

*Leave of Absence**Friday, March 13, 1998***HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES***Friday, March 13, 1998*

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 two Members of this honourable House who have asked to be excused from today's sitting. These are the Member for Diego Martin West and the Member for Oropouche who are both out of the country. The leave of absence which they seek is granted.

STATE LIABILITY AND PROCEEDINGS (AMDT.) BILL

Bill to amend the law relating to civil proceedings against the State arising out of the exercise of powers and the performance of functions and duties by constitutional bodies and for other related purposes brought from the Senate, [*The Attorney General*]; read the first time.

PAPERS LAID

1. The annual audited financial statements of Metal Industries Company Limited for the year ended December 31, 1996. [*The Attorney General (Hon. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj)*]
To be referred to the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee.
2. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the National Housing Authority for the year ended December 31, 1984. [*Hon. R. L. Maharaj*]
3. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the National Housing Authority for the year ended December 31, 1985. [*Hon. R. L. Maharaj*]
4. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the National Carnival Commission for the year ended July 31, 1993. [*Hon. R. L. Maharaj*]
5. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the National Carnival Commission for the year ended July 31, 1994. [*Hon. R. L. Maharaj*]
6. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Post Office Savings Bank for the year ended December 31, 1983. [*Hon. R. L. Maharaj*]

Papers Laid

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7. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Post Office Savings Bank for the year ended December 31, 1984. [*Hon. R. L. Maharaj*]
8. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Post Office Savings Bank for the year ended December 31, 1985. [*Hon. R. L. Maharaj*]

Papers 2 to 8 to be referred to the Public Accounts Committee

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

The Attorney General (Hon. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj): Mr. Speaker, I did indicate to the Chief Whip, the hon. Member for Diego Martin Central, that the Government would be unable to answer today questions Nos. 25, 34, 35 and 36, and we shall be asking for a deferral of two weeks for the Government to be able to answer numbers 24, 26, 39 and 40. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Just out of an abundance of caution because of what happened about three sittings ago, I am putting it to the House.

Question proposed [Interruption]

Mr. Speaker: Do you want a division this time again?

The following questions stood on the Order Paper:

I.A.D.B. Investment Sector Loan

25. (a) With respect to the I.A.D.B. Investment Sector Loan, could the Minister of Planning and Development indicate:
 - i. the date this loan was signed, and what was the amount involved?
 - ii. what are the main conditionalities and obligations of this loan?
 - iii. what was the date of the last drawdown on this loan?
- (b) Could the Minister state the details of the drawdowns on this loan up to the present time?
- (c) Has the Government of Trinidad and Tobago met the conditionalities and deadlines required for the drawdowns of this loan?
- (d) If the answer to (c) is in the negative, could the Minister explain what conditionalities have not been met, and why? [*Mr. P. Manning*]

**Piarco Airport Development Project
(Birk-Hillman Contract)**

34. (a) In view of the recommendations of the report of the Justice Deyalsingh Committee which recommended termination of contracts for the Piarco Airport Development Project, could the Minister of Works and Transport state why Government has not terminated the Birk-Hillman contract for design and project management services for the project?
- (b) In addition to the \$43 million already paid to Birk-Hillman, how much more money is expected to be paid to Birk-Hillman for work on the project? *[Mr. C. Imbert]*

**Piarco Development Project
(Contract)**

35. Could the Minister of Works and Transport state:
- (a) Has the Northern/Yorke/Coosals (NYC) contract for construction of the terminal building and related aspects of the Piarco Airport Development Project been terminated?
- (b) If the answer is in the negative, could the Minister state the reasons why the NYC contract has not been terminated, the nature of the work involved, and how much money is expected to be paid to NYC for work on the project? *[Mr. C. Imbert]*

**Piarco Airport Development Project
(Termination of Contracts)**

36. Could the Minister of Works and Transport state:
- (a) With the exception of the Seereeram Brothers Limited contract for earthfill, have all other contracts on the Piarco Airport Development Project been terminated?
- (b) If the answer is in the negative, could the Minister state the reasons why these contracts have not been terminated, the names of the contracts involved, the nature of the work involved, and sums of money which are expected to be paid in 1998 for work done on the project by these contractors? *[Mr. C. Imbert]*

Questions, by leave, deferred.

Mr. Patrick Manning (*San Fernando East*): Mr. Speaker, since we are allowed to have three questions asked at each session, does this mean that the Government is prepared to answer four questions next week in light of the fact that they are only answering two this week?

Mr. Speaker: The Standing Order states more than three questions cannot appear on the Order Paper with respect to any one Member.

Mr. P. Manning: The House also regulates its own business and, therefore, if the House, by agreement, decides to answer four questions that is possible from any one Member.

Mr. Speaker: We do not have three questions from any one Member. *[Interruption]* Excuse me, could we make sure that that door remains closed unless it is absolutely necessary? The Standing Order actually provides that if even there appear on the Order Paper more than three questions with respect to any one Member, only three would be dealt with. However, it does occur that if questions are deferred they come up and may meet with other questions that have been asked by the Member, in which case it is permissible in those circumstances for more than three questions from one Member to appear and be answered.

I.A.D.B. Agricultural Sector Loan

24. Mr. Patrick Manning (*San Fernando East*) asked the hon. Minister of Planning and Development:

- (a) With respect to the I.A.D.B. Agricultural Sector Loan, could the Minister indicate:
 - i. the date this loan was signed, and what was the amount involved?
 - ii. what are the main conditionalities and obligations of the loan?
 - iii. how much money has been drawdown from this loan, to date?
 - iv. what was the date of the last drawdown on this loan?
- (b) Has the Government of Trinidad and Tobago met the conditionalities and deadlines required for the draw downs on this loan?
- (c) If the answer to (b) is in the negative, could the Minister explain what conditionalities have not been met, and why?

The Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources (Dr. The Hon. Reeza Mohammed): Mr. Speaker, the Agricultural Sector Loan Agreement was

negotiated by the previous administration and signed on August 11, 1995. The Agricultural Sector Loan contract was signed on June 11, 1996. Resources under this loan amount to US \$65 million and are being disbursed in three tranches comprising US \$22.5 million for the first and second tranches respectively and US \$20 million for the third tranche.

To support implementation of the Agricultural Sector Reform Programme a technical cooperation loan was obtained from the Inter American Development Bank (IADB) to the amount of US \$11 million, comprising US \$9 million (IADB) funding and US \$2 million counterpart funding.

The main conditionalities and obligations under the ASL are as follows:

"4. Trade and Policy

- i) Removal of quantitative import restrictions on all agricultural commodities and replacement with the Caricom Common External Tariff (CET) and a Tariff Surcharge Schedule.
- ii) Ensuring direct support payments and subsidies to the agricultural sector do not exceed 10 % of agricultural GDP.

Agricultural Development Bank (ADB)

Maintenance of the ADB's Capital Adequacy Ratio at or above the agreed level of thirty per cent (30%). Lending rates and fees have been adjusted to reflect full cost pricing. Monitoring of the ADB's compliance is being undertaken by the Investment Division of the Ministry of Finance.

Land Use

- i) Implementation of Land Use Action Plan comprising:
 - a) Transfer of 3,500 acres of lands belonging to Caroni (1975) Ltd through sale/leasing arrangements to private farmers;
 - b) Transfer of 1,200 acres of other state-owned land through sale/leasing arrangements to private farmers.

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- (c) transfer of 7,000 acres of other state-owned land through sale/leasing arrangements to private farmers or for squatter regularization; and
- (d) transfer of an additional \$1,900 acres through sale/leasing arrangements for squatter regularization.

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- (ii) Replacement of the Agricultural Small Holdings Act and Agricultural Contracts Act by the Agricultural Small Holdings Tenure Act (ASHTA);
- (iii) Design and implementation of a new standard agricultural lease;
- (iv) Enactment of the Planning and Development of Land Act (formally the Urban and Regional Planning Act);

Caroni (1995) Limited

- (i) Implementation of a new incentive payment system for sugar cane;
- (ii) Ensuring greater reliance on private cane farm production—the target ratio is 75 per cent private cane production, 25 per cent company cane production;
- (iii) Reduction of general labour force by at least 1,505 persons and staff by 80 persons;
- (iv) Reduction of operating losses to no more than 5 per cent of revenue by 1999;
- (v) Restructuring of the company into five divisions in accordance with the Tripartite Agreement;
- (vi) Initiation of a study of land markets;
- (vii) Government to:
 - (a) guarantee loan funds to support Caroni (1975) Limited early retirement programme in an amount of TT \$40.3 million; and
 - (b) provide capital investment support to Caroni (1975) Limited for factory and field equipment in the amount of TT \$138.1 million during the period 1995—1998

Public Administration Reform

- (i) Strengthening the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources policy analysis and management capabilities and developing complementary policy-driven internal planning and budget management procedures and supporting management information system;
- (ii) Modernizing and streamlining the regulatory framework for the sector so as to promote growth while also strengthening health and environmental protection;

- (iii) Phasing out selected ministry commercial activities and promoting private sector investment in potentially profitable areas; and
- (iv) Improving research and extension and other farm service capabilities needed to enhance sector competitiveness;

Environment

- (i) Review and revision of regulations pertaining to use of agricultural chemicals;
- (ii) Design and implementation of an integrated pest management programme;
- (iii) Design and implementation of an environmentally sound and safe method for control of effluent from the rum distillery.

Social Impact Mitigation

- (i) Design and implement a social impact mitigation programme directed at assuaging the adverse impact of the Reform Programme.

Additionally, satisfaction of the second tranche conditionalities under the Agriculture Sector Reform Programme entails fulfilling the Third Tranche obligations of the Investment Sector Reform Programme with respect to the Agricultural Development Bank and the Land Tenure (Regularization) components.

