

Leave of Absence

Friday, November 28, 1997

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, November 28, 1997

The House met at 1.30 p.m.

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I wish to advise that I have received communication from the Member for La Brea (Mr. H. Bereaux) who has asked to be excused from today's sitting of the House. I have also received communication from the Member for San Fernando West (Mr. B. Sinanan) who has asked to be excused because he is out of the country. There is a continuing request from the Member for Arouca South (Mrs. C. Robinson-Regis) who is out of the country until November 30, 1997. She has also asked to be excused.

**VICTOR L. CAMPBELL
(DEATH OF)**

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, at the last sitting I did indicate that a former Member for Ortoire/ Mayaro died and the House stood for one minute's silence. It was agreed that representatives from both sides would today express some words of condolence. We shall now do so.

Mr. Kenneth Valley (Diego Martin Central): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of Members on this side of the House, I rise to pay tribute to the late Victor Lionel Campbell who sat in this hallowed Chamber for 25 years, from 1956—1981, as the representative for the constituency of Ortoire/Mayaro. He was born in August 1922. As a young man he first served as an apprentice with the Trinidad Leaseholds Limited, an oil company on the east coast.

After his father's death, Victor Campbell at the age of 21, was saddled with the responsibility of maintaining his mother, brothers and sisters. No sacrifice was too great for the well-being of his family. This trait was continued when he became head of his own household. He loved people and this led him to contest the general elections of 1950 against Stephen Maharaj for the Ortoire constituency. Although he was defeated in that election, this did not daunt him. In 1956 when the PNM fought its first election, Victor Campbell was a member on the slate and this time he won the Ortoire seat convincingly. His affable personality and dedication to the welfare of his constituents were the keys to his successes and he brought home the Ortoire/Mayaro seat for the PNM in five consecutive elections.

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His first political appointment was in 1956 when he served under the late Baron Learie Constantine as parliamentary secretary in the Ministry of Works and Communications. He subsequently served as parliamentary secretary in the Ministry of Agriculture and in the office of the Prime Minister. In 1964 he became Minister in the Ministry of Planning and Development and became this country's first Minister of Works in 1966. His performance in this capacity earned him the distinction of being the longest serving Minister of Works in Trinidad and Tobago, his tenure dating from 1966—1975. Victor Campbell's last official appointment was as Minister of National Security.

Mr. Speaker, it is well known that Mayaro is a long way from Port of Spain, but Mr. Campbell was never daunted by distance or long hours on the road. During his tenure in government he was always punctual both in Parliament and Cabinet. He was a jovial man and felt happy to be among his constituents. Even though he gained high office, he kept his feet on the ground and was easily approachable to those who sought his assistance. He was a simple, grassroots man who cared about the country and above all his fellowmen. He was an effective representative and transformed Mayaro from a sleepy fishing village to the vibrant, prosperous community which it is today.

He retired from public life in 1981, and following his retirement he continued to serve the people of Mayaro and Guayaguayare through his association with the Mayaro Roman Catholic Church in which he was active. He was devoted to spiritual matters and worked with the underprivileged in his community through the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

Throughout his life he was devoted to his family, community and country and served all well. Our country has been made poorer by the departure of this icon of Mayaro, this simple village boy who strode the national stage with dignity.

Mr. Speaker, we on this side express our condolences to the members of his immediate family, especially his wife Rita and children, and to his brothers and sister whom he loved dearly.

The Minister of Housing and Settlements (Hon. John Humphrey): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Government, I wish to echo exactly, the sentiments expressed by the Member for Diego Martin Central.

I did not enter active politics when the late Victor Campbell did, but I was very aware of the politics of 1955 and 1956 when the late Dr. Williams led a team of very capable citizens of Trinidad and Tobago into the battle against the colonizers to achieve independence for Trinidad and Tobago.

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Victor Campbell was one of those very early strugglers in that battle for the attainment of independence for Trinidad and Tobago.

The figures stated by the hon. Member for Diego Martin Central indicate that Mr. Campbell served as a Member of this House for a quarter of a century. Twenty-five years is a very long time and, in fact, that 25 years is a third of his entire lifetime as he died at the age of 75. Some of us who have served for similar periods will appreciate what it takes for an individual to dedicate himself to represent a constituency and to serve in government as he did. He was described as the longest serving Minister of Works. I can boastingly say I am the shortest serving because I do not think I lasted more than about nine months. *[Laughter]* But, Mr. Speaker, those of us who have been in politics for a long time have to admire our colleagues, regardless of where their party affiliation is, who have stuck to the grind and Victor Campbell was one such person.

He came out of public life in 1981, when certain things had changed. But for 25 years he served his constituents and the people of Trinidad and Tobago in very good stead and I think he left politics with an extremely good reputation. I have heard nothing negative about Mr. Victor Campbell.

I pray his soul rests in peace. On behalf of the Government I express to his family, who must miss him very dearly, our condolences; and to give him the recognition for the service he has rendered Trinidad and Tobago I would readily subscribe to that.

Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I, myself, wish to be associated with the utterances of Members on both sides of the House on the passing of Victor Campbell. It was my privilege to have served in the Cabinet of which he was a member and to have succeeded him as the Minister of Works. It could truly be said that he was and always remained a man of the people who was dearly loved by the people of Mayaro and surrounding areas.

On the last occasion on which this House sat we did observe a minute's silence in his memory and I have taken the liberty to send to his funeral—which is taking place this afternoon—a wreath from us all. I would ask the Clerk of the House to send a suitable letter of condolence to his wife and children.

I thank you.

Papers Laid

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PAPERS LAID

1. The Financial Institutions (Amendment to the Third Schedule) Order, 1993. [*The Attorney General (Hon. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj)*]
2. The Amblyomma Variegatum (Prevention and Control) Regulations, 1997. [*The Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources (Dr. The Hon. Reeza Mohammed)*]
3. The annual audited financial statements of Trinidad and Tobago Free Zones Company Limited for the year ended December 31, 1996. [*The Attorney General (Hon. R. L. Maharaj)*]
4. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the National Project Development Services Limited for the year ended December 31, 1992. [*Hon. R. L. Maharaj*]
5. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the National Project Development Services Limited for the year ended December 31, 1993. [*Hon. R. L. Maharaj*]
6. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the National Project Development Services Limited for the year ended December 31, 1994. [*Hon. R. L. Maharaj*]
7. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the National Project Development Services Limited for the year ended December 31, 1995. [*Hon. R. L. Maharaj*]
8. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Trinidad and Tobago Solid Waste Management Company Limited for the year ended December 31, 1996. [*Hon. R. L. Maharaj*]

Papers 3 to 8 to be referred to the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I ask that we defer this item on the order paper for a short while.

Mr. Valley: [*Inaudible*]

Mr. Speaker: Statements by Ministers.

CANE FARMERS INCORPORATION AND CESS (AMDT.) BILL

Order for second reading read.

The Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources (Dr. The Hon. Reeza Mohammed): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move,

That a Bill to amend the Cane Farmers Incorporation and Cess Ordinance 1961 be now read a second time.

Mr. Speaker, the purpose and intent of this Bill is to make provisions for the stable management and reunification of the Trinidad and Tobago Islandwide Cane Farmers Association.

Mr. Speaker, it is important that I give a brief historical background as to the events leading up to the Bill before this House in an effort to put certain things in perspective and to justify how the necessary amendments came about, and the reason for these amendments. The purpose of the Cess Ordinance No. 17 of 1961 was originally to consolidate several pieces of legislation relating to cane farmers by incorporating them into one body. In 1965, however, an Act entitled the Cane Farmers Incorporation and Cess Act was brought to Parliament in order to amend and revise Ordinance 17 of 1961. This came about because certain deficiencies were identified in the Ordinance. A further amendment to the 1965 Act was sought in 1973 by Act No. 14. However, in 1975 certain provisions of the Act, section 4 which dealt with the establishment or the eligibility of membership as well as sections 17, 18 and 19 which dealt with the imposition of a cess became the subject of concern for the Court of Appeal in civil matters 11 and 14 of 1975.

1.50 p.m.

The following matters were referred to.

“In the matter of

the Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago
being the Second Schedule to the Trinidad and Tobago (Constitution) Order in
Council 1992.

And

In the matter of the Application of Prakash Seeraram (A person alleging that certain provisions of the said Constitution have been and are likely to be contravened in relation to him by reason of the Enactment of the Cane-Farmers Incorporation and Cess Act, 1965, Act No. 1 of 1965) for redress in accordance with section 6 of the said Constitution

and

The Trinidad Island Wide Cane-Farmers’ Association, Inc.

and

The Attorney General.”

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The Court of Appeal subsequently declared Act No. 1 of 1965 and its amending legislation of 1973 null and void since both were found to be in contravention of section 6 of the Constitution.

It would appear that between 1975 and 1993, the Trinidad and Tobago Island Wide Cane Farmers Association conformed to the provisions of Ordinance No. 17 of 1961. However, in December, 1993, at the 36th Annual General Meeting of TICFA, the meeting was disrupted by a group of disgruntled farmers who apparently made allegations of mismanagement, misconduct and corruption, and this automatically led to the formation of two factions of the Trinidad and Tobago Island Wide Cane Farmers Association.

It would appear that the final reason—and I would not say the major reason—for the split in the Trinidad and Tobago Island Wide Cane Farmers Association was the non-adherence to the procedures laid down in Ordinance No. 17 of 1961 for the calling of a special general meeting for the election of a management committee. The amendments before us today seek to ensure stricter compliance with the procedures for the conduct of such elections.

The former Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources had the opportunity of resolving this matter, since I am advised that the former minister met with the cane farmers at their invitation as a result of a petition of over 500 farmers at Usine Ste. Madeleine staff club on September 22, 1994. Even though the farmers were promised by the former minister that he would look into this matter, I am advised that they never heard from him until January 30, 1995 when the Jamaat stormed the TICFA House and the former minister allegedly said, “Not me and TICFA.”

That, apparently, brought an end to the relationship between the former Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources and the members of the Trinidad and Tobago Island Wide Cane Farmers Association.

Between December, 1993 and March, 1996, over eight writs were filed in the High Court in order to obtain injunctions by both factions of the Trinidad and Tobago Island Wide Cane-Farmers Association, until March of 1996, when the present Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources met with the Dipchand Lall faction of the Trinidad and Tobago Island Wide Cane Farmers Association. This meeting led to the appointment of the Spence Committee on March 16, 1996, which was given a mandate to recommend amendments to Ordinance No. 17 of 1961 as is necessary to bring about the return of the Trinidad

and Tobago Island Wide Cane Farmers Association into one body. Approximately 20 meetings were held with both factions, independently, since there was an unwillingness by one faction to sit in the same room with the other faction.

Since March, 1996, it has been an uphill battle, if I can use those terms, “toing” and “froing” between the two factions, meetings, contradictions between them; listening to their concerns; giving them the opportunity to make contributions towards amending Ordinance No. 17 of 1961 so that the cane farming community could be brought once more together as one body, the Trinidad and Tobago Island Wide Cane Farmers Association.

It got so bad at one stage, I was invited to one of these meetings and there were three groups of people present at that meeting: the Dipchand Lall faction, the Jaimungal Parsan faction, as well as the National Farmers and Workers Union. One of these three groups had a great difficulty to sit with the other two groups to participate in the discussions. The result was the group that was unwilling to sit with the other two groups, went to the Prime Minister’s office.

The matter was resolved, however, in an amicable manner. I think that the group which did not see it fit to sit with the other two groups in order to find a solution to these problems, realized finally that what the Government and the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources were attempting to do was to bring about the re-unification of the association governing the cane farming community in Trinidad.

So with respect to what transpired during those discussions; the problems encountered during those discussions; in the 20-odd meetings which were held, I want to commend and to say a special word of thanks, particularly to the executive of the National Farmers and Workers Union. They listened to the issues and made meaningful contributions towards finding solutions to the problems facing the Trinidad and Tobago Island Wide Cane Farmers Association.

If I may give a synopsis of the occurrences which prevailed during the period of time, one would observe that whilst there was a willingness by one group of people, one faction, to bring about changes which would ultimately result in the reunification of the association, for whatever reason, there was a particular faction which found it necessary on every occasion to stymie the discussions that were taking place in an effort to resolve these matters.

2.00 p.m.

Having given a mandate to the Spence Committee, and that Committee having met at different locations over a three-month period, the committee made

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recommendations as a function of the mandate that was given it. Those recommendations were forwarded to the Cabinet of Trinidad and Tobago by Cabinet Minute No. 2798 of October, 31, 1996. Subsequently, a Bill was brought to this honourable House on July 11, 1997. However, there was still some degree of disquiet and a feeling of discomfort amongst the group of persons who were trying to unite.

This required further meetings, and on one occasion, the hon. Prime Minister saw it fit to invite all concerned to a meeting. Unfortunately, that group, who during the initial discussions over the period April to October 1996, had not found it fit to sit with the other group, demonstrated similar behaviour when they were invited to come and sit with the Prime Minister in an effort to find a final resolution to this problem.

Mr. Speaker, all is well that ends well, and even today the group continues to regret the fact that it was invited by the hon. Prime Minister to sit with the other groups concerned to find a solution to these problems, and on that appointed day they refused to sit at that meeting.

All that has happened and all the concerns that were expressed which focussed mainly on finding a solution to bring about free and fair elections so that the fragmented bodies could once more come together, have finally resulted from of the recommendations that were made in the drafting of amendments to Ordinance No. 17 of 1961.

I alluded earlier to the recommendations made by the Spence Committee, the recommendations that went to Cabinet, and the Bill that was drafted and introduced to this honourable House on July 11, 1997 and the fact that further consultation had to be held with the various factions of the Trinidad Island Wide Cane Farmers Association, and this finally resulted in an amended Bill which is before us today.

Some of the concerns expressed, apart from the value of the Cess and the amendments being presented by this draft Bill, focus mainly on a system to inform of the holding of elections by the different factions of the Trinidad Island Wide Cane Farmers Association.

Firstly, I refer now to clause 5 of the Bill and to some of the amendments which are before this honourable House today which are designed to amend section 4 of the Ordinance by prescribing rules of eligibility for membership in the association.

Mr. Speaker, the existing section 4(1)(b) of the Ordinance provided that every cane farmer shall be deemed to be a member of Trinidad Island Wide Cane-Farmers Association. This was finally thought to be in contravention of the right to the freedom of association guaranteed by the Constitution. The new clause 5 of the Bill states that “every cane farmer is eligible to be a member of the association” giving the cane farmer the freedom to join if he or she so desires.

Another provision that is being inserted into the Ordinance by clause 5 of the amendment requires the association to deposit to the respective authority a list of their members once every year. This would ensure that all members of the association are *bona fide* cane farmers eligible to vote at the meetings. However, when the association contravenes its provision, that association will be guilty of a summary offence and shall be liable to a fine of \$5,000.00.

Clause 6 of the Bill is designed to amend section 7 of the Ordinance by increasing from one-third to two-thirds the number of management committee members who shall retire each year in rotation—and this is to ensure that one-third of that management committee remains in order to provide some degree of continuity. Those of us who are familiar with Ordinance No. 17 of 1961 would know that sections 18—23 dealt with the financial provisions for the association—and this involved the imposition of a cess on all canes supplied by any cane farmer to any sugar manufacturer.

The provision of a cess has never been completely operational and, in fact, I am advised that it has never worked. The new Bill seeks to repeal these provisions, and by amending the existing section 8, it would allow the association to make its own financial provisions. Therefore, clause 7 of the amended Bill allows, through its standing orders, that the association will be able to fix its own annual membership fees and dues.

Mr. Speaker, all these amendments arose out of intensive consultation and discussion with the three groups who are involved in the impasse, as well as in the main, the two factions as presently exist.

The new clause 9 of the Bill would amend section 11 of the Ordinance by providing that a special general meeting of the association needed to change the management committee can only be done if the request is made by 25 per cent of its members. The Ordinance stipulates 25 members. Out of discussions with the groups involved, it was recommended that 25 per cent should be considered rather than 25 members. It is hoped that by using 25 per cent of the members rather than

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25 members, there would be a greater measure of stability since any group wishing to call a special general meeting must have the support of 25 per cent of its members rather than only 25 members of the association.

Clause 10 of the amendment inserts a provision whereby the President may appoint an independent supervisor whose main responsibility would be to overlook the conduct of any special or general meeting.

This is a new concept that we are trying to introduce within the framework of the Bill in our reunification efforts. This independent supervisor would ensure that all the conditions and requirements for such a meeting have been met and, in the event that the management committee fails to call a meeting in accordance with the provisions of Ordinance No. 17 of 1961, this independent supervisor would be empowered to convene the meeting as requested. This amendment relates to the reasons why a split occurred in the Trinidad and Tobago Island Wide Cane Farmers Association.

2.10 p.m.

My information is that problems arose during the course of 1993 because there was no adherence to what was laid out in Ordinance No. 17 of 1961, with respect to the calling of special general meetings and annual general meetings. I am advised that the Ordinance of 1961 requires that an advertisement in a particular form and fashion be put in the newspaper inviting members of the association to the elections. On more than two occasions the advertisements were put, but the form and fashion made them difficult to detect. That is to say that the prescribed form of the advertisement was not adhered to according to the relevant section of the Ordinance. There was a lot of “toing” and “froing” with regards to where and when the meeting would be held. Out of discussions with the different groups I was also advised that they were of the opinion that the advertisements were put in such a form and fashion to create some degree of disillusion, resulting in members of the association not knowing where and when the meetings were to be held.

