

Leave of Absence

Friday, October 18, 1996

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, October 18, 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 indicate that I have received communication from the Member for San Fernando West to the effect that he is going to be out of the jurisdiction until October 28, 1996, and has asked to be excused. He is excused from attending sittings of the House in that period.

PAPER LAID

Annual Report of the National Insurance Board for the period July 1995 to June 30, 1996. [*The Minister of Social Development (Hon. M. Ramsaran)*]

**National Insurance Board
(Annual Report)**

The Minister of Social Development (Hon. Manohar Ramsaran): Mr. Speaker, in accordance with section 13(2) of the National Insurance Act, Chap. 32:01, I wish to present to this honourable House the Annual Report of the National Insurance Board for the period July, 1995 to June, 1996.

Section 13(2) of the National Insurance Act, Chap. 32:01 requires the National Insurance Board to submit a report of its proceedings and of the operation of the Act, within three months of the end of each financial year to the Minister who shall, within two months of the receipt of the report lay it before Parliament.

Section 25(2) to (4) of the National Insurance Act, Chap. 32:01 stipulates that:

- (2) The accounts of the Board shall be audited annually by auditors appointed by the Board or under the supervision of the Auditor General in accordance with the Exchequer and Audit Act.
- (3) As soon as the accounts of the Board have been audited the Board shall forward to the Minister a copy of the audited statements of accounts and any report thereon made by the auditors.
- (4) The Minister shall cause a copy of every such statement and report to be laid before Parliament at the same time as the annual report referred to in section 13(2) is so laid.

National Insurance Board
[HON. M. RAMSARAN]

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The financial statements of the National Insurance Board are contained in pages 18 to 30 of the Report, while the Auditor's Report by Ernst & Young, Chartered Accountants, who were appointed auditors for the period under review is at page 17.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, at the time of the laying of the previous report of the National Insurance Board on December 19, 1995, I emphasized this Government's commitment to ensuring effective management of the social service system which serves the population. I also took the opportunity to identify specific actions which should be taken in order to achieve the desired objectives. These included enactment of the necessary legislative amendments to effect improvement in the system and a review of the actual system by a ministerial committee appointed to examine the operations of the Board. Less than one year later, I am pleased to report on the progress that has been made.

Firstly, the Board has improved its efficiency and service during the last financial year. A most significant achievement was an increase in the contribution income received by the Board to \$241.6 million, a \$12.5 million or 5.5 per cent improvement over the last year. This was the highest collection in the past ten years. In addition, there was a 12.1 per cent reduction in administrative expenditure and the recurrent cost was \$7.6 million below the previous year's figure of \$62.8 million.

Secondly, consequent on cost containment strategies implemented and the change in the Board's portfolio mix the Board also performed well financially, achieving a 6.8 per cent growth in its assets to \$3.3 billion and a 15.3 per cent growth in income of \$535.1 million.

Thirdly, in the Local Office Network, the records and verification of claims system was finally automated (a function that was manually done for the last 23 and a half years). Mr. Speaker, I do not believe that it is merely coincidental that such positive results have occurred during the financial year following the assumption of office by the present administration. Surely, the wheels of change have been well oiled.

I am also happy to report that in the area of legislation, Cabinet has already approved a series of changes which are intended to further improve the efficiency of the system and which were based on the recommendations of the Ministerial Committee appointed to review the operations of the Board. The Committee submitted its report in June of this year.

Critical recommendations in this respect include:

- (i) revocation of section 29(2) of the Act which is discriminatory by gender and states that a married woman employed by her husband is uninsurable.
- (ii) introduction of a direct method of payment requiring employers to submit to the Board in a form prescribed by the Board and within the time specified therein, the particulars of contributions due in respect of their employees.
- (iii) amendment of Benefit Regulations to allow *inter alia* for payment of Sickness Benefit from the first day where illness is certified for four continuous days or more and payment of Maternity Benefit for any thirteen week period of loss of earnings related to confinement.
- (iv) introduction of enforcement measures to improve compliance under the Act; and
- (v) removal of the 9.5 per cent contribution income restriction from the legislation and replacement by a provision whereby the Minister fixes a limit for administrative expenses consistent with the recommendations of the actuary arising out of the period of review of the system.

The Attorney General has been mandated to take the necessary action to give immediate effect to these amendments.

Another key recommendation made was the authority to invest a portion of the Board's portfolio in foreign securities. Further action would be taken on this and other areas when the final report of the Fifth Actuarial Review of the system is completed as the Ministerial Committee has already been directed to review the Report and advise Cabinet thereon.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that the foregoing achievements have ably demonstrated this Government's capacity to take speedy action on matters of serious national importance. I take this opportunity to state that this is only the beginning of things. We are determined to take whatever action is necessary to ensure that the Corporate Mission of the NIB which is to effectively manage a social insurance system which is relevant to the needs of the population, is achieved.

I wish to state in particular this Government's intention to work closely with organizations which have the requisite expertise in the area of social security and are willing to assist, such as the International Labour Organization.

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1.40 p.m.

This organization has provided technical assistance to this country in the field of social security since 1958 and has undertaken four of the five actuarial valuations of the NIS for which we are most grateful. I have noted from their Country Objective Statement for Trinidad and Tobago for the period 1996—1998, that an immediate priority which has been identified for attention is the need to define a social security/social protection strategy aimed at mitigating and alleviating the hardship created by the current economic transformation of the country.

In pursuance of the above objective, the ILO has proposed several strategies which include promotion of dialogue and consensus among the social partners and the Government on social protection issues and promotion of an integrated approach for reforming the system based on a better understanding of social security mechanisms, possibilities and limitations. The organization also plans to build up a national capacity in actuarial matters which is highly commendable.

Mr. Speaker, this Government stands ready to join hands with the ILO and the country's other social partners in achieving the desired objectives all for the improvement of the standard of living of the poor people of this nation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEFINITE URGENT MATTER
Decline of TT Dollar

Mr. Kenneth Valley (*Diego Martin Central*): Mr. Speaker, earlier today, I sought your leave to move the Motion on the Adjournment in accordance with Standing Order 12 to discuss a definite matter of urgent public importance, to wit, the continuing decline in the value of the Trinidad and Tobago dollar.

This matter is definite because it pertains to a specific issue, namely the sudden and dramatic fall in the exchange rate of Trinidad and Tobago.

This matter is of extreme urgency because at present the market for foreign exchange is, in effect, closed and traders are unable to obtain the foreign exchange they require for their normal business.

The matter is also of public importance because the lack of foreign exchange in the market prevents the importation of raw material which is required for the industrial sector, and it also limits the ability to import other essential items such as medical supplies.

Definite Urgent Matter

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It is in that context that I sought your leave to raise this matter and I trust that you also will consider it urgent, definite and of public importance.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, I did in fact receive the notice which you filed on time and I have considered it. Notwithstanding the issues that are raised, which could be raised in another way, I am not satisfied that the matter is proper to be discussed, without giving my reasons, of course, as an emergency matter.

ARRANGEMENT OF BUSINESS

The Attorney General (Hon. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the House proceed as follows: First, Motion No. 1; second, Motion No. 3; third, the committee stage of the Motor Vehicles Insurance (Third-Party Risks) (Amdt.) Bill; fourth, Bill No. 1, that is the Foreign Arbitral Awards Bill; and, if time permits, Motion No. 2.

Agreed to.

LAND SURVEYORS BILL Senate Amendments

The Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources (Dr. The Hon. Reeza Mohammed): Mr. President, I beg to move, the following Motion standing in my name:

Be it Resolved that the Senate amendments to the Land Surveyors Bill, 1996 listed in the Appendix be now considered.

Question proposed.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 6

Senate amendment reads as follows:

In subclause 2, delete the roman numeral "(iii)".

Mr. Speaker, it was felt by Members in the other place that the members of the board as detailed in clause 4(b) should not remain in office for six years or two consecutive terms so as to broaden the representation and ensure a broad-based management of the profession's affairs. This is why this amendment is now being brought from the Senate to this honourable House.

Dr. Mohammed: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the House doth agree with the Senate in the said amendment.

Question proposed.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 11

Senate amendment reads as follows:

"Delete subclause (3)."

Dr. Mohammed: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the House doth agree with the Senate in the said amendment.

Question proposed.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 15.

Senate amendment reads as follows:

"In subclause (5), line one, insert after the word 'material' the words 'or information'".

Dr. Mohammed: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this House doth agree with the Senate in the said amendment. It is meant to give greater clarification to the word, "material".

Question proposed.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 17.

Senate amendments read as follows:

"Delete subclause (2) and substitute the following:

1. (2) A person shall be registered as a Land Surveyor if he -
 - (a)(i) is a person of good character and reputation and a fit and proper person to be so registered;
 - (ii) possesses the prescribed academic qualifications;
 - (iii) has gained such practical experience in the field of surveying as is prescribed; or

(b) is otherwise qualified as prescribed.

2. In subclause (3), delete paragraph (a) and renumber paragraphs (b) (c) and (d) as paragraphs (a)(b)(c)".

In clause 17(2)(a)(i) it was intended by the addition of "and a fit and proper person to be registered" that some emphasis should be given to the nature of the person to be considered under this section, in that "fit and proper" here, taken in the legal context, would refer to persons who are of sound mind and able-bodied.

With respect to the deletion of (a) in subclause (3), this came about when the Immigration (Caribbean Community of Skilled Nationals) Act, No. 68 of 1996 was passed in this House. That amendment is to facilitate the passage of that piece of legislation, since the way it is presently framed within the Act is in some measure inconsistent with the free movement of professionals among the member Caribbean community states.

Dr. Mohammed: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the House doth agree with the Senate in the said amendment.

Question proposed.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 55.

Senate amendments read as follows:

- (i) In subclause (1), line one, insert after the word 'person', the word 'not being registered in accordance with Part IV and'.
- (ii) In subclause (1)(c), delete line two and substitute the word 'not'."

It was felt by Members in the other place that this amendment will give further clarity to clause 55 by inserting "not being registered in accordance with part IV at that juncture, and replacing line two of (i)(c) with the word "not", since line two would become superfluous in light of the amendments being made to line one of clause 55(1).

Dr. Mohammed: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this House doth agree with the Senate in the said amendment.

Question proposed.

Question put and agreed to.

PRIVILEGES AND IMMUNITIES (ASSOCIATION OF CARIBBEAN STATES) ORDER

The Minister of Foreign Affairs (Hon. Ralph Maraj): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the following Motion standing in my name:

Whereas it is provided by section 9 of the Privileges and Immunities (Diplomatic, Consular and International Organisations) Act, Chap. 17:01 (hereinafter referred to as "the Act") that the President may by Order declare that any international or regional organisation or agency named or described in such Order shall, to such extent as specified in the Order, be accorded the privileges and immunities set out in Part I of the Fifth Schedule therein:

And Whereas it is also provided by section 9 of the Act that every Order made under that section shall be subject to affirmative resolution of Parliament;

And Whereas the President has on the 27th day of March, 1996 made the Privileges and Immunities (Association of Caribbean States) Order, 1996:

And Whereas it is expedient that the Order now be affirmed:

Be it resolved:

That the Privileges and Immunities (Association of Caribbean States) Order, 1996 be approved.

Mr. Speaker, this Order was made by His Excellency the President on March 27, 1996, in accordance with the power vested in him by section 9 of the Privileges and Immunities (Diplomatic, Consular and International Organisations) Act, Chap 17:01. Section 9 of the Act also requires that every Order so made under that section shall be subject to affirmative resolution of Parliament. Therefore, the purpose of this measure is to affirm the conferment on the Association of Caribbean States and on some of its officers, certain privileges and immunities which Trinidad and Tobago has traditionally granted to international and regional organizations operating locally.

These privileges and immunities are based on the international law and practice on the subject and on our legislation which gives domestic legal effect to these treaty-based international norms.

The Association of Caribbean States was established on July 24, 1994 by the Cartagena Convention. The convention was, in fact, signed in Cartagena, Colombia, by 25 independent states of the Caribbean and by France on behalf of the French territories of Martinique, Guadeloupe and French Guiana.

2.00 p.m.

In addition to the dependencies of France already mentioned, there are 10 non-independent territories which are eligible for associate membership in the ACS. The Convention as one sees, had the requisite number of ratifications and is in fact enforced.