To date, total disbursement amounts to \$22.5 million representing drawdown of first tranche resources which were accessed as follows:

- US \$22,045,338.28 on December 10, 1996
- US \$454,661.72 on February 27, 1997.

Mr. Speaker, the period of disbursement of the resources under the Agriculture Sector Loan is four years effective from the date of signing of the loan contract. The resources of the Agriculture Sector Loan are being disbursed in three tranches, with specific conditionalities and obligations attached to each tranche. At present, Government is in the process of fulfilling the conditionalities attached to the second tranche. The target date for drawdown of second tranche resources is September, 1998.

The status of implementation of the outstanding obligations with respect to the second and third tranches are as follows:

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Agricultural Development Bank (ADB):

Agricultural Development Bank's capital adequacy ratio is currently above the agreed level of 30 per cent and the fees and lending rates have been adjusted to reflect full cost pricing. The Investments Division of the Ministry of Finance has put in place a supervisory mechanism to ensure continuing compliance. The third tranche conditionality entails continued maintenance of these obligations.

Second Phase of the Action Plan for Land Tenure Rationalization:

The drafts of the Land Adjudication, Land Administration, Land Tribunal Bills are expected to be submitted to Cabinet by July, 1998. The Forest Resources Bill has been drafted and will be presented to Cabinet by May, 1998, following public consultation. The National Parks Bill is being re-drafted to incorporate public comment and is scheduled to be presented to Cabinet by April, 1998. The Planning and Development of Land Bill is being revised on the basis of earlier public consultation and is expected to be tabled in Parliament by September, 1998. The drafting of the Lands Sub-division Code has to await finalization of the Planning and Development of Land Bill and is scheduled to be submitted to Cabinet by September, 1998.

The establishment of the Digital Mapping facility at the Lands and Surveys Division is at a fairly advanced stage, that is about 75 per cent, and is scheduled to be completed by April, 1998. The mapping of three pilot areas is expected to be completed by August, 1998, at which time a contract will be awarded for mapping the rest of Trinidad and Tobago.

With respect to the modernization of the Land Registry, a contract is soon to be awarded for the engagement of a land information specialist who will assist in undertaking a needs assessment of the Land Registry.

Land Use Action Plan:

Implementation of the second tranche conditionality entails the transfer of at least 2,000 acres of Caroni (1975) Limited land to private farmers. Lands have already been identified. However, facilitation of the transfer process is dependent upon enactment of the Agricultural Small Holdings Tenure Bill (ASHTA). This Bill has been drafted and is expected to go before the Cabinet shortly.

With regard to the transfer of 7,000 acres of other state lands to private farmers or for squatter regularization, lands have been identified and survey plans are currently being finalized.

Caroni (1975) Limited:

The ratio of sugar cane produced by the company to that of private cane farmers is currently 56:44. The delay in enactment of the Agricultural Small Holdings Tenure Act has retarded progress towards increasing the acreage cultivated by private cane farmers.

Over the period 1995 - 1997, total operating expenditure of Caroni (1975) Limited increased by some 3 per cent. Upward movement in wages and salaries and fluctuation in foreign exchange rates mainly accounted for this rise in operating expenditure. The targeted cane production shift will substantially increase the acreage under private cultivation and, by extension, significantly impact upon the operating expenditure of the company. Third tranche compliance requires maintenance of operating expenditure at below 5 per cent of revenues.

The second tranche conditionality with respect to the company's labour force is the reduction of the general labour force by at least 605 persons and at least 20 staff members. The company has reduced its general labour force by 799 daily-paid workers and 45 permanent staff between September, 1993 and September, 1997.

In order to access third tranche resources, it is necessary that the company reduce its general labour force by at least an additional 900 persons and staff by at least 60 persons.

As to the initiation of a study of land markets to assist in the determination of additional lands for sale or lease, Caroni (1975) Limited has established an Estate Management Division. This division is responsible for initiation of the land market study, general land development and sales of company's lands. Satisfaction of third tranche conditionality entails completion of the land market study.

With respect to the early retirement programme, the company has not pursued the guaranteed loan funds. This programme will be undertaken in tandem with the shift to greater reliance on sugar cane production by private cane farmers.

As regards capital investment support, cumulative actual disbursements by the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago as at December, 1997 amounted to TT \$115.97 million. For 1998, a total of TT \$22 million has been provided under the Public Sector Invest Programme.

Public Administration Action Plan:

This component seeks to strengthen the policy analysis and management capabilities of the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources. The second tranche conditionality consists of:

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- (i) completion of studies and preparatory activities required to design and initiate the Public Administration Action Plan;
- (ii) the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources programme of work and annual budget reflect new sector priorities and Public Administration Action Plan agreements;
- (iii) execution of the Technical Assistance Programme.

Satisfaction of (i) and (ii) above requires the engagement of long-term and short-term consultants under the Technical Assistance Programme. The fulfillment of the third tranche conditionality requires the achievement of agreed targets with respect to the Public Administration Action Plan.

Social Impact Mitigation Programme and Environmental Action Plan:

Mr. Speaker, with respect to the Social Impact Mitigation Programme and Environmental Action Plan, Government has reached agreement with the Inter American Development Bank for the provision of in-house specialists to assess the current situation, formulate proposals and, where necessary, develop the terms of reference for the engagement of consultants. Third tranche conditionality requires implementation of these programmes.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, the Technical Assistance Programme. The implementation of this programme requires the contracting of one or more consulting firms to provide technical and advisory services. However, the initial proposals received from consulting firms did not provide the required mix of skills. As a result, it became necessary to re-package the Technical Assistance Programme contract into its separate components and request new proposals. This has resulted in some delay in the execution of the programme. It is expected that the firms to effect the Technical Assistance Programme would be procured by the second quarter of 1998.

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

I.A.D.B. National Highways Project Loan

26. Mr. Patrick Manning (*San Fernando East*) asked the hon. Minister of Finance:

- (a) With respect to the I.A.D.B. National Highways Project Loan, could the Minister indicate:
 - (i) the date this loan was signed, and what was the amount involved?

- (ii) what are the main conditionalities and obligations of this loan?
- (iii) what was the date of the last drawdown on this loan?
- (b) Could the Minister state the details of the drawdowns on this loan up to the present time?
- (c) Has the Government of Trinidad and Tobago met the conditionalities and deadlines required for the drawdowns of this loan?
- (d) If the answer to (c) is in the negative, could the Minister explain what conditionalities have not been met, and why?

The Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources (Mr. Chandresh Sharma): Mr. Speaker, on July 12, 1996 the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and the Inter American Development Bank signed an Agreement for a loan in the sum of US \$120 million for the National Highways Programme. The objective of the programme is to improve the road surfaces provided by the national main road network which is administered by the Highways Division of the Ministry of Works and Transport and by the Works Division of the Tobago House of Assembly. The programme is to be implemented over a period of six years and is expected to reduce overall transportation costs through effective planning and maintenance management thereby contributing to a more competitive and diverse economic base.

The main components of the programme are:

- (i) rehabilitation of approximately 586 kilometres of main roads and approximately 65 bridges throughout Trinidad and Tobago;
- (ii) routine maintenance of the entire national network of 2,700 kilometres of roads including approximately 1,000 bridges over a six-year period;
- (iii) trunk road expansion works for 50 kilometres; and
- (iv) institutional strengthening of the Highways Division of the Ministry of Works and Transport and the Works Division of the Tobago House of Assembly.

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The main conditionalities of the loan, upon which first disbursement is required, are as follows:

- (i) Staffing and equipment of the Project Implementation Units in the Ministry of Works and Transport and the Works Division of the Tobago House of Assembly;

- (ii) Approval, by Government, of the plan of action agreed with the Inter-American Development Bank for the institutional changes in the Highways Administration Unit in the Ministry of Works and Transport and the Works Division Unit of the Tobago House of Assembly;
- (iii) Appointment of Heads of the Environmental Units in the Ministry of Works and Transport and the Tobago House of Assembly and their designation as environmental officers by the Environmental Management Authority;
- (iv) Formal adoption of agreed environmental evaluation procedures; and
- (v) Signing of a memorandum of understanding between the Ministry of Works and Transport and the Tobago House of Assembly defining their responsibilities in the execution of the components in Tobago.

All the main conditionalities of the loan have now been met and the Ministry of Works and Transport is working on their implementation.

No resources have yet been disbursed because two of the conditionalities were delayed.

In spite of the delays the Ministry of Works and Transport has pressed on with the implementation of the programme utilizing in-house staff, qualified and experienced professionals, from the Highways Division. The entire programme is on schedule and has been implemented to date in accordance with the procedures of the Inter-American Development Bank and to their satisfaction.

Physical works—Year I

The entire first year International Development Band programme which comprises the rehabilitation of 81 kilometres of road and the construction of eight bridges, is now in progress. The bridges projects are expected to be completed within scope, budget and time. However, the scope of the road works in the South are being reassessed because of the increased scope, due to changes in the physical conditions of the roads, due to unforeseen landslides, increased heavy traffic. This may result in extension of time and increased budget.

Roads are as follows:

Roads	General Progress
North Coast Road	95%
Eastern Main Road	58%

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Western Main Road	2%
Siparia Road	20%
SS Erin Road	12%
Bridges	General Progress
Southern Main Road (four bridges)	
B 1/16, B 1/64, B 1/71 and B 1/73	30%
B 1/5—Couva Main Road	80%
B 1/5—Cunapo Southern Main Road	98%
B 2/9—Guaracara Tabaquite Road	68%
B 1/8—Western Main Road	5%

All the bridges projects are scheduled to be completed before the end of June, 1998.