Some of the writs which were filed in the High Court arose out of nonconformity with the Ordinance in that a specified period of 14 days was required. In one or two instances when advertisements were put out, they fell short by a few days. All this led to discomfort and disillusionment in the way the management committee was managing the affairs of the association. All this came out at the meetings which were held over the period April to October 1996. Because of these concerns the recommendations which went to Cabinet came

about and further modifications were made even though the Bill was before Parliament on July 11, 1997.

I go back to the role of the independent supervisor and the important functions he would be required to perform. Clause 8 of the Bill says that the supervisor would be authorized to use his discretion in calling for general elections if he perceives an impasse in the management of the association. He would be charged with the responsibility of receiving a list of the members from the association, as per clause 5 of the amended Bill.

Clause 11 seeks to change the number of members that make up a quorum. This has been increased from 25 members to 10 per cent of the membership. It would be required that 10 per cent of the membership of the association be present at meetings for a quorum to be satisfied. No longer are we conforming to a quorum of 25 members. This association may end up having about 3,000 members. It depends on whether the cane farmers decide to be members of this association.

During the course of the discussions it was felt that the previous Ordinance, having stipulated 25 members, the number of persons present at these meetings was not sufficiently representative of the body of Trinidad Islandwide Cane Farmers Association (TICFA). For this reason, it was recommended that we should consider 10 per cent of the membership and not 25 persons.

Clause 11 sets out the procedures which must be followed to give notice of a meeting when called either by the management committee or the independent supervisor. This goes back to the discrepancies which arose *vis-à-vis* the advertisements which appeared in the newspaper notifying the membership of TICFA of the general elections. As discussions continued, it became necessary to include a clause within the framework of the amendments that would speak to the management committee and the independent supervisor, of the responsibility with respect to the notification of meetings.

This Ordinance has seen amendments coming to Parliament in 1965 and 1973 over a period of 30 years. Today we are faced with a situation where the cane-farming population is divided. Whether or not previous governments found it fit to reunite these people, this Government feels that it has become necessary in the interest of the sugarcane industry and the stakeholders, that every effort should be made to bring the two factions that exist presently, back into one fold. For this reason, the Cane Farmers Incorporation and Cess (Amdt.) Bill is before us.

I strongly urge the Members of the Opposition, as well as others concerned, to support the amendments which we have brought before this House, so that we can

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bring about the reunification of the two factions. At this point in time those two factions are claiming to be legal. The company wishes to recognize one body. The fundamental question is: Which body would the sugar manufacturer recognize? I wish that Members of this House would support the amendments of this Bill so that we can reunite the Trinidad Islandwide Cane Farmers Association.

Thank you.

Question proposed.

2.20 p.m.

Dr. Keith Rowley (*Diego Martin West*): Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member for Princes Town wanted to ensure that I take part in this debate, so he sought to place the blame for this situation on his predecessor. Let me assure him that I had every intention of taking part in this debate, if only to put my comments on record, especially now that I have heard what he has said. To use very kind language, I would say to Trinidad and Tobago, this is foolishness.

You, Mr. Speaker, put a great dent in your budget on Monday, in great pomp and ceremony, to indicate to the country that the Parliament is coming back to do the people's business, and all this Government could find to do is bring this Minister to spend the Parliament's time making all kinds of illogical statements, trying to give the impression that the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago could legislate behaviour and put an end to a squabble. That is what this is, Mr. Speaker.

When one looks at this and hears the Minister say that the company—and I presume that he means Caroni (1975) Limited—wishes to recognize one body, I ask him: Are we to expect his other masterpiece to be a piece of legislation to remove all the unions in Caroni (1975) Limited, which are about four or five? The company wishes to recognize one union, and since this Government is unity crazy and somehow figures it has a preordained mandate to unite whomever it wishes, will it unite all Caroni (1975) Limited workers under one trade union? If not, what is this requirement to legislate unification of Trinidad Islandwide Cane Farmers Association? He has not said what. He has expressed a wish to do it.

Mr. Speaker, I have no problem with cane farmers uniting under one body. He has said—and I have difficulty believing anything that he says—that cane farmers have said that they want this and if this is what they want, we have no difficulty in supporting it. However, they should not present it in the Parliament, at the opening of a new term, as something serious. Can you imagine that? This is what this Government opens a new term of Parliament with.

Listen to what it will do! It will solve the Trinidad Islandwide Cane Farmers Association's squabble. He himself indicated that there is a serious problem with Trinidad Islandwide Cane Farmers' Association. Of course, he said that I, as the previous Minister, should have fixed it. He also went on to tell us that in trying to fix it, how they behaved, including one faction not even wanting to come when the Prime Minister expected them. But he wants me to fix it! I should have fixed it!

In this country, people are free to associate or not to associate. The original draft of this Bill sought to legislate that all cane farmers must be members of the Trinidad Islandwide Cane Farmers Association. It passed the Minister, you know. It was printed and passed by the Minister. It had to be pointed out later that that was against the Constitution. One cannot force someone to belong. So, as he said a moment ago, they had to modify it and say: "All cane farmers are eligible".

Big news to the country! First thing in Parliament is that the country is being told that all cane farmers are eligible to be members of the Trinidad Islandwide Cane Farmers Association. Big news! However, one has to understand the thinking which first caused them to say that all cane farmers must be members of Trinidad Islandwide Cane Farmers Association.

He goes on to say that this parliamentary session is to put an end to the long-standing management dispute in the Trinidad Islandwide Cane Farmers Association. So, if people do not want to associate and they decide to have their own organization—right now there is the National Workers and Farmers Union and he says that they have agreed to be a part of this—as long as they are cane farmers and they are abiding under the laws of Trinidad and Tobago, what is the problem with Caroni (1975) Limited dealing with them? Why should Caroni (1975) Limited insist on dealing with only one group? You can mark my words today, Mr. Speaker. Insofar as this is being presented as a solution, I am saying that this is a recipe for future confusion.

Mr. Speaker, some man called an Independent Supervisor is to be appointed by the Minister—and if he appoints this man the same way he appointed previous persons, you know how we will start. If we look at clause 8(b)(2), it says:

"Where it appears to the Independent Supervisor that there is an unresolved dispute in the management of the Association such that the management...is at an impasse, he may call general elections..."

So one man can stand up outside an organization, look at it and if it appears to him that there is an impasse, that man can decide to call a general election in your

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organization. That is what we are legislating—an appointing of this "minister of questionable conduct", who will stay outside an organization, look at it and say, "it appears to me that you are at an impasse, therefore I am decreeing that there shall be general elections in your organization". That is his masterpiece solution to solve the Trinidad Islandwide Cane Farmers' Association crisis. If it works, I congratulate him and his Government. I wish them well.

However, to ensure that it works and to come here and prance and parade to sound as if he is talking something sensible, do you know what he has done? Hear how this is guaranteed to work! Clause 5(c)(4) says:

"The Association shall be required to deposit with the Independent Supervisor a list of members of the Association once every year and where necessary copies of letters of resignation and written notifications by members who rejoin..."

So first, under law, if it is passed—and they will pass it, and we will support it, because they say this is what cane farmers want—a list would go to this Independent Supervisor. Also, copies of letters of persons who have resigned and rejoined. What if the list is a bogus one? There is no mention of that. All that has to be done is provide this "Mr. Fix-it-fix-all-Supervisor" with a list of names and the requirement is met.

He must also get copies of letters of resignation. What if these copies are bogus, incomplete, excess or insufficient? He must also be provided with notifications of those who rejoin. What if his list of those who rejoin is not in fact truthful? There is nothing about how the supervisor will react to that, or any penalty to go with that. However, as long as a list or any list is provided, this requirement is met, because it says that the association must provide the list.

So, we have a list, but he did say that there are factions. Which one of the associations is to give him this list? If Trinidad Islandwide Cane Farmers Association is split and there are two or 20 Trinidad Islandwide Cane Farmers Associations, who will provide this list? He expects that these people who have been behaving so well to the Prime Minister, when a list is provided, will say, "Okay, Parliament passed a law the other day and this list is okay". Does he expect them to accept that? Fine! However, Mr. Speaker, who are these people who will provide the list in the first place? It could not be the same people who were supposed to be operating under the Act of 1961, which was amended twice. There was a law there. They were governed by law, and the same people that he is saying

will provide this perfect list so that we can move on to unity and unify cane farmers, they are the same ones who were calling general meetings by Lamp Post #24 in Blanchisseuse on Sunday evenings.

He told us about the underhandedness of sending out notices: the way they got around the existing notices; how they hoodwinked the membership and so forth. These people will comply with the new law. Do you know why? Because this Minister got a new law passed. Because of that those people will suddenly get very happy, very law-abiding, very unity conscious and will live happily ever after. This is his solution.

It goes on to say that "if the Association contravenes the provision", that means if these various lists are not provided, then an offence is committed and somebody is liable to a \$5,000 fine. I do not know that this is a novel provision in our laws. I know that under the trade union laws, because of the particularity of trade unionism, there are certain provisions with respect to providing names and so forth, but not in organizations like the Trinidad Islandwide Cane Farmers Association.

2.30 p.m.

What really is the Trinidad Islandwide Cane Farmers Association (TICFA), Mr. Speaker? The Trinidad Islandwide Cane Farmers Association is, in fact, a glorified kind of co-operative where cane farmers come together to look after their own interest and so forth. Why is it necessary for this particular agency to have, under law, this kind of enactment and also this penalty if it does not provide a list and so forth? This takes the state and the law deep into the confusion, micro management of an organization which is guaranteed to create more problems.

Mr. Speaker, when the Government puts itself in this position, by law, the ministers in the future will always find that there would be individuals, factions and groups who will seek to use their ministerial office as their place of complaint. That has been happening now and it will happen in the future. All this Bill is doing is creating further avenues to encourage that kind of behaviour and confusion would be the order of the day in the future. If the Minister is trying to fix it he should say he is trying to fix it. He should not come and give us this and try to pretend that he has solved the problem by some superior intellect. This is going to simply create a new situation and I have no doubt that those who did not conform in the past, will not conform in the future.

Mr. Speaker, by the Minister saying that he has 25 members to call a meeting, then he wants 10 per cent of the membership, if it is a meeting he wants for

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whatever he wants, then he will get it done. Whoever wants to overthrow the executive or who is against the chairman and so forth, he will mobilize them to keep their membership and call these meetings. The fact that he has secured 10 per cent of the membership does not mean he would not try and would not succeed. It does not mean that at all. He was doing it under the other law. If it is their behaviour to fight over and for the executive, this is not going to stop it. The great bone of contention is the management of the Trinidad Islandwide Cane Farmers Association's assets and those assets arise out of the cess that farmers pay; they pay moneys into the organization.

There is still a provision for cess in clause 12 and I expect that as long as there are assets to be controlled there would be attempts at control, both in and out of the executive. Mr. Speaker, that, in summary, is what this is all about. Parliament is called out to try to settle a squabble in the Trinidad Islandwide Cane Farmers Association. It is a squabble where people have been arguing that this one is the right one and that one is the wrong one and the Government is saying, it can and it will legislate behaviour and we will legislate conduct. At the end of the day the Government is saying that by legislation in this form it will solve the problem.

What is the Trinidad Islandwide Cane Farmers Association doing for cane farmers? It is allowing them to come together and do a few things which will benefit them. But, Mr. Speaker, when one considers the arrival of this Bill in the Parliament, it must be of the greatest irony that when cane farmers are under the greatest amount of pressure in this country, when they are in the process of losing their livelihood, losing their crops, this is what the Minister comes to Parliament with.

Mr. Speaker, I have no problem if this works to the benefit of cane farmers, as I said before, I will support it. But this is not what cane farmers need at this time. This is minimal contribution to cane farmers' comfort. What cane farmers need—cane farmers who have been devastated by the actions of this Minister and the board of Caroni (1975) Limited—is a secure Caroni (1975) Limited that has the potential for a secure future where they sell their canes and earn a livelihood. That is what they need. [*Desk thumping*]

As far as I am concerned, if they choose to associate with one, two or three bodies, as long as they have these bodies properly constituted under the laws of Trinidad and Tobago, to me, that is not really a big problem. If they manage to do it with one body it makes life easier for all. To say, however, it is a be-all and an end-all and an absolute essential, I do not share that view.

What cane farmers need is a good return on their canes and they must earn that return in a way that there is not a burden on the Treasury. That is what they need. Cane farmers want to know that they are being paid well for their cane and not having to wait on the Minister of Finance who may or may not grant an increase in the price of their cane. If the farmers are selling cane to Caroni (1975) Limited and Caroni (1975) Limited is selling sugar they should be doing it efficiently enough, or, Caroni (1975) Limited should be in a sound, secure position to be able to pay the farmers a good price for their cane and they would move into the future with that kind of relationship.

What cane farmers need is a board of management of Caroni (1975) Limited that is finding solutions to Caroni (1975) Limited's many problems, and that the board itself is not a problem for Caroni (1975) Limited as exists right now. Insofar as the board of Caroni (1975) Limited by its management of Caroni (1975) Limited's affairs is creating more problems than it is solving, cane farmers do not need that. That is why the cane farmers all said at the last meeting that the board and the Minister should go because they understand that both the board and the Minister were acting against the interest of cane farmers and Caroni (1975) Limited. They understand where the interest lies.

Mr. Speaker, above all, what cane farmers need is a minister who knows what he is saying about their business and when he speaks they would know that he is speaking the truth. That is what cane farmers need. What this Minister could have come here this afternoon and told us, if he was really talking about cane farmers' business, is how he and his board intend to react to the situation, as it stands, with cane farmers who have put out their moneys; who have grown cane; who have had their crops destroyed by the negligence of the board and the Minister and who are now facing serious financial ruin.

When a cane farmer loses money it is a personal loss. All those cane farmers who are in line to lose money, as a result of the experimentation and the pigheaded attitude of those who have caused that crisis in Caroni (1975) Limited over the froghoppers, will suffer personal losses. Caroni (1975) Limited as a company will hardly suffer any significant loss. The workers at Caroni (1975) Limited will be paid, the management will be paid, Caroni (1975) Limited will import sugar; buy cheap and sell expensive, and if the chairman is given a chance he will raise the price of sugar so everybody in Trinidad and Tobago who sucks a sweet or drinks a soft drink will pay for the inefficiencies and conduct of Caroni (1975) Limited. It is the cane farmer whose cane has been destroyed, because of the attitude of the Minister who will suffer the loss.

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If the Minister wants to help cane farmers, coming here with this Bill trying to force cane farmers into forming one body because that is some magic wand to solve their problem, is not in any way going to contribute significantly to the cane farmers. Let me explain to you, Mr. Speaker, why I am saying that this is trivial and the real problem that the cane farmers face is not this; it is their loss, it is the insecurity of the company and it is the behaviour of the Minister and the board to them.

Mr. Speaker, cane farmers are now in line to suffer \$10 million to \$15 million in direct losses or probably much higher than that, but at the last computation cane farmers were going to suffer upwards of \$10 million to \$15 million in losses. Do you know what caused that, Mr. Speaker? This Minister who is so concerned, his heart bleeds for the Trinidad Islandwide Cane Farmers Association, “Disunited Trinidad Islandwide Cane Farmers Association (TICFA), my heart bleeds for you, so I am going to Parliament to bring a law to bring you together.” Do you know what it needs, Mr. Speaker? It needs a little knowledge and an attitude. Have you noticed how the Minister speaks, Mr. Speaker? He speaks about “this Minister this and this Minister that;” he is desperate to make his mark. But he has made his mark already! He has made his mark in this country as the Minister who has been held up in front the entire country, in front of all the school children, who says do not believe anything I tell you. So he does not have to carry on like that. Mr. Speaker, he has made a living out of not facing up to facts, but he is so desperate to make his mark that he is always making reference to the previous minister. But I wear size 12 shoes, he cannot put his foot in those shoes. *[Laughter]*

2.40 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, I want to point out to you, why cane farmers are in the present predicament that they are in. Cast your mind back to how many times this Minister in this Chamber sought to take credit for fighting the mealybug problem. He wants to be known as the “mealybug” minister. He is desperate for credit. So he gets up in the Parliament, time and time again, in his normal style of not coming clean with the truth and saying that his predecessor and the previous government did nothing about the mealybug problem, and it took “this minister” to fight the mealybug. Today, to point out how Caroni cane farmers ended up in that position, I want to refer you to the mealybug problem, which is the root of this problem at Caroni. I refer my friend from Princes Town, the “this Minister,” to this document called, “*Report on the Status of the Hibiscus Mealybug Infestation and Associated Management Approach in Trinidad and Tobago up to October 15, 1995.*” It is a

report up to October 15, 1995. It is dated November, 1995. Mr. Speaker, election was November 1995 and he was nowhere in sight when this report was prepared. Mr. Speaker, permit me to assist him to go through on page 2 and you would see that the hibiscus mealybug was first reported to be in the vicinity of Port of Spain in June, 1995. That is the first time we had any incident of the hibiscus mealybug in this country. We were first told that it was in Grenada in April of 1995. We were on the look-out for it, and we spotted it as it got to the plants outside the Financial Complex in June, 1995.

Having seen that, immediately, we took steps and Cabinet approved \$1 million to respond to that problem because there was no provision in the annual budget. When the budget was passed, the mealybug was not on the scene. It came, and we had to respond—\$1 million approved when it was required.

Mr. Speaker, page 5 says:

“...the Ministry has developed a Task Force as an essential component of its medium to long-term strategy...

The Minister will be the head of the task force. His main responsibility will be the co-ordination of the other ministries which impact directly or indirectly with the efforts of this Ministry...Finance, Legal Affairs, National Security, The Information Division of the Prime Minister’s Office and so forth. Most of these activities will be handled by the Permanent Secretary of the respective Ministries.”