Mr. Speaker, the purpose of the Association is to identify and promote the implementation of policies and programmes designed to:

- (i) harness, utilize and develop the collective capabilities of the Caribbean region to achieve sustained cultural economic social scientific and technological advancement;
- (ii) develop the potential of the Caribbean Sea through interaction among member states and the third parties;
- (iii) promote and enhance economic space for trade and investment with opportunities for co-operation in order to increase the benefits which accrue to the peoples of the Caribbean from their resources and assets including the Caribbean Sea;
- (iv) establish, consolidate and augment, as appropriate, institutional structures and co-operative arrangements responsive to the various cultural identities developmental needs and normative systems within the region.

Mr. Speaker, this Order is a simple one. It seeks to confer on the ACS only those privileges and immunities which are provided for in the Privileges and Immunities (Diplomatic, Consular and International Organisations) Act, Chap. 17:01 and which have been granted in the past to other regional and international organizations.

If we are to look at the Order itself, section 3 stipulates pursuant to clause 1 of the Third Schedule of the Act, that “the ACS shall possess such legal personality as may be necessary to allow it *inter alia* to contract, to acquire and dispose of all property and to be a party to legal proceedings.”

Section 4 of the Order in conformity with Part I of the Fifth Schedule to the Act accords to the ACS immunity from suit and legal process, recognizes the invariability of the official archives and premises and grants exemption or relief from certain rates and taxes.

Section 5 of the Order, in keeping with Part II and Part IV of the Fifth Schedule to the Act, grants to the secretary general and other specified senior officers of the organization, their staff and families, similar immunity from suit and legal process, invariability of the residence and relief from taxes as are granted to a diplomat accredited to Trinidad and Tobago.

Section 6 of the Order in conformity with Part III of the Fifth Schedule to the Act restricts the immunities of those officers and servants not covered in section 5 of the Order to things done or things omitted to be done in the course of the performance of official duties, and it limits their privileges to an exemption from income tax in respect of emoluments received as an officer or servant of the ACS.

It also makes it clear, Mr. Speaker, that nationals or residents of Trinidad and Tobago in consonance with clause 1 of Part III of the Fifth Schedule of the Act only enjoy immunity from suit and legal process in respect of omissions or things done in the course of official duties.

Section 7 of the Order grants the representative of any organ, council or committee of the association privileges and immunities consistent with those granted to the secretary general and other senior officers of the ACS in section 5 of the Order.

Mr. Speaker, the idea of the creation of the ACS had its genesis in the report of the West Indian Commission which was established by the Caricom Heads of Government in 1989. The Commission's report addressed the integration experience in Caricom and sought to project the movement into the 21st Century. The ACS, I should point out, represents a market of 200 million persons and an aggregate gross domestic product in the order of US \$500 billion. Trinidad and Tobago campaigned vigorously and successfully for selection as a site of the headquarters of the Association.

As a member, possessing one of the most industrialized and diversified economies in the region, this country is in a position to benefit economically, politically and diplomatically from acting as host for the headquarters of the ACS. The maximization of those benefits are, of course, dependent on the extent to which the members and associate members achieve the goals of co-operation and integration which underpin the formation of this association.

The new reality of globalization of the international economy, widening and deepening of integration movements and the progressive liberalization of regional and international trade are propelling us in but one direction, closer co-operation and deepening integration.

Mr. Speaker, having promoted actively the establishment of the ACS, having sought the site of the headquarters of the grouping and being conscious of the dynamics, the international economic environment requires us to associate and cooperate with like-minded and similarly situated states and territories. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago intends to do its best to facilitate success by helping to put in place the physical, institutional and legal infrastructure required if the association is to achieve the goals set for it. This Order, therefore, is part of that process which has already begun.

I, therefore, unhesitatingly recommend that hon. Members of this House support the confirmation of this Order.

I beg to move.

Question proposed.

Mr. Kenneth Valley (*Diego Martin Central*): Mr. Speaker, I rise to lend support to the Motion before us, because well do I remember the Heads of Government meeting—I think it was in July, 1994—when Trinidad and Tobago, after some initial discussions and so forth, was afforded the opportunity to host the headquarters of the ACS.

I remember the charge that we proceeded on, led by the Prime Minister at the time, ably assisted by my colleague who was in a different place at that time, and your humble servant, but that was in a different environment. That was against a background and vision that the government of the day had for Trinidad and Tobago. That was in July of 1994. At that time we had liberalized the currency and one could have seen quite clearly that the economy was in an upward path, and that in fact, the business people had demonstrated that confidence in the economy.

2.10 p.m.

It was the vision of the Government that it would position Trinidad and Tobago as the centre of this part of the world. When we went to the Heads of Government meeting—and I remember one country stating as a fact, that it was supporting Jamaica for the headquarters and literally, we had to do some arm-twisting to get that country to change its views and also to convince some other countries that given all that we were in fact doing jointly with that country, they should support Trinidad and Tobago as the headquarters. Mr. Speaker, we saw in the ACS that opportunity to position Trinidad and Tobago as the centre of the hemisphere, and it continues to be the strategic vision of the PNM as we go forward.

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If we are to do that, and if as one notes that the Government of the day appears to be accepting that view, then there are certain consequences which must flow from that decision; certain strategies which must be put in place. One cannot expect to attract foreigners in order to obtain the gains as the Minister said, of diplomacy and so forth, if one's local business sector is losing confidence in one's economy. If, for example, the local business community is voting with its money, as it were, if in fact, there is that sense of uncertainty or insecurity in the economy, then I believe our efforts at achieving our vision would be compromised.

While I am of the opinion, still, that there is time to make the necessary correction in governmental action, I say that unless that is done rather quickly, it is going to compromise Trinidad and Tobago's ability to achieve the gains that were originally envisaged when we fought to have the ACS located in Trinidad and Tobago.

Again, I want to counsel the Government that it needs to get its act together. It needs to send the appropriate signals so that the local business community can gain its confidence if we are to go forward.

By 1994, one knew that the world had changed quite a bit. There was that whole concept of liberalization, whereas, at least up to the late 1970s, there was still in Third World economies the concept of industrialization by invitation. As I have said in other places, I believe President Reagan and Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher changed all of that for all times, and whether we like them or not, we have to realize that the whole concept of the openness of the economy is here to stay and that the world is now becoming a village. At the same time, although one talks in terms of free trade, one knows there is an incremental approach to free trade and that even within Caricom, there are still barriers which prevent the free flow of goods and services. "Nevertheless", we see there is free trade within Caricom, and that is so.

The quest with respect to the ACS was, of course, based on the fact that one is talking about a wider market—200 million—a GDP of 500 billion. We knew very well that we were working on the concept of the concentric circle, and that we would not have achieved the degree of integration in the ACS as we have achieved with Caricom. I make this point because from time to time, one hears some people asking, "do we know what we are doing? Today we are in Caricom, tomorrow we want to go into NAFTA, and ACS."

I want to make the simple point that each initiative is merely, perhaps, a wider flow of that concentric circle with Caricom at the centre. The ACS and NAFTA

(North American Free Trade Association of the Americas) because it does not matter which part of the world we were to view, one will see that there is some type of regional free trade association, whether it is the Mercosur Group, the Andean Pact, the European Common Market or the similar association in Asia. As we move to free trade in the world, it will be on an incremental basis. It is always easier to do business with one's neighbours. As we do that, we spread and it becomes wider so that as we deepen the integration within Caricom one would find that we would also deepen integration within the ACS.

At no time within Caricom one would expect that the level of free trade or liberalization as it were, would be the same level as there is in the ACS. My own feeling is that as this issue progresses, one day we would simply get up and realize that the next logical step with respect to Caricom—because we would have moved on to the single currency, the single economy—would be political union. I believe so. It may not very well come in our life time but when we move that way that does not mean that we would have political union with the ACS or with NAFTA. It would mean that we may have a higher level of integration or a removal of more of the barriers with respect to the ACS or with the Free Trade Association of the Americas.

The basic concept I want to make is that one has to look at the whole movement towards free trade as a series of concentric circles with the one nearest the centre representing the deepest level of integration. In our case, that being Caricom. One is aware, for example, of Caricom initiatives with respect to Third World countries. The fact that Caricom approved the trade agreement using the exceptions listing—I know my colleague would like to claim credit for that. He can claim credit for finishing it only, but that is an important initiative. I am saying that these are important initiatives as we move to ensure that there are opportunities available for our manufacturing sector to market its goods externally.

2.20 p.m.

If Trinidad and Tobago is to allow imports from Caricom, then of necessity, Trinidad and Tobago and the other larger countries in Caricom must seek larger markets externally. The markets in Trinidad and Tobago, perhaps Barbados and Jamaica, may be sufficient for the countries of the OECS to absorb the manufacture of the countries in the OECS. If we are to allow that, of necessity, we have to export to Venezuela, Colombia and Santo Domingo. That is why that initiative was started. One hopes that the ACS would bring the ability to trade with the countries which are bounded by the Caribbean Sea.

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There is another important initiative on which the Association of Caribbean States can work. That is to make the Caribbean Sea drug free. We are talking about countries which are bounded on the Caribbean Sea. It seems to me that at that level one can work on that initiative to make the Caribbean Sea drug free.

The PNM government was extremely pleased that Trinidad and Tobago got the headquarters of the ACS. I remember at the inaugural ceremony in 1995 that there was a French interpreter and a Spanish interpreter because people from the region were speaking different languages. One saw clearly the need to train our young people in these languages. From time to time one hears about the Hong Kong affair, but I remember being in Hong Kong where it is said that the lecturers at the university are permitted to lecture either in Chinese or English. It is the student who has to be bilingual. If the student cannot talk English, then he/she cannot do the course. The obligation is placed on the student to be fluent in the language. I thought that if we want to position ourselves as the centre of this part of the world, perhaps we ought to say that in 10 or 15 years, the University of the West Indies would be holding its lectures in Spanish, French or English and put the obligation on the student. If the student wants to do the particular course, then he/she must know the language.

I think we need to take this issue of language fluency seriously given where we are. We have been paying some lip-service to it, but it would be extremely important in our overall positioning if we are able not only to speak the language, but also to understand the culture of the people on the mainland such as Martinique or Guadeloupe. One has to look at this initiative with respect to the ACS in the context of the overall positioning of Trinidad and Tobago.

While I have not studied in detail the document on industrial policy, put out by the Ministry of Trade and Industry, I was really taken aback by the mission. One hears the Prime Minister talking about positioning Trinidad and Tobago as the business and financial centre and the gateway to South America, but when one looks at the mission statement outlined in that document, somehow one gets a different view. Perhaps I am too precipitate as it were. Perhaps there is something in that document. I would have to read it. There must be consistency in words and actions. More importantly, if we are positioning to be the centre of this part of the world, to benefit from transshipment and the BWIA/LIAT hookup so that LIAT can act as the spoke with BWIA as the hub—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Sudama: Are you still talking about BWIA?

Mr. K. Valley: I can talk about BWIA any time. I am proud of BWIA. I will tell you that is the best transaction which I have had the pleasure of working on in the government. As an aside, let me just say that there is a situation today where under the golden share, the Minister of Finance had to approve the CEO. He did that about two months ago, but today he is refusing to give the CEO who has done magic at LIAT his work permit. Two months ago under the golden share which we negotiated we gave the Government the right to determine whether it wants a particular CEO or not. Two months ago he approved the CEO but now his friends are bringing pressure on him.

Mr. Panday: Call names!

Mr. K. Valley: Because Ranson—we could call it right in here—wants to take an investment in BWIA for a start, and LIAT is saying—you must look at that! You must understand why your Minister of Finance—

Mr. Speaker: Quite clearly, hon. Members we cannot continue like this. I have risen to suggest, hon. Member for Diego Martin Central, that if you continue to talk to me and not turn your back on me and digress into answering asides, I think we would get through faster.