Design Works—Year II

Consultants have been selected for the design review and supervision of the Year II works. The designs were completed four years ago and will have to be updated because of changing traffic and the physical state of the pavement. Year II works would include the rehabilitation of 26 kilometres of roads and seven bridges and are expected to be contracted out in November, 1998. Contractors have already been prequalified.

Year III Design

The Year III consultants, numbering six, have already been prequalified and have been invited to submit technical proposals for the design of 40 bridges, 109 kilometres of roads and the installation of a weigh-bridge station. Work is expected to begin in July, 1998 in order for Year III work to begin in November 1999.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to present a summary of the progress to date.

Steering Committee appointed and functioning, seven meetings held to date;

Draft transition and implementation plans for each district were prepared by each district engineer. The transition plans were presented and reviewed by the Steering Committee;

Meetings with the bargaining trade union for the daily-paid workers were held which also included the Inter-American Development Bank. Ongoing consultations with the union are still in progress;

Ten training workshops on contract maintenance and managing change and project management were conducted for maintenance managers;

The detail road inventory is completed for pilot district, Caroni, and is in progress in three other districts;

The computerized routine maintenance management system is being tested. Bugs found have been adjusted by the consultants;

Computerized bridges maintenance management system completed with manuals and installed in all districts, including the Tobago House of Assembly;

Pavement management systems completed and installed with manuals. System to be changed with the release of HDM 4 by the World Bank;

Training workshops were conducted on information systems and technology for professional engineers both in Trinidad and in Tobago;

Discussions with the Tobago House of Assembly are ongoing. A presentation of the entire National Highways Programme was made to the Tobago House of Assembly in Tobago by the Programme Director and the consultant, Lea-Trintoplan, in August of 1996;

Sub-committees have been established to monitor critical aspects of the programme;

Training workshops for supervisors in maintenance by contract have been conducted in order to train the maintenance supervisors on contract administration.

Surveys of the Highways Division and the capability of each district were assessed. The culture of each district was also analysed and the risk control strategies developed with the district engineers.

Trunk Road

Detailed final designs for the East/West Corridor project is on schedule. This project includes:

- (i) Interchange Churchill-Roosevelt Highway/Uriah Butler Highway intersection—90 per cent completed;
- (ii) Churchill-Roosevelt Highway Improvement Works;
- (iii) Port of Spain Access Improvement Works;
- (iv) Traffic Control System.

Relocation of utilities of the interchange works is already in progress and physical work is scheduled to begin later this year. The entire project is scheduled to be completed by December 1999.

All the moneys spent to date on the Inter-American Development Bank programme are expected to be disbursed shortly. The sum is expected to be approximately US \$20 million.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk Thumping*]

Mr. Manning: Supplemental question, Mr. Speaker. Does this loan have, as one of its conditionalities, the lay-off of workers in the public sector and, if so, what figures are involved, please?

Mr. Sharma: Mr. Speaker, I am sure the Member for San Fernando East would appreciate the very comprehensive and detailed answer just presented. I will submit that at the next sitting.

**National Flour Mills Limited
(Mode of payment)**

39. Mrs. Camille Robinson-Regis (*Arouca South*) asked the hon. Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister of Consumer Affairs:

Would the Minister indicate to the House:

- (a) what is the usual mode of payment utilized by the National Flour Mills Limited in purchasing grain from its international suppliers?
- (b) whether the usual mode of payment was utilized in the purchase of rice from Gangadas Shah of India?
- (c) what was the mode of payment for the Gangadas Shah transaction if it was not the usual mode?
- (d) whether National Flour Mills Limited bankers effected the letters of credit prematurely, allowing payment to Gangadas Shah before the Company was satisfied with the shipment of rice, and if so, what steps are being taken against the bankers for such action?

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister of Consumer Affairs (Hon. Mervyn Assam): Mr. Speaker, the National Flour Mills Limited purchases most of its grain from the United States, utilizing the following financing methods:

- (1) The GSM or the Grain Subsidy Management Programme, which is a line of credit extended by the US Government to commercial banks in certain eligible countries of up to six months for the purchase of grain from the

United States, based on extremely soft rates, that is, LIBOR rates. In other words, the facility cannot be utilized to source grain outside of the United States of America;

- (2) Suppliers credit—the company's major grain suppliers, Continental Grain Company, currently extends a 90-day facility to the National Flour Mills Limited, based upon United States prime rates; and
- (3) Irrevocable letters of credit.

The customary mode of payment regarding purchases outside the United States was used with respect to the transaction with G. Gangadas Shah and Sons, that is, irrevocable letter of credit.

The answer to part (c), obviously, is not applicable.

The bankers effected payment in accordance with the terms and conditions as laid down in the letter of credit.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Supplemental, Mr. Speaker. Would the Minister indicate whether the method of payment used was letters of credit that were dated prior to the date of actual receipt of the Bill of Lading and of the shipment being loaded onto the vessel in India?

Hon. M. Assam: Mr. Speaker, I do not know know, but I will be very happy and willing to provide the Member for Arouca South with the answer to that specific question with respect to date. I am not going to give Parliament an answer of which I am not sure and then to be accused subsequently of misleading the Parliament. *[Interruption]* It is okay. I can verify the dates and I can send them on to the Member for Arouca South.

Mr. Manning: They were paid on the 15th and 21st.

Rice Purchase from Gangadas Shah

40. Mrs. Camille Robinson-Regis (*Arouca South*) asked the hon. Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister of Consumer Affairs:

Would the Minister indicate to this House:

- (a) which bankers were utilised in the financing of the purchase of rice from Gangadas Shah?
- (b) whether these bankers are National Flour Mills Limited usual bankers?
- (c) the reason for not utilising the usual bankers, if the bankers utilized were different from the company's usual bankers?

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister of Consumer Affairs (Hon. Mervyn Assam): *[Interruption]* I am not going to be accused of being Hamlet, "To be or not to be".

Mr. Manning: Whatever that may be.

Hon. M. Assam: I shall dilate in due course.

Mr. Speaker, Citibank Trinidad and Tobago Limited was utilized in establishing the letter of credit. They, in turn, utilized their overseas bankers in Mumbai, India to effect the transaction.

The company's major bankers are Citibank Trinidad and Tobago Limited and Bank of Nova Scotia Trinidad and Tobago Limited.

The answer to part (c), obviously is not applicable.

Mr. Valley: Mr. Speaker, if I may be permitted a supplemental. I wonder if the hon. Minister would inform the House whether the company's bankers, that is, Citibank and Scotia Bank, informed the Chief Executive Officer of the National Flour Mills Limited that they had difficulties in dealing with Gangadas Shah and that he should exercise caution?

Hon. M. Assam: Mr. Speaker, I do not eavesdrop on conversations of the Chief Executive Officer of the National Flour Mills Limited and the officials of the Bank of Nova Scotia or the officials of Citibank of Trinidad and Tobago Limited, so I would not know of the private conversations between these two officials.

Mr. Valley: Mr. Speaker, further supplemental. I wonder whether the Minister would inform the House if it is still the norm for state companies to submit minutes of their meetings to the line Minister?

Hon. M. Assam: The answer is yes.

Mr. Valley: Therefore, Mr. Speaker, would the Minister inform the honourable House whether minutes coming from the Board of the National Flour Mills Limited suggested that these bankers informed the Chief Executive Officer that he should exercise due care and caution in dealing with Gangadas Shah?

Mr. Manning: And careful before you answer it!

Hon. M. Assam: Why is the Member of San Fernando East trying to caution the Member for St. Joseph? He should try to caution people on his side.

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Mr. Speaker, I read the minutes sent to me by the National Flour Mills Limited after each Board of Directors meeting and I do not recollect in any of the minutes I have read, recorded in any of those minutes, any conversation between the Chief Executive Officer of the National Flour Mills Limited and any official of any of the commercial banks with which they deal.

Mr. Valley: Mr. Speaker, further supplemental. Could the Minister inform the House whether he received and read the minutes of the February board meeting at which the Chairman outlined 13 reasons and requested the board to suspend the Chief Executive Officer?

2.10 p.m.

Hon. M. Assam: Mr. Speaker, I have not yet received the board minutes of that meeting of whatever date in February to which the Member for Diego Martin Central has just alluded.

Mr. Valley: One more supplemental question, Mr. Speaker. Could the Minister inform the House as to whether he is aware that the CEO of the National Flour Mills was suspended?

Hon. M. Assam: I am aware that the CEO of the National Flour Mills was suspended.

Mr. Valley: Mr. Speaker, I beg for a further supplemental; whether the Minister found out from the chairman or any other functionary of the company, the reasons for the suspension of the CEO.

Mr. Speaker: No. I do think that—will you permit me, Member for San Fernando East?

Mr. Manning: I have not said a word, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Yes, but you are performing—

Mr. Manning: No, Sir—

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, we must be careful in terms of abusing supplemental questions. I allow supplementals where they are directly on the question that is here. I will allow this one, but I think that we are going well outside of it.

Mr. Manning: You allow this one?

Mr. Speaker: Yes.

Hon. M. Assam: Will the hon. Member repeat the question?

Mr. Valley: Mr. Speaker, the question was whether the Minister, having found out that the CEO was suspended, investigated from the chairman or from any other functionary of the company the reasons for the suspension of the CEO.

Hon. M. Assam: Mr. Speaker, I was advised by the chairman of the National Flour Mills that the board had reached a decision at a meeting that they held, that they were going to suspend the CEO of the National Flour Mills until such time as the CEO was able to provide them with a certain amount of information and answers to certain questions which the board had put to him.

Mr. Manning: Mr. Speaker, would you permit a further supplemental?

Mr. Speaker: May I hear the supplemental?

Mr. Manning: Did the Minister request of the chairman or any other official of National Flour Mills what these specific questions were?