What was the Government’s response in Trinidad and Tobago? We approached the problem, and page 6 mentions;

“...the Ministry’s strategy of containment/eradication...”

That was the approach: containment, eradication.

On pages 14 and 15, we made it a notifiable pest so that where it occurred it had to be notified. As we sought to close our borders to prevent it from coming in, in this report, it was recorded that we intervened on the Port at Port of Spain Wharf. Coming from St. Lucia, we have interjections where we had to intercept 250 boxes of bananas and dumped them; from Grenada, 124 boxes—dumped them; St. Vincent, 105 boxes—dumped them; St. Vincent, 140 boxes—dumped; at the airport at Piarco, fruits and vegetables, 128 boxes—seized and destroyed; St. Vincent, 9 boxes; sugarcane from St. Lucia—seized and dumped; sugar apples from Barbados—seized and dumped; pineapples from Guyana—seized and

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dumped. We were closing our borders to those things coming from outside which could have brought the question to us: that was our containment policy. But this Minister comes here and talks about “nothing has been done” and it took this Minister from Princes Town—that was his attitude and that is the attitude he carried to Caroni, which caused us, today, to be in line to lose hundreds of millions of dollars down there because the Minister is looking for credit.

It goes on to page 16 to say:

“Construction of mass rearing rooms and supporting laboratory designed...”

To rear what? What are we going to rear? *[Interruption]* Mr. Speaker, permit me, because you must understand these things. Page 17 is where he got off-track. It continues:

“...initiation of studies to biologically base integrated management of the Hibiscus Mealybug...”

This is the first time the Minister came into contact with this issue on biological control. He met it at work in the Ministry and he wanted credit for it. So he comes to the Parliament time and time again saying nothing had been done about the mealybug.

It is only when I came from Princes Town and became Minister that this Minister fought the mealybug and I am the “mealybug” Minister. Here it is recorded, “Biological control, integrated pest management.” This project was proposed as an FAO/TCB project. We were going to mass produce an *Anagyrus Kamali* and *Cryptolaemus Montrouzieri*. These are the two animals that were going to breed and mass produce, to be released in the country and those animals would then feed and destroy and bring the mealybug under control. All this was in place before this Minister even had a vote cast for him. He is walking up and down the country saying, “nothing was done about the mealybug, and I had to come into office and do it.”

Mr. Speaker, we were also screening pesticides. We did an assessment and utilization of the indigenous natural enemies of control of the mealybug. This project was aimed at mass production and release of indigenous *Anagyrus* species, and *coccinellids beetles* which prey on mealybugs. We had to assess them and see how effective they were against the mealybug. That could not have been done before in this country because we never had mealybugs. So when the mealybug came in June, we tried to attach these beetles and wasps to the mealybug to see

how effective they were in controlling the mealybug. When we determined which one was more effective we mass produced them and put them out in the country. In the meantime, there was a Containment Programme in place, and, of course, we introduced exotic species of the beetles and so forth.

Mr. Speaker, at the bottom of page 17, he will see that this project was developed by Dr. Gautam of the Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI). We brought Dr. Gautam to Trinidad to take charge of this programme of biological control. It goes on in detail, how we would focus the activity on *Cryptolaemus Montrouzieri* and we introduced the beetle and so forth. There was regional involvement, a two-day workshop conducted in Grenada on October 4th and 5th, involving Food and Agricultural Organization, CSC, USDA, APHIS, IICA and CARDI. There was regional action, all there lined out.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, it goes on to say:

“The Ministries of Agriculture of Grenada and Trinidad and Tobago are to be the leading institutions in the project entitled: Biologically Based and Sustainable Programme for the Control of the Pink Mealybug. The Ministry of Agriculture of Trinidad and Tobago has the responsibility for the initial identification of the Hibiscus Pink Mealybug.”

We could not even identify it in the region. We had to train people to do that, and Trinidad and Tobago became the leader in that by October, 1995. Of course, samples from St. Lucia, Jamaica and St. Kitts are currently being processed.

This is October, 1995, but this gentleman from Princes Town, who knows nothing about the truth, comes to the Parliament and goes all over the country and misleads children and tells them that the previous minister did nothing about the mealybug. [*Desk thumping*] If I might say, as Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Inter-American Institute for Co-operation on Agriculture (IICA), Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI), Caribbean Food Corporation (CFC) have said, the response in Trinidad and Tobago to the mealybug problem, has been outstanding, exemplary and successful.

2.50 p.m.

It has nothing to do with my friend from Princes Town. He wanted credit for that. He wanted to be a biological control expert. Do you know what he did? He went to Caroni—Mr. Speaker, I quote very quickly from two extracts from the Handbook of the Sugar Association of the Caribbean. This document is 1994. Guyana reporting to the Sugar Association in 1994 says:

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"Froghopper: Aeneolamia flavilatera

Froghopper is a serious pest..."

Even before he was a Minister, the whole country and region knew that froghopper was a serious pest.

"The nymphal stages are the prime target for chemical control. Adult control is also practised..."

Malathion Carbaryl and Trichlorofon are applied aeriaily to control adult froghoppers. Attempts are in progress to isolate and mass-fungus *Mettarrhizium sp.* which is a known bioparasite of froghopper."

I repeat that line. In Guyana they were reporting to this conference that:

"Attempts are in progress to isolate and mass-fungus *Mettarrhizium*, which is a known as bioparasite of froghopper." The International Institute of Biological Control (IIBC) is undertaking developmental work in this connection."

They won the election, appointed the gentleman as Minister and he jumped ahead of everybody and decided, having heard about *Mettarrhizium*, he is going to dictate to Trinidad and Tobago that *Mettarrhizium* from here on is going to control froghopper; and there was a precipitation of the crisis.

In the same meeting Trinidad and Tobago was reporting. This is what we had to say:

"There are essential research programmes for the control of froghopper *Aeneolamia variasaccharina* and the small moth borers *Diatraea saccharalis*... In the case of froghoppers, laboratory bio-assays are done routinely to test insect susceptibility to both new insecticides and those being used in the commercial control programme. This is backed up by field trials with various selected insecticides. The programme has proved to be essential to the guidance of the commercial control programme... Progress on the research into biological control now appears to be promising with the use of spore suspensions of the fungus *Metarrhizium anisopliae* as a bioinsecticide. Spore suspensions are being produced in the laboratory and large scale trials have been established during the last year. Results are promising."

Even before he came into office we were experimenting with *Mettarrhizium* but we knew what we were doing. We knew the results were promising, but you put match and gasoline in the hands of a child and you get a conflagration.

The Member came into office and met Caroni's management and research staff developing a programme which could benefit us, he jumps out, desperate for credit, in the same way he wanted credit for the mealybug programme, not understanding what he has met, but being an expert, he and his board at Caroni; a board which should know and a management which knows that we reported the following to the Sugar Association, under pest control:

"By far the most important pest in Trinidad is the froghopper *Aeneolamia varia saccharina*. The adults in the course of feeding, puncture leaves, causing long streamer-like blotches, which coalesce and in which chlorophyll is destroyed; the tissue eventually dies. As a result, the photosynthetic activity of the plant seriously impaired, with consequent reduced yields and poorer cane quality. Sugar losses per unit area of land of up to 60% have been demonstrated experimentally."

We did not have to poison the whole canefield in Caroni to discover that. It was discovered experimentally that froghopper could destroy up to 60 per cent of sugar yields on a unit basis.

It goes on to say:

"Eggs are laid in the soil and those from the last brood, usually the fourth, exhibit very strong diapause; they survive the drought and hatch with the onset of the rains to produce the first brood of the following year which, if unchecked,..."

This is Caroni (1975) Limited reporting to the Sugar Association of the Caribbean saying:

"...can build up to extremely severe infestations in the second and third broods."

Therefore, we had all the information. We knew what we were doing! We knew all about froghoppers in 1994, how did we end up in this predicament in 1997? Ask the Member for Princes Town, the disaster for a Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources! How did we end up in this position today? *[Desk Thumping]* This Minister must tell us, in the face of all this information, practice and experience, how did we end up in this predicament?

We went on to report as a country to the association that:

"The current control is based, in the first instance, upon suppressing the first of the four main annual broods of adults with insecticides!"

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Mr. Speaker, I need not say any more about that. What we do know is that, desperate to make a mark for himself—which is a good thing, but do not mark all of us—and to get recognition and to claim credit, the first time that we knew disaster was pending, he went down to the Sugar and Energy Fest and made the grand announcement, he, the biggest environmentalist in the world, has determined that from here on Caroni (1975) Limited would no longer be polluting the environment with chemicals, we are going into biological control.

Having heard what I have said about the lifecycle of froghoppers, Mr. Speaker, even when you heard that, you were concerned as to what disaster was about to befall Caroni. If you do not deal with the adult froghoppers in the correct time and way, in a matter of three to four days it would be too late.

This Minister who knows everything, decides Mettarrhizium is going to be it. There are people in this country who heard him and got so concerned—I am speaking about the Sugarcane Farmers Union—they called for a meeting with the board to ask, "What are we hearing, what are you saying, what is this mad man saying?" They said, "Do not do as he is suggesting; we have to maintain a very efficacious programme of chemical control while we introduce any element of Mettarrhizium. But his dictates and his partner on the board decided that Mettarrhizium is it. The sugar union told them that if they go ahead with that and farmers suffer any losses it would be to their account. The arrogance of the board prevailed. The same arrogance we saw in today's *Guardian*. In the face of existing and encroaching disaster, the board through its chairman still maintains the most arrogant posture to the cane farmers.

I am quoting from today's *Guardian*:

"Caroni Chairman: Crop in no danger"

Thus, the target has fallen under the Tripartite. This year Caroni should have been producing 135,000 tonnes of sugar—that was the target of the Tripartite to end up at a 140,000 tonnes next year. We were in the ballpark of 120,000-125,000. They are reporting 95,000 tonnes as the revised target now. In the face of that you have a chairman telling the country that Caroni's crop is in no danger. So the loss of 30,000 tonnes of sugar is no problem for the chairman of Caroni!

But the arrogance that went with the Mettarrhizium versus an integrated approach—listen to this arrogance, the Association of Technical, Administrative and Supervisory Staff (ATASS), those who supervise the workers of Caroni (1975) Limited, are concerned about what is going on with the company. They wrote the

chairman time and time again, saying that something is wrong with what is going on in the company, in this case having to do with the upgrading of the Ste. Madeleine plant. If an agency like ATASS has a problem, it should be common courtesy requires that you at least hear what they have to say and treat them with some courtesy.

3.00 p.m.

Listen to the response to ATASS from the chairman and I am quoting here from the *Trinidad Guardian*. In a letter dated June 17, chairman Ramkissoon replied that he did not share the concern expressed by Batson, the head of the union ATASS. The chairman does not share Batson's concern. I am quoting here the chairman's reply to ATASS:

“in the absence of any technical submission from you, and no identifying authority for your conclusions, I do not consider it prudent to pursue the matter with you.”

What arrogance and impertinence. That is what is going on in Caroni (1975) Limited. So, while the Treasury is being lined up to pay out \$2 million, \$240 million, \$260 million to the chairman of Caroni (1975) Limited, this arrogance is being written to the union that is saying we are concerned that something is going wrong; something which could go as wrong as the froghopper which is causing us hundreds of millions of dollars in losses.

I am saying to you, Mr. Speaker, I am calling on the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago to dismiss the board of Caroni (1975) Limited instantly and dismiss the Minister. I have 45,000 constituents and I am not going to sit here in this Parliament and hear that kind of nonsense and hear the chairman parade in this way on the papers and then know, at the end of the day, it is my constituents' dollars that will have to go to subsidize the losses that are created by the negligence and arrogance of those whom this Minister and this Government have put in office. They must leave now! [*Desk Thumping*]

Today's papers—they have just thrown away \$56 million. We are talking about 100,000 tonnes of cane farmers' cane. On your way up here to bring this item of trivia to this Parliament did you pass through Munroe Road? Did you pass Calcutta? Did you pass Mt. Plaisir? Did you pass Forres Park? Did you pass Massy Land? Have you seen what is going on there? Well I have and I am telling you, cane farmers are in line to lose 100,000 tonnes of cane at an average cost to the cane farmers, including his cost of production to bring the cane there. If he loses

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\$100 per tonne what are you talking about? Multiply that. About 100,000 tonnes of cane; they will lose that outright. Caroni (1975) Limited's officials have not one cent to lose because the Treasury is there to bank loan any nonsense that they do. Understand that. Workers will be paid, management paid, board paid, board given contracts for \$120,000 and the Minister will get what he has to get, but the cane farmers will lose 100,000 tonnes of cane.

I am calling on the Government today. You have to make provision to compensate cane farmers for the losses that the Government has brought. [*Desk thumping*] You have to compensate the farmers, and as this Government takes on board the compensation package, the Minister has to be held responsible and be dismissed out of hand.

Over and above the 100,000 tonnes of cane farmers cane, the company is conservatively telling you that it is losing 200,000 tonnes of cane. So, in total 300,000 tonnes of cane, that is 30,000 tonnes of sugar. Multiply that by US \$3,000; that is what they have thrown away because this Minister is looking for credit. He could not convince people about the mealybug so he is looking for credit in mettarrhizium and we are paying a mettarrhizium price of 100,000 tonnes of cane loss and 200,000 tonnes of Caroni (1975) Limited cane loss. All of that, Mr. Speaker, was before Price Waterhouse told us that, even before the mealybug took its bite out of the cake, we were in line to lose \$270,000,000 at the end of the year. This year alone, 1997, a loss of \$175,000,000. Next year it is going to go to \$240,000,000 and growing. God alone knows what the figure is going to look like when the frog hopper has finished with us.

In the face of that, he comes to Parliament, at the opening of the parliamentary session, with a piece of innocuous, inane trivia and thumps his chest and tries to give the impression that he is somehow doing something of importance for the country and for cane farmers in particular. This is absolute trivia. This could have been done after we had completed some serious work on some other Bills while I am having a joke with my friend from Siparia this could have been passed on another occasion. But if you want to help cane farmers this will not help.

What cane farmers need now is compensation for the severe losses that you have brought upon them. They owe the bank. You will have to come and talk about the ADB. They owe the ADB. They have lost their crops as a result of the Minister's negligence. Who is going to compensate them now? Because the cane farmers are not responsible. Do you know what the board is telling the cane farmers now? Cane farmers are responsible for their own cane.

Mr. Speaker: The speaking time of the Member for Diego Martin West has expired.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Dr. K. Rowley: I thank you, Mr. Speaker and I sincerely thank my colleagues for the extension.

Having voluntarily and cavalierly precipitated this disaster on cane farmers, the board is now telling cane farmers that they are responsible for their own cane. Therefore, the state could breed froghoppers across the street, infest people's crops, and then turn around and tell them you are responsible for your own cane.

Mr. Speaker, there is a reason why the froghopper control programme is centralized under Caroni (1975) Limited and subsidized by the state. It is because froghoppers do not know who owns which cane where. When froghoppers start to hop they could end up anywhere. Look at my friends over there. [*Desk thumping*] [*Laughter*] So, in order to effectively manage the froghopper threat, Caroni (1975) Limited is responsible for the programme and they are supposed to go and spray both the company's cane and the farmers' cane. When the company takes a decision in the face of objections from the farmers by way of their union's representation, the farmers are saying do not do that, it will not work. The company is saying we must do it and the farmers lose their crop. Mr. Speaker, it follows from that that the farmers have to be compensated.

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what cane farmers need is a board. When it speaks through another voice, what it says can be believed. At the end of August, I mentioned to the country that there was a serious financial crisis at Caroni (1975) Limited and there was a serious crisis which threatens the industry which is going unaddressed. I did not say it was his fault or your fault, I said there was a problem. I went further, I said I had a report from Price Waterhouse which analyzed the situation and it is grim. Price Waterhouse outlined a number of options available to the Government which range from immediate intervention of putting a certain plan in place to closure. A whole spectrum of options. The Minister responded by way of the *Independent* newspaper and said Rowley talking crap, and the chairman responded, the same chairman who is here saying Caroni (1975) Limited's crop is in no danger—while the Minister was on television saying that there is no report,

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that there is one copy of the report which the Minister of Finance has—was saying there was no report. Therefore, how can cane farmers believe any of them? If they want to help farmers they must first admit the situation, they must first tell cane farmers what they are going to do about the predicament the company is in. If there is no Caroni (1975) Limited, then there will be no cane farmers. And if Caroni (1975) Limited is in a precarious position, then cane farmers are in a worse position. Therefore, tell cane farmers the truth.

3.10 p.m.

What do the cane farmers hear? They hear that Dhampur Sugar Mills Limited is doing some renovation work at Usine Ste. Madeleine. I hope when the Minister responds he would answer this question. In the interest of cane farmers to grind what the froghoppers left, I ask him: how did Caroni (1975) Limited go about sourcing and attracting Dhampur Sugar Mills Limited to get that job that they are now doing, the one that is causing the concern to the Association of Technical, Administration and Supervisory Staff (ATASS)? What process did they use to hire Dhampur? Because as far as I am concerned, my information tells me, it came out at the same chairman's intervention in India during the Prime Minister's visit to India. The next thing we knew, we have Dhampur doing the job.