Mr. K. Valley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The point has to be made because as part of that overall positioning of Trinidad and Tobago, air transport played a very important role. Some people do not understand that initiative with respect to BWIA and LIAT. Quite simply, one saw BWIA as the long-haul carrier acting as the spoke, not flying simply to West Indian islands, but going on to the mainland into Belem which is merely two and a half hours from Port of Spain. If the people in Brazil have to go to Miami, they have to go deep south and then fly north using nine hours for what could be at most a six-hour flight. We saw clear opportunities available and attempted to put a particular structure in place which is now being compromised, because the Minister of Finance and Tourism is more concerned with his personal well-being and that of his friends, instead of looking at the national interest for which I hope he was appointed.

2.30 p.m.

We have a Prime Minister who appears to be seeing all this and doing nothing. We have an Attorney General who is severely compromised and gets up and says that he is merely “mamaguying” the people. That is what we have from the Government. Perhaps I ought not to get involved in that.

I rose this evening to support this matter because I see—

Mr. Speaker: No, hon. Members, for it to be shouted across the floor that someone is a petty thief, which I could hear *[Interruption]* Hon. Member, I am simply saying that what you have just said is unacceptable. Could we proceed with a certain *[Interruption]* I am sorry. Please proceed.

Mr. K. Valley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was making the point that I did not come here today to deal with those other issues because it takes much time to deal with them. I rose in support of my colleague from Naparima because we were there together fighting to get the ACS into Trinidad and Tobago. At that time we shared a certain vision. I do not know if he shares that vision today. If he does, I expect that he would counsel his colleagues about the proper course of action.

I make the point that if that vision is still valid, then there are certain things one has to do and air communication is an important strategic approach with respect to achieving that overall vision. We on this side support the granting of immunities to this Association as part of the agreement to house the ACS in Trinidad and Tobago.

I thank you very much.

Mr. Patrick Manning (*San Fernando East*): Mr. Speaker, I rise this afternoon to join my colleague and our new Deputy Political Leader, the Member for Diego Martin Central, whom I wish to congratulate very sincerely.

We lend our support to Motion No. 3 on the Order Paper which calls for the granting of immunities to officials of the Association of Caribbean States. I was not in Ocho Rios in 1990 when the Heads of Government of Caricom met, concerned as they were about the need to deepen and widen the integration process, but equally concerned, Mr. Speaker, that in so doing the identity of Caricom should not be prejudiced in any way. I was not there when the decision was taken to set up as a consequence of these concerns a group, which I prefer to refer to as the “wise men”, headed by that international public servant, Sir Shridath Ramphal, a son of Guyana and a son of the Caribbean. Indeed, that honour fell to the hon. Member for Tobago East who was Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago at the time, and I am sure that he was present.

I first came into contact with the group when on July 25, 1990, the team was in Trinidad and Tobago and I met with them at the Central Bank building for a relatively brief period. I must say that I was not particularly impressed when I met

with them and I think it is an appropriate time for me to place just one or two issues on record. *[Interruption]* Yes. It was two days before the coup.

The members of the team raised a number of issues with me. At that time I was Leader of the Opposition and I myself expressed one or two concerns to them. One of the questions I asked the team was: What should happen if a country in the Caribbean floats its currency? At the time I had known—apparently the team did not—that Jamaica was contemplating that course of action. I had known then that a great deal of work was taking place in the People's National Movement on the policy directions we would pursue as and when the people of Trinidad and Tobago saw it fit to return us to government.

Members will recall, I am sure, that it was in December 1987, that an address to the Twenty-Seventh Annual Convention by the newly elected political leader of the PNM was adopted as a fundamental party document and that that document was used as a basis for the review of policy over the entire range of governmental activities and, indeed, one of the areas which came under review as a consequence of this new vision and this exercise was the area of economic policy and in particular, the area of exchange rate policy. Indeed, it was just a few days later, August 13, 1990, when a small group of us met, that we actually took the decision that as and when the PNM got into government we would pursue a floating exchange rate policy as is the case in Trinidad and Tobago today.

I raised the question with members of the team and may I say, I was given a lecture by one of them. I would not say which one, but basically what he said was that was a most unlikely occurrence.

I place these things on the record, Mr. Speaker, because there are people who will come after us. There are students who in due course will want to research these issues and I believe that the two incidents that I will relate—I have just related one—are important for the benefit of those who will come in the future.

The second issue which I raised was one which related to security. Again, I was given a lecture by one of the members of the team and basically what I was told was that the attitude of us big countries in the Caribbean was that we feel that we have to carry the small countries financially, but that the smaller countries were financially more sound than countries like Trinidad and Tobago. I listened, but there was a comment made by another person which suggested that if something should happen in Trinidad and Tobago we could just go to the United States to deal with it.

Can you imagine my consternation, Mr. Speaker, when two days later there was a problem of a security nature in Trinidad and Tobago which related to the questions discussed two days before at that forum. You will understand, Mr. Speaker, when I say that at that time I was not particularly enamoured with the work of the team that had been set up by the Heads of Government when they met in Ocho Rios. In a sense I did not continue to follow the work which was taking place, which, incidentally, has turned out to be very important work by that team which was headed by Sir Shridath Ramphal.

2.40 p.m.

I next came into contact with it all when I assumed the position of Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago and shortly thereafter the chairmanship of Caricom. In that capacity, Sir Shridath Ramphal, as head of the team, kept the head of Caricom at the time, up to date on the work and the progress that they were making at the level of that committee.

Mr. Speaker, it also involved the team advising on some of the major recommendations, and it became clear to me quite early that one of the major recommendations that would have emanated from this group was the setting up of some kind of association in the Caribbean, which today we know as the Association of Caribbean States.

May I say that when I realized all that, I sat and pondered on it, and I examined its history. I remembered the “Federation” of the 1950s and the fact that Trinidad and Tobago was identified as the capital of the “Federation” and that was the vision of Dr. Eric Williams for Trinidad and Tobago in the Caribbean context. I was in school at the time, Mr. Speaker, but I remember it. It then occurred to me that if an Association of Caribbean States had to be set up, and if a headquarters had to be chosen for such an association, that Trinidad and Tobago, taking its historical and other considerations into account, could have presented itself as an ideal host for the headquarters of the Association of Caribbean States.

When it became clear that the report of the team would not have been ready for the Heads of Government Conference in July 1994, Trinidad and Tobago was very quick to propose to them—we had hosted the Heads of Government in Trinidad and Tobago—an unusual course of action, to host the special meeting of the Heads of Government in October, 1994, which had two items on the agenda. Firstly, the report of the “wise men” who were set up by the Heads of Government meeting in Ocho Rios; secondly, the very important discussion and negotiation on

the trade reform package—the common external tariff. Much discussion had been taking place on the CET but no agreement had been reached by then and no agreement was in sight.

It was a credit to the Government and the public servants of Trinidad and Tobago that when that meeting was convened in October, 1994, in the space of three hours, we came to an agreement on a common external tariff. The other side of the story, of course, is that we adopted the report and the idea of the Association of Caribbean States was given proper birth and acceptance by Caricom Heads of Government. We agreed to host it in Trinidad and Tobago for many reasons, one of which was that we had our eye on Trinidad and Tobago being the headquarters of the Association of the Caribbean States.

Mr. Speaker, much has happened between that decision and the Heads of Government meeting in Barbados in 1994. I do not want to get into the details of it at this time, except to say that at one time Trinidad and Tobago almost gave up pursuit of that objective for reasons which need not detain us at this time. We almost gave it up, but I do not want to get into contentious matters. One of the reasons we pursued it in the first place was our vision of Trinidad and Tobago in the Caribbean. We had been promoting ourselves and we had, in fact, seen ourselves as a gateway to the Americas. Trinidad and Tobago strategically and geographically located in a position to play a major role in an export platform to Latin America; in a position to play a major role as an export platform to North America—one of the reasons we had been pursuing an early entry into NAFTA and also enjoying as we in the Caribbean do, special arrangements with Europe; in a position to play a major role as an export platform to Europe.

We saw ourselves, therefore, as a very important country in the entire region, Caricom included. Already Trinidad and Tobago enjoys the benefits of the balance of trade in Caricom. Trinidad and Tobago is already the prime nation in Caricom from a trading standpoint—and so we pursued it.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to place on the record my appreciation of the contribution of the hon. Member for Diego Martin Central in that particular meeting. We were seeking to influence countries in the Caribbean to support Trinidad and Tobago. Jamaica had a very strong case and the other interested country was Belize.

There were discussions taking place between Trinidad and Tobago and Antigua/Barbuda at the time. The then Minister of Trade and Industry, the Member

Privileges and Immunities Order
[MR. MANNING]

Friday, October 18, 1996

for Diego Martin Central, was in discussions with his counterpart in Antigua/Barbuda and I had been holding some discussions with their Prime Minister. The same question was put to both of us by both men and they got different answers. I remember the Prime Minister having consulted with his Minister of Trade, came to me and said, “When I grow up I would like to be like you and your Minister of Trade and Industry.” *[Interruption]* Those were his words. Mr. Speaker, the nuances may be lost on the Member for Oropouche, bucolic as he is, but you see it was the distinguished Prime Minister of Antigua/Barbuda who, in fact, was saying to us that he was impressed with our diplomacy on this matter. He eventually came back and said to us that contrary to an earlier position, Antigua/Barbuda will support Trinidad and Tobago as the headquarters of the Association of Caribbean States. Mr. Speaker, it was a diplomatic triumph whether they like it or not.

Jamaica’s case was strong. Jamaica positioned itself from a geographic standpoint, arguing that it was strategically located, virtually in the centre of the Caribbean and the wider Caribbean taking into account the Central American countries that were a part of the ACS or which were being courted to be a part of the ACS; the countries in the Caribbean Basin in South America and the countries in the Caribbean themselves. If one looks at a map, Mr. Speaker, Jamaica’s argument was, indeed, very strong.

Belize, on the other hand, took the position that there are certain countries in Caricom that had not been given the opportunity to play as major a role as they could and that something like the headquarters of the ACS could be very beneficial to the development of a country as Belize; that in the past they had been supporting a lot of the initiations by other countries and perhaps it was time that other countries looked favourably on the desire of Belize to host the Association of Caribbean States. Another strong argument, Mr. Speaker.

2.50 p.m.

What was the argument of Trinidad and Tobago? In a sense, that argument emerged on the very morning. I remembered when the Heads of Government met in caucus—make no mistake about it—the decision was to identify Trinidad and Tobago as the headquarters of the Association of Caribbean States.

After the Jamaican Prime Minister made his case; the Belizean Prime Minister made his, then it was Trinidad and Tobago’s turn. Our argument was that if the smaller territories in the Caribbean were concerned that they could become

marginalized, if they found themselves as part of a wider Caribbean economic and/or political association—because it was the smaller countries which did not have the financial resources to do the extensive travel that was required in this new association—the benefit that we could give to them was to site the headquarters closer to those countries. If one did that, then access to the headquarters was not the problem that it could have been, had the headquarters been sited elsewhere. Indeed, it would give those countries an opportunity to participate to the full extent of their capabilities. More than that, it will prevent the countries from becoming marginalized in this wider conglomeration involving countries that are much larger and much more economically and politically powerful than they were.

Mr. Speaker, the records would show that the argument appealed to seven of the 12 countries that were present that morning: seven countries voted for Trinidad and Tobago; three voted for Belize and two voted for Jamaica.

Mr. Speaker, in all things there must be integrity and statesmanship in the way one conducts one's affairs. Before we got to vote on that day we made an offer to Jamaica so that the generosity of Trinidad and Tobago could have been properly recorded. We offered Jamaica, giving up our right to hosting the Caribbean Court of Appeal, and in fact we would support the Caribbean Court of Appeal being sited in Jamaica if Jamaica would withdraw its argument and support the establishment of the headquarters of the ACS in Trinidad and Tobago—the records will show that the Jamaicans politely declined the offer, and the rest is history. Today, Trinidad and Tobago has been identified and is hosting the Association of Caribbean States, and Trinidad and Tobago is well poised to play a major role in the diplomatic, economic and political affairs of the region.

May I also say, following that decision, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago took careful note of the diplomatic implications. Therefore, one of the things we began to consider was, what arrangements would be made to ensure that we were in a position to properly provide for the large number of countries which will seek to enter Trinidad and Tobago and establish diplomatic links. The first of these, of course, is not a country but the ACS itself and its presence in Trinidad and Tobago that has generated a Motion before this honourable House with which we are extremely pleased to be associated.