Mr. Speaker: I am not allowing that question. Are there any other supplementals? *[No response]*

DENTAL SCHOOL (GRADUATES)

The Minister of Health (Dr. The Hon. Hamza Rafeeq): Mr. Speaker, the University of the West Indies, Faculty of Medical Sciences, St. Augustine offers a five-year training programme leading to a Doctor of Dental Surgery degree to students who wish to pursue a profession in dentistry. The dental school in the Faculty of Medicine, UWI, has been offering training since September 1989 and to date four graduating classes have completed the course of training. This degree programme is accessed not only by students from Trinidad and Tobago but also students of Caricom members.

Graduates of the dental school, as is the position with graduates of the medical and legal profession, need to be registered by the appropriate regulatory body which governs the profession before they are able to practise in Trinidad and Tobago. In the case of the dental profession, the relevant regulatory body is the Dental Council which is set up under the Dental Profession Act.

The Dental Council has, over the years, expressed concern about the adequacy of clinical/practical training which the graduates of the UWI Dental School obtain, as well as reservations on the syllabus of the dental school. Initial attempts

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between the dental school and the Dental Council to resolve the problem of practical training resulted in the Dental Council requiring the graduates to complete a one-year period of internship under the supervision of a registered dentist. However, this has not succeeded in dispelling the concerns of the Dental Council and, consequently the Dental Council has not recognized the degree awarded by the University of the West Indies (UWI) for registration purposes.

The Dental Council has stipulated that as a prerequisite to registration for practising dentistry, the graduates of the dental school must submit to an examination administered by the Dental Council following the period of internship. The fee for this examination is \$2,000 and the Council has recently requested that the fees be increased to \$4,000. I wish to draw to your attention that in 1997, of the 11 candidates who sat the examination, only two were successful at the initial attempt, while in 1996, two out of 10 were successful.

The results reflected a relatively low performance from the candidates, notwithstanding the fact that students who enrolled for training at the dental school have excellent academic credentials. It is worth noting that UWI examinations, both theoretical and practical, are conducted by internationally recognized experts, whereas the examinations by the Dental Council are conducted by general dental practitioners. Further, there is a huge disparity between UWI examination results and those of the Trinidad and Tobago Dental Council.

The UWI dental school is the only dental school in the Caribbean serving approximately six million people and supported by 14 territories. Further, the dental graduates who are registered to practise are normally absorbed in the health sector where there is need for additional human resources in this field. The situation relating to the graduates of the University of the West Indies is impacting negatively on the population, since there is a general shortage of professionals in the area of dentistry in both the public and private sectors. Further, dental boards in other Caricom countries are refusing to register UWI graduates from the dental school on the ground that the degree is not recognized by the Trinidad and Tobago Dental Council.

Caricom governments are now reluctant to send other students for training at UWI dental school and this can have serious negative consequences for the viability of the dental school. However, I wish to highlight that a number of these graduates have sought and obtained jobs in the United Kingdom and the United States of America as general dental practitioners with no further examinations required of them. Further, a number of these students have been accepted to do post-graduate

training in the United Kingdom after passing the examination from the Royal College of Surgeons.

In an effort to resolve the problem of the accreditation of UWI dental school and recognition of the degree by the Dental Council, the Ministry of Health facilitated meetings with all interested parties, including the Dental Council, the University of the West Indies, the Ministry of Planning and Development and the graduates of the dental school. Moreover, Cabinet recently appointed a ministerial committee comprising:

The Minister of Planning and Development

The Minister of Health

The Minister of Education, and

The Attorney General.

This committee was supported by a technical committee of representatives of the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education and the office of the Attorney General.

This matter was thoroughly explored. The committee held consultations with representatives of the Dental Council, the University of the West Indies and the graduates, in an effort to arrive at the best possible solution in the national interest. After considering the recommendations of the committee, Cabinet has agreed to amend the Dental Professions Act, Chap: 29:54, to give effect to the following:

- (1) Alter the composition of the Dental Council to include representation from the UWI (Medical Faculty), the Medical Board of Trinidad and Tobago and a lay person appointed by the Minister of Health to represent the general interest of the public.

The Government feels that such an alteration in the council's membership will in no way decrease the control which is now exercisable by the profession in its functions, but will enable the University of the West Indies and others to contribute immeasurably to the deliberations of the council. The council could then avail itself of the university's expertise in dentistry and in so doing ensure the welfare and improvement of the dental profession, not only in Trinidad and Tobago, but throughout the Caribbean region.

- (2) Include under a schedule a list of universities, colleges or other institutions, the diploma of which shall be recognized by the Dental Council; the University of the West Indies to be included in the list. The

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Government feels confident that the UWI dental school has achieved an acceptable standard to warrant accreditation status and automatic recognition by the regulatory body.

2.20 p.m.

- (3) The Minister of Health be empowered to amend the said schedule by adding thereto or deleting therefrom any universities, colleges or schools after consultation with the Dental Council.
- (4) A provision be included whereby the Minister of Health in consultation and collaboration with the Dental Council be mandated to review the curriculum and training programme of the Dental School, University of the West Indies. This provision is to ensure that the highest level of training is given to the students of this institution.

Mr. Speaker, the necessary legislation that gives effect to this proposed amendment will be brought to the Parliament in the near future.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I have been advised that another statement will be made by the hon. Prime Minister. This will be deferred for later on in the proceedings.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY BILL

Bill to render unlawful certain kinds of discrimination, to promote equality of opportunity between persons of different status, to establish an Equal Opportunity commissioner and an Equal Opportunity Tribunal and for matters connected therewith, [*The Prime Minister*]; read the first time.

Motion made, That the next stage be taken at a later stage of the proceedings. [*Hon. B. Panday*]

Question put and agreed to.

PUBLIC SECTOR (ARREARS OF EMOLUMENTS) (AMDT.) BILL

Bill to amend the Public Sector (Arrears of Emoluments) Bill, [*The Minister of Public Administration and Information*]; read the first time.

Motion made, That the next stage be taken at a later stage of the proceedings [*Hon. W. Mark*]

Question put and agreed to.

Interpretation (Amdt.) Bill

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INTERPRETATION (AMDT.) BILL

Bill to amend the Interpretation Act, [*The Minister of Health*]; read the first time.

Motion made, That the next stage be taken at a later stage of the proceedings [*Hon. H. Rafeeq*] read the first time.

Question put and agreed to.

STATE LAND (REGULARISATION OF TENURE) BILL

[SECOND DAY]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question [Friday, March 06, 1998]

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Question again proposed.

Mr. Speaker: On the last occasion the Member had been speaking 15 minutes and has 30 minutes more.

Mr. Colm Imbert (*Diego Martin East*): Mr. Speaker, for a moment there I thought you had forgotten my constituency. On the last occasion I was attempting to advise the Member for St. Augustine that the Bill he has brought before the Parliament is seriously defective and in his usual way, he did not appear to wish to listen.

Before I go into the substance of my objections, I wish to illustrate by way of an example the problems that can arise not only from this Bill, but from the manner in which the Member for St. Augustine and the Government as a whole, have approached this matter and the tabling of this legislation.

Earlier this week I happened to turn on the radio and heard a news report regarding a dispute over squatting on state land at No. 1 Mucurapo Road—the Jamaat Al Muslimeen matter, and I heard a gentleman—I believe he was referred to as the Acting Imam—indicating that under the State Land (Regularisation of Tenure) Bill the hon. Member for St. Augustine is piloting, the organization that occupies that land had squatters' rights and was entitled to the land that they sought to occupy. This is a classic example of the point I have been trying to make to the Member for St. Augustine.

This Bill is unclear, the state's position is unclear. As the Member for San Fernando West has pointed out, the Bill is a recipe for chaos. It will cause an

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explosion of uncontrolled squatting. I cannot believe that the Member for St. Augustine is supporting uncontrolled and disorderly squatting. There are provisions in this Bill which will allow an explosion of squatting and the Bill creates a framework for confusion in the minds of people.

Here is an organization which, in the past, has had confrontation with the state claiming that under this Bill brought by the Member for St. Augustine, they have a right to occupy state lands.

Mr. Speaker, when we pointed out to the Member for St. Augustine—and this is not a rumour, I heard it myself—that even in the definition section, the definition of a “dwelling house” is defective where it says:

“...a building or part of a building used mainly as a dwelling or residence.”

I used a very extreme example where, if someone was using part of their building as a brothel, would it be defined as a building used mainly as a residence.

Here is another situation where there are residences and schools attached and all sorts of other things, will this fall within the definition of a dwelling house? One has got to be clear about this, because we would be creating confusion in the minds of the population when we bring loose and woolly definitions into this honourable House which do not tighten the issue that we are trying to address.

I ask the Minister to please listen. The Minister is a very "harden" person. He does not wish to listen. He adopts a very emotional approach to issues even when his colleagues are trying to get him to see reason, as I saw the Member for Tobago West speaking to him last week. Even when they are trying to make him see reason he brushes off their concerns but I will try to outline as simply as possible the problems with this legislation. While we are on that issue that I referred to, I ask the Attorney General to please deal with that matter because the country is in a state of fear because of the manner in which this situation is being handled. I ask the Government to deal with it. Do not leave it hanging in the air, which is what it appears to be at this time. Deal with the squatting matter down at No. 1 Mucurapo Road. Do not just leave it there and leave people in a state of panic. I know the Attorney General is very familiar with the circumstances of that issue and, therefore, with his inside knowledge he can assist the Cabinet to deal with that matter. Let me go to the crux of the issue, this Bill.

The Member for St. Augustine responded to some of the concerns that I made last week by saying that the issues that I raised were covered under the State Lands Act.

It has been my misfortune to listen to Members on the other side simply referring to legislation and referring to provisions in legislation without having a clue as to the actual provisions in those pieces of legislation and the Member apparently was trying to brush me off with his asides as regards to the State Lands Act.