I do not know that there were any advertisements inviting people with the sugar technology engineering capacity to come to Caroni (1975) Limited because there was \$20 million of renovation work. I do not know that. Tell me it was so. Because if he does not tell me today, I am going to ask him tomorrow, in writing. Tell me how Dhampur was selected—a \$20 million contract—of all the sugar companies in India, in the region and all over the world. How did we select Dhampur? Tell me if Dhampur gave favours of any kind, large or small, to anybody in authority in Trinidad and Tobago. Tell me, because I am going to ask him again. [*Desk thumping*]

Cane farmers want to know that the Minister understands what he is talking about. When he gets up in the Parliament, like he did recently and said he went to lunch with some unnamed gentleman who told him that regardless of what happened to the Lomé Sugar Convention there will be a sugar protocol, cane farmers sat in their seats and shuddered, because they wanted to know what this man is talking about; cavalierly dismissing the Lomé protocol on which sugar would live or die and saying some gentleman told him that regardless of whether that goes or not, some other protocol will come. That is how he views the threat to the sugar industry, which will go the same way the banana industry has gone;

victim of international economics, where the big players set the stage and the small players have to fight along the lines.

How do they intend to handle it? Again, using their propaganda. There are those who propagandize in this country and one of them is the head of one of Caroni (1975) Limited's unions, who, when confronted by Caroni (1975) Limited's inefficiencies and the need for direct intervention to correct the situation and put the company on a sound footing, always gets up and says that the reason Caroni (1975) Limited is in this position is because it is being forced to sell its sugar at a lower price by the Government and if Government allows Caroni (1975) Limited to free up the sugar price, Caroni (1975) Limited will earn enough to meet its inefficiencies. Absolute hogwash!

I quote from today's *Express* in which the same chairman of Caroni (1975) Limited is saying:

“Caroni sets hopes on sugar hike:

Caroni (1975) Limited is looking for an increase in the price of sugar to help offset the company's expenses.

In disclosing this yesterday, Caroni's chairman Joe Ramkissoon, could not say exactly when the increase would come but assured, 'it would not be before Christmas'.

Ramkissoon said management has projected a sugar yield of 95,000 tonnes for next year.”

So it is quite all right for the Minister and his friends to interfere with the crop—mash up the sugar cane crop; lick down the sugar cane crop—by 35,000 tonnes, or something like that, and then come and tax every sugar user in the country by raising the price of sugar. I say, never! There will be resistance to that.

When we embarked on correcting Caroni (1975) Limited's problem, as part of the tripartite arrangement, one of the first things we did twice in that context was to raise the price of sugar by 15 per cent. That has already been done, and you cannot come now and impose a further increase on the country to support your inefficiencies, your bad politics, your underhandedness and your negligence. You cannot do that!

The real numbers are these. If we have to buy sugar on the world market, we can buy it substantially cheaper than what is produced at Caroni (1975) Limited. The reason we are buying it from Caroni (1975) Limited, as we are doing now, is

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to support local industry and all the positives that go with that, including employment-creation and foreign exchange earnings. But you will observe, Caroni (1975) Limited is only temporarily protected. Under international trading arrangements, we are now protecting one product in this country. The only product protected under protocol and monopoly is sugar. Beyond the year 2000 that cannot be guaranteed. As the world condition changes—and we are part of the Marrakech Accord; World Trade Organization is in place—we cannot continue to close our borders to external sugar so Caroni (1975) Limited can sell us sugar at 80 per cent higher than the world price.

A tonne of refined sugar on the world market is US \$2,100. Raw sugar is US \$1,600 a tonne. But when Caroni (1975) Limited sells its sugar to “John Public” on the local market, it sells sugar at \$3,423 a tonne. So Caroni (1975) Limited already is overcharging the local market for sugar, while spokespersons of Caroni (1975) Limited are telling the country that the reason Caroni (1975) Limited cannot pay its debts is because the sugar price is too low. The opposite is true. Sugar is a protected item in this country and gets a preferential Government-set price. Under the present arrangement we cannot encourage a further increase in the price of sugar.

Wash grey sugar is \$2,330 when sold to “John Public” in the shops. Local industry, competing with the imports, has to buy sugar from Caroni (1975) Limited at \$3,866 a tonne when the world market price is \$2,100. Understand that. Those who are exporting are given a preferential price because their product has to compete outside with cheaper sugar in products which are on the market. They have to pay \$3,100 a tonne, when the world market price which their competitors use is \$2,100.

What will an increase in the price of Caroni (1975) Limited’s sugar do? It will make all our manufacturers’ products uncompetitive, both in the local and the external market. This Minister and his friends are trying to undermine even the trade sector. Because if S. M. Jaleel, which is now exporting soft drinks, has to pay more for sugar—I go across the Caribbean and I see the product and I am proud of it when I see it on the shelves—it would cause the drinks to come off the shelves immediately. It would be uncompetitive. Increase the price of sugar and all the progress made by Associated Brands in putting all brand names around the world in confectionery would be off the shelves; uncompetitive.

That is what they are threatening us with. So this increase in the price of sugar is not a simple matter; it has serious implications. The unemployment that is going

to be created for those persons who otherwise would have been cutting the cane crop well into May or June because the mealybug has destroyed a substantial portion of the crop, they will lose their jobs and increased unemployment will be the result. That will be a joke to the unemployment that will be created if a sugar price increase causes a loss of markets for Trinidad and Tobago producers.

All of this is progress that we have made: trade reform; looking for external markets; investing substantial moneys to break into markets, and this gentleman and his colleagues, in one fell swoop, will undermine and destroy all of that. I am glad that my Friend from Couva North has arrived because I saw him in Parliament in the last debate two weeks ago, very silent. He did not say a word on the Caroni (1975) Limited debate in the Parliament, but went down to his union meeting threatening not to wear red again, because they do not even know when to wear red; even when people are protesting against them they are wearing the protest.

I am glad the Prime Minister is here and I hope he will pay some attention to what I am saying because he was a part of a solution, a consensus position of what do we do about Caroni (1975) Limited. I always say I commend him for taking part in that exercise because many union leaders would not have done that. But he was convinced that it was for the good of the union, the company and the country and he was persuaded to take part and he took part. So we knew what was the solution.

He comes into Government and for two years, allows this renegade Minister to do nothing but bring irrelevance to the Parliament; allows him to be undermining all the good work which has been done. Then he is confronted by his union members, by the disaster which is sugar, and rather than say, "I have been a part of the tripartite; I know what the solution is; even though we have delayed a bit, let us press on with it", he is waving a magic wand, "I give you three months to do this; I give you six months to do that; I give you nine months to do that." Brou ha ha, that means nothing.

3.20 p.m.

Is the Prime Minister saying that the exercise that he took part in, which brought all the stakeholders—union, company and the Government together to come to a solution which he signed, is an inferior exercise to the one which will come out of some unnamed person, some unnamed group that has been given three and six months to do this and that? Who has been mandated, we do not know. He stands on a platform and talks to a group of people and says I give you three months, tell me who you gave? Who is the chairman? What are they going to

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do? You were part of a structured item—but that is a symbol of a government that does not know what it is doing. [*Desk thumping*]

I do not begrudge this Government. They came into office at a time when things were going well in the country, the economy was looking well, there were a lot of things going well. The bottom line is, any government in office at that time would look good. The problem is with the influx of time, the Government is required to intervene to keep the process going, what we are seeing is that every time the Government intervenes on any issue, it is a disaster. So they are living on other people's work and when they are called upon to work, disaster, but they are earning \$5,000.00 a month in housing and saying they earned it. I am not surprised that they had to hide in the night and do that because they should be ashamed of themselves the way they behaved the last time there was a parliamentary increase. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as the Government is trying to help cane farmers with this trivia, it is undermining cane farmers' earnings by breeding mealybug to eat down the cane to cause them substantial losses but quietly taking \$4,000.00 per month as housing. Some of them live nowhere like "Miss Howard's cat", but they are taking \$4,000.00 a month in housing. They had \$1,000.00, they take \$4,000.00 more. They do not care about cane farmers whose livelihoods they are threatening, but they are lining their pockets in an underhand way. If they wanted an increase, let the commission do it and come to the Parliament and do it in the open and stand up and say the independent commission approves this increase for parliamentarians and I would have no difficulty with that. I felt ashamed of myself to be their colleagues when I heard what they had done, putting cane farmers at risk. Rather than treating the canefarmers' serious problems they are bringing trivia to the Parliament by talking about united cane farmers. A united bunch of cane farmers is of no use to anybody. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Minister has a job to do. He has to write a letter of resignation and be rid of all of us. In two years he cost us \$200-odd million. He is costing us the IDB loan money. What else is he going to cost us? I say no more, except to tell the Minister he did not have to come and waste Parliament's time by trying to legislate to solve the Trinidad Island-wide Cane Farmers' squabble. If he thinks he can solve the Trinidad Island-wide Cane Farmers' squabble, more power to him. This Bill before us is not a blue print for any permanent solution. It is a temporary plaster which could easily aggravate the sore. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thank you.

The Minister of Tobago Affairs (Dr. The Hon. Morgan Job): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am in no position to predict when any volcanic eruption will take place in this Parliament, in Dominica or anywhere, and I will defer to the better judgment of anyone who is so competent and who has the expertise in that area.

I have a meagre amount of exposure to matters having to do with biological control, having spent a few years of my youthful life diligently studying such matters. I happen to know, and for the benefit of the national community, I do now advise that the nymphal stages of the creature called the froghopper, the population dynamics of the creature called the froghopper, is not unconnected to the other aspect of our environment which is called the weather. The weather, as we understand it, comes under the rubric, "an act of God", and the question of integrated biological control.

Mr. Speaker, I will go through my presentation in sundry different areas because I have to respond for the benefit of the national audience to all the things I have referred here that, in my own judgment, are unconnected to the matters at hand. We are here to discuss a Bill entitled "an Act to amend the Cane Farmers Incorporation and Cess Ordinance, 1961." Then we went into all these things about biological control and Caroni (1975) Limited, which I do not mind because I am competent and capable of talking about all of them.

The question of biological control has to do with the weather. We have been reading the newspapers and hearing about a phenomenon called "El Niño". El Niño is the Spanish word for "the little boy". There is a phenomenon that ties in with the weather patterns of the planet earth that has to do with the changes in temperature of some ocean currents bordering on the Pacific ocean. These things affect the world weather pattern and everyone in this Parliament knows that during these last few months we have had very unusual weather. We have had dry weather in October, when one is dealing with biological control where one is using a fungus: a fungus likes moist conditions. Nobody could have predicted that the weather would have been as dry as it was in October. So that where there is an integrated biological control methodology that deals with spraying fungal spores, there is a problem. Therefore, the kind of facetiousness, the kind of tendentious arguments that we have heard, as if there was some conspiracy to undermine farmers' cane, it had to do with the weather.

Let us get to some other matters of substance that I have been hearing in this Parliament today.

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

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A few minutes ago, I heard that the world market price of cane does not suggest that Caroni (1975) Limited should be producing cane. I have in my hand various reports from which I am going to quote: *The Report of the Tripartite Committee on Caroni (1975) Limited, July 1992; the Report of the St. Cyr Committee; Report Of The Professional Committee On A Policy Towards Optimum Utilisation Of the f Resources Allocated To The Sugar Industry, dated March 30 1984, the Directional Plan, Caroni Limited 1988—1992.*

I think the hon. Prime Minister had something to do with this other report which was produced by the union when he was head of it. The reason why I have to do that is that much was made of the inefficiency of the kind of management of this Government of which I sit in the Cabinet every Thursday morning. I have no indication in the last two years that there was anything done in that Cabinet that manifested itself as the kind of wastefulness that is evident even in the Tripartite Committee which is the culmination of years of management by some other people in this country.

3.30 p.m.

Let us deal with the question of the current Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources as the one responsible for the high cost of the production of sugar. *Report Of The Professional Committee On A Policy Towards Optimum Utilisation Of The Resources Allocated To The Sugar Industry*, paragraph 5.3.8.2 states:

“Producing sugar at \$4,500.00 per ton with the assured market outlets providing prices in 1983 of \$856.00 and \$1,063.00 and a free market price of less than TT \$500.00 at present effectively determines Trinidad’s role as an exporter of raw sugar. Table III shows that even given substantial improvements in yields and conversion ratios, cost of production, using 1983 prices, cannot fall below \$2,457.00.”

This report is saying that in 1983, sugar was being produced at \$4,500 per ton and it could have been bought on the world market for \$500 per ton, that is almost one tenth.

Until I came here I was outside of the Parliament and everybody knew that I said that this country has suffered too long under the burden of opposition politics. I mean that occasion is afforded in this Parliament for people to make statements which seem to be credible, but in fact are vacuous, deceptive, without substance and meaning in terms of taking them and doing a project. This Parliament has been

misused and abused to lead a mob to its own destruction. I have no intention to be part of that.

This country must begin to understand that this Parliament must be used to lead people with ideas and truth and not mischievously deceive and manipulate the emotions of ignorant people to create the kind of situation that ended up with the death of Mr. Des Vignes behind there. This *Report of the Government Appointed Tripartite Committee on Caroni (1975) Limited* dated July 1992 was prepared by another government. Dr. Kusha Haraksingh was the chairman. I do not have to say who was the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources. This is what it says concerning Caroni (1975) Limited. Page 4 states:

“The Committee recommends the following steps.

1. (a) That the Government of Trinidad and Tobago treat the loan capital of Caroni (1975) Limited amounting at 1992 to \$2.138 billion as a subvention.”

When I was part of the process in 1983—this report has a lot of my work—the figure was about the same. When everybody was saying that ISCOTT and BWIA were wasteful and the greatest drains on the Treasury, Caroni (1975) Limited was the number one state enterprise living off the Treasury. Mr. Basdeo Panday was not the Prime Minister. I am quoting for the benefit of the citizens of this country. A while ago I heard the Member for Diego Martin West say:

“My constituency’s dollars must not support waste and subsidize the massive losses of Caroni (1975) Limited.”

That is destructive deviousness. The recommendation which I think was implemented was that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago treat the loan capital of Caroni (1975) Limited amounting to \$2.138 billion in 1992, as a subvention. The report continues:

- (b) That as a consequence of the above the Company’s profit and loss statement be adjusted to reflect the accrued interest related to the loan capital.”

I just heard the Member say that his constituency’s dollars must not subsidize the massive losses at Caroni (1975) Limited. All these things were going on from the time Caroni (1975) Limited became part of the state enterprise. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, this is but the third speaker in this debate. I assure you that every Member will have an opportunity to speak for the full 45

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minutes and a possible 30 minutes more. It is unnecessary to try to silence the Minister during his contribution.

Dr. The Hon. M. Job: Mr. Speaker, I have been in this place for five months and I have never disturbed anybody else when they were making their contributions. Everybody here can attest to that. That is my way and how I have been brought up. I believe in leadership by example. I do not know what the children who listen to these debates are learning about good manners.

I do not know whether there is a relationship between Dhampur of India getting a \$20 million contract and the Cane Farmers Incorporation and Cess (Amdt.) Bill. Perhaps there is and the country must deal with it. If Dhampur of India received a contract under circumstances and conditions which are immoral and corrupt, whoever is involved must deal with it. It is essential for the citizens of this country to understand what Parliament is all about. For the benefit of the national community, the problems at Caroni (1975) Limited have a long history and genesis. Unlike what they have been told, the people on this side cannot by any stretch of the imagination be the purveyors, instigators or people to be blamed for what the country has to bear as a burden of Caroni (1975) Limited. I want the citizens to read *Hansard*.

This is neither the NAR nor the UNC Government, but the government that produced the report in 1992. The Report of the Tripartite Agreement on Caroni (1975) Limited. Page 16, paragraph 6 states:

“The Committee recommends the establishment of a land development/land management unit within the Company as part of the Diversification Division.

The unit will have significant revenue generating potential over the next five years. Its functions will include the administration of all land matters; the rationalizing of land holding within the Company including the sale of tenanted residential lands; responsibility for developing lands with residential or commercial potential; and the management of the Company’s agricultural lands.

One of its early tasks is expected to be an up to date valuation of the Company’s land assets; the last such valuation was completed in 1975. This will involve a more realistic determination of land use capability and potential.

An important element of rationalization involves streamlining this situation with regard to land effectively alienated from the Company by tenancy agreements, or by squatter communities.”

3.40 p.m.

"Some of the revenue generating potential of such a rationalization are explored below.

The Company has on its books 4711 tenants of residential lots, that is, persons who have built their own homes on lands rented from the company. The average annual rental is \$5.00 per lot. Currently, the sale of 80 of these tenancies are being processed. The land development/land management unit will be responsible for arranging the sale of the remainder of the tenancies. The Company also has on its books 4346 agricultural tenancies, occupying 11,854 acres, and rented at \$70.00 per acre. On some of these lands, the tenants have erected unauthorised structures or buildings, thereby contravening the terms of agreement for agricultural tenancies. As a revenue generating mechanism, the specific proposal is to excise house lots from these agricultural tenancies and offer these for sale to the current tenants. These steps together are capable of generating an estimated sum of \$91.6 mn over a five year period.

The land development/land management unit will be able to develop lands which are currently idle or abandoned and in which future agricultural use is unlikely to dispose of these at market rates.

The Land Development Management Unit will also be responsible for disposing of land assets which are unlikely to be required for future use. These include some twenty dwelling houses, of various sizes and at different locations, which are currently unoccupied, a target of vandals and costly to the Company in terms of maintenance.

There is in place a Spontaneous Settlement Unit (SSU) established in August 1991 to regularize the squatting situation on the Company's lands. The existing plan is to provide the squatters with title to residential parcels. The Spontaneous Settlement Unit is a temporary unit and will be disbanded upon completion of the regularization exercise.

The exercise in which the Spontaneous Settlement Unit is engaged relates to residential squatters. But there is another dimension to the problem, which is agricultural squatters. A possible mechanism for dealing with this issue is the instrument of short-term leases, but this is problematical in context of existing tenancy legislation and in particular the Agricultural Smallholdings Act, 1966.

The Committee recommends that the relevant legislative environment be reviewed by the appropriate authorities."