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister of Consumer Affairs (Hon. Mervyn Assam): Mr. Speaker, thank you for giving me the opportunity to join in the debate on this Motion that has been piloted by my colleague, the

Minister of Foreign Affairs. It is surprising that a Motion having the support of the opposite side has taken so long to be concluded.

Indeed, the last speaker, the Member for San Fernando East, gave us a historical review of the genesis of Trinidad and Tobago's position in the ACS and how we came to qualify for the headquarters. I was surprised that he placed so much emphasis on his minister of trade at the time, the Member for Diego Martin Central, and he said that it was because of the diplomacy of that Member whom he praised so lavishly, ably, I suppose, guided by himself, that he was able to get the final scores of seven, three and two: seven, in favour of Trinidad and Tobago; three, for Belize; and two, for Jamaica. I was wondering what was the role at the time of the then foreign affairs minister in his administration whom, I believe, was charged with the responsibility of conducting these types of discussions, and that it was also the role of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to engage in these diplomatic manoeuvres and to develop the strategies necessary for Trinidad and Tobago's position to be both firmly and successfully established in these fora. So I was surprised that the Minister of Foreign Affairs, in his administration, seemed to have been lost somewhere. Or, is it that he did not have a Minister of Foreign Affairs in his administration? If this is the case, maybe he should have given us an explanation for that during his long, tedious and historical discourse.

3.00 p.m.

What is even more disturbing, Mr. Speaker, he tried to juxtapose the situation of 1960 with 1994, when the late Dr. Williams came back to Trinidad—and I was a young boy at the time—and gleefully said that he had brought back the capital of the “Federation”, Trinidad and Tobago. Indeed, the argument at the time, I remember very vividly, had nothing to do with the whole question of positioning Trinidad and Tobago within the “Federation” as such to be the political, diplomatic, financial or trading capital. What Dr. Williams said on that occasion, I do remember, is that he was rescuing the name of Trinidad from the “bobol”, the corruption that was associated with Trinidad and in an attempt to extricate Trinidad from that image he sought to get the capital of the “Federation” in Trinidad and Tobago. Those were almost the words that Dr. Williams used on his return to Port of Spain that night.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: You were PNM at that time?

Hon. M. Assam: Therefore, attempting to juxtapose the situation in 1960 with 1994 is totally different because, in 1960 the infrastructure—and I am talking

about the physical and other types of infrastructure in Trinidad—was indeed inferior to that of Jamaica, which had at that time, in my view, quite a legitimate, valid and powerful claim to having the capital located in Kingston, Jamaica.

But on this occasion it seems to me that the task of the then Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago was not as formidable because the infrastructure in Trinidad and Tobago, financial, physical and otherwise, had been ably laid at that time, thanks to the NAR administration that had been in place before. *[Laughter]* That is the fundamental difference of the two eras, although they span some 35 years. Your job was so much easier than Dr. Williams', who had to erase the tarnished image of our country as one of corruption and "bobol".

It is unfortunate, again, that the Member for San Fernando East attempted to heap upon himself a lot of praise. My mother used to tell me, self-praise is no recommendation. How can he claim credit for what he did not in fact do? I wonder if he remembers that Heads of Government Conference in Grenada attended by the then Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, Mr. A.N.R. Robinson.

Miss Nicholson: His memory is short.

Hon. M. Assam: In that Gran 'Anse Declaration, that particular set of ideas, to which the Member for San Fernando East referred in his contribution, germinated and, in fact, concretized at the end of that conference, giving rise to the Grand Anse Declaration. So Mr. Speaker, the Member for San Fernando East must not take credit where credit is not due, and he must give credit where credit is due—to the Member for Naparima, who everyone knows was instrumental, to a large degree, in Trinidad and Tobago having, today, the headquarters of the Association of Caribbean States. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker, having got the Association of Caribbean States headquarters in Trinidad, what did the then Prime Minister proceed to do? We had a wonderful opening ceremony in August, 1995 and then he proceeded to call an election and lost it. Therefore, it was almost like a stillbirth in terms of his leadership. It was this Government, the UNC/NAR administration, which had to take on the responsibility of housing and putting in place the structures necessary for the proper establishment of the Secretariat, and it will be this Government that would be responsible for erecting a permanent headquarters for the ACS, in due course.

Mr. Robinson: Hear, hear!

Hon. M. Assam: But, what surprised me more about the Member for Diego Martin Central—who you say is this great diplomat—I do not know what school

of diplomacy he went to. I see the Member for Point Fortin is smiling, because the Member for Point Fortin did have some diplomatic training, and I was wondering why you did not use him instead of using the Member for Diego Martin Central if you wanted to jettison your Foreign Minister at the time. I think the Member for Diego Martin Central, as is his wont, gets so agitated that he goes off on a tangent and puts his foot into his own mouth and begins to tell us about the best deal he ever did during his ministerial career, albeit, very abbreviated I must say, and all as a consequence of the folly of his Prime Minister calling an early election. It is the best deal he ever made; and he said BWIA was his best deal.

Miss Nicholson: The worst economist.

Hon. M. Assam: Now, let me tell this honourable House, Mr. Speaker, and by extension the national community, about this best deal that the former Minister of Trade and Industry made. Trinidad and Tobago Government has 31 per cent of the shares.

Mr. Valley: You are wrong already. Thirty-four!

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: He is always wrong.

Hon. M. Assam: So what, 34 per cent of the shares; and the private sector has 66 per cent of the shares. Of the 34 per cent that we have, we are supposed to have three directors, the private sector six, and the unions two. But do you know, the way it is structured, notwithstanding his protestations about the golden share, which is almost meaningless in the context of the agreement that was struck—

Mr. Manning: That is not correct. You do not understand the whole concept.

Hon. M. Assam: —between BWIA and Acker and Weigel *et al*, who were able to take this airline almost down the road—the same slogan they had prior to the 1995 election? But they really took it beyond down the road, Mr. Speaker, because this Government does not get information, notwithstanding the fact that it is a 34 per cent shareholder.

The Directors themselves admitted that they were unable to get information and any kind of proper decisions taken while Weigel and Acker were at the helm of that organization. Instead, they squandered the money, bought houses in some of the “poshest” places in Trinidad, travelled to and fro; lived in the most luxurious hotels; paid themselves handsome salaries; and you know what is the big deal? I understand they paid him a consultancy fee, Mr. Speaker, of US \$250,000—

Mr. Valley: Mr. Speaker, that Member—

Mr. Speaker: Order! Order! Order! Hon. Members, we do have a procedure for when one rises on a point of order, and the Minister has, quite properly, sat down. Point of order?

Mr. Valley: Mr. Speaker, let me for the record, first of all—

Mr. Speaker: No, no, no. Just one second.

Mr. Valley: On a point of order. He has given way, first of all.

Mr. Speaker: No, just one second. If you are asking him to give way—

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

Mr. Speaker: Very well. Which Standing Order?

Mr. Valley: Standing Order 35(5), Mr. Speaker.

3.10 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Standing Order 35(5). There is no 35(5). Standing Order 35(8)? 35(8) deals with— Please. Give him the Standing Orders.

Mr. Valley: It is 36(5), Mr. Speaker. My apologies.

Mr. Speaker: It says: "No Member shall impute improper motives to any other Member of either Chamber."

I would ask the hon. Member not to pursue the line that he was pursuing.

Mr. Valley: Mr. Speaker, please—

Mr. Speaker: Order! Order! Order! Hon. Member, you have risen on a point of order indicating that the Member was imputing improper motives to you. If indeed and I accept that, I have asked him—

Mr. Valley: To withdraw it.

Mr. Speaker: Yes. Certainly.

Mr. Valley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: One second.

Mr. Valley: I am sorry.

Mr. Speaker: That will be—

Mr. Manning: Expunged from the record.

Mr. Speaker: No. Please. I will find my words.

Mr. Manning: Well you are taking so long. *[Laughter]*

Hon. M. Assam: Mr. Speaker, before you expunge. I am not too clear about what is taking place because I never imputed any improper motives to the Member for Diego Martin Central.

Mr. Manning: Are you questioning the Speaker's ruling?

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, we are on a point of order. You were saying certain things and the hon. Member has risen and suggested that there was an imputation of improper motives.

Hon. M. Assam: Against Mr. Acker, not the Member for Diego Martin Central. I was talking about Mr. Acker who got the contract of US \$250,000.

Mr. Valley: That is not what he said, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Gentlemen, if indeed the hon. Member was speaking about Mr. Acker, he could proceed.

Hon. M. Assam: I never at any time was talking about any contract with respect to the Member for Diego Martin Central. Never. I was speaking about a contract that Mr. Acker got for US \$250,000. *[Crosstalk]*

Mr. Speaker: Order! Order! Hon. Gentlemen and Ladies, could the Member be permitted to proceed. He has clarified the issue.

Hon. M. Assam: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, at no time, called the Member's name with respect to the US \$250,000. I was speaking about Mr. Acker and Mr. Weigel and how, in spite of the fact that he had got US \$250,000 to put a company together, to find a joint partner, he proceeded to milk the company by buying expensive cars and an expensive home and took the company "down the road" according to the slogan of the PNM. That is the point I was making. I thought I was abundantly clear on that matter. I was never imputing anything to the Member for Diego Martin Central at all.

Mr. Hinds: You should apologize.

Hon. Member: The Minister of Trade at the time. That is the point you should make.

Hon. M. Assam: But you know, Mr. Speaker, it was said that Government cannot run business effectively and efficiently, and that BWIA needed to be privatised in order for it to become an efficiently run airline. It has been privatised and the Member for Diego Martin Central said it is the best deal he ever did in his life. That is what he said. That was his boast. Having privatised BWIA, it has become one of the most inefficient organizations in Trinidad and Tobago today.

Mr. Valley: Mr. Speaker, if the hon. Member would give way.

Hon. M. Assam: I am not giving way.

Mr. Valley: I just want to make the point.

Hon. M. Assam: I am not giving way for the simple reason that you unfairly accused me of imputing motives to you, which I never did. I am not going to give way. I am not going to tolerate that kind of nonsense, Mr. Speaker, because I will never impute improper motives to anybody. It is not my style. It is the style of the PNM. I have always said that I am a decent man and I am a balanced speaker in this House. I have never accused anybody. I have often said waste, mismanagement and I said I will not do like the Member for La Brea and speak of corruption. That is the kind of thing I have said in the House.

But, Mr. Speaker, having privatised it, it has become one of the most inefficient businesses in this country. *[Interruption]* That was the most fictitious kind of accounting figures that this country has ever seen because having said that in the first six months it had profited \$1 million, in the next six months, it lost about \$25 million. That was the kind of, to use a local term, "ratchiffee" and cooking they did to make that deal look good six months after he had demitted office. That is the way it was done and today, the service is bad, the reliability is bad, the time-keeping is bad; and even the equipment which they had brought in, the airbus, is the wrong equipment. Now there is a second airbus which is being delivered to this airline which the airline cannot afford to pay for but it is forced, because of the kind of agreement, to accept.

The airline is strapped for cash. It cannot meet its bills. Its creditors are upon it and it is a most disgraceful and embarrassing thing for me, as a national, to have to endure the kinds of criticisms and comments which I hear about a national airline of which I was once so proud.

The Member for Diego Martin Central and the PNM administration, like so many other things that they have destroyed in this country, have destroyed the national airline. They have destroyed it. Today, to stand up in this House and tell

this House, and by extension, the national community, that it is the best deal he ever did, I would like to know which is the worst deal he ever did. This is a scandal to say the least.

Then he went into an excursion and you know, a little knowledge is a dangerous thing. He knew nothing about trade, perhaps a little smattering of finance although they made him the junior minister, he heard a few phrases from the senior public servants when he was in trade and he comes and uses them—

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: And in what are you trained?

Hon. M. Assam: I am trained, Member for Arouca South.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: In what?