Let us look at what the State Lands Act says. I have managed to obtain a copy, and I will refer to the specific clause. Section 20 which deals with squatting on state lands says:

“1. Any Magistrate, on information that any person is in possession, without any probable claim or pretence of title, of any State lands, may issue a summons calling on the person to appear and answer to the information, and if the person, after being duly summoned, does not appear or appearing fails to satisfy the Magistrate that he has or had, or those under whom he claims have or had, some probable claim or pretence of title to the lands, the Magistrate shall make an order for putting the person in possession of the lands out of possession, and the delivering of the possession to the Commissioner.”

2. Unless, on hearing of the information, the person against whom the information is preferred proves to the satisfaction of the Magistrate that he holds the possession of the lands by inheritance, devise, or purchase from some other person, the Magistrate shall make a further order that the person so informed against be imprisoned for such term,...

What does this defective Bill say? Clause 2(b) reads as follows:

“(2) Nothing in this Act affects the operation of—

(b) section 20 of the State Lands Act, except in so far as section 4(1) of this Act confers security from ejection on any squatter, and in particular section 20 of that Act continues to have effect in any case where a person squats or otherwise occupies State Land either before or after the appointed day in contravention of the provisions of this Act;”

2.30 p.m.

What does this mean? Clearly, the Member for St. Augustine does not understand. I made the point that the Schedule lists areas. Some of them are: Five Rivers, Arouca, Morvant Old Road, Morvant, Second Caledonia, Morvant, Las

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Cuevas, Lawrence Wong Road, Longdenville and others. The Minister made the point that he was going to regularise these areas. Under this Bill, persons within those areas have a right to receive a certificate of comfort. It is virtually automatic.

Clause 4(2) states:

“A squatter to whom subsection (1) applies is entitled—

- (a) to the issue of a Certificate of Comfort in accordance with Part III in respect of one dwelling house only and such certificate may be issued in the squatter’s own name or jointly with another;”

Again, there is a little confusion here. It does not say a building used mainly as a dwelling. The point is that once someone is within this designated area, that person is entitled to a certificate of comfort, under this Bill. Whether that person is on an area designated for a road, a river, or sewerage facility, a school, community centre, health centre or a drain, under this Bill—once the area is designated like River Estate in the constituency of Diego Martin East—he/she is entitled to a certificate of comfort. The Minister is now voiding the provision in the State Lands Act which gives the state the power to remove someone who is squatting on state lands. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker, it appears as though I have to read it again for the Member for St. Augustine. I am sure that the Attorney General understands. I would address my position to him. Clause 2(2) states:

“Nothing in this Act affects the operation of—

- (b) section 20 of the State Lands Act, except in so far as section 4(1) of this Act confers security from ejection on any squatter, ...”

This means that clause 4(1) of this Bill overrides section 20 of the State Lands Act. I will have to give the Member for St. Augustine a course in remedial law. He does not understand anything.

Now, I will refer this matter to the Attorney General. There is a situation where once a person is in the designated area, that person is entitled, as of right, to get a certificate of comfort. Once a person receives a certificate of comfort, he/she cannot be ejected. Mr. Speaker, I see that I will have to slow down and spell out every word.

Clause 11 states:

“A Certificate of Comfort—

(a) confers security from ejectment pursuant to section 4(1);”

This clause voids the State Lands Act. This is giving someone within a designated area an automatic right to a certificate of comfort which prevents the state from ejecting this person, even if he/she is in a sensitive location, whether it is a watershed, a river, a drainage channel or a road.

Mr. Humphrey: That is not true.

Mr. C. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, the Member for St. Augustine is saying that is not true. That is not a problem. Let the Attorney General deal with this issue. That is why I am asking that this Bill go before a select committee. We on this side have brought legislation twice which signifies that the PNM has no objection to giving squatters security of tenure. The issue here is not whether we are for or against giving squatters security of tenure. That has passed. There is no dispute between either side that we wish to do so. We are arguing about the way we go about doing this. In our submissions in 1986 and 1995, we sought to put in place an orderly procedure protecting the state from this kind of situation I see in this Bill, where a person can indicate, “I have a certificate of comfort; you cannot eject me from this piece of land. This is my piece of land. I do not care whether you want to build a road, this is my piece of land.” If the Minister believes I am wrong, that is no problem. As far as I am concerned, he is woefully misadvised. *[Interruption]* He is muttering now about relocation.

I do not know if it is on the side of the plaintiff or the defence, but from private practice, the Attorney General has had experience in issues of relocation. Once a person is given a legal document such as this Certificate of Comfort—

Mr. Humphrey: It is not a legal document.

Mr. Manning: You are fooling people.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: You are fooling people.

Mr. Humphrey: It is a policy decision.

Mr. C. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, do you hear the nonsense? It is a policy decision to act humanely. The point I was leading to is that when someone has to be relocated—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker: Order please! The Member for Diego Martin East is entitled to be heard uninterruptedly. The hon. Minister of Housing and Settlements and the Member for Arouca South ought not to be carrying on a conversation so close to him so that it puts us off.

Mr. C. Imbert: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I was saying, the precedent is replete with examples where someone was being relocated. They must be given satisfaction. In other words, this person can wave this Certificate of Comfort which—it does not matter what the Member for St. Augustine thinks—is now a legal instrument and prevents the state from ejecting them. That person can stay as long as he/she wants. If the Member for St. Augustine comes to such a person and says that he would like him/her to move from that location because that is allocated for a road, that person can say, “I am not going.” The Minister could then ask, how would he make that person move? That person can say that he wants 10 acres of land or \$100,000. This is the problem when someone has rights and is being relocated. That person would be in the driver’s seat.

The Attorney General knows this. He would know that once a person has some entitlement or proper claim to a piece of land, that person cannot be removed easily. You have to give that person what he/she wants. I cannot be party to a law that gives someone a certificate of comfort in an area which the state may have reserved within a designated area for infrastructure or community facility. That was a feature of our legislation which we brought to Parliament in 1995. There were areas we called “no go areas”. There were certain areas for which we would not give someone a certificate of comfort or legal entitlement.

I am asking the Minister to get serious in this Parliament. This is a serious matter. If we pass this legislation in its existing condition we would institutionalize chaos in Trinidad and Tobago. There would be squatter communities where the purpose of the legislation would be defeated. We want to upgrade the standard of living of the people. The Member for St. Augustine spoke about changing these communities and turning them into middle class communities, but that would be impossible. As a Member of Parliament, at present, when communities approach me and indicate that they wish to upgrade their infrastructure, widen the roads or improve the drainage as in Dundonald Hill and Belle Vue, there is always the problem that somebody’s fence is in the way.

2.40 p.m.

We cannot remove a fence or make a slight shift in someone’s boundary because they believe that they have rights to that property. Right now, they do not have the legal right that is being proposed here. It is a recipe for chaos, and I am asking the Government to refer this Bill to a committee. Let us sort out these

issues. No one is arguing about giving squatters security of tenure, but it is the way they want to do it.

The Bill gives squatters the right to make an application for a certificate of comfort, one-year period after the appointed day. This is why I ask the Minister: What is the mechanism for ensuring that a person actually was in occupation on the appointed day? Let us assume that an appointed day is chosen. Clause 11(2) of this Bill states:

“Within one year after the appointed day...a squatter to whom section 4(1) applies, whose dwelling house is outside a designated area, may apply to the Land Settlement Division for the issue of a Certificate of Comfort in respect thereof.”

Clause 12 states:

“A late application made after the prescribed period shall be entertained by the Division for a period of one year...”

The point my colleague, the Member for San Fernando West, was making is that you say the date is March 31; a year later someone turns up and says he would like a certificate of comfort; a year still later, someone else turns up and says that his application is late, how does one define the boundaries of the area? Who was inside and who was outside? Is that person entitled to a certificate of comfort?

When I look at clause 12, I find it absurd. It says:

“A late application made after the prescribed period shall be entertained by the Division for a period of one year only and it shall be supported by the declarations of two independent deponents who attest to the fact that the squatter was in actual occupation of the dwelling house, to which the application refers...”

What does this mean? I can go down the road and find two partners to swear I was there before the appointed day. What is the penalty for that? A fine of \$1,000 and imprisonment for seven days. So, even if the state can prove—and I consider this to be unlikely, because there is no mechanism for proving it—that it was a false declaration, the person will go to jail for just seven days. That is “no big thing” to some people. Some people are in and out of jail, what is another seven days?

I cannot understand why the Minister is not tightening the controls in this legislation. I understand his point that the previous approach may have been a bit too rigid and would have caused delays, but we have gone from one extreme to the

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other. There is no control. All the evidence that is required is that I bring two letters from my partners saying that I was there. It cannot be as simple as that. We have to tighten the issue being referred to in clauses 11 and 12. As far as I am concerned the penalty, to some people, will be “no big thing” and persons will get titles they should not have.

The Minister has no problem with the expansion of squatter communities. That is his view and I will not argue about whether he is right or wrong. I am saying that we have a squatting problem with which we are trying to deal. Attempts were made by a previous Parliament to deal with this. This is another approach to the situation. Let us ensure that we achieve the objectives that we are seeking.

My understanding is that the Minister is trying to improve the situation to give squatters title, and also to allow the orderly development of squatter communities. I cannot see how those two objectives are consistent with each other in this Bill. It does not make any sense. Let a committee look at this Bill and deal with the issues clause by clause.

Another issue which the Member for San Fernando West raised—and this is something that needs to be looked at—is that at the present time persons in occupation of lands in Port of Spain and other areas are only entitled to a 30-year lease. However, under this legislation, a squatter can get a deed for 199 years. Why is the state discriminating? If they are giving squatters 199 years, why not give everybody in occupation of state lands 199 years? I would like to know the reason because, in my opinion, it is a conflict of policy.