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This is from the report of the *Tripartite Committee on Caroni (1975) Limited*, dated July 1992, Dr. Kusha Haracksingh, Chairman. That is not the UNC Government.

The reason I have quoted this at length is that I want this country to understand that this was not the first time this was recommended. The Spence Committee of 1968, I believe, the Rampersad Committee and every single sensible person recommended that Caroni (1975) Limited, as an institution and an economic unit, was unviable. I will quote a statement from a paper I wrote in 1971, 26 years ago, making the same point.

There is a reason we are still here listening to people talk about Caroni (1975) Limited losing money and constituency dollars that cannot support subsidies for Caroni (1975) Limited, which is so self-contradictory. In the same statement, and one can read the *Hansard* record, they are claiming that the first thing they did when they came to office in 1991, that is early in 1992, was to raise the price of sugar. Whose constituents were paying for that? Was it Mr. Panday's constituents?
[Interruption]

Mr. Speaker, I never interrupted anyone over there. I have not done it in the five months I have been here and I do not intend to start doing it. I hope the entire country observes what is going on. This mephistophelian nastiness: this unwillingness to play fair and to play by the rules! They do not want anyone to know the truth. You must read Goethe's Faust! This is where Mephistopheles, the character, comes in. No one must know the truth. They must persist in that use, that demonic wickedness, where the language in this Parliament is used to animate the ire; to canalize hatred and grievances for destructive purposes. That is Opposition politics; politics without responsibility. They must be done with it, and as long as I am here, I will educate, lead, guide the mind to substance; not that kind of mischief.

I will come back to this Agricultural Small Holdings Act, 1966, that they talk about, but I want to mention that every single one of these reports had recognized, what any broadminded, honest and sincere human being would recognize—that Caroni (1975) Limited is an institution that has been burdensome to this country, as it now is and as it has become because of the impotence, negligence, absolute refusal of those who had the power to do or to refuse to do.

I will remind you of Shakespeare in *Measure for Measure*:

"Our doubts are traitors and make us lose the good we oft might win by failure to attempt."

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They never attempted because their doubts had to do with a kind of parochial, provincial, narrow-minded vision of what is possible. Every time there is talk about land and Caroni (1975) Limited, they start to think in terms of who has land and who did not get; who came from Africa and who from India; and they become impotent, muscle-bound, with a kind of palsy of the brain.

Mr. Speaker, this letter I will read was drafted by me. I quote for the benefit of the record:

"MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE,
LANDS AND FOOD PRODUCTION
St. Clair Circle
Port of Spain
Trinidad
Trinidad andTobago

21st May, 1984.

Hon. O. R. Padmore,
Ministry of Education and Culture,
Alexandra Street,
ST. CLAIR."

He was a member of a Cabinet-appointed committee, of which I was a member, to look at Caroni (1975) Limited. The letter says:

"Dear Sir,

We, the Professional Committee on Sugar Resources, submit herewith our report on the optional utilisation of the resources allocated to the Sugar Industry and take the opportunity to thank you for the discussions on an earlier draft with your ministerial colleagues on 17th April. The comments and suggestions were most helpful and have been taken into account.

Our report represents the collective views of members on an issue of comparable national magnitude faced in such years of our history as 1783, 1834, 1845 and 1917. We trust that our work reflects these perceptions.

Yours faithfully,"

I shall name the people who agreed to that, for posterity. They were: Frank Gomes, Senior Lecturer in Soil Sciences, University of the West Indies; Dr. Eric St. Cyr, who I believe is still a Senator; Mr. P. I. Gomes; and Dr. Morgan Job.

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3.50 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, in 1783, Roume de St. Laurent, I think it was, issued a thing they called the, Cedula of Population, because Trinidad and Tobago was an island that did not have enough people in it. Mr. St. Laurent, therefore, issued this thing and at that time there were the Napoleonic wars going on, and the black people were killing out all the white people in Haiti and the French colony. The population who were not white, the Mulattos, also came to Trinidad with their slaves. There are many records to show that when the Mulatto slave-owners came to Trinidad and Tobago, after 1783, they were arguing about why the white slave-owners must get 200 acres of land and they were only getting 100 acres of land.

I say that deliberately because there are many people who do not understand that there were black slave-owners in the Caribbean. Half of the £20 million that were voted in Parliament to give to slave-owners went to black slave-owners. People do not know that. They do not talk about these things. Mr. Speaker, that slavery is a matter of black and white is absolute nonsense.

In 1783, we had a problem of too much land and too little people, so that is the first date. In 1834, the slaves were manumitted: they were freed. They used to work for no money, they said, and then they let them go. So that when the slaves were freed in Trinidad and elsewhere they left the plantations and went to squat and tried to see about themselves. One does not want to be a slave even though one was being paid. That memory, the circumstances, maybe the market circumstances, were such that one wanted to bid up one's labour.

So that there was that crisis in 1834 which ended with the importation of labour into Trinidad and Tobago to match with the land in 1845. The Fatel Razack came here with the first load of Indians, and as I like to say—I would repeat what I said on the radio, when these people are talking about pure race, I said in 1945, the Fatel Razack unloaded a band of "Douglas" here. So where are these pure-race Indians in Trinidad and Tobago? *[Laughter]* That is another matter. That is not a laughing matter really, because people in Trinidad and Tobago *[Interruption]* Mr. Speaker, could you—

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, please.

Dr. The Hon. M. Job: Mr. Speaker, we began Indian indentureship in 1845 and that ended in 1917. This is the record that school children need to consider. Why is it that I said 1783, 1834, 1845 and 1917? In each of these years, these dates focus one's mind on the question of land in Trinidad and Tobago. This is still

the question with Caroni (1975) Limited. This report that we have prepared is consistent with the Spence Report, the Rampersad Report, all the sensible reports, including the report of 1992 by Kusha Haraksingh, because they did not have anything to do. All they had to do was to take all the other reports, summarize them and call them their report. They got paid to do nothing! That is all they did! They spent a large sum of money! That is how money is wasted in Trinidad and Tobago. A set of high-powered people are paid to go and copy what other people wrote and then call it their report. That is what they have done.

Mr. Speaker, it is absolutely necessary that once and for all we understand this Prime Minister—I know him to be a very sagacious and astute individual. He reminds me of Shakespeare, again, when Cassius was telling Brutus before the battle of Philipii:

“There is a tide in the affairs of men
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;
Omitted, all the voyage of their life
Is bound in shallows and in miseries.
On such a full sea are we now afloat;
And we must take the current when it serves,
Or lose our ventures.” *[Desk thumping]*

This Prime Minister is on a flood tide of opportunity with respect to Caroni (1975) Limited and I have no doubt that he understands Shakespeare. *[Desk thumping]* I have no doubt that his Bill is just, as the Chinese say: “A journey of a thousand miles begins with but just a single step.”

One of the things that we need to do to give effect to all these reports on the restructuring of Caroni (1975) Limited, must necessarily involve what all these reports, from Spence, Rampersad, Job, *et al* have been saying, that one must deal with modernization. One must go from words to action. There must be subsidiary companies at Caroni (1975) Limited and one of them has to be a land development company. I did not say so. This is not Morgan Job. It is in the Haraksingh Report of July, 1992. Mr. Speaker, you notice I am avoiding saying the PNM’s report because all they did was to repeat what I and others had said. *[Laughter]*. Mr. Speaker, understand, quite clearly!

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Mr. Speaker, for the benefit of future generations and for the children who are going to look retrospectively at the impotence and, as I called it, Mephistophelian deviousness that allowed these reports to be written and to rot, to collect dust and to have nothing done with them, I want the children of this country to understand how not to govern. I want the children of this country to understand how they must not abuse the people's trust.

The land of this country, including the land at Caroni (1975) Limited, belongs to everybody. I do not know that Mr. Panday, at any time, had determined in his own mind that a land development subsidiary in Caroni (1975) Limited must be an instrument of apartheid, that only Baboolal, Ramjohn, Seeta and Drupatee, must get land there. I do not know that.

I want to read the *Executive Summary* of 1984. That committee—I think Mr. Padmore was the chairman; the one they called the Chinese chopper; what was his name? Mr. Williams, Mr. Kamal Mohammed, and I cannot remember the name of the other person. However, Mr. Speaker, for the benefit of the children, because all these issues are raised by the Members of the Opposition I have to deal with them.

“Executive Summary

1. Export sugar no longer represents a viable use of the human and material resources at present engaged in the sugar industry.
2. On account of the complex issues raised by resource rationalisation, particularly the problems of human readjustment, change will be effected over a planned period of sufficient length to cushion social and financial costs.
3. In the short to medium term (5 to 10 years) the industry will be streamlined to bring output to about 100,000 tons, enough for domestic consumption and some export, and supplying molasses and bagasse to related industries. In this phase roughly one-half of the required cane will be produced by an expanded farming sector to which estate lands will be leased in medium sized farms (+ 25 acres). The labour force will be gradually reduced through voluntary retirement and priority to farms will be given to such sugar workers. The programme of land use diversification into livestock, cereals, fruit and vegetables, which has already begun, will be accelerated.

4. In the longer term (20 to 25 years) full rationalisation of the resources will have been achieved. It is envisaged that the physical resources will all be vested in a single state owned corporation which will diversify itself by creating wholly owned subsidiaries.”

Mr. Speaker, I will stay there just to explain, before I forget it, that I have no reason to presume that the genius of the people of Trinidad and Tobago is not equal to the task of creating a subsidiary equal to the purpose of building houses for public servants, policemen and teachers. I have said on sundry occasions in the past and I now repeat, that paying people’s pension from the Consolidated Fund is unfair, it is counterproductive and it is dangerous to the future of our children.

4.00 p.m.

When I said that in the past, I tried to explain what I meant by unfairness. That all the pensions that are being paid today are of current taxes. So that people who just leave high school and get a little clerk work, are being taxed to pay the pension of many people who worked with DEWD on a crash programme and URP and did not do any work at all. Is that fair, Mr. Speaker? We want people to understand that pensions must be linked to one’s security, one’s vision of independence, one’s sense of responsibility and do not burden future generations for one’s lack of responsibility.

So that when you have a fully-funded pension fund by all public servants, you can use that pool of resources to put into a land development company which is going to use all the lands in Caroni (1975) Limited that are equal to that purpose, and the very government that is criticizing this current one had agreed that they should do that. They never did it. No way. No child in this country should ever wait in expectation. Do you know when Kipling said, “if you can wait and not be tired of waiting,” they would be tired of waiting for this to be implemented. Let me continue, having said that.

“By and large the agricultural lands will have been leased for medium sized farms and reliance placed on price signals to determine land use. Processing industries for fruit and vegetables will have been developed.

Details of the characteristics of the human resources are discussed in Section III while the constraints of soil types and topography and a possible land use plan are presented at Section IV.

In Section V the state of the industry in 1983 is described as Model Zero and two developmental scenarios are sketched: Model One, a modified sugar

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industry, is thought attainable in the short run, while Model Two, for a full farming sector, is a long run possibility.

The key elements of a policy towards the resources now engaged in sugar should contain the following: an unambiguous decision to diversify away from export sugar towards agro-industrial production mainly for the home market; the need to phase the transition over a period of years so as to keep human, social and financial costs within affordable bounds; clear recognition that flexibility and efficiency in resource use necessitates decentralisation through the creation of individual farms.”

That is the summary which is consistent with the Haraksingh Report of 1992.

Mr. Speaker, my notes suggest to me that I need to talk about this question of international trade. Like I said, and I repeat for the benefit of the children in the audience, that I am not a volcanologist so I would take the advice of other people who understand when volcanoes will or will not erupt and with what force, but on matters having to do with international trade, I think I am the resident expert, Sir. So that when we are talking about Lomé, this is not a time for anybody to be talking about protecting the Lomé. I want to emphasize that for the benefit of every child.

You can go on a computer screen right now and read a newspaper in Japan, Osaka, Hyderabad, Bangalore and find out “who burn who and all this kind of nonsense. Some Japanese security firm gone under, you lock up somebody, you would hear that before everybody in Japan know about it.” In that kind of environment we cannot be talking about protecting a Lomé protocol. *[Interruption]* The Minister said that he should not worry about it and *[Crosstalk]* Mr. Speaker, I am responding to what I heard and what I heard was that we should have a vested interest in a Lomé protocol, which apparently, is some elixir, some certitude. *[Interruption]*

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague very much for giving way. I just want to clarify that it was the opposite. I was saying exactly what he was saying, it was in the context of what the Minister said: when I said what you are saying, he said a man at lunch told him that there will be a protocol, so do not worry. So we are saying the same thing.

Dr. The Hon. M. Job: Mr. Speaker, to err is human, to forgive divine. I think I have a bit of divinity in me. I would like to say that I see God in every face, not race, and I see it in my colleague over there. So that I humbly apologize if I did offend him. I

still want to make the point that what we need to do is those things that we have not done in the last 40 years with respect to enlightening the population, instigating them to understand that we no longer live in barracoons and slave plantations. We are living in a world of intellect, of cyberspace, we live in a world of multi-state economic blocs, Mercusor; that bloc from Canada to NAFTA. There are blocs in Asia. That is the kind of world we live in.

More importantly, too many children in this country have grown up imbibing a set of opposition political nonsense about autarchy, a kind of neo-mercantilism which prevents them from developing that set of attitudes and cultures that have to do with competing with the world. We should use this opportunity to emphasize that the lack of diversification in Caroni, and perhaps the reason why Dhanpoor of India got a \$20 million contract to help in that modernization and diversification concept, that imperative that has been long left to lie; left to wither, never vitalized in the mind of people. We need for them to understand that international trade and the markets that therein reside, is the only hope for Caroni (1975) Limited. Caroni (1975) Limited is a bundle of resources that we can use as a foundation to develop products. Mr. Speaker, every single one of these reports, including the one that the Member is talking about; this one is by Mr. Winston Dookeran, the Governor of the Central Bank and the Dookeran report identified many products coming out of using sugar, bagasse, distillery, fermentation technology, bio-technology and so forth. They talked about joint ventures in meat production. All those things, such as tilapia, sheaves, bagasse board, bagasse feed, have to be done.

I used to be the Prime Minister's Advisor for a while. This report is dated April 08, 1988. When I went through this report I wrote to the Right Hon. A.N.R. Robinson, Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, Whitehall, Maraval, and explained to him that the Dookeran Report, while it is a very good Report, was very defective in the sense that it undermined the very motive of the NAR *Manifesto*, which is, that they must privatize; they must get into the market; they must understand the dynamics of world trade. This report did not do that. I criticized it for that reason, but not for the essential substance that they needed to diversify.

Mr. Speaker, I am going through all these things because they are part of what was said, and if I go to keep the mind of the public or the reason I have to agree that the past Minister had a justification in divaricating into these sundry areas, they have to do with the reason we want the Bill. I think this Prime Minister understands Shakespeare. He must be a kind of opportunist which we all are, and I

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do not mean this in a pejorative sense, I mean an opportunist in the sense that you see a good opportunity and you take it; you do not let it pass. This opportunity is to do what nobody else had the guts, or the will to do. I would talk about will when I quote something here again.

The issue here is how you get the stakeholders that you call the union and the cane farmers. Those people who are essential and fundamental to the working of any project, how you do those things as a Government. Mr. Speaker, any Government in this country or, indeed, anywhere in the world, communist or whatever you call them, has to be interested in the feelings. Government is not just a technological concept. I have been at pains to explain these things to people that what a government can do, has a lot to do with feelings, emotions, ideas and culture.

4.10 p.m.

The sugar workers union, Mr. Panday's union, was quite right when it said—and I quote from the foreword of their report because they agreed with many of the things, and Dr. Keith Rowley did, in fact, say so:

"The union is committed to the view that the human factor is the most critical variable in any development process. After all, economic development is for and about people."

I have heard Mr. Panday say that otherwise.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the speaking time of the Member for Tobago East has expired.

Motion made, That the hon. Member's speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [*Dr. K. Rowley*]

Question put and agreed to.

Dr. The Hon. M. Job: Mr. Speaker, my mother taught me that one has to be gracious. I publicly express my sincere, good feeling that the Member for Diego Martin West moved a motion that I be allowed to continue. I thank him for that.

Mr. Panday: Do not spare him!

Dr. The Hon. M. Job: I was glad that the Member for Diego Martin West declared to all and sundry that they will support the amendment. He said so on two occasions, at least, that I heard. I do not think that in saying so he gave enough enthusiasm to his desire to support it. Apparently he did not understand that it is

not the wish of this Government to subvert the imperatives, injunctions and philosophy of the Constitution. You must defend the right of people to belong or not to belong, and that is what the man said in the *Gita* I think it was; to uphold and to support. Therefore, a Bill cannot be brought to subvert people's right to belong or not to belong. The thing is more subtle than that. It has to do with creating that kind of environment, ambiance, congruity of circumstances that will permit you with facility, even felicity, to embark on that journey of transformation with the least kuchori, the least amount of bacchanal.

We live in a country that lives, to a large extent, in denial and bacchanal, so whatever you can do to ease that process, the potential and the possibility, as a Government understanding that economic development is for and about people, and the trade union is committed to the view that the human factor is the most critical variable in any developmental process, you do that, within what is lawful and decent.

I have the honour to say publicly that the Prime Minister of this country is not the Prime Minister of a trade union. Many people, including myself, thought it might be a difficult transition for him, but I want to admit what I have learned from the ancients, wise men sometimes change their minds, fools never do. I think he has changed his mine about many things. I do not hear anything about "parasitic oligarchy" again. [*Laughter*]. That is good. You have to train children to understand that those who are rigid and ossified in their antiquarian postures, they die. You have to be flexible and learn to adapt. That flexibility and wilfulness to adjust and adapt is the secret of success.