Hon. M. Assam: I will tell you that privately if you want to know. I am not going to expose it. *[Laughter]*

But he hears a few words in the Ministry of Trade and Industry where he was for about two or three years and he comes and regurgitates the same words over and over and over, giving the impression that he is the inventor of these words; he is the inventor of these systems; he is the inventor of these concepts; he is the inventor of these mechanisms for accessing markets and improving the international trading status of Trinidad and Tobago. It really amazes me when, in fact, much of these things were in train when he got to the ministry and they continue to be in train, because the whole question of development of international trade is a process started many years ago and has taken on a new dimension with greater speed and intensity so that Trinidad and Tobago can position itself, whether in Caricom, in the ACS, in Latin America, in Europe, in North America, or wherever.

He does not even know the name of APEC. A former minister of trade saying another trading association in Asia. He does not even know the name APEC. It is very disgraceful and shameful. He does not even know that. But it shows that he learnt so little and whatever he has learnt, he comes here today and gives the impression that he was the inventor of whatever has taken place at the Ministry of Trade and Industry.

3.20 p.m.

Why do that? I have given my predecessor credit; I have said that he started something, and I am prepared to give him whatever little credit he has started. But why does he come here and gallery day after day, giving the impression that he was the architect, the inventor, the author, almost giving himself some kind of

original powers with respect to trade policy in Trinidad and Tobago? He should desist from doing that.

He tries to castigate the Minister of Finance in his absence—just as the Member for La Brea tried to castigate the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries, in his absence—with respect to denying him the work permit. Everyone knows the law. If the PNM did it when they were in office, then they violated the law, which, of course, I am sure they must have done a few times. No one must come into Trinidad and Tobago and begin to work without a work permit. That is the law. Do not come and say that the Minister of Finance, because of the golden share, has the right to select who should be the chief executive officer of BWIA. Perhaps it is the only thing in the golden share that has merit in it. The whole arrangement is flawed because of the "best deal" that the Member for Diego Martin Central ever undertook and ever concluded.

What has happened is that two senior members of the BWIA staff, including the CEO, came into Trinidad and took up their appointments improperly. They did not have a valid work permit. If one does not have a valid work permit or has not applied for a valid work permit, then one should not be at the job.

Hon. Member: One can work for 30 days.

Hon. M. Assam: I said, if one has not applied. So to come here and castigate the Minister of Finance for observing the law, or bring it to the attention of the public that a violation has taken place, what is wrong with that? Was it done in order to get some kind of exposure on the television; that the Minister of Finance has done something that is improper?

The Member for San Fernando East spoke about the exchange rate and the security of small states. I do not know in what way that was relevant to this particular debate. That is a matter that is well established; the vulnerability of small states and the lack of security of small states. What is the point in raising it here in relation to granting diplomatic privileges and immunities to the Association of Caribbean States? He asked somebody about what they think about floating the exchange rate, knowing full well that he had inside knowledge, as Leader of the Opposition, that Jamaica was going to float their exchange rate. So he has more intelligence-gathering capabilities than everybody in this area.

I am amazed at these kinds of statements emanating from the mouth of a former Prime Minister. More than that, do you know what had me really completely floored, Mr. Speaker? When the Member for San Fernando East began

to disparage that behemoth, Sir Shridath Ramphal. Imagine he said that he was unimpressed by that team led by Sir Shridath Ramphal; these wise men, Willie Demas, outstanding economist—

Mr. Manning: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. Member for giving way and I want to make it clear that I did not intend to disparage anybody. In fact, that was never my intent. What I sought to do was merely put on the record some personal impressions I had following a particular meeting. I did not call any names; I was careful not to do that. I said I had lost interest in the work of the team after that, but that subsequently, I had been reintroduced to it. I was careful to say also that I thought that the team did extremely good work. I hope the hon. Minister would take note of those comments.

Hon. M. Assam: I am sure *Hansard* has recorded what he has said about his impressions about the wise men, Sir Alistair McIntyre, Sir Shridath Ramphal and Willie Demas. But I am not going to argue the point that he disparaged them and he was unimpressed with them.

What I thought that the Opposition would have mentioned today, even if they wanted to take a couple kudos, is the benefit of this particular Motion. None of them, neither the Member for Diego Martin Central nor the Member for San Fernando East, told this honourable House the benefits that could and would accrue by providing the diplomatic privileges and immunities to the Association of Caribbean States, and the kinds of diplomatic activity that will take place in this capital; and how Trinidad and Tobago will begin to attract, as it has already started to attract, other countries setting up diplomatic missions resident in Trinidad and Tobago, because hitherto there were a number of them with missions accredited to Trinidad and Tobago but resident in Caracas, in Havana, in Colombia, in Canada in Washington. At this point in time, they are beginning to think quite differently and they are beginning, not only to establish diplomatic relations with Trinidad and Tobago, but those who were credited hitherto and had resident missions outside of Port of Spain are now having resident missions in Trinidad and Tobago in the capital of Port of Spain.

These are some of the benefits I thought they would have alluded to and make the whole debate positive and upbeat, because if they think they did it, and they think they are going to bring such benefit, why do they not carry it forward, rather than show all the negative aspects that they are so wont to show, particularly when they are on the other side.

Tell the Parliament and the national community that this will provide more jobs for Trinidad and Tobago, because when there are resident missions here, there is locally recruited staff. They are going to employ messengers, drivers, typists and perhaps they are going to employ people for giving visas and for doing commercial and other kinds of work which is non-diplomatic in nature. There would be more motor cars being purchased; there would be services; cocktail parties at Hilton, Holiday Inn, and everybody will benefit. Why do they not speak of all the economic, political, diplomatic and financial benefits, plus putting Trinidad and Tobago on the map even further, as a tourist destination, as a financial centre, as a diplomatic centre, increasing the whole trading aspects of Trinidad and Tobago's relationship with Latin America and other parts of the world?

That is the kind of thing that I expected the other side would highlight in a debate of this nature. We are talking about diplomacy which, of its very nature, has a certain kind of sensibility to it, something that has more refinement, rather than getting down to the bottom. That is the kind of debate I expected here this afternoon. I hope that Members opposite will stop getting involved in irrelevant contributions, in glorifying themselves in things and taking credit for that which they were never responsible, or even exaggerating some of the things that they did, but giving credit where credit is due.

The Member for Naparima was their foreign minister. The Leader of the Opposition may hate him to the guts as he hates Rowley and Imbert, but this is the time for reconciliation and healing of wounds, as he said so gallantly when he won. Why does he not take the healing of the wounds beyond last Sunday and take it to his former colleague and say, "yes, Member for Naparima, even though we broke ranks, you are still one of my colleagues who assisted me while I was the Prime Minister to forge greater links between Trinidad and Tobago and the rest of the world through the diplomatic manoeuvres and initiatives that you took, and having the ACS established in Trinidad and Tobago so that the people of Trinidad and Tobago will benefit from these particular developments."

Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

3.30 p.m.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs (Hon. Ralph Maraj): Mr. Speaker, I thank all hon. Members for participating in this debate. I thank the Opposition for their support of this Motion, and I especially thank my colleague, the Member for St. Joseph, who, in his usual articulate, powerful and devastating style has floored all

of the insinuations and arguments that were being put forward by the other side. I think after his contribution there is very little for me to say because I am sure to fall short both in terms of substance and analysis with respect to this particular matter.

I want to go back to a number of things that the Member for Diego Martin Central spoke about. He was wondering about the economic policy of this Government and where we were. Mr. Speaker, it ought to be clear to everybody—and I think it was made clear very early in the life of this administration—that essentially this Government is really continuing the economic policies that have been set in motion by previous administrations. [*Desk thumping*] I think we made that absolutely clear, and there is nothing surprising about that.

Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that if one looks at what is happening in the world today one would see that there is a uniformity in economic policies applied and adopted by almost all countries, and that is only natural. In the integration and globalization process and international economic policies, it is only natural to accept and expect that there would be uniformity in economic policies. It has happened in Trinidad and Tobago where governments have changed but the policies remained the same. It is happening in countries all over the world that by the very nature of the globalization process one would expect that to take place.

Mr. Speaker, in fact, the reform process that we have undergone in Trinidad and Tobago is one which was started in the mid-80s. It is an incremental approach that has been taking place, and I have no doubt that the policy would evolve as the globalization process continues and economies integrate more intimately. The policy will in fact evolve and one is going to see sameness in economic policies throughout the world. That is what one is going to see. So, really, that ought to have been clear to everyone.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Diego Martin Central asked about whether we were positioning Trinidad and Tobago as the centre of the world. I have said it elsewhere that the goal of this administration is to ensure that all major hemispheric and global highways move in and out of Trinidad and Tobago. That is what we are doing. We are seeking to position Trinidad and Tobago, not only as the centre of the world but as the centre of the universe! That is how we see ourselves and that is the argument I was making when I put forward the idea that Trinidad and Tobago should move expeditiously to ensure that it becomes the site of the ACS headquarters.

I have argued that from our perspective we ought to have seen Trinidad and Tobago as the centre of the hemisphere and the region. It depends on how we see ourselves. We want to ensure that Trinidad and Tobago is connected totally and comprehensively within the hemisphere. That is what we are doing. That is why, for example, we are seeking to create the kind of market access in the hemisphere for products emanating out of Trinidad and Tobago.

The Member is wondering what we are doing for the local businessmen. I want to let him know that our emphasis is on creating the market access in the hemisphere so that we can have further industrialization, earning of foreign exchange and the generation of employment. We are talking to people all over the place.

Just recently I was talking to the Mexicans and it is very possible that at the end of the year we would be talking to Mexico about a free trade agreement between Trinidad and Tobago and Mexico. I visited Argentina recently and I have also spoken to the Brazilians—both to the President and the Foreign Minister—and they have agreed that they are going to sponsor and ensure that Caricom gets into discussions in the early part of 1997 with the Mercosur movement which, as one knows, is the most dynamic integration process taking place in the hemisphere today.

We are going to be talking to the Central Americans in November of this year at a meeting of foreign ministers of Central America and Caricom and I insisted that we have on the agenda of that meeting, a free trade agreement between Caricom and Central America. That is on the cards as well.

We are talking to the Dominican Republic. Only yesterday I spoke on the phone to the Foreign Minister of the Dominican Republic as a result of a conversation I was having with the Secretary General of Caricom. He told me—I am saying this for the first time—that they are now prepared to begin negotiations with Caricom with respect to a free trade agreement. This is a new administration in the Dominican Republic, as one knows, and they are prepared to do that. We are pursuing these matters. We are talking to the Venezuelans. This morning I had a meeting with the Venezuelan ambassador to Trinidad and Tobago and he has assured me as well that Venezuela is now prepared to enter into discussions with Caricom before the end of the year with respect to a free trade agreement between Caricom and Venezuela.

It is clear that this administration is seeking to create the market access for the goods emanating out of this country. We are seeking to integrate Trinidad and

Tobago totally into the hemisphere and we are achieving this. I have no doubt that by the end of next year or so that goal would have been significantly advanced.

Trinidad and Tobago's position in the hemisphere is multifaceted and comprehensively revitalized and the time has really come for us—while we have been placing emphasis on our own hemisphere—to look beyond our hemisphere with the same kind of vigour, energy and creativity.

One knows that the present Lome´ Convention is coming to an end in a few years' time. We have to begin negotiations. We have already had our consultations here in Port of Spain with respect to the position that we would like to see Trinidad and Tobago take and contribute to the regional dialogue. At that seminar we brought in the private sector, the university, the labour movement and the NGOs to hammer out the position that we would take with respect to the Lome´ Convention, because we want as far as is possible to maintain the preferential access that we enjoyed for our goods into the European union markets under the Lome´ Convention.

We are doing all of that and our ambassador in Brussels is playing a key role in ensuring that our cause is advanced. In fact, right now there is a meeting in the Dominican Republic of the Cariforum, where Trinidad and Tobago is represented, dealing with all of these matters so that we are continuing to ensure that the markets are available, because as far as we are concerned, in the globalization and integration process market access becomes critical if our industrialists are to survive and our manufacturing sector grows to create the kind of employment that we need in Trinidad and Tobago.

3.40 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Diego Martin Central also spoke about the incremental approach to free trade. That is an idea that we share because wherever we go we talk about the different levels of economic development there is in Caricom, and when we are talking at the multilateral level, we do not only put forward Trinidad and Tobago's case. We are aware that there are economies in Caricom which are not as strong as Trinidad and Tobago, possibly, Jamaica or Barbados, so we must ensure that as we enter into discussions with the Mercosur Group, NAFTA and so forth, that this is brought into the picture and that special considerations be given to these countries.