Is the Minister saying that squatters should get better treatment than people who have been in Woodbrook for 100 years? Are they only entitled to a 30-year lease while squatters are entitled to 199? I would like the Minister to tell me why. I am saying that the lease should be 30 years, and if we seek to change the general provisions for the lease of state lands to 199 years, do it for everybody, the squatters at the same time.

This is discrimination. Right now, a person in Woodbrook can only get a 30-year lease. I believe that is all squatters should be entitled to at this time. When we change the regulations and conditions of lease for other persons, we can change everything to 199 years. It is a simple piece of legislation. When they are doing the lease legislation, they can make it applicable to all the laws to deal with the leasing of state lands. However, at this time, I consider it discrimination against persons who lawfully have been in occupation of state lands, paying their rent and

conforming with all the laws of the country. Why should they get 30 years and someone who has been breaking the law get 199 years. It is unfair!

Let me make another point. Who determines the cost of infrastructure referred to in clause 15(5). The Bill says:

“Infrastructure development costs may be charged where applicable and may be prorated over the terms of the Statutory Lease.”

Who establishes the cost of infrastructure? Is there an element of subsidy involved? If so, how much? What is the policy? We need to know. Why should a person from Woodbrook have to pay cost for infrastructure and someone squatting on state lands get it free? The clause says “where applicable”. It does not say how it is calculated. This is another area that we need to look at. We need to get serious in this Parliament. When we on this side raise issues, the other side must listen.

Let me go now to the Preamble of the Constitution to show that the Member is incorrect in his interpretation of it.

“Whereas the People of Trinidad and Tobago—

- (b) respect the principles of social justice and therefore believe that the operation of the economic system should result in the material resources of the community being so distributed as to subserve the common good, that there should be adequate means of livelihood for all...”

The Member for St. Augustine interpreted that section to mean that land is a material resource of the community, therefore people are entitled to it. He can correct me if I am wrong. I believe he used words like: a material resource of the community is state lands and it should be distributed to benefit everybody. According to the Member for St. Augustine, persons are therefore entitled, under the Constitution, to state lands and we have all been acting in violation of the law by not giving them that right.

2.50 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, that is a fallacious and convenient argument. There are other material resources of the community. There are mineral resources, all the money in the treasury; all the vehicles in the Ministry of Works and Transport; all the produce owned by the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources; are all material resources of the community. But I cannot go down the road and jump into a Ministry of Works and Transport’s truck and say that I do not have a vehicle, it

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has 200, so I am taking one. The Member for St. Augustine is saying that this part of the Constitution should only apply to land. It does not apply to the Treasury. I cannot walk into the Treasury and say you have \$10 billion, and I have none, give me \$5 billion. This is what the Member is promoting. That the material resources of the country belong to everybody so all are entitled. All I am saying is that I cannot agree with him. Why has he confined his argument just to land, why not construction equipment, why not sugar cane? Why can I not go into Caroni (1975) Limited and say I want sugar cane?

Mr. Speaker, when the framers of this Constitution wrote these words, what they intended was that through the rule of law, the electoral process, the election, and the representation of the people, a government is formed. There is a Parliament which passes laws and implements them and they govern the country so that the material resources of the community are subserved for the common good. That is what it means. It means that it has to be interpreted in the context of the laws of Trinidad and Tobago and under the State Lands Act which I have just read. It is illegal to squat on state lands. One cannot interpret the Constitution conveniently.

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. C. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, the Member has indicated that clause 2 is the relevant clause. This is what clause 2 says:

“This Constitution is the supreme law of Trinidad and Tobago, and any other law that is inconsistent with this Constitution is void to the extent of the inconsistency.”

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

That is the point I am making. If the preamble says that the material resources—and I would read the clause for the Member for St. Augustine because he does not understand.

“The material resources of the community be so distributed as to subserve the common good.”

That is what it says. If, according to the Member for St. Augustine, clause 2 says that this is the supreme law, then what he is saying is that any law of Trinidad and Tobago which prevents citizens from taking to themselves, to grab material resources—which is what squatters do—it is inconsistent to survive. What the Member is saying is that anybody who takes land to survive is in accordance with the Constitution. Suppose I take food to survive? Stealing food is a crime, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but according to the Member, it is not. The argument is convenient. I may decide that I need that to survive. I need that briefcase which belongs to the Prime Minister to survive.

Mr. Panday: You leave my briefcase.

Mr. C. Imbert: So according to the interpretation of the Member, anything that I decide I need to survive, according to the Constitution, I could take it and he has applied that argument to land. According to him, people need land to survive, so they could take it. I have tried to demonstrate to him that argument can extend to anything. That is why the Member has been unsuccessful in using the Preamble of the Constitution to give comfort to persons who squat on state lands, because there is no court in this land, or any court that has jurisdiction over us which would agree to that. So the Member for St. Augustine is in a minority of one, as he normally is.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if the Attorney General would pay attention, I know he is dealing with matters of the state. I am asking that clause 11(2) be either deleted or amended radically. This is the one-year period matter where someone is outside a designated area. Also clause 12 to be either deleted, or radically amended to give us the protection which we need to define whether someone is really in occupation or not; whether they are inside or outside. A proper mechanism is needed to define that. I am also asking the Attorney General that we tighten up the definition of “dwelling house” in clause 2 of the interpretation section so we can avoid a situation where a person has a house here, part of a house, and a school here, and the school occupies 49 per cent of the building and the house 51 per cent. In accordance with this, it is mainly as a dwelling.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am hearing muttering from someone over there, an unauthorized source, a squatter. I would ask the Attorney General to look at that as this is the most important issue. *[Interruption]*.

What was that? There is a Member here who has a certificate of comfort from ejection, a squatter?

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Clause 2(b) of this clause is the most dangerous section where it gives persons security of ejectment and it voids section 20 of the State Lands Act, so that I ask the Attorney General to look very closely at clause 2(b).

The other issue is who defines, and I ask the Attorney General to look at this as well. Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is a muttering coming from somewhere, which is a distraction. Could you deal with it, please?

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You know how these squatters are.

Hon. Member: Lawless.

Mr. C. Imbert: We need to get a definition of how we establish the boundaries of this plot, and I ask the Attorney General to look at that. It appears to me—one has to look at everything, that is why it has to go to a committee. There has to be a mechanism for the definition of boundaries. There is a situation where a person can say these are my boundaries, the person who is next to him can say no, they are my boundaries. There is no mechanism in here to decide who defines the boundaries of the parcel of land. It speaks about the land settlement division and so forth and about title investigation, sociological and physical surveys. It talks about these things, but when one goes back to the clause which deals with the certificate of comfort and, particularly the clause which deals with the delay, clause 12, it says:

“A late application made after the prescribed period shall be entertained by the Division for a period of one year only and it shall be supported by the declarations of two independent deponents...”

So according to this, two independent deponents would say he was there and the person next door would say, “No, he was not there, I was there.” And bring two independent deponents to say otherwise and there is a situation of conflict here.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is need for a conflict resolution mechanism. There are two persons who are claiming the same land and I do not see that the land administration or settlement division or whatever it is called, has the power to do that.

It talks about administering and carrying out the provisions of this Act, but where in this Act are there provisions for settlement of disputes over boundaries between squatters? I do not see it here. And I do not see how the Land Settlement Division can settle disputes between squatters. I do not see it, it is not referred to in this Bill, unless I have missed it.

When one goes to clause 21, it says:

“For the purpose of establishing the entitlement to security of tenure in respect of each lot of land within an area to be designated under section 17(3) or specified in the Schedule, the Committee shall—

- (a) authorise an officer of the Division to conduct an investigation of title on a lot by lot basis;
- (b) cause notice of the impending title investigation to be published in at least two daily newspapers for a continuous period of seven days immediately prior to the commencement of the title investigation.”

Then it goes on to challenge and so forth.

Then there is a dispute procedure in relation to the designation of state lands in clause 23(2) which says:

“Where a person makes objection to any matter or has a dispute as to encumbrances or other matters relating to the State lands that the Minister proposes to designate, the Committee shall determine any such matter in accordance with subsections (3) to (5).”

It speaks about a person who makes objection to any matter as a dispute as to encumbrances or other matters relating to state lands; the right of parties to redress in the ordinary courts and then it says whether such matters may be conciliated or settled at community level.

The clause I am really looking for is clause 23(3) which says:

“The committee shall first determine whether such matter may be conciliated or settled at community level.”

What does this really mean? I have given somebody a certificate of comfort for which he has applied, I also give someone else a certificate of comfort. How is the community going to settle that? I would really like to see something in this legislation which tightens up this whole issue because there is a long convoluted thing in here which actually makes nonsense of the points made by the Member for St. Augustine. Where the committee may hear and determine the matter, or it may direct the appropriate investigation; consider such report; provide the concerned parties with a copy of reasons, and so forth, then what happens at the end of that? Does this committee determine that “party A” could squat here, and “party B” cannot squat there when both of them own a certificate of comfort? I would like the Attorney General to address this. If two persons are given a certificate of comfort for lands which are in conflict with each other, how is that dealt with?

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Mr. Deputy Speaker, I repeat my request that I would like to see a mechanism for determining the validity of the claim in the legislation or some accounting regulation which deals with that. There is a mechanism in determining whether someone was actually in occupation of a parcel of state lands, what are the boundaries of those lands, and when was it occupied.

The Minister speaks about aerial photographs and claims that through aerial photographs every single squatter in the country could be determined. I do not know about that. I am not certain that the state-of-the-art is such that we can do that. I am not certain that in Trinidad and Tobago we can take aerial photographs which can pinpoint the precise location of boundaries, especially in contentious squatter settlements.

3.05 p.m.