This is why I have no doubt that this amendment is part of that necessary process which will lead us to do all those things all these reports said we should have done, and never did. We never did them because people were focused, fixed, provincial, parochial; narrow minded perspectives and antiquarian understanding having to do with the role of state enterprises as the doers of good, the imposers of equity. State enterprise was to do that. Caroni (1975) Limited was to be a flagship, in a kind of—when they were talking about commanding heights and all kinds of things, they forgot that if you get the workers and farmers involved and give people a good prospect, everyone is there for their own benefit, and there is no crime and no annoyance in saying that people seek their own best interest, that is the fundamental axiomatic basis of law.

Every legal system that we ever knew about, whether it was Hammurabi, Babylonian, the Old Testament, Leviticus or the Hebrew people, it came out of

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that axiomatic understanding that the individual must protect his self-interest, and there is no reason why the sugar workers and cane farmers should not want to protect their best interest. It is the purpose of the Government to facilitate them in so doing, lawfully to the benefit of everybody else and this Act is to do that, to make sure that Caroni (1975) Limited is not a burden but a boon.

Caroni (1975) Limited can be a cornucopia of plenty. It would have been if they did not squander the opportunity, and we would have had less racism, anxiety, annoyance, or uneasiness in this country. I have an interesting thing to read but I hear they always bring this thing about who get and who did not get and I have a problem here. I wrote one of my colleagues a note and asked the question, "I have a problem with this thing about the 'Tripartite Plan' that I am reading from—Tripartite seems to me to have to do with three, so who were the parties to this thing?" He wrote: the union, the Government and Caroni (1975) Limited. I was a bit facetious but I still asked the question because the reality is that this Tripartite thing was not tripartite at all. It was between two people. It was between the Government on one side and the union on the other.

Let us look at this:

"APPENDIX 2

Members of the Tripartite Committee on Caroni (1975) Limited"

Listen to who the members were, there is a whole page to tell you who the members were and I could only see two sets of persons:

"Members of Government/Caroni Team were as follows:

- | | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Dr. Kusha Haraksingh | - Chairman
Caroni (1975) Limited |
| Mr. Russell Wotherspoon | - General Manager
Caroni (1975) Limited |
| Mr. Carl Nurse | - Financial Controller
Caroni (1975) Limited |
| Mr. Dennis Pantin | - Economist
U.W.I |
| Permanent Secretary | - Ministry of Finance |
| Permanent Secretary | - Minister of Agriculture, Land and
Marine Resources" |

That was one side—now they say this is a Tripartite document—but listen to who was on the other side.

The union's representatives were as follows:

"Mr. Panday	President General ATS&GWTU
Sam Maharaj	General Secretary ATS&GWTU
Mr. S. N. Maharaj	ATASS
Mr. R. Shah	N.F.W.U.
Mr. S. Ramsingh	T.I.C.F.A

The alternates nominated by the unions were:

Mr. F. R. Bissessar	ATS&GWTU
Mr. B. M. Jones	ATS&GWTU
Mr. R. Chandrakate	NFWU
Mr. P. Jordan	ATASS
Mr. M. Hosein	TICFA

That was a tripartite committee! So, what are you teaching children? There is a situation going on in this country in which textbooks are printed and every page has wrong information on it, this is a wrong page! *[Laughter]* The committee had two sides but it is called Tripartite! The nonsense started in Cabinet, is that kind of Cabinet! The people who print the textbooks were just taking pattern.

Mr. Speaker, I am dealing with that because it is essential for people to understand that this piece of legislation has very powerful implications. It is not what people are saying it is. It is an attempt by the Executive to meddle in trade unions' business and force people to do what they do not want to. This is an amendment to legislation that is already there and was amended previously, they did not abolish it. If they thought that the intention of this Bill was subversive of constitutional rights, well, they had the option, they should have voided it completely, negated it. That was not done, because I presume people always saw some merit in trying to establish the kind of harmony in the sugar area.

Indeed, when I quoted the dates there, you must understand sugar and sugar unions and Caroni (1975) Limited. I remember Sat Maharaj writing something

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which I cussed him a lot for, when they were having a sit down at the Maha Sabha Headquarters some years ago about Caroni (1975) Limited. He said that Caroni (1975) Limited and Indian culture were the same. I said to him that there were no Caroni (1975) Limited Indians, so what nonsense he was saying; but there is a point to it.

There is an important point to it which is in the context of the economy of Trinidad and Tobago. This is where I am going to quote this little piece here, and we need to do that, Mr. Speaker, to understand why it is important for the Government to measure in this thing.

4.20 p.m.

In 1971 I wrote a paper entitled *Issues in Sugar Trade Policy* and I quote from it. I said:

“In the West Indies the implications of policy as it effects the workers and small cane farmers have very important sociological and political overtones. During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, large international shifts in labour took place in response to the demands of tropical plantation agriculture. Indians went to Fiji and the West Indies to grow sugarcane. To Malaya they went to grow rubber. In East Africa it was to build a railway and help manage the territory. The consequence to the West Indies is that the sugar workers in Guyana and Trinidad are mostly East Indians. A change in fortune for the sugar industry affects them directly and to a greater extent than the urban African who comprises the rest of the population. The political consequence of a negative change or negative changes in the sugar industry are an exacerbation of the normally bad race relations existing between these two groups especially as governments are black dominated. Charges of neglect of the interest of Indians are easily correlated in the minds of the workers and farmers with the biases of the black political leaders. Racial harmony, then, is seen to rest to some extent, on the stability in the sugar industry. That emotions run high when West Indian intellectuals view the sugar industry is seen clearly in the expressed views of the sociologist Orlando Patterson. He thinks that the cast system has evolved with the industry and that the instability of Jamaican family life is to be blamed on the insecurity engendered by the seasonality of employment in the industry. The conclusion then is that there are influences of socio-cultural nature that must be taken into account when viewing the decision-making process as it relates to policies concerning the sugar industry and that these factors serve to limit rather than to widen the choices open to policy makers.”

Mr. Speaker, in my youth, 26 years ago I had vision. I did not know I would have been in Parliament one day dealing with these issues in this kind of way but I had the vision to state it there, to write it down that policy makers are restrained in the options and the choices they have because of the historically antecedent circumstances which are exploited by political charlatans; venal, incompetent men knowing nothing better than to manipulate the vulgar emotions of the mob carnalizing them into instruments of destruction. That has to stop, Mr. Speaker.

This amendment is part of that process to prepare Trinidad and Tobago to deal once and for all with Caroni (1975) Limited as a national asset—an asset to benefit everybody. It is not an occasion and an opportunity for building political careers; careers that have no virtue and value except and to the extent that they give meaning to the notion of divide and rule. “Time to overs that!” We have to deal with it as if indeed we have a thing called a nation of Trinidad and Tobago; we have a constitution that gives people rights and responsibilities. This Cabinet has to behave and must be seen to behave with regard to Caroni (1975) Limited as if indeed the imperatives of the Constitution—even if the policy maker may be constrained by history and circumstances, that is what the art of politics is about. It is about relaxing these constraints when you meet them to facilitate the kinds of action that you know you must morally do; those things that you must morally commit.

Mr. Speaker, I want to end, I cannot go into everything.

Hon. Member: *[Inaudible]*

Dr. The Hon. M. Job: Yes, you know I can go on until 8.30 p.m. but I have until 4.30 p.m. I cannot go into all the devarications and subtle corners that the Member for Diego Martin West went into, but I think that I have sufficiently dealt with the substantial issues in his contribution that, if you are reminded, Mr. Speaker, are very tangential to the substance of the reason I am standing here—a Bill to amend the Cane Farmers Cess Ordinance.

I do think it is legitimate that politicians, when they get up in Parliament, should use the occasion to score political points; that is the nature of politics. I, myself, will do that when I see reason so to do; when I think it will benefit us. But I want to say if the Member for Diego Martin West will grant me that most of what he said was rather tenuously connected to the—it was mainly his opportunity to carry on his war with the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources. It was his opportunity to galay and gambage; “gallery” on the national stage, let

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television pick it up: “I did so about mealybug”, and he called out mealybug name in zoological terms; nothing to do with an Act to amend Cane Farmers Cess Ordinance. It was bravura and bravado, what people on the street know as boasting. That is not my purpose, Mr. Speaker. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker, I just want to put on the record in the few minutes left to me, that Caroni (1975) Limited is about ideas—wrong ideas, destructive ideas, bad ideas—that were the engine of the PNM for the past 40 years. Ideas are the things in the mind of God. In the book of John, Chapter 1, verse 1 it says: “In the beginning was the word and the word was God”. They are talking about ideas and if you have the wrong idea you do the wrong thing. These people were motivated by the wrong ideas about state enterprises; that they must develop a land development company in Caroni (1975) Limited because Indians will get land; ideas that suggest that it is quite all right to do a land distribution programme in Wallerfield but not in Caroni. Those kinds of bifurcated ideas, that kind of dimensionality, that two-dimensional set of ideas that allowed you to do one thing in Wallerfield but not the same thing in Caroni. Even if it is going to burden Trinidad and put a chain or a fetter around the neck of this nation forever, you do nothing because you have the wrong idea.

Mr. Speaker, I hope I have indeed done what I set out to do—to make a contribution. I want to get the Members of Parliament to understand what this amendment is about and why they should support it. More importantly, I want to do what I came in this Parliament to do—to use it not as an occasion for bombast, or to mischievously misuse illiteracy and ignorance, but to use it as an opportunity to help this nation to retreat from the edge of the abyss in which the wrong ideas of those people have put it. I do support this amendment, Mr. Speaker. *[Desk thumping]*

BUDGET DAY
(ANNOUNCEMENT)

The Prime Minister (Hon. Basdeo Panday): I did not rise to contribute to the debate but rather I want to thank you for granting me this opportunity to make an announcement at this stage and I wish to announce that budget day is December 12, 1997. *[Desk thumping]*

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

4.30 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.02 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

CANE FARMERS INCORPORATION AND CESS (AMDT.) BILL

Mr. Colm Imbert (*Diego Martin East*): Mr. Speaker, the last Member who contributed has distinguished himself among other Members of the UNC Government who come into this Parliament to speak on legislation without even reading a single clause of the Bill in question. For the benefit of the Member for Tobago East, the Bill does not have anything to do with trade unions; it has nothing to do with people getting involved in trade union business. The “Association” in question is an association of farmers.

All I can say is that I am extremely disappointed in the contribution of the Member for Tobago East, who spent in excess of one hour, prattling and prating with irrelevant phrases, misquoted literature and high-sounding principles. Imagine this is the replacement for Mr. Robinson; a shame and a disgrace.

Now that ministers are recipients of an increased housing allowance, those ministers who are indebted to the state, should pay their loans, rather than come here with all of this shameless, high-sounding principles. To use one of the quotations from the literature that the Member likes to use: “completely out of context, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.”

What did the hon. Member seek to do when he got up? A shameless apology for the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources. I took some notes. “The Minister is not to blame for the Froghopper crisis; the weather caused the problem; act of God; the El Niño current, causing unpredictable weather patterns.” Just spouting words. Does he know anything about El Niño? That has been around for the last two years. If the Minister knew anything about that, he would not have been so misguided as to support the unpredictable weather patterns which have emerged within the last two years as being attributed to El Niño; if the Minister knew that, then he would not have experimented with this biological-control agent in this way. Precisely because no one can predict the weather patterns with El Niño and other atmospheric phenomena present at this time; the Green House effect and so forth; precisely because world weather patterns are changing, that is the reason it was highly irresponsible of the Minister and the board to experiment with a biological-control agent.

To make it worse, the Minister and the board were warned. The farmers warned them, “do not experiment with biological-control agents. Even if you wish to do that, although we are warning you not to do it, have adequate back-up of chemical control agents of pesticides.”

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Neither the Minister nor the board paid any attention to the advice given to them by the farmers. They had no back-up and when the problem arose, they panicked; they could do nothing. What was the result? Twenty-five per cent of the sugar crop has been lost. For what reason? The hon. Member for Tobago East said no one could predict it. Twenty-five per cent; \$300 million in revenue! Why? As my hon. colleague from Diego Martin West has pointed out, the Minister and the board wanted to demonstrate how intelligent they were. They were on the cutting edge of technology. No need to use pesticides. "We, the super-intelligent ones, know how to deal with the frog hopper. We will introduce a biological-control agent that would solve all of Trinidad and Tobago's problems with the frog hopper."

What happened? Three hundred million dollars down the drain and they have to double the amount of pesticides they put into the system. So the adverse effect on the environment was doubled. This is what the Member for Tobago East got up to defend. Monumental incompetence! I sincerely hope that we are not going to be treated to more of these experiments from the Member for Princes Town which have cost us hundreds of millions of dollars.

As for the Member for Tobago East, reading from some report from 1971 which recommended diversification as the solution to Caroni (1975) Limited's problems, the record shows that every single one of the attempts at diversification: sheep, goat, citrus, has been a money loser. It is old hat. In his rambling, he made the point that something must be done about Caroni (1975) Limited. "We must seize the opportunity. There is a time and tide in the affairs of men." But he fails to concede that it is the Minister who has not seized the opportunity. The Minister in the Government of which he is a part, did nothing. You see, we have an element of political dishonesty in this Parliament. The Minister, who is a Member of his Cabinet, did nothing for the last two years and has put Caroni (1975) Limited on the brink of financial ruin.

5.10 p.m.

The reason he did it is the very reason which the Member for Tobago East told us. What is the Member saying? On the one hand he condemns previous governments for inaction and, on the other hand he excuses his colleagues for his inaction over the last two years because the Member is protecting his political turf. The Member for Tobago East would never get up and tell us the reason we have lost millions of dollars over the last two years is because of the incompetence of my colleague, the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, who is

protecting his political turf. This is the political dishonesty, I speak of, juxtaposing sentences and phrases completely out of context, making irrelevant points and coming like “Johnny come lately” to persons in their second, third, fourth and fifth terms in this honourable House about what parliamentary presentation should be all about—not even a year in the Parliament and they want to tell us how we should conduct ourselves in this Parliament.

I think it is necessary to educate the Member for Tobago East about the Bill of which he knows nothing. The Bill before this honourable House attempts to control a situation that has occurred with a cane farmer’s association, not a trade union. It speaks about an independent supervisor, but how can someone be independent if one is politically appointed. This is what this Bill says, that the independent supervisor appointed by the President. In this case it means Cabinet, it means Minister. How can that be an independent person? That is a political appointee so it is a misnomer. There is a political appointee now controlling the affairs of cane farmers and what is the substance of the legislation if this independent person, this political appointee, believes that the association is in difficulty he can convene a general meeting?

In clause 10, section 11 is being amended by inserting after section 11 the following section:

“(2) The Independent Supervisor shall have full conduct of all general elections held and general meetings convened pursuant to sections 10 (2) and 11 (4).”

So, this political appointee now comes into this association and decides how general elections are conducted. One needs to think about this a bit more as my hon. Colleague from Diego Martin West has pointed out. At present persons do not obey the law. There is existing legislation and persons have flouted it. What makes you believe they will not flout this as well if at present they are not responsible or they do not follow normal principles and they do not wish to respect the legislation? Why by enacting new legislation do you believe you can force them to behave when clauses are put into the legislation that can cause a challenge? Why should a political appointee tell me how to run my organization? Why should a political appointee run my general meeting? If I were a member of the association I would challenge that if I did not like who the political appointee was, if I were of the view that that political appointee is favouring one faction. The person is not truly independent. Why is the person not being appointed by the President in his own right?

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Mr. Speaker, through you, why does the Minister have to become involved in the appointment of some so-called independent person? Then we see dilution of democracy. You are allowing a meeting to take place, and decisions to be taken by 10 per cent of the membership, So one in every 10 persons would be deciding the fate of the other nine. Mr. Speaker, does that make sense to you? Are you saying that even if there are two meetings and you cannot get 10 per cent of the persons to come, under clause 11(c) where two consecutive general meetings annual or special, are held after notices have been duly served, but the number of voting members present is insufficient to constitute the required quorum, a third general meeting may be convened and all decisions of the association may be taken at that meeting by majority vote of all voting members present? So, if one per cent of the members show up, three persons show up, three vote so and one so, must everybody in the association be subjected to the decisions taken at that meeting?

Mr. Speaker, I hear the Attorney General saying that is how it happens all the time in clubs. This is not a joke. We are legislating people's behaviour here. If persons are dissatisfied with the manner in which the supervisor is appointed, for example, and decide to protest by not attending the meeting, what you are doing is legislating a mechanism for a small minority to control a majority of persons. We really need to think about this a bit more. I understand what the hon. Minister is trying to do. There is a chaotic situation, there are factions and so forth, and the Minister is attempting to bring order by bringing someone from outside. Presumably he will have no vested interest to regulate the affairs of the association.

I do not believe this is the way it should be done. If, in fact, one wants to bring an independent person, let that person be truly independent. I do not believe the Minister should have a role in selecting the person at all, and I do not believe the quorum should be reduced from 25 per cent to 10 per cent because, you are legislating the fact that there is no participation in this matter. Why must we admit failure? You are admitting that you have failed when you legislate that you will accept a meeting with only 10 per cent of the eligible persons who would be involved. Why 10? Why not two, five or 12 per cent? Where did this magic number come from? I do not think it is correct to institute legislation to have serious matters deliberated upon by 10 per cent of any organization, even in this Parliament. It is unusual.