When I was talking to the Argentinians and Brazilians, I made it known to them that we would like that kind of sensitivity to apply when we begin discussions

with them. May I say that I am convinced that the integration movement is quite flexible because the systems and the approaches are not as rigid as in other groupings in the hemisphere. I have no doubt that is largely responsible for the success and the dynamism that the Mercosur grouping enjoys today. All the countries of the hemisphere are seeking to move to that magnet. Not only the countries in the hemisphere, but there is integration movement in all parts of the world and the European union has already got into discussions with them.

I was in Argentina recently and one of the countries of the “Asian Tigers” was there with a plane load of businessmen seeking to travel from Argentina to Brazil, to Paraguay and to Uruguay, because they are aware of the dynamism that is taking place down there. So we must get into the Mercosur grouping. We are of the view that as we approach the Mercosur grouping and as we approach all of these integration processes and seek to get into economic arrangements with them, we must take into account the differing levels of economic development among our neighbours in Caricom. The Member also talked about the political potential and the political union in Caricom. I do not want to go into that at the moment. I want to make the point though, that the ACS is a very unique grouping in the hemisphere—I do not think there is any other integration process in the hemisphere which combines economic, political, technical and cultural co-operation. That is what we have in the ACS.

Whilst we may not eventually come to the point where there will be political union among the countries of the ACS, the possibilities for political co-operation are tremendous indeed. I made the point over and over when we were facing the Haitian crisis after the restoration of President Aristide that had the ACS been in existence, one may not have had that Haitian crisis. I want to make the point again that there is that potential in the ACS to develop that political potential. If we are talking about regional security as the Member for San Fernando East mentioned, that is what we need. I am not disagreeing with him, but I am now focusing on the political potential that exists among the ACS countries to solve all kinds of problems.

The Member mentioned the Caribbean Sea and the need to protect it. We in Caricom have made a loud noise about the fact that we do not want the Caribbean Sea to be used as a transshipment route for nuclear waste and so forth. We even went so far as to take it to the United Nations.

In my discussions with the foreign ministers of ACS countries, we are coming to the conclusion that the ACS has the potential not only to deal with the drug

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trade in the Caribbean Sea but to protect the Caribbean Sea. That is one of the things we are going to see happening when the ACS really gets going, protecting the Caribbean Sea, protecting the environment of the Caribbean Sea.

As you know the ACS countries are those countries with a Caribbean shoreline. That is the common patrimony as it were, of the ACS countries and we need to get together to protect that Caribbean Sea, to protect the marine resources from misuse and abuse. There is talk about the cruise ships and their pollution of the environment. We can get into a corporation to protect the Caribbean Sea from this kind of abuse. Of course, it is important for tourism which is the concern of the countries of the Association of Caribbean States.

Mr. Speaker, when we envisage the ACS we should not only see it as a trading bloc which is what primarily it is. It came about because of the need for economic integration but there is so much potential for integration and co-operation in other areas; political, environmental and very important, cultural.

I believe, through the ACS, that there can be a cultural fusion among the countries of the English-speaking Caribbean and the Latin American countries, and that is very important indeed.

There are many other issues that one can mention as a result of what the Member for Diego Martin Central spoke about. He mentioned transportation and I believe the BWIA issue has already been dealt with. I have made the point before that with the ACS coming into being we will have the opportunity for overcoming many of the transportational problems that we experience among the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean.

I have no doubt, that as Trinidad and Tobago continues to develop—and I had made that prediction when I was the Minister of Foreign Affairs in the previous administration—that with the coming into being of the ACS, Trinidad and Tobago will emerge as the diplomatic centre of the region, and we are seeing it already. The Cubans are here, the Mexicans have returned. The Argentinians are going to be here during the course of the year. A number of other countries have already told me they are going to be here. I do not want to mention them but there are going to be individual countries as well as multilateral organizations coming into Port of Spain. So, Port of Spain is emerging.

The point I am making is we have the makings of a solution to the transportational problems that we are experiencing among Latin American countries and the English speaking countries. There are already airlines making enquiries as to how they can link up with Port of Spain and the Eastern Caribbean.

Mr. Speaker, I flew on the inaugural flight from Piarco to Belem. It lasted for about two hours. This is a very good way of linking Trinidad and Tobago and Brazil. That is also going to come into being.

I just want to make one correction. The Member for San Fernando East mentioned the Ocho Rios Conference. I do not think it was the Ocho Rios Conference, it was really the Gran 'Anse Declaration he was referring to.

These are some of the concerns that were brought up by my Friend from Diego Martin Central. I believe my very good Friend from St. Joseph dealt very comprehensively with the contribution of the Member for San Fernando East. I thank all Members for their support of this Motion.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That the Privileges and Immunities (Association of Caribbean States) Order, 1996 be approved.

3.50 p.m.

**MOTOR VEHICLES INSURANCE
(THIRD-PARTY RISKS) (AMDT.) BILL
[FOURTH DAY]**

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question [September 20, 1996]:

Bill committed to a committee of the whole House.

House in committee.

Clauses 1 to 3 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 4.

Question proposed, That clause 4 stand part of the Bill.

Mr. Maharaj: Mr. Chairman, I beg to move that clause 4 be amended by deleting paragraph (b) and substituting the following:

“(b) substitute the words “five thousand dollars” for the words “five hundred dollars”; the words “two years” for the words “six months” and the words “three years” for the words “twelve months”.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 4, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, may I say that we on this side have examined the proposed amendments in detail and we are in complete agreement with all of them. There is one clause which I spoke to the Attorney General about that was not dealt with in this list of amendments.

Clause 5

Question proposed, That clause 5 stand part of the Bill.

Mr. Maharaj: Mr. Chairman, I beg to move that clause 5 be amended by the following:

5(a) Delete paragraph (b) and substitute the following:

“(b) insures such person, persons or classes of persons as may be specified in the policy in respect of any liability which may be incurred by him or them in respect of any death of or bodily injury to including emergency treatment therefor performed by a duly registered medical practitioner or damage to the property of any person caused by or arising out of the use of the motor vehicle or trailer mentioned in the policy on a public road.”

5(b)(i) Insert the words “and (d)” after the letter “(b)” in line one; delete the letter “(d)” in line two and insert the word “and” after the letter “(c)” and delete the words “and (e)” in line three.

5(b)(ii) Delete clause 5(b)(ii) and renumber clause 5(b)(iii) as clause 5(b)(ii).

5(b)(ii) A. Delete clause 5(b)(ii) and substitute the following:

“(ii) in paragraph (c) as renumbered delete the words “two hundred thousand dollars” and substitute the words “one million dollars” and add after the word “person” the words, “which sum shall not be taken to include payment for emergency treatment not exceeding one thousand dollars in respect of each person;”

New 5(b)(iii) B. Add after clause 5(b)(ii) as renumbered the following:

“(iii) Delete the words one million dollars in paragraph (d) as renumbered and substitute the words “two million dollars”.

5(d) A. In subparagraph (i) delete the words “two hundred thousand dollars” and substitute the words “five hundred thousand dollars”;

B. In subparagraph (ii) delete the words “five hundred thousand dollars” and substitute the words “one million dollars”.

5(e) In clause 5(e) insert after the word “order” the words “subject to affirmative resolution of Parliament.

Renumber clause 5(e) and (f) as 5(f) and (g) respectively and insert after clause 5(d) the following:

“(e) insert after subsection (4) the following new subsection:

“(4a) in the case of death, bodily injury or damage to property a policy of insurance shall not contain any provision that restricts liability in respect of any portion of a claim by any one person arising out of the use of a motor vehicle on a public road.”

5(g) Renumber this paragraph as 5(h) and insert the following new paragraph (g):

“(g) in subsection (6) delete the words “one hundred and twenty dollars” and substitute the words “seven hundred and fifty dollars.”.

New 5(I) Add the following new clause 5(1):

“Renumber subsection (9) as subsection (11) and insert the following new subsections:

“(9) A policy of insurance together with a certified copy of the proposal form upon which the policy was issued shall be delivered by the insurer to the insured before the expiration of a period of one week from the date of issue of the certificate of insurance under subsection (8).

(10) For the purposes of this section a reference to “emergency treatment” means medical or surgical treatment or examination administered by a registered medical practitioner immediately after the accident to an injured person as a result of bodily injury (including fatal injury) caused by or arising out of the use of a motor vehicle on a public road.”

An important point was raised by the Opposition that has to deal with clause 5(e) which says that the Minister may by order vary any of the amounts mentioned

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in subsections (2) and (4). The point raised is that the Minister should not have that power. I agree with it because the Minister would then be able to vary and even reduce without parliamentary approval. I move an amendment to make it possible for the Minister to do that, but subject to an affirmative resolution of Parliament.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 5, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

4.00 p.m.

Clause 6.

Question proposed, That clause 6 stand part of the Bill.

Mr. Maharaj: Mr. Chairman, I beg to move the following amendment to clause 6:

Delete and substitute the following:

<p>“Owner of vehicle motor deemed to be employer of driver</p>	<p>4A. Notwithstanding any other law, the owner of a motor vehicle licensed to ply for hire and insured under this Act is deemed to be the employer of any person driving the motor vehicle at the time of an accident as a result of which a person has suffered death, bodily injury or damage to property unless it is shown that at the time of the accident that the vehicle was the subject of larceny.”</p>
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Question put and agreed to.

Clause 6, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 7 and 8 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 9.

Question proposed, That clause 9 stand part of the Bill.

Mr. Maharaj: Mr. Chairman, I beg to move the following amendment to clause 9:

Delete this clause and substitute the following:

“Section 10 9. Section 10 of the Act is amended—

- (a) in subsection (1) by deleting the words “including any amount” and substituting the words “in addition to any amount”;

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- (b) in subsection (2)(c) by inserting after the words “bodily injury” the words “or damage to property”.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 9, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 10 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

New Clause 11.

Mr. Maharaj: Mr. Chairman, I propose a new clause 11 which reads as follows:

“Act amended	11. The Act is amended by inserting after section 12 the following new section:
“Avoidance of certain restrictions	12A. Where a certificate of insurance has been delivered under section 4(8) to the person by whom a policy has been effected, so much of the policy as purports to restrict the insurance of the persons insured by the policy as regards liability in respect of the death of or bodily injury to persons being carried in or upon the motor vehicle at the time of the occurrence of the event out of which the claims arise by reference to whether or not those persons are carried gratuitously or belong to any particular class of persons shall, as respects such liabilities as are required to be covered by a policy under section 4(1)(b), be of no effect.”

New clause 11 read the first time.

Question proposed, That the new clause be read a second time.

Question put and agreed to.

Question proposed, That the new clause be added to the Bill.

Question put and agreed to.

New clause 11 added to the Bill.

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New Clause 12.

Mr. Maharaj: Mr. Chairman, I propose a new clause 12 which reads as follows:

Section 25 12. Section 25(1) of the Act is amended by deleting the words amended “one thousand dollars” and substituting the words “seven thousand five hundred dollars”.

New clause 12 read the first time.

Question proposed, That the new clause be read a second time.

Question put and agreed to.

Question proposed, That the new clause be added to the Bill.

Question put and agreed to.

New clause 12 added to the Bill.

Question put and agreed to, That the Bill, as amended, be reported to the House.

House resumed.

Bill reported, with amendment; read the third time and passed.

ARBITRATION (FOREIGN ARBITRAL AWARDS) BILL

Order for second reading read.

The Minister of Legal Affairs (Hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move,

That a bill to give effect in Trinidad and Tobago to the New York Convention on the recognition and enforcement of Foreign Arbitral Awards, be read a second time.

The purpose of this Bill basically is to put the words and the spirit of the New York Convention into the domestic law of Trinidad and Tobago to ensure that there is a clear procedure to be followed in terms of enforcing foreign arbitral awards wherever they may be made, and if made in Trinidad and Tobago our awards will have the reciprocal effect of being enforced in any of the other contracting states to the New York Convention.

This is exceedingly important especially in light of the debate which has preceded this one on the question of globalization of the positioning of Trinidad and Tobago in the Western Hemisphere as the hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs has

so ably described it. It is even more important when we realize that Trinidad and Tobago signed this Convention as long ago as 1966. Since then nothing has been done to make that international obligation part of the domestic law of this country.