I would like to see—and this is the most important thing—provisions in the legislation for the refusal of the issue of a certificate of comfort to someone who is in an area designated for infrastructure, or for public purposes. If there is a particular location within a designated area to be used for infrastructure, community or public purposes, a person is not entitled to a certificate of comfort in that situation. I would like to see the state move in an orderly and progressive upgrading of squatter settlements.

I am asking the Attorney General to please send this legislation to a committee. There is too much ambiguity, too much missing in the legislation and it is a recipe for chaos.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY BILL
(STATEMENT ON)

The Prime Minister (Hon. Basdeo Panday): Mr. Deputy Speaker, a short while ago the Equal Opportunities Bill, 1998 was tabled in this honourable House. The journey which has brought us to the tabling of this Bill—

Mr. Valley: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point or order. Under what item of the agenda are we at present?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: We are dealing with the Equal Opportunities Bill.

Mr. Maharaj: You were not there when it was announced by the Speaker.

Hon. B. Panday: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I see the hon. Member has withdrawn his objections as quickly as he withdrew his resignation. *[Laughter]*

[MR. SPEAKER, *in the Chair*]

Mr. Speaker, the journey which has brought us to the tabling of the Equal Opportunity Bill has been a very long one. I have worked for this day over 20 years. The journey which has brought the Equal Opportunity Bill to this House began when our nation was born on August 31, 1962.

In our National Anthem, this nation's most fervent hope, the people of Trinidad and Tobago's most vital imperative, were expressed in the words:

“Here every creed and race, find an equal place.”

That was not an expression of fact, it was a sentiment of intent; an aspiration.

“Here every creed and race, find an equal place” is a petition and a pledge twice stated in our nation's National Anthem. That prayer and pledge will be forever foremost among our national objectives.

The Equal Opportunity Bill, 1998, translates the prayer and the pledge, first articulated at the birth of our nation, into potent, practical law. The journey to the tabling of this historic Bill began even before the birth of our nation. For me, that journey began at the earliest awakening of my social consciousness, as a very young man growing up in a plural society, and going forth into a world in which not much hope could be held out for an equal place for every creed and race.

There has never been a period of my life when I was not, in some manner or in some sense, engaged in the struggle for equality, social justice and economic enfranchisement of the poor in our society. Fully conscious that it was more symbolism than substance—that provision in the Constitution—in 1962, I established an Equal Opportunity Commission in the office of the Leader of the Opposition. It could be said that I was trying to practise what I preached.

It is to be noted that the thrust and title of the Minister of Finance's 1998 Budget Statement was “Opportunity for All.” The budget measures, intended to deliver opportunity to all, will be buttressed by the Equal Opportunity Bill which has been laid for the consideration of this honourable House.

On the journey to this day, Mr. Speaker, the manifesto of the successful 1995 United National Congress election campaign, at page 22, pledged, as a priority, the introduction of the Equal Opportunity Commission and I take this opportunity to read. Under the heading “Race Relations” it says:

“A UNC government will, as a matter of priority, introduce legislation to set up an Equal Opportunities Commission which would have the necessary

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powers to give redress to individuals who suffer discrimination on other grounds.”

We lost no time on delivering on that pledge, Mr. Speaker.

In November 1995, this Government asked the Law Commission to prepare a working paper on Equal Opportunity Legislation. That paper was ready by January 17, 1996, within two months of my appointment to the office which I have the privilege to hold.

The working paper on equal opportunity recommended legislation to prohibit discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, political affiliation, religion and disability in the fields of employment, education, accommodation and the provision of goods and services.

Less than a month later, the Working Paper was laid in both Houses of the Parliament. Subsequent to that, a Joint Select Committee of the Parliament, chaired by Sen. The Hon. Wade Mark, evaluated submissions from a cross-section of individuals and organizations. Among them:

Miss Merle Hodge	Lecturer, Department of Liberal Arts, UWI
Dr. Rolph Premdass	Lecturer, Department of Behavioural Studies UWI
Dr. Rhoda Reddock	Senior Lecturer, Department of Gender and Development Studies at UWI
Prof. Bridget Brereton	Lecturer in the Department of History at UWI
Dr. John La Guerre	Head of the Department of Behavioural Studies, UWI.

In addition to this, the hon. Attorney General instructed that an Equal Opportunity Commission Bill be drafted to give effect to the Working Paper. That Draft Bill was published for public comment last April.

The Equal Opportunity Bill, 1998, which will receive the attention and sanction of honourable Members, embodies the recommendations of the Joint Select Committee, which were laid in Parliament on November 5, 1997. The committee recommended *inter alia*, that:

“Equal Opportunity Legislation should be introduced to prohibit acts of discrimination on the grounds of sex, race, (including mixed race) ethnicity,

religion, material status, disability and origin (including geographical origin) in particular fields, namely, employment, education, the provision of goods and services and accommodation.

An Equal Opportunity Commission should be established comprising five commissioners to receive, investigate and conciliate complaints; and a three-member Equal Opportunity Tribunal to hear and determine un-conciliated complaints with powers to make enforceable orders; and the legislation should bind the state.”

The Bill would set up a legal framework for every individual in Trinidad and Tobago who feels he is treated unequally to apply to the commission to obtain redress. The procedure for applying is simple, not legalistic and informal.

3.15 p.m.

The Commission and the Tribunal are given the necessary powers to provide redress for the injustices suffered as a result of any unequal treatment. The Bill, therefore, provides effective machinery for the ordinary person to have access to equal justice. Mr. Speaker, my Government has been diligent in moving this Bill on its journey to this day. Hopefully, this is one achievement for which the Opposition will not claim credit.

It is pertinent to draw attention to the fact that the 1987 Hyatali Constitution Commission had examined the question of an Equal Opportunities Commission, a recommendation proposed by Dr. John La Guerre. The Hyatali Commission, however, felt no justification for including such a body in the Constitution, holding to the view that the Fundamental Human Rights provision of the Constitution provided adequate protection against discrimination.

What we are doing here today is giving life and blood to the provisions of the Constitution by providing a mechanism for the enforcement that is available to the poorest among us. The United National Congress, the African Association of Trinidad and Tobago and the Bar Association had also petitioned the Hyatali Commission for the inclusion of an Equal Opportunity Commission in the Constitution. Only the PNM Opposition objected.

It is worth noting that the previous administration, by their inaction, and by their obvious lack of interest in the removal of the barriers to opportunities to so many in this diverse society, holds resolutely to its credo that ‘party’ is paramount, not the citizen. By their rejection of my call for a Government of National Unity, by their rejection of my crusade for National Unity, by their rejection of my

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appeals for National Reconciliation, they continue to prove, beyond any spectre of doubt, that instead of seeking to put the people first, they seek nothing but any means to regain political power.

Mr. Speaker, with the Equal Opportunity Bill, the Government is levelling the legal playing field as an absolutely necessary prerequisite to the full social and economic enfranchisement of every man, woman and child in Trinidad and Tobago, regardless of gender, race, religion, political affinity, disability, origin, including geographical origin, or any criterion of status.

At the same time, the Leader of the Opposition's dominant manifest preoccupation is to hang on to the bridge of a ship that progressively takes on the appearance of a Titanic in progress. His principal contribution to national life and consciousness of the Constitution last year was his quixotic and costly constitutional motion to deny two Members of Parliament their constitutional right of association. His principal contribution this year has been to issue alarmist proclamations to the world involving racial confrontation and threats to free and fair elections in this country. We must add to this his recent threat to further sully the good name of our Republic in international fora with his plan to go to the Organization of American States on behalf of an avowedly partisan mercenary to whom he has now hitched his own, his party's and his constituents' survival.

If I may be allowed an aside, Mr. Speaker, certain sources have it to say that the abrupt "volte face" of the Member for Diego Martin Central, after his resignation and the vituperation directed against his leader, was because he was threatened with an infamous constitutional motion. They have lost their sense of *joie de vivre*.

I digress to seek levity to set the stage for two points. Under the Equal Opportunity Act—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members.

Mr. Valley: I seek your apology, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. B. Panday: I can well understand their need to distract me on this point. Under the Equal Opportunity Act, any act of discrimination may be challenged without recourse to legal counsel and the burden of attendant legal fees. Generally, those discriminated against are usually those least able to afford the legal process.

Moreover, the Commission will move the locations of its sitting across the country, thus bringing justice closer to the people. No need to incur million-dollar legal debts with no ability to pay.

The other point, Mr. Speaker, is an attempt to use reverse psychology, to leverage support for this Bill from the Opposition Benches, so often intractably opposed to any measure from the Government which promises great good for great numbers in our society.

The Equal Opportunity Bill is far reaching in its sensitivity to the diversity of our society. Among other things, the Bill also prohibits offensive behaviour in public, which offends or insults another person or group on the grounds of race, origin or religion; and also prohibits the inciting of racial and religious hatred.

In the field of employment, discrimination against applicants in the selection procedure, the terms and conditions of the job and in not offering the job is prohibited. Discrimination against employees in relation to their terms and conditions, access for promotional and training opportunities; and dismissal and discrimination in the training of an employee are also prohibited.

Mr. Speaker, in any society, but most specifically, in a plural society such as ours, to deny opportunity to any group, any individual, because of gender, race, religion, disability, or any criterion of status, is to deny the society the opportunity to achieve its full development potential. The Equal Opportunity Bill removes such barriers and disparities for all times.

As I come to the end of my statement, I can think of no conclusion more appropriate than to express my sincere gratitude to all whose vision, views and energy have shaped the Bill of which I have spoken. I am confident that the passage of this Bill into law will give the population greater hope and confidence in the future, and increasing opportunity for self-worth and personal net worth.

I thank Nelson Mandela for the word which very well defines what the Equal Opportunity Bill sets out to achieve:

“MASAKHANE”

It is a Nguni word which means: “Let us build one another together.”