As a matter of fact, I have never heard of a sitting of Parliament where four Members of Parliament were present and debated and deliberated on legislation. That is unheard of. I am asking the Minister to look at these matters a little more

closely. I understand what the Minister is trying to do but he should look at it again. It cannot be. As my colleague has pointed out, this is the most important piece of legislation and, as the Member for Tobago East very inaccurately indicated, this piece of legislation is the beginning of action in the whole process of change in Caroni (1975) Limited, this piece of legislation has absolutely nothing to do with that.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask the Minister to focus on issues that really matter. When I looked at that Price Waterhouse report on Caroni (1975) Limited a month or so ago, which again, the hon. Member for Tobago East conveniently neglected to treat with, the numbers in that report are shocking, the conclusions in that Price Waterhouse report are very far-reaching and I ask the Minister to focus his energies on things that really matter. This is important but in no way is it as important as the crisis in which Caroni (1975) Limited finds itself. When you look at that you see that Caroni (1975) Limited will have a \$2 million debt in five years, you see that the recommendations of that Tripartite Report which the Member for Tobago East so flippantly dismissed as being a report of two groups, plagiarism of his work, I ask the Minister to focus on these problems.

5.20 p.m.

There is no problem if he believes that the Tripartite Report has to be modified, or that a new direction is necessary. The Minister has the responsibility for the portfolio. He should do something. If this Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources does not do something fast to improve his track record, he would go down on record as the worst Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources this country has ever had. By doing something I do not mean wearing boots and going out on the field when cane cutting begins and other public relations exercises.

When I was appointed Minister of Works and Transport, after we had made some architectural improvements to this edifice, I was presented with the challenge of the Port Authority of this country, a state enterprise which had been losing in excess of \$100 million annually. I could have taken the easy way out and do nothing, or put my hand out to the Treasury and call for money, that the Minister probably is being persuaded to or has no opportunity, but to do. I did not do that. I took the bull by its horns and brought in a company like Price Waterhouse to evaluate and establish the staffing requirements and what should be done to make that utility effective and efficient.

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Arising out of the consultant's report we embarked on an attrition programme at the Port Authority, where we restructured the entire utility. Today the Port Authority can boast of making a profit in excess of \$50 million annually, in 1995, 1996 and 1997 because we took the harsh decisions. I am advising the Minister about this. Short-term political gain is meaningless. If the Minister wants to go down on record as having done something, he should bite the bullet and take meaningful action at Caroni (1975) Limited as any other enterprise.

We did it at Public Transport Service Corporation and the Water and Sewerage Authority. As a matter of fact, I dare say that the PNM suffered some loss of support because of the action we took at the state enterprises, but now, the country is benefiting! For this reason the UNC Government can talk about economic growth and surpluses. During the period 1991—1995, we took decisions which were in the national interest and long-term future of the country. Populace government where you pander to public sentiment in the face of cold reality can only last for so long and take you so far; after a while it catches up with you.

I ask the Minister not to allow the Member for Tobago East to speak after him on the next occasion. We could have been spared the 70 odd minutes of irrelevant, trite, vacuous and inane nonsense to which we were treated. He said absolutely nothing!

Mr. Speaker: I am sure that you have such a command of the English Language that you can use a word, other than "nonsense".

Mr. C. Imbert: I thank you, Mr. Speaker. Inane, trite, vacuous irrelevancies that we were treated to by the Member for Tobago East. He rambled on about all sorts of things as ethnicity. He abused this Parliament and took the opportunity to force us to listen to diatribe written by him, similar to what we read in a weekly newspaper, that under normal circumstances one would not read. I am paid to be here, so I have to listen to this diatribe to which this unfortunate Member has decided to subject us. It has nothing to do with the Bill. It was completely off the point and did not deal with the substance of the problem at Caroni (1975) Limited.

I ask the Minister to look at this Bill again. We on this side would accept the principle which he is seeking to put forward. In my view, there is some need for modification. If the Minister wishes to make his mark he must be serious about the management of the matters under his control.

Thank you.

The Attorney General (Hon. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj): Mr. Speaker, I did not intend to speak in this debate, but having regard to the points which have been raised as to whether or not the Bill may be constitutional, I think it is my duty to respond to some of the matters. The point was raised by the hon. Member for Diego Martin East that it is wrong for an independent supervisor to have some control over an association.

Clause 8 (b) (2) states:

“Where it appears to the Independent Supervisor that there is an unresolved dispute in the management of the Association such that the management of the Association is at an impasse, he may call general elections and convene a general meeting for that purpose.”

This Bill gives a machinery for settling or resolving disputes, where before the disputes were not resolved.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Attorney General for giving way. I am not against any institution or machinery for settling disputes. The issue I raised was how independent is this independence.

Hon. R. L. Maharaj: Mr. Speaker, under the Act which was passed by the PNM administration and is the existing law, the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources has some influence in the operation of the cane-farming industry and the Trinidad Islandwide Cane Farmers Association. Therefore, any government of the day would have a duty in respect of that. When there are unresolved disputes which affect the sugar industry, they affect the public's interest. There is an obligation on the executive arm of the state to intervene so that the problems can be resolved. This is the machinery for intervening. The intervention occurs and the general membership is involved. The notice for the meetings would be published in the newspapers and the general membership would have a say in which direction the association would go.

These amendments are made in an effort to get the membership involved at important stages of the management or operation of the association. Instead of there being the allegation of political interference, it gives the membership an opportunity to take direction of the association.

5.30 p.m.

I think the hon. Member for Diego Martin East has misunderstood the Bill. He raised the point of 25 per cent and 10 per cent. When one looks at section 11 of the Ordinance, it says that:

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- "(1) A special general meeting of the Association shall be called by the secretary—
- (a) upon the direction of the committee; or
 - (b) upon receipt by him of a request signed by not less than twenty-five members of the Association and specifying the business to be transacted thereat."

The law the PNM passed was that 25 members of the association can request the meeting. This is being amended so that 25 per cent of the membership can call the meeting. There must be more people so that there are greater safeguards. *[Interruption]* Ten per cent is the quorum. I am talking about clause 11(a), inserting after the words 'twenty-five' the words 'per cent'.

The law as it is now reads: "The quorum of any general meeting whether annual or special shall be twenty-five". Clause 11 of the Bill amends "twenty-five" to "twenty-five per cent", and section 12 of the Act is amended to read "10 per cent of the members of the association". So, there are two amendments which give greater safeguards. Twenty-five per cent of the membership are to request the meeting and 10 per cent of the membership, instead of 25, is to be the quorum.

The hon. Member for Diego Martin East got up and said, "Look at what the Government is doing!"

Mr. Imbert: I thank the hon. Attorney General for giving way. My understanding of clause 11 is that the quorum is being reduced from 25 per cent to 10 per cent.

Hon. R. L. Maharaj: Mr. Speaker, it is a waste of parliamentary time to talk the truth and to speak the facts. That is PNM style. He gets up after studying the Bill and makes that statement, when the amendment shows that it increases the quorum, gives more safeguards and increases the number of people who have to request the meeting. He did not say that he did not read the Bill.

Mr. Speaker, any expression to the effect that this Bill is in any way unfair, illegal or oppressive to the membership is incorrect. The hon. Member also read clause 11(c), which inserts subsection (5):

- "(5) Where two consecutive general meetings, annual or special, are held after notices have been duly served, but the number of voting members present is insufficient to constitute the required quorum, a third general meeting may be convened and all decisions of the Association may be taken at that meeting by a majority vote of all voting members present."

It is not unusual in corporations incorporated by Parliament or companies formed under the Companies Act, to have similar clauses. It follows that if one is trying to have a meeting and people do not come, one must have a meeting. One just cannot postpone meetings. What then does one do? There is machinery to give notice to the world. It is advertised in the Act. It must be published and whoever comes to the meeting, after being notified, takes decisions by a majority vote of all members present. What is unfair and oppressive about that? In what way can that be regarded as trying to control and politically interfere with this association?

I owe a duty in this matter to say that I find it very difficult for the PNM to come here, having passed a law in 1961, and amended it in 1965, which compelled people to belong to a particular association and say the things they did. Why did they want that? They wanted political control of the cane farming industry. They came to this Parliament and used its majority to try to politically control the cane farming industry. The law said that every cane farmer whether he or she wanted to belong to that association or not, had to belong. The law was to the effect that every cane farmer, whether he or she wanted to pay money to that association as membership fees or not, had to pay a Cess to the association, and for years the PNM manipulated and controlled the association. It was so bad it caused divisions in the sugar and cane-farming industries. As the Member for Tobago East, Dr. The Hon. Morgan Job, said, this association and Caroni (1975) Limited were being used by the then government for political purposes.

A cane farmer decided to go to court to challenge this and it was declared illegal by the courts. Mr. Speaker, do you know why? Because it was held that the legislature does not have any right to compel people to belong to the association. It was a breach of the freedom of association and a denial of the enjoyment of property. It was declared unconstitutional: as violating a person's rights under the constitution.

Where did the PNM—unless they now want to disown the PNM—get the moral authority to say that we, the Government, want to interfere in the administration of the cane farmers' association; to hijack the association for political purposes. How could that be correct?

Mr. Speaker, this is an important Bill, but I know that the hon. Member for Diego Martin West had to give the impression that it is not important. He had to do that because he failed to create harmony in the cane farming industry and this Bill was doing what the hon. Member for Princes Town was able to achieve. He is coloured in his mind about the hon. Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine

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Resources bringing a bill to assist in emancipating cane farmers from PNM oppression; promoting harmony in the industry; promoting the human resource development and bringing some political stability to the area to assist in the economic development of Trinidad and Tobago.

5.40 p.m.

But according to the hon. Member for Diego Martin West, that is not important. We must come with a bigger bill because it is the opening of Parliament. We must come with more pages, a long bill because it is the opening of Parliament.

This Government does not operate that way. This Government looks at the substance not at the form, and the substance of this Bill is to promote justice in the cane farming industry and more political stability to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. Mr. Speaker, any allegation that it is illegal; that it in any way interferes with the rights of anyone; it in any way promotes political interference, is totally incorrect.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister of Consumer Affairs (Hon. Mervyn Assam): Mr. Speaker, I did not want to prolong this debate but nevertheless, I thank you for giving me the opportunity to make a very brief intervention on a Bill to amend the Cane Farmers Incorporation and Cess Ordinance, 1961.

Mr. Speaker, this is a very simple, albeit, very important piece of legislation. Notwithstanding the fact that the Member for Diego Martin West attempted to deride the Bill and its importance, it is my view that this Bill has far-reaching economic consequences, and this is the dimension I wish to make my short intervention about.

Although I wanted to add that in the same manner that a previous PNM administration wanted to foist itself on the cane farmers by legislating an organization in which they had to join and pay a cess, they also resisted the establishment of Trinidad and Tobago Unified Teachers Association (TTUTA) and many people have forgotten that. When a substantial number of the teaching profession wanted to disassociate itself with the Trinidad and Tobago Teachers Association and founded an organization, in the interim, called COMFORT moving towards the establishment of Trinidad and Tobago Unified Teachers Association, that same PNM administration attempted to frustrate the democratic rights and

aspirations, under the Constitution of this country, of the large majority of teachers in this country. To come today and accuse this Government of being unconstitutional and undemocratic and attempting to foist itself and so forth, on cane farmers is a total abnegation of some of the things they themselves had perpetrated in this society for a long time.

What I want to bring into focus about this Bill, is to indicate to this Parliament what were the reasons, and what were the objectives defined in Act No. 17 of 1961. It is very important to go back to the parent Act to see, in perspective, the importance of this measure and its economic implications. It says:

- (a) to promote, foster and encourage the growing of cane by cane-farmers and the orderly and proper delivery thereof to factories and the extension and welfare of cane farming as an industry;
- (b) the preparation of or the settling of terms for cane-farmers' contracts with sugar and with other factories and with labour;
- (c) to aid in settling disputes that may arise between cane-farmers and sugar factories, cane-farmers and labour and amongst cane-farmers;
- (d) to act as agents for cane-farmers or any of them in any matter;
- (e) to promote any Bill in furtherance of the interest of cane farming;
- (f) to make representations to the Government on any matter affecting the interest of cane farmers;
- (g) to buy and sell and deal in fertilizers and agricultural implements and supplies if and when it may be deemed necessary to do so for the benefit of the members of the Association;
- (h) to invest and deal with the money of the Association in such a manner as may from time to time be determined by the committee and to pay all costs, charges and expenses that may be incurred by the Association at any time;
- (i) to become members of any association except any political body or association;
- (j) to endeavour to obtain or to extend financial aid for such members who may require such aid in the carrying on of their cane cultivation;
- (k) generally to do all such acts, and matters on things that may appear to the Association to be conducive to the attainment of the objects of the Association."

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So all the objectives of this association are economic in nature. That is very important.

Therefore, in order for these economic objectives to be achieved—and I observe that both Members for Diego Martin East and West took the opportunity this afternoon to go outside of what this Bill is attempting to do and to introduce all kinds of tangential and sometimes irrelevant matters concerning Caroni (1975) Limited—if one puts the two things and juxtapose them, one would see how important this Bill is in terms of the survival and future development of Caroni (1975) Limited. If one does not have an association that is strong, if one does not have an association that can achieve economic objectives, if one does not have an association that can grow cane effectively and efficiently—as the Member for Diego Martin West said in a previous debate, he would like to see the tripartite committee’s recommendations undertaken successfully, that is, a reduction of cane growing by Caroni (1975) Limited and an increase in cane growing by cane farmers so that cane could be grown on a more efficient basis, all the more reason, Mr. Speaker, to have an organization that is in harmony.

An attempt by this Government to heal a schism, an attempt by this Government to ensure that there are good relations existing within the cane farming community and, to heal any rift that may occur and does exist, to me, is a noble motive and a very high aspiration to achieve in respect of not only the cane farming community but on what cane and sugar will have on the Treasury as the Member for Diego Martin West always alludes to and has alluded to this afternoon. It is very important.

Mr. Speaker, in order to ensure that their objectives were met, a framework was put in place which made provision for a committee of management, and a committee which comprises the representatives, Government and the association had the following responsibilities:

- “(a) the regulation of its proceedings, the calling of meetings, the quorum necessary for the transaction of business, the voting of the members of the Committee, and the retirement and rotation of the elected members of the committee;
- (b) the appointment of the executive committees and sub-committees, and the delegation to such committees and sub-committees, of the powers and duties of the committee;

- (c) the appointment and removal of a manager and secretary and of such other officers and servants as the committee may think fit, and the allocation of duties of the officers and servants;
- (d) the keeping and presentation of accounts, and generally for carrying into effect the objects of the Association.

If a situation has arisen whereby this association could not carry out its objectives as a consequence of some fraction having taken place, it is in my view—and it is the view of this Government—and it is the responsibility of the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources to take every measure, to seek every solution, to take any approach that would bring about this harmony in order to ensure that the economic objectives of the association are carried out and that the responsibilities of officers, servants, secretary and so forth are discharged.

That is essentially what this Bill is seeking to do this afternoon. If one complains that in 1998 there is going to be a drain on the Treasury of \$200-odd million, in 1999, \$300 million and in the year 2000, another \$300 million, then this Government is taking the necessary actions to ensure that the cane farming community is at peace with each other and that it will grow cane in quantities and in quality, efficient and economic so as to bring about the turnaround that is required, so that Caroni (1975) Limited will no longer drain the Treasury at the levels suggested by the Member for Diego Martin West and some other spurious report that has been talked about.

Over time, Caroni (1975) Limited can be turned around into an economic entity providing employment, foreign exchange and all the other services that they provide to the welfare of the people of that Caroni community and, by extension, the national community, so that Caroni (1975) Limited could make its economic contribution to the development of a quality society and to the quality of life to the people of this country.

5.50 p.m.

I am rather surprised, in fact, I am very disappointed that both the Member for Diego Martin East and Diego Martin West could come here this afternoon and take that line of argument. I think they should have congratulated the Government and the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources for bringing this timely piece of legislation to the Parliament, recognizing the precarious position in which Caroni (1975) Limited finds itself today, rather than say at the beginning of the legislative term, at the beginning of a new session of Parliament, we have

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brought trivia, drivel, vacuousness, as described by the Member for Diego Martin East in his attempt to exercise that kind of attitude that he is wont to exercise in previous sessions of Parliament.

Mr. Speaker, this Government would do everything it can to bring about peace in this country, whether it is peace among cane farmers; whether it is industrial peace as evidenced by the fact that various categories of public servants were unable to get their collective agreements settled for more than nine years, and in less than two years of this Government being in office, we were able to settle every single collective agreement that was outstanding with respect to public servants in this country. This is another manifest demonstration of the capacity of this Government to bring about industrial peace in this country with our over-arching the motto of national unity; another demonstration of attempting to bring about unity in the cane-farming community of Trinidad and Tobago and in Caroni (1975) Limited, in particular.

So that we must not come to the Parliament and make statements that cannot stand up to scrutiny. We must not come to Parliament and not read our Bill, not prepare for it and make erroneous statements and mislead the Parliament and the public gallery and, by extension, mislead the national community. We must not allow that to happen. I think the Member for Diego Martin East should be censured in attempting to do so.

The other unfortunate statement, before I wind-up to give way to my hon. colleague, the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources [*Interruption*] I did not exclude anybody, I said before I give way to him. I am not excluding the Member for Diego Martin Central or the Member for Laventille East/Morvant or the Member for Tunapuna or anybody for that matter. If he wants to speak until doomsday, so be it. He has a capacity to speak. I was told once in my early days in Parliament, that Parliament means *parler* and if you only *parler* drivel it is okay, *parler*.