Government has made it very clear in recent months that we see our way out of some of the problems we inherited in terms of the economy of this country; that we see solutions as lying in sustainable development and in the creation of long-term employment.

Only last night the hon. Prime Minister went at lengths to point out that the business of Government was not simply to create 10 days employment with the URP for the people of this country. He was very clear that the aim and the thrust of this Government was to create long-term employment.

4.10 p.m.

We, in Trinidad and Tobago can do this but we must certainly do it with the assistance of foreign investors who will assist, not only themselves, but certainly the people of Trinidad and Tobago by way of investment and bringing in foreign capital. In order to encourage foreign investors we have to convince them that we have a stable working legal system which will protect their rights here as well as abroad. It would therefore be apparent to those following the proceedings of the Parliament that we have concentrated our efforts, during the past, on improvements in the administration of justice in this country. That is why this Government has concentrated on building new courts and police stations throughout Trinidad and Tobago. If we want to attract foreign investors we must have a stable working legal system.

This, in turn, will lead to more foreign investments, to the re-blossoming of the manufacturing industry and to our being able to export, again, to existing and new markets. Our hon. Prime Minister pointed out last night that his recent trip to North America was basically for sourcing markets for the products of Trinidad and Tobago. Therefore, this Bill is important to Trinidad and Tobago in terms of making a stable working legal system to make it attractive to foreign investors, and to therefore bring a sustainable development to this country. At the same time, apart from sustainable development, as a result of more investments, obviously, we would have other reasons for boosting the economy and productivity in this country.

We should not let go unremarked, that yesterday, October 17, was the United Nations International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. Mr. Speaker, you will

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recall that the Minister of Social Development pointed out that studies have shown that up to one-third of our population live in poverty. That is a terrifying figure, Mr. Speaker. It means that one in every three persons in this country does not have the housing, services or income that he needs to exist in the most basic and simple way. Unfortunately, we do not have figures on a world scale, since on international average, one in every five persons lives in poverty. Here in Trinidad and Tobago the figures show that it is one in every three persons.

This Government has made a very firm commitment to eradicate the linked scourge of poverty and unemployment. We have done this because we recognize every citizen's right to be given a chance in life. The reason this piece of legislation is being put in place, along with so many others, is so that we could get a legislative framework in order to encourage both our own and foreign investors, and in that way we would assist in the development of our economy. Mr. Speaker, if we do that in a just way, the "have nots" will benefit as well as the "haves" and we can therefore assist in reducing poverty in Trinidad and Tobago.

Another important reason for this piece of legislation is that the globalization of the world economy—and we in Trinidad and Tobago certainly want to benefit from that—requires that countries have similar standards and rules for commerce and business, so that they are confident that their investments would be safe and productive and that there would be clear rules for dealing with disputes in an effective manner.

If we look at the historical background to the Bill that is before this honourable House, Mr. Speaker, the Convention on the Recognition and Enforcement of the Foreign Arbitral Awards, commonly known as the New York Convention, was adopted by the United Nations on June 10, 1958 and it entered into force on June 7, 1959. Today, there are 110 states which are parties to this convention, Trinidad and Tobago is one of those parties. We acceded to this convention on February 14, 1966. When we presented the instrument of accession to that treaty we made the following reservation. I quote:

"In accordance with Article 1 of Convention, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago declares that it will apply the Convention to the recognition and enforcement of awards made only in the territory of another Contracting State. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago further declares that it will apply the Convention only to differences arising out of legal relationships, whether contractual or not, which are considered as commercial under the Law of Trinidad and Tobago."

That was in 1966, Mr. Speaker, 30 years ago. Thirty years ago we deposited instruments of accession with the United Nations and we undertook, then, to bring the Bill into our domestic law.

Mr. Speaker, we have had cause, time and time again, to point out that over 30 years from 1966 to 1996 and this legislation was never brought to the Parliament. Therefore I ask you, Mr. Speaker, to note that after 30 years, from 1966 to 1996, within the space of a few months, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, in this administration, has brought the legislation to the Parliament.

The New York Convention seeks to ensure that arbitral awards are binding and enforceable according to the rules of procedure of the country where the award is to be relied upon. It also regulates the judicial enforcement of arbitration agreements and arbitral awards to facilitate the submission of disputes to arbitrators as well as the international currency of awards. The New York Convention has the distinction of being one of the most successful treaties in the field of private international law. Its remarkable success can be gleaned from the large number of court decisions in which the convention has been interpreted and applied internationally. The Convention also continues to play a major role in the strengthening and the diffusion of international arbitration.

It is important to note, however, that the convention was always intended to be applied by domestic courts. Therefore, whilst we acceded to the convention in 1966, not having brought it into our local legislation, we could not benefit from the provisions of that convention. It was always intended that it be applied by domestic courts, and therefore by the local courts in this country and in the other contracting states.

Article 1(2) of the convention describes arbitral awards as those which are not only awards made by arbitrators appointed for each case, but also to those made by permanent arbitral bodies to which the parties have submitted such a case.

Article III of the convention contains the requirement that all arbitral awards are binding and enforceable, according to the rules of procedure of the state where the award is relied upon. The convention also seeks to ensure that the conditions of the awards, fees or charges imposed are on par with those imposed on the recognition or enforcement of domestic arbitral awards.

The rules of procedure to be followed for the recognition and enforcement of awards are contained in Articles IV to VII and include, for example, that the party applying for recognition and enforcement shall, at the time of submitting the

application, supply the duly authenticated original award or a duly certified copy and the original agreement referred to in Article II or a duly certified copy of the same.

4.20 p.m.

May I point out that the terms of the convention form the Schedule to the Bill, so that the terms of all these articles are there on reading the Bill.

The recognition and enforcement of awards can be refused at the request of the party against whom it is invoked subject to certain considerations. These conditions are reflected in Article V, for example, if the parties to the agreement referred to in Article II were, under the law applicable to them, under some incapacity, or the said agreement is not valid under the law to which the parties have subjected it; or in cases where the party against whom the award is invoked was not given proper notice of the appointment of the arbitrator or the arbitration proceedings.

The recognition and enforcement of awards may also be refused if the competent authority in the country where recognition and enforcement is sought finds that the subject matter of the difference or dispute is not capable of settlement by arbitration under the law of that country; or the recognition or enforcement of the award would be contrary to the public policy of that country.

Should a party submit an application for the setting aside or suspension of an award to a competent authority, the authority before which the award is sought to be relied upon may, if it considers it appropriate, suspend the enforcement of the award and may also order the other party to give suitable security.

Article VII states that the provisions of the New York Convention shall not affect the validity of multilateral or bilateral agreements on the recognition and enforcement of arbitral awards entered into by contracting parties. In other words, it is without prejudice to any multilateral or bilateral agreements. It would not deprive any interested party of any right he may have in an arbitral award in the manner and to the extent allowed by the law or the treaties of the country where such award is sought to be relied upon.

Articles VIII to XVI of the convention contained the administrative provisions and deal with such issues as the procedure for becoming a contracted party and the manner in which denunciation of the convention could be made.

Mr. Speaker, as I pointed out, we became a party to that Convention in February 1966, and this Bill is, therefore, intended to give effect in Trinidad and

Tobago to the New York Convention. The Bill contains fairly short clauses; there are eight clauses, the Schedule itself being the New York Convention.

Clause 2 is the interpretation clause. It is self-explanatory.

Clause 3 provides for certification of the fact that a particular state, is or was at the time, specified a party to the convention by the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Mr. Speaker, that is important because only those states which are parties to the convention would benefit from the domestic law of this country. We too, can only benefit from a domestic law of another state where that state is the contracting party. States which are not contracting parties obviously then cannot take any benefits out of this legislation that we are seeking to put in Trinidad and Tobago.

Clause 4 of the Bill is the enforceability provision which states that an award is enforceable in Trinidad and Tobago either by action or in accordance with the provisions of section 20 of the Arbitration Act, Chap. 5:01. This clause further provides that an award under the Act would be binding on the persons directly affected who can rely upon it by way of defence, set off or otherwise, in any legal proceedings in Trinidad and Tobago.

Clause 5 lists the documentation which must be produced for the enforcement of such an award. This provision is basically the same in content to that of Article IV of the New York Convention.

Clause 6 of the Bill contains an exhaustive list of the circumstances under which the enforcement of an award may be refused. The provisions are reflective of Article V, paragraphs 2 and 3 of the New York Convention.

Clause 6(4) seeks to simplify Article V, by providing an award which contains decisions on issues which were not submitted to arbitration to be enforced, but only to the extent that the award contains decisions and matters submitted to arbitration and can be separated from those and matters which were not submitted.

Clause 7 which is similar in content to Article VI of the convention, would empower the court or a competent authority, before which the enforcement of an award is sought, to adjourn the proceedings when an application for setting aside the suspension of an award has been made. The court hearing an application for the setting aside of the suspension may, on the application of the party seeking to enforce the award, order the other party to provide security. This interim measure would be a form of protection that would serve to preserve the rights and interests of all concerned parties. In a sense, it is similar to injunctive or interim measures

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that are provided for in our local law, so that all things remain the same whilst the matter is decided upon.

Clause 8 is the savings clause as it is intended to preserve the right of an individual to seek the enforcement of the award, otherwise, than under this Act. So that the Act is without prejudice to other means and methods that a party may have for enforcing an award. The Schedule, as I said before, contains a text from the New York Convention.

In closing, I say that “arbitration”, for the purposes of the New York Convention and this Bill means any arbitration, whether or not administered by a permanent arbitral institution, and, for the most part, would not apply to alternative dispute resolution mechanisms such as mediation and conciliation. It is also important to note that an arbitrator is not a judge and the award should not be confused with a determination by a court. So, we are seeking to enforce an arbitral awards, not the decisions of foreign courts.

The New York Convention and this Bill do not purport to govern arbitration proceedings in Trinidad and Tobago, in fact, they deal strictly with recognizing and enforcing in a contracting state, domestically, arbitral awards made in another contracting state.

Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to introduce the legislation which does not contain any substantive provisions which can be applied to the determination on the competence of arbitrators. Even though the Bill is in that sense limited in scope, arbitrators could ensure the validity and enforceability of the award in the country of origin because the annulment of the decision in the country of rendition could affect its enforcement in other countries.

This Bill is, therefore, a clear reflection of the New York Convention, the provisions of which have entered the annals of customary international law and is commended to this honourable House.

Mr. Speaker, with those words, I beg to move.

Question proposed.

4.30 p.m.

Mr. Colm Imbert (*Diego Martin East*): Mr. Speaker, I was listening to the Member for Siparia who talked about the purpose of the Bill in encouraging a stable environment in Trinidad and Tobago, and so forth.

I wish to say that one thing that would encourage a stable investment climate is a stable exchange rate!

Mr. Manning: Ah chat! Ah chat! [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. C. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, in addition to a stable legal system—you see the Member spoke about the reblossoming of the manufacturing sector and building new courts and police stations. I was taken aback at what the Member was saying.

The only police stations and courts that are under construction were those started by the previous administration, prior to November 1995.

Mr. Assam: He has gone back to that again?

Mr. C. Imbert: But the point is, Mr. Speaker, I noted on Monday, the hon. Prime Minister made a statement to the effect that our dollar was strong, backed up by the Member for St. Joseph—

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: He was floored.

Mr. C. Imbert: —and 24 hours after our Prime Minister made this statement, the rate collapsed!

Mr. Manning: Goat mout’

Mr. C. Imbert: Goat mout’, Mr. Speaker. They put goat mout’ on the exchange rate, and clearly, there is a credibility problem.

Mr. Assam: You obviously do not understand finance, so keep quiet.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the sitting is suspended for half an hour.

4.31 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.11 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Mr. C. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated before the tea break, I found the contribution of the Member for Siparia very curious in that she sought to place this Bill in perspective by indicating that it encouraged foreign investors to come to Trinidad and Tobago; it would eradicate poverty; it would facilitate the reblossoming of the manufacturing sector, and so forth. I took notes, Mr. Speaker, and I noticed that the Members on the other side were sleeping, but it was a very curious introduction to a Bill that essentially talks about foreign arbitrary awards. There is nothing to do with the reblossoming of the manufacturing sector, eradication of poverty, and so forth.