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

STATE LAND (REGULARISATION OF TENURE) BILL

The Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs (Hon. Pamela Nicholson): Mr. Speaker, when I saw this Bill entitled, “An Act to secure certain squatters from ejection from state land; to facilitate the acquisition of leasehold titles by both squatters and tenants in designated areas, and to provide for the establishment of

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land settlement areas”, I was very excited because I recognized that this was a revolutionary step that we have achieved in this country. [*Desk thumping*]

This is an issue which governments in this country have been struggling with for over a decade. I have played an integral role in this, and because of that, I feel very proud today to give support to the Member for St. Augustine in bringing this Bill to this House. I believe that all Members on the other side should be totally supportive of the Bill. It might have a few flaws, as most of the Bills that the last Government used to bring in the House used to have, but we must be broad-minded enough to deal with those problems.

3.25 p.m.

I feel very proud too, to be supportive of the Member for St. Augustine, because he was the individual who really got me interested in this area. When the country was crying out, in a crisis situation with regard to housing settlement, it was the Member for St. Augustine who called me, as Member for Tobago West, to discuss the problems that we had as far as settlements were concerned, and who came up with creative ideas. For example, the Sou Sou Lands Project. He invited me to be a part of that grouping, which tried to implement a programme to the advantage of the low income earners in the society.

I feel very proud, and I could boast, that the best project that came out of that Sou Sou Lands Programme is the one that I was in charge of in Tobago. We bought the New Grange Estate of over 100 acres. The lands at the time were being sold for between \$70,000 and \$100,000 per lot. We bought it, developed it, and sold it back to the low income earners in Tobago for \$7,000 per lot. That is why I feel very proud to be seated here with the Member for St. Augustine, and to try to do same for the squatters of Trinidad.

I listened very closely to the Member for San Fernando West the last day when he went through the preamble on page 2, the first paragraph, and he said that, and I quote:

“It does not bring to an end the issue of squatting on state lands, but, rather, when you read this Bill in its entirety, it gives a *carte blanche* licence to encourage and promote squatting on a sustainable basis.”

I do not support that argument as postulated by the Member for San Fernando West. I do not support it because I believe that the land settlement unit, when it is put together, will be there to deal with the people who have problems. The low income earners who would not be able to purchase lands, since they cannot

afford, can go to this unit in the Ministry of Housing and Settlements to address their problem. It does not give them licence to go and just squat, because we are not entertaining that at this time.

Mr. Speaker, when the squatting problem was dealt with in 1989, as Minister of Housing and Settlements, I took to the Cabinet a Cabinet Note giving approval for the whole issue of squatter regularisation to be addressed. In 1991, a Bill was prepared to also address that issue. It was in 1989, that in collaboration with the Inter-American Development Bank, that the first pilot project, in relation to squatter regularisation was addressed and I am the minister who has to take that credit.

I believe that there is another clause which the Ministry of Housing and Settlements has within their purview which might have been omitted in this Bill, we did not refer to it, that is, one must have operating regulations. When we dealt with those areas: Triangle 8, Valencia, Bamboo Settlement and others, this document was prepared and addressed as operating regulations. I am sure that the Minister has this in his Ministry to be dealt with, to implement the programme. All I am saying is that might be one clause that we forgot. *[Laughter]*

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Hon. P. Nicholson: Mr. Speaker, one must have regulations, and I am sure that the Ministry has addressed this. There must be a Project Execution Unit within the Ministry. *[Interruption]* We work very closely together. Everything I want, the Minister would address it on my behalf, and I would do same. *[Interruption]* No, he has it, but we are referring to it here.

Mr. Speaker, one must have a Project Execution Unit, and a Mobilization Unit, to mobilize the people in the various squatter areas. So when the representative for Diego Martin East asks: How are you going to deal with the boundaries? How are you going to deal with the people? The Mobilization Unit will mobilize the people in the various squatting areas. We went to cooperatives, credit unions and so forth, so that the people would be there as a strong community to address their programmes.

Mr. Speaker, it would not be the same as the Inter-American Development Bank's pilot programme in the sense that, with regard to that programme, funding was given to assist the people. So, the projects were subsidized; if the cost was \$10,000, 60 per cent was borne by the people and 40 per cent subsidization. But in this case, the Government cannot afford to do all of that, so the people would be

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mobilized and, with people in their credit unions, their cooperatives and so forth, they will decide how they are going to deal with the infrastructural development in their areas.

So the first thing, obviously, that the communities would address, would be surveying their lands to determine their 5,000 square feet lots. They will address their problems with whatever assistance the Government can give from an implemental perspective. So, after they have surveyed the land, they will deal with the other infrastructural development, roads, drainage and so forth, just as we addressed the project in Tobago. Roads, drainage, walkways, they will decide where they will site their playgrounds and schools. That is why I give much credit to the Minister for being able to bring this Bill here, because whatever problems confront the squatters, the land settlement unit in the Ministry will assist. In the sense that if an individual—as the Member for Diego Martin East was saying—on an area that was reserved for schools and for recreation grounds, the executive councils of the credit unions, and the cooperatives will deal with relocating those who should be relocated. So, I am saying that the Government already has their operating regulations to deal with that.

Mr. Speaker, as I went through the contribution by the Member for San Fernando West, I want to quote what he said:

“Before I go on, I want to touch on one point about these private contractors. It is a point I think I have raised before in this House. When private contractors undertake work for the Government, it is the obligation of the relevant Ministries and Ministers to ensure that the work produced and delivered to the state is not substandard. It is incumbent upon the Government to ensure that when homes are built by private contractors, they are built to specifications and to the high standards set by the Ministry.”

I want to tell the Member for San Fernando West that he is speaking to his colleagues. He is speaking to the People's National Movement; a government that was in power and held power in this country for 40 years.

Mr. Speaker, when I had the privilege to serve the people of this country in the period 1986—1991, we had to upgrade all the houses at La Horqueta and Maloney: the roofs, windows, floors, water systems, sewer systems. We had to cut the mortgage prices because of the tremendously poor housing service that people had to pay for. We had to help the people by cutting the mortgage prices. It was the NAR government of which I was a part. *[Interruption]* You could say anything. Mr. Speaker, it was the government of which I was a part. We had to put schools,

libraries, recreation grounds on those development projects, they knew nothing about that. So when the Members for Diego Martin East and West were talking today about putting in schools, libraries and social facilities, it was a development they were putting down, they were not dealing with squatter regularisation. These were housing developments that they were putting down and they did not know that they had to build schools, after putting over 20,000 people to live in those areas. We had to put in schools, libraries and recreation grounds in those areas. I am quoting two areas: La Horqueta and Maloney. We had to save those people, we had to save the young people in those areas.

3.40 p.m.

Member for San Fernando West, when you are talking, you are talking about the People's National Movement of which you are a part. *[Interruption]* Mr. Speaker, I am dealing with the Bill, this is a debate and that is what the Member said.

Mr. Bereaux: Sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander.

Dr. Mohammed: Are you getting water? Good, be grateful and be quiet.

Hon. P. Nicholson: The Member said that adequate shelter cannot be provided by regularisation alone or seemingly encouraging squatting on state lands. I dealt with that when I said that, firstly, there is the land settlements area and the agency to deal with that. We also have, as I said, operating regulations that we know must be implemented, and we also believe that there should be containment units.

The Member for San Fernando West spoke about a mad rush for lands, that is why we have the land settlements area, so that the low income people could go into it. This is also why we have the operating regulations, and the ministry would be having its containment unit to deal with that situation because we cannot entertain illegalities in the country and lawlessness; we have to promote law and order. What we are trying to do is help the low income people, the poor who cannot find their way out of their economic dilemma, the thousands who are deprived. That is why this document is here today and I am sure that all Members on the other side can do no other thing but support it.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: She is right to call it a document and not a Bill.

Hon. P. Nicholson: *[Interruption]* I already told you how we are going to address them, if we forget something we will put it in. We are very broadminded on this side and are concerned about the people in this country.

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Mr. Speaker, the Member also said on page 4, the last paragraph, that this clause 11(12)—the same land settlements area—would create a stampede of persons in this country to become squatters. When housing settlements are developed there is an approach used to market it to the people. There is not a stampede at the Ministry of Housing and Settlements or in the National Housing Authority. If it is well structured—it could only be a stampede under the PNM. It cannot be a stampede here. One must have a system that one will use. I believe that the majority of our people are lawful.

Another point that the Member made about which I felt very strongly concerns clauses 17(3) and 18(3). He said that these two clauses could be abused in the hands of a partisan minister because they confer on him powers to influence population shifts in constituencies. He was referring to clause 17(3) which states:

"(3) Subject to section 19, the Minister may, from time to time, by Order, amend the Schedule by removing areas of land therefrom or by adding areas of land thereto, including land owned by a State Agency which is occupied by a squatter pursuant to section 3(1)(c)."

18. The power of the Minister to amend the Schedule may be exercised—

- (a) on his own motion;
- (b) on application to the Minister by—
 - (i) the Division, or any other State agency;
 - (ii) an individual or group of individuals entitled to a Certificate of Comfort.

I was very surprised because after being in this House for over two years with the Member for San Fernando West, I saw him as a man of integrity and of very high profile. I was surprised when he made this spurious, imbecilic comment when he said that the Minister could be "partisan" and "confer on him powers to influence population shifts on constituencies", I consider that very trite. I was very disappointed to hear that superficial statement—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

Hon. P. Nicholson: —coming out of the mouth of the Member for San Fernando West, because it might not be the Minister; after any election we do not know who will be there. Is he saying all the Ministers would be doing that? That is superficial! It is not partisan. It is to address the problems that confront the people and we have been demonstrating that. That is why congratulations should