make the land once more into a state where crops, vegetables, rice, aquaculture as well as livestock farming may be practised.

I now turn to land distribution and regularization which is a hotbed. The reason for this is that the division referred to as Lands and Surveys within the framework of the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources has not been paid any great attention in the past. There are a number of outstanding land matters where lands have been acquired and there is a delay with respect to the necessary transactions, paperwork and surveys that need to be done. Because of the administrative bungling which has been taking place in that institution we are faced with a situation—which was not created by this Government—where there are a number of persons, mainly farmers, who would like to get involved in the acquisition of larger parcels of land, but because of the inability of that institution within the Ministry to really function, things are being held back.

In my capacity as Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, I have taken the decision to have a close look at that division and to right-size it, if I may use that term, so that those persons who are willing and able to grow food in this country would now be able to access at a much faster rate those parcels of land—

Mr. Valley: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order.

Dr. The Hon. R. Mohammed: I will not give way, Sir, I am sorry.

Mr. Valley: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I think the Member—

Mr. Speaker: If it is a point of order, could you please indicate to me the relevant Standing Order that he is infringing? He says he is not giving way.

Mr. Valley: Give me a copy of the Standing Orders let me get it please. I know it is in there. *[Standing Orders passed to Mr. Valley]* I think it is 35(2), Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: All right.

Mr. Valley: Let me just check it to make sure.

Miss Nicholson: Mr. Speaker is entertaining that?

Mr. Valley: It is 36, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is it 36(2)? It does not seem to apply.

Mr. Valley: It is Standing Order 36, Mr. Speaker. I want to make the point that the Member seems to be talking—

Mr. Speaker: No. If you are asking him to give way and he is prepared to do it, there is absolutely no problem, but what you have raised will hardly be a point of order. Please proceed.

Dr. The Hon. R. Mohammed: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The 1997 programme for the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources therefore includes the surveying and subdivision of 1,333 hectares of land for distribution to farmers and within the framework—*[Interruption]* If you listen you would learn. Within the framework of that 1,333 hectares there is the provision of roads, drains, culverts, cylinder crossings and irrigation, which are all construction.

Mr. Speaker, the fishing industry has great potential and can make a tremendous contribution to the economy of Trinidad and Tobago as one of those sectors outside the realm of the energy sector. In the Ministry's operational plan

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for 1997, the construction exercises which are to be done as far as the fishing industry is concerned include the construction of sea walls- which is construction and job creation; construction of slipways, net sheds, marketing facilities; the paving of compounds at major landing beaches which would include Otaheite, Gran Chemin, Las Cuevas and Blanchisseuse.

As far as construction of buildings is concerned for 1997, office buildings which are currently under construction and renovation will be completed at Point Fortin, county of St. Patrick; San Fernando, the office of the South Regional Administration; St. Augustine, the office of the North Regional Administration; Wallerfield and St. George East county offices. The construction of new office buildings are expected in Craguish in Victoria and the Fisheries Division head office at Port of Spain.

The ministry's plan up to the period December 1999 is focused on infrastructural development because we have recognized that without proper infrastructure, the agricultural sector will never move forward, so that the majority of projects within the framework of that operational plan is designed to construct. I have outlined a few of these projects that we have in mind for 1997 and there are more for 1998 and 1999.

5.45 p.m.

When a Motion is moved indicating that this Government has taken a policy decision to reduce the construction sector, and by extension, reduce the number of jobs that that sector can generate, Mr. Speaker, if we look at the reports coming out of the Central Statistical Office, we will observe that the construction sector is just one of the 12 sectors which contribute to employment. The statistics also indicate that the construction sector contributes, by way of labour, 10.3 per cent of the total labour that is generated. On the other hand, Mr. Speaker, agriculture generates about 10.1 per cent of total employment.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate, simply, that the Motion moved by the hon. Member for Diego Martin East has flawed itself from the start, simply because of the way the Motion has been brought to this House. It gives an extremely narrow conception of the construction industry. Secondly, I draw your attention to the inaccuracies as far as the statistics contained within the framework of that Motion and finally, Mr. Speaker, its failure to recognize the contribution to employment by the 11 other sectors of the economy, as indicated by the Central Statistical Office.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

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ADJOURNMENT

The Attorney General (Hon. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the adjournment of the House to Friday, October 11, 1996 at 1.30 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, in moving the adjournment of the House, may I mention that the Tobago House of Assembly elections are constitutionally due by December 9, 1996. In order for His Excellency the President to proclaim a period of electoral registration, the following procedures, among others, must be followed:

1. A Bill entitled, An Act to validate the Sixth Report of the Elections and Boundaries Commission on the Boundaries of the Electoral Districts in the Electoral Area of Tobago, has to be passed in both Houses of Parliament.
2. A Draft Order to give effect to the Recommendations contained in the Report is to be approved by the House of Representatives.

Mr. Speaker, in order to fulfil these constitutional obligations, the Government proposes to:

(1) Debate the Bill in the House of Representatives on Friday, October 11, 1996. It is intended to take this Bill through all its stages on that day. This Bill will be taken first, with the leave of the House, on that date.

(2) To debate the Draft Order to give effect to the Recommendations contained in the Report.

Mr. Speaker, the Draft Order is being circulated now and the Government intends to commence and complete the debate on that Order on October 15, 1996. By doing this, the process will be cleared for the electoral registration to be completed, in accordance with law, and for the issue of the Election Writ, so that the elections may be held on the date the elections are constitutionally due.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 5.49 p.m.