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I return to the point that if this Bill is, in fact, intended to encourage foreign investment and if it is intended to eradicate poverty and facilitate the reblossoming of the manufacturing sector, then there are far more important matters that must be dealt with before, and in addition to this Bill, such as the exchange rate. If one gets an award in TT dollars, with the rapidity with which the rate is collapsing, then that award might be worth nothing in the next year or two.

Since we are dealing here with compensation, financial settlements and so forth, Mr. Speaker, let me return to this exchange rate matter to reiterate my surprise at the intervention of the Member for Couva North, the hon. Prime Minister, when he indicated earlier this week that the dollar was stable and the Member for St. Joseph found it necessary to back him up. Yet, 48 hours later the rate collapsed. It has a lot to do with incompetence of the UNC/NAR coalition and its inability to manage the economy. What is the point of passing legislation enforcing foreign arbitral awards when, because of the mismanagement of the economy, these awards could be worthless? What is the point?

There are members of this administration who have no idea of the consequences of what they do. When the Prime Minister spoke about the exchange rate and introduced the concept of speculation, this caused a rash of panic buying because people listen. They say, "Oh, people are speculating on the rate. There must be a reason for that." And there was an immediate surge to purchase foreign exchange, hence the collapse of the rate. There is also the question of credibility of the Government; credibility in that if it says move left, one moves right. So that if it says the rate is stable, the rate is in danger.

It has a lot to do with the whole question of the consumerist budget that was brought before this Parliament by the Minister of Finance, who Members on the other side will soon find out about, a budget that encouraged inflation, importation and put severe pressure on the exchange rate by creating an environment for the importation of foreign used motor vehicles, one of the primary reasons for the collapse of the exchange rate.

Mr. Speaker, I am urging the Government. The Member for Siparia talks about the eradication of poverty, the reblossoming of the manufacturing sector, a stable environment and foreign investors. I can say that I support this Bill. It is a pity that the Member, in typical fashion, did not present the Bill, did not go into the philosophical underpinnings of the Bill, and just read in a stereotype style, the usual dry sterile, stereotype manner from a prepared text. In a short while, I will deal with the philosophy behind this Bill since the Member for Siparia did not. But

I am urging the Government, if it wishes to create a stable investment climate in Trinidad and Tobago, to intervene in this foreign exchange crisis to stabilize the exchange rate. I am urging the Government to do something before it is too late.

Certainly what should be done is to put a muzzle on the Member for Couva North, the hon. Prime Minister, because he had absolutely no right to say anything about the exchange rate. That should have been a statement from the Central Bank or whatever, but not the Prime Minister. I am urging the Government to put a muzzle on the Member for Couva North before that administration kills all of us and do something about the exchange rate, intervene in the system.

Now, let me deal with this Bill. Mr. Speaker, this Bill essentially arises from a Cabinet Note prepared by the Member for Diego Martin Central in 1995. As usual, the Member for Siparia omitted to mention that the Member for Diego Martin Central is the one, in the thrust towards globalization, trade liberalization and reform of our system of international trade, who brought a note to Cabinet—it is a fact, do not try to deny it—as a result of which we have this Bill before us. Essentially, what this Bill seeks to do is give legal effect, through the convention which is appended as the Schedule, but the thing is that there are certain concerns about legislation of this type which seek to impose upon people in Trinidad and Tobago in law, the recognition of foreign arbitral awards. There are certain safeguards which are essential. This is why I say that the Member for Siparia, in her usual, stereotype, superficial manner, did not deal with the philosophical underpinnings of the Bill.

It is essential to stress the point as contained in clause 6 that there are a number of safeguards in this Bill which will protect citizens of Trinidad and Tobago from the enforcement of arbitrary arbitral awards, because one would not want a citizen or a company in Trinidad and Tobago to be subjected to an arbitrary arbitration award and, therefore, clause 6 is the most relevant aspect of this Bill. I would have expected the Member for Siparia to go through in detail to indicate what is the purpose of clause 6, what is the intent and what will be the consequence of clause 6. Essentially what clause 6 does is set out a number of criteria and a number of circumstances where foreign arbitral awards will not and cannot be enforced in Trinidad and Tobago.

5.20 p.m.

The most important aspect of clause 6 is clause 6(3)(b) which reads as follows:

"Enforcement of a convention award may also be refused if -

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(b) it would be contrary to public policy to enforce the award."

This protects citizens in Trinidad and Tobago from the irrational behaviour of other countries and persons in other countries. You could have a state that is not friendly to Trinidad and Tobago imposing certain punitive awards on the Government of Trinidad and Tobago; on persons in the country, and clause 6 deals with that.

I simply want to say that we support this Bill in full. We have no problem with it; it covers all the matters necessary; it gives effect to the convention, but also provides the protection necessary for citizens. I would ask the Member for Siparia not to come to this House and bramble about matters about which she has little knowledge, such as, what is necessary for a proper investment climate; how we can eradicate poverty and how we can stimulate the manufacturing sector. Certainly, this Bill has very little to do with those things.

We can eradicate poverty; we can stabilize the economy, if the Government does its work, if ministers not shoot off their mouths, making inappropriate statements, creating panic in the country, such as the "foot in mouth" disease that was so evident on Monday in the published remarks that I saw in the newspaper that caused the collapse of the exchange rate—"foot in mouth" disease. I ask the Government now to intervene in the monetary system and stabilize the exchange rate, not just for them, but for everybody in this country because the consequences would be dire.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Minister of Legal Affairs (Hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar: Mr. Speaker, each time the Member for Diego Martin East rises in this House it is obvious that he has spent a lot of time memorizing his own voice, because what he does is to regurgitate the same speech time after time. As the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries said on the last occasion, we, from the Ministry of Legal Affairs, would soon have to give him a patent for the speech that he keeps making in the House on every occasion.

I say this, because instead of coming to this House and dealing with the Bill, his idea of what is a good debate is to stand up and personally attack the Minister of Legal Affairs. You see, Mr. Speaker, I can only assume that the malice that lies in his heart as a result of the battle that he was engaged in, is now being transferred onto this side, because he comes and talks about the Minister of Legal Affairs. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, whenever a Member seeks protection, it is normally an indication that the House is getting a little out of hand. I think that the House is, indeed, getting out of order. It is just fair that one should hear the other side, please.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am saying that he comes here and makes personal attacks; he talks about the contributions of the Minister of Legal Affairs being dry and sterile, stereotype and superficial. But those words, in my respectful view, totally describe the Member for Diego Martin East. When he wants to talk about dry and sterile, there is no better example than the Member for Diego Martin East.

The Member spoke of the curious introduction of the Bill that is before the House; that it has nothing to do with foreign investment; nothing to do with the reblossoming of the manufacturing sector; nothing to do with the eradication of poverty. It is obvious to us on this side that he did not listen to any part of the presentation. As I have said before, he is so enamoured with his own voice that he would stand up to speak even when he has nothing to say, because in our introduction we gave very clearly the historical background of this Bill and we were at pains to point out that it was the very PNM in 1966 who deposited instruments of accession to the New York Convention and failed to bring the legislation. So he now says, "give the Member for Diego Martin Central credit because he brought a Cabinet Note and that is why this Bill is before this House". I beg to disagree, because you see, this is another example of the "coulda, woulda, shoulda" of the PNM.

Every Bill that we bring on this side of the House, they stand up to tell us that they want the credit for it. Even today when we were dealing with the ACS, the Member for San Fernando East stood up in this Parliament, gave all the credit to the Member for Diego Martin Central and himself, for diplomatic skills, when it was the Minister of Foreign Affairs. [*Desk thumping*]. So do not come to us and tell us about dry, sterile and stereotype, because the stereotype is on their side, because each time they speak it is to say, "give us credit" and they beat their chests.

If the Member finds the introduction so curious, it is because he has no idea of what is happening in this country. At this present time the inflation rate is down to 3.5 per cent. At this time in this country in the economy, there is a balance of payment surplus. [*Desk thumping*] At this time in this country under this UNC/NAR

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Government, foreign investments have been flowing in to the tune of multi-millions of US dollars. *[Desk thumping]*. At this time, Government's fiscal operations are in surplus. *[Desk thumping]*.

Hon. Member: Talk about the exchange rate.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar: We will talk about the exchange rate. We are not afraid to talk about it. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, it is perfectly legitimate for an honourable Member to drop in a word here or there, but, really, to keep up a barrage of heckling while a Member is responding, is just not fair. That is more suited to school boys in short pants. Hon. Members, I appeal to you, let us, please, lift the standard.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar: Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, at this time in Trinidad and Tobago, the unemployment rate is the lowest it has been for six years. So when the Member for Diego Martin East talks about curious introduction; that we do not know anything about foreign investment and eradication of poverty, I am saying that he obviously does not read and does not know what is happening in this country and he certainly does not care.

If the PNM—and with the greatest of respect to those on the other side—from 1966 when they deposited these instruments of accession to the UN, had brought the Arbitration (Foreign Arbitral Awards) Bill to the Parliament 30 years ago, then when we saw the dispute that ensued on the other side between the Members for Diego Martin East, West, Central, and the Member for San Fernando East, they would have been able to submit that dispute to arbitration. *[Desk thumping]*

5.30 p.m.

On a more serious note, Mr. Speaker, the issue that was really made was on the question of the exchange rate. *[Interruption]* I wonder if they remember who it was that decided that the exchange rate should be a floating one in Trinidad and Tobago. *[Interruption]* That is what I am saying. I wonder if the hon. Member for San Fernando East remembers who did it. We give them the credit because they are the ones who said we would not have a pegged rate, we would have a floating rate. *[Desk thumping and laughter]* But, in typical PNM fashion, they are now arguing for the contrary position. In typical PNM fashion, as the exchange rate is floating they are arguing about that and they now want it pegged. *[Laughter and desk thumping]* They took the decision that the exchange rate would float.

Mr. Assam: But it is the PNM who devalued the currency twice. They met it at \$2.40 and left it at \$3.65!

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar: Every major currency in the world—

Mr. Assam: You all devalued it twice!

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar: Every major currency, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: It is quite obvious that hon. Members do not believe me when I tell them that the standard is falling but, perhaps, you will believe me if I say to you that the *Hansard* reporter is having difficulty in conforming with the Standing Orders which actually provide that she must faithfully record everything that is said in this Chamber. You will appreciate the difficulty that she would have, so I appeal to you once more to hear the other side; the cardinal principle of natural justice.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I was saying that every major currency in the world floats. If one looks at the US dollar, the yen, the pound sterling and others, they go up and down. When the PNM government decided to float the exchange rate, they intended that it would not move. It seems as though that is what they intended, because today, they are arguing for a pegged rate.

The Member for St. Joseph, the hon. Minister of Trade and Industry, made the point—and I want to take that point further—that when the other side took office the exchange rate was \$4.25. When they left office, what was the exchange rate? What was the exchange rate? The dollar did not go down in their time, but they would not take credit for that. They would not take credit for in effect floating the dollar. That is what happened. As the Member for St. Joseph said, they in effect devalued the dollar of Trinidad and Tobago on two occasions.

Mr. Manning: Once.

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar: Well, take credit for once, but I would tell you it was twice, Mr. Speaker. In effect, it was twice.

So that all this noise about a floating dollar when it was they who brought a floating dollar system into this country is totally contradictory and out of order.

Mr. Speaker, we have gone off the Bill that is before the House, and I have done so simply because of the issues raised by the Member for Diego Martin East.

In closing, I would finally say that if there is anything that is dry and sterile in this House, it is not the Minister of Legal Affairs, but the Member for Diego Martin East.

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Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a second time.

Bill committed to a committee of the whole House.

House in committee.

Clauses 1 to 8 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Schedule ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Question put and agreed to, That the Bill be reported to the House.

House resumed.

Bill reported, without amendment; read the third time and passed.

ADJOURNMENT

The Attorney General (Hon. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the House do now adjourn to a date to be fixed.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I would simply indicate that at the last sitting we did indicate that a matter which was down for discussion on the Motion for the Adjournment was put for today, but by agreement it has been further deferred.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 5.42 p.m.