The point I was going to make—Mr. Speaker, they think they can set me off, but they cannot because I have an elephantine memory—that the Member for Diego Martin West must not come to the Parliament—he is a fellow whom I would like to respect. I read on the newspapers and I heard on the radio recently where he was execrating his party and was telling them about what leadership is all about, and that the PNM was dying and that their base was less than 2,000 and they must begin and continue to rethink their position and that he wanted to play a noble role in this great party but they are not allowing him to do so, because the

party is a party of dinosaurs. I accept all that the Member for Diego Martin West is saying. I accept all that. But I know the Member for Diego Martin West is an intelligent man, he makes good contributions, he is also a good Caribbean citizen. He has just visited Montserrat, trying to help our good Caricom neighbours there.

As the Prime Minister said at the Mid-Centre Mall on Sunday, he is earning his keep as a professional, whereas others are vagrants; begging all over the place as mendicants in order to deal with a situation they brought upon themselves, and also by being given bad legal advice from their own membership. Be that as it may, I want to tell the Member for Diego Martin West, I want to continue to respect him and maybe one day he would ascend to the leadership of what he thinks is a great party. The Member cannot come here and make a statement that we, in a very clandestine way, increased our salaries or housing allowance and so forth. It is well-known to all and sundry how salaries, allowances and other terms and conditions of parliamentarians are established. They are established when the President of the Republic requests the Salaries Review Commission to undertake a review of some aspect of their terms and conditions. This was done. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Valley: Mr. Speaker, just to add to what the hon. Member is saying, simply, we are saying that a government that boasts about transparency would have seen it advisable to *[Interruption]* It was laid here, but to do something else—what the PNM would have done was to come here and say, “this is what has been recommended and this is what we would do.” That is what you do when you talk about transparency. The hon. Member cannot talk about transparency *[Interruption]* when they just see an increase in a report and take it. You cannot do that! That is not transparency!

Hon. M. Assam: Mr. Speaker, I am really so disappointed that the Member for Diego Martin Central could rise and make the statement he just made. Do you know that same Member for Diego Martin Central said in this honourable House—not to speak of what he said privately—that he does not want to be a Member of any government or a Minister if *[Interruption]* Why do not they give me a chance? I was quiet all day. Like the Member for Tobago East, I did not interrupt anybody notwithstanding the fact that I was tempted. I am surprised that the Member for Diego Martin Central has said in this honourable House, and privately in other places, that he would not want to be part of a government or be a Minister again unless the terms and conditions of parliamentarians are substantially improved.

Mr. Valley: Correct, Mr. Speaker. I am saying, you should come to the Parliament and tell the people what you are doing. If you want to talk about transparency, you do things above board! That is all I am saying.

Hon. M. Assam: Mr. Speaker, I would not forget what I was saying. I said, it is the President of the Republic who requests a review from the Salaries Review Commission of the terms and conditions of parliamentarians. The President did so; the Salaries Review Commission reported; the report was sent to the Cabinet and it was laid in Parliament accordingly. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I have sat here really hoping that hon. Members would observe the norms which we would like them to observe, and it seems as though my silence is being mistaken for stupidity. I would like to suggest to hon. Members that notwithstanding the hour, we come back down to earth.

6.00 p.m.

Hon. M. Assam: As I was saying before the interruption, Sir, the terms and conditions of Parliamentarians are established by the Salaries Review Commission which is an independent commission established under the Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago. It is the President of the Republic who requests a review from this commission. This was done and the Salaries Review Commission submitted its report to the Cabinet. The Cabinet brought the report, under law, and laid it in Parliament. Every Member of Parliament had a copy, to the extent that after it was laid and the tea break took place, both the Members for Diego Martin Central and East spoke to me right in the middle of that space there—

Hon. Member: And say what?

Hon. M. Assam: —and agreed, but it is unfortunate that when we want to get—

Mr. Speaker: Order please!

Hon. M. Assam: —into the spotlight and score political points, always remember that every dog has his day and when the shoe is on the other foot, whether it is a size six or 12, it is a different matter all together.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Member for giving way. I said this afternoon that I have no problem with Members getting an increase. I simply want to ask the Member, if all this openness took place in here, how is it that this information is now of such great surprise to the rest of the country—

Hon. Member: Which country?

Dr. Rowley: —including the media?

Hon. M. Assam: The Salaries Review Commission Report having been laid in Parliament is a public document. I challenge every one of you.

Mr. Valley: Transparency!

Hon. Member: Taken under the table!

[Mr. Speaker rose]

Hon. M. Assam: I challenge anyone on the opposite Bench to deny that they did not receive a copy of the Salaries Review Commission Report with respect to that. *[Laughter]* I challenge every one! But more than that—

Mr. Maharaj: Challenge them that they did not read it.

Hon. M. Assam: No, they did read it, because both the Members for Diego Martin Central and East came to me afterwards. I swear! If you want to bring a bible I would swear on that as well!

Mr. Valley: Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member has a lapse in memory.

Hon. M. Assam: Mr. Speaker, they speak of transparency. I wonder if you remember when the PNM was in office and there was also a Salaries Review Commission Report and perhaps, there was some public outcry about an increase in parliamentary salaries, what happened then? I will tell you—why can these Members not keep quiet? They are like a bunch of juveniles in a kindergarten class. *[Laughter]*

I remember well that there was some public outcry because they had not settled the outstanding public servants' salaries. The then Minister of Public Administration, the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's East, was a senator at the time. He was so incapable of doing anything, running around and telling people about public service reform, but he was not doing his job. He was not attempting to settle public servants' salaries that were outstanding for years. Therefore, they could not, at the time, because of public outcry about the non-settlement of public servants' salaries, take the increase suggested by the commission. Do you know what happened? The then Prime Minister made a decision to shelve it. The Member for Diego Martin Central who was a minister put in his resignation on that issue. *[Desk Thumping]*

Mr. Valley: Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker—

Hon. M. Assam: Deny it, deny it!

Hon. Member: Good shot Mervyn!

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, regardless of how salacious any bit of information is, we must maintain a certain order. I get the impression that the Member for Diego Martin Central is asking you to give way and you seem to have given way.

Mr. Assam: Sure, I have given way.

Mr. Valley: Mr. Speaker, that is correct. *[Desk thumping]* I make no joke about that.

Hon. M. Assam: 'Yuh tink I doh know what I talking bout?'

Mr. Valley: I want to say that the PNM came to this Parliament and the report was debated. That is the point I am making. *[Desk thumping]* If you want to take this as an increase, even if you want to cloud it as a housing allowance, you have an obligation—if you claim to believe in transparency—to come to the Parliament and tell the people what you are doing. *[Desk thumping]*.

Hon. M. Assam: Mr. Speaker, this is the third time I have given way to the hon. Member for Diego Martin Central, and he has repeated the same thing. He reminds me of a certain young parliamentarian who was in the House of Commons, newly elected. It is a bad thing to put your speech in your head and try to learn it by rote because Parliament is a debating chamber. He did so, and when he arrived at the House of Commons and Winston Churchill was the Prime Minister, he got up and said, "Honourable Speaker, I conceived, I conceived, I conceived..." Whereupon, Sir Winston rose and said, "My Lord Speaker, my young, honourable friend has conceived thrice but has not brought forth any fruit." *[Laughter]* In like manner, he has spoken thrice and has said nothing. *[Desk thumping]*.

Let me continue, he put in his resignation to the then Prime Minister on the issue that he could not live on the money he was getting and if the Prime Minister had not implemented the increases he would leave the Cabinet. That is a fact! This is not any kind of fiction, because I am a gatherer of intelligence. *[Laughter]* Do you know what happened? They allowed the matter to be put in abeyance for a few months and very surreptitiously and clandestinely they paid themselves the new salaries with back pay. Deny that! *[Laughter]* Where was the transparency?

The Member for Diego Martin Central is talking about transparency, we did not come here and say that we were shelving the report, or putting it in abeyance. We laid and implemented the report of the Salaries Review Commission and we were constitutionally bound to do so.

I will not prolong this discussion at all, because to engage in this further is to deny this Parliament valuable time discussing valuable matters. But I understand there is another season upon us where the Salaries Review Commission has been requested by the President to look at terms and conditions. I hope when the report is laid by this Government in this House that we will hear at that time the views of all the Members opposite and they would not come subsequently and say that they did not get a copy of the report.

However, let me return to the Bill at hand. I conclude by saying that I support this Bill. I think it is important, it will bring unity in the cane-farming community and I think it will have economic benefits so that the association can, in fact, achieve the economic objectives. It can have a serious, beneficial impact on the turning around of the fortunes of Caroni (1975) Limited, particularly, if cane farmers are allowed to grow more cane and the company less. In the not too distant future, I hope I will not hear the Member for Diego Martin West coming here and, like a prophet of doom and gloom, continuing to shower all the ills that he likes to shower on the future prospects of Caroni (1975) Limited.

I thank you.

6.10 p.m.

The Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources (Dr. The Hon. Reeza Mohammed): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the arguments on both sides and especially the arguments referred to by the hon. Attorney General. I would like to let this House know that the Attorney General is absolutely correct in that my colleague on the opposite side, the Member for Diego Martin West, has become so in the habit of opposing for opposing sake that even when he knows that I speak the truth in this House, he opposes. That is the situation we are faced with in this Parliament. Nonetheless, Mr. Speaker, this piece of legislation is not intended
[*Interruption*]

[*Mr. Fitzgerald Hinds rose*]

Would you please sit. [*Interruption*] No. This piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker, is not intended to control behaviour. It is intended to legislate for management. I think this is where the Members on the opposite side, in their arguments against this piece of legislation, try to shift the focus from being legislation for management to legislation for behaviour and conduct.

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Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member for Diego Martin West alluded to his size 12 shoes. I want to assure him, through you, Mr. Speaker, that I have absolutely no desire to put my foot in his shoes, and further more every contribution he has made in this House so far, even in the last parliamentary session, gives me the impression that he would like to put his foot in my shoe. I made it clear on another occasion that I would not allow the hon. Member for Diego Martin West to sit on the Opposition Benches and manage the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources or the affairs of the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources. The Member for Diego Martin West spoke at length about the mealy bug and the plans that he had put in place when he was the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources. I would like, through you, Sir, to ask one simple question to this honourable House and that is if all those plans were put in place and the Cabinet budgeted \$1,000,000, as indicated by the Member for Diego Martin West towards controlling and containing this pest, why is it when this Government came into office in November of 1995 that the country was ravaged and raging with the mealy bug? That is the question I would like to ask this honourable House.

Furthermore, the protocol that I met in the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources on assuming office was one of spray, cut and burn. That was the protocol developed by the former Minister. Mr. Speaker, the devastating effect of that protocol on those farmers was that they had to remove their bearing fruit trees. Because of that protocol we have lost a lot of valuable fruit trees in this country; because of that silly—if I may use that term, Sir—protocol that was developed by the former Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources. I am still wondering where that \$1,000,000 went to. I am still wondering that.

I am wondering whether it went to the spray companies, private spray companies and if so, who benefited from the purchase of chemicals and the use of those chemicals. That is what I am wondering, because on December 19, 1995 I had my first meeting on the matter of the mealy bug with the officials of the ministry and I, in my capacity as Minister and charged with the responsibility of the sector, immediately took a different focus on the mealy bug. That is why we can report that today we have achieved an 80 per cent success rate with the Hibiscus mealy bug in Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] Plans are fine, Mr. Speaker, plans are good, but they must be implemented. This honourable House should know that those plans and the implementation of some of those things in that plan were under my watch, under my responsibility as Minister of Agriculture, Land

and Marine Resources. This is why we are able to report today an 80 per cent success rate in the control and containment of the Hibiscus mealy bug.

So, Mr. Speaker, when the hon. Member for Diego Martin West gets up and shouts in the Parliament—as though he can frighten somebody in here—to make a simple point, I want to let him know, through you, Sir, that this Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources will not be scared into submission by the hon. Member for Diego Martin West and that I shall continue to do my work to the best of my ability in the interest of the sector.

Then there is the question of the froghopper, Mr. Speaker. The Member for Diego Martin East also alluded to that. I would like to let this honourable House know that, at the time when the decision was taken to develop an integrated pest management programme for the froghopper that the decision was informed by an international symposium which was held in Trinidad and Tobago in June of 1997. Furthermore, at the time when the programme was started the company, Caroni (1975) Limited, had in its stores enough chemicals to cover 21,000 acres. The Member for Diego Martin East got up in this House and said that there were no chemicals in store. I want to correct that for the record. I am advised that when the programme started there was a reservoir of chemicals in the company to satisfy the requirements for over 21,000 acres.

Furthermore, he referred to El Niño and he accused the Member for Princes Town of using El Niño as an excuse. I would like to point out to him the effects that El Niño had on Ecuador and Chile very recently. In Chile it was a case of massive flooding; in the case of Ecuador it was a case of excessive drought. All the agricultural bases in Ecuador and Chile have virtually been destroyed. So, when he comes here to this Parliament and tries to misinform and mislead this Parliament, I wonder, as the Member for Tobago East has said, whether in the future when our children would have the opportunity to read the record of the *Hansard*, what impressions they would derive from Parliament during this period. Listen to his behaviour, Mr. Speaker, and he wants to be the leader of the PNM with that kind of behaviour. Does that qualify him to lead the PNM? He should realize that I have caught on to his so-called strategy.

Mr. Speaker, continuing to vie for the leadership of the PNM, he has to keep himself in the eyes of the public and the way he is attempting to do that is to use the media. Every time he calls a press conference, not too long after the substantive leader of the Opposition calls a press conference as well. So, the fight is still on. But I want to let him know, through you, Sir, that his behaviour does

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not warrant him being the leader of the PNM. No, Sir, it does not. Mr. Speaker, having listened to the—

Hon. Member: *[Interruption]*

Dr. The Hon. R. Mohammed: You know he is trying to encourage me to do as his colleague, the Member for Diego Martin Central, did. Write a letter of resignation when he was dissatisfied with his leader.

6.20 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, Members of this side of the House do not behave in that fashion at all. So in winding up, as indicated by my colleagues on this side, the amendment to the Bill brought here today is in the best interest of that subsector, the sugar industry, the cane farmers and their reunification. As some of my colleagues indicated, if we are to move Caroni (1975) Limited towards some degree of viability which is not only a processor of sugar cane but also a grower, and given the terms laid out in the tripartite agreement with respect to more canes being produced by the private sector and less canes grown by the company, it is in the interest of all that we find a mechanism to reunite the farmers who would be required to produce that extra amount of sugar cane.

With that, I beg to move.

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 4 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 5.

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

Dr. Rowley: The matter of the list, clause 5(4). I just want to ask, through the point I raised earlier on, about the requirement for a list. It seems to me that once a list is supplied to the supervisor, that it satisfies this condition. But I think the intention is that the correct list of members—it is either we find a way of effecting that, or apply a penalty for the submission of a bad list. Otherwise, this clause could be easily circumvented by supplying inaccurate or bogus information which will not achieve the objective, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Maharaj: Mr. Chairman, the point which has been made by the hon. Member for Diego Martin West is taken, in the sense that the clause covers the supply of a list. The point he is making is that assuming an inaccurate list is supplied, there is no way of imposing a penalty. I have spoken to the hon. Minister and to the technical people and it may be that we could describe what is a list so that it would mean an accurate list. It would mean that subclause (5) would therefore cover a contravention.

Dr. Rowley: But on receipt of this list, how is the supervisor going to know it is accurate, and if, in fact, it is not accurate, what does he do?

Mr. Maharaj: It may be that to cover some of these matters we could probably put a clause for regulations to be made to give effect to that and then put the regulations subject to a negative resolution.

Dr. Rowley: I will suggest that, Minister. I will tell you why. Somebody spoke about culture this afternoon, of an organization, and I could see the root cause of the problem of this whole thing is that people were being excluded in a way because other people were not pleased with them. If one person's name is left off so that the person cannot take part in election, the way this is written, if that list does not include one person's name, does that not negate the list and open it to legal challenge?

Mr. Maharaj: I take your point and I think, probably, I would get them to draft an amendment to include a section for regulations to be made to give effect to the Act and then we would put the regulations to be subjected to negative resolution.

Dr. Rowley: May I suggest that in considering it, that the list be posted before a certain time so it can be checked and verified?

Mr. Maharaj: And there would be an opportunity of verifying it.

Dr. Rowley: Right.

Mr. Maharaj: That is a good idea. So we can go ahead and I will get that clause drafted.

Mr. Chairman: Clause 5 is then being deferred?

Mr. Maharaj: We can go ahead and we will introduce a clause at the end. We will move to amend the Bill to include a separate clause.

Mr. Chairman: That is today?

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Mr. Maharaj: Yes, today.

Clause 5 deferred.

6.30 p.m.

Clauses 6 to 12 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

New clause 13.

Mr. Maharaj: Mr. Chairman, I beg to move that a new clause 13 be inserted as follows:

13. The Ordinance is amended by inserting after section 26 the following new section:-

“27. (1) The Minister may by regulations prescribe any of the matters necessary or required for giving effect to any of the provisions of the Ordinance.

(2) The regulations made under subsection (1) shall be subject to negative resolution of Parliament.”

Mr. Chairman, there is one aspect that is troubling us. Because it is an ordinance which is being amended by an Act. Where it is stated the Minister may, by regulations, prescribe any of the matters necessary or required for giving effect to any of the provisions of this Act, I do not want it to be construed that it only means the Act. It should be, any of the provisions of the ordinance as amended.

Mr. Valley: Mr. Chairman, may I suggest that we put the amendments before the Senate and then bring it back here?

Mr. Maharaj: I will go with what is advised by the technical personnel. They said it should be any of the provisions of this Ordinance because the ordinance, as amended, will cover it.

New clause 13 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 13 added to the Bill.

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

House resumed.

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

Motion made and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn to Friday, December 12, 1997 at 2.00 p.m. [Hon. R. L. Maharaj]

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 6.42 p.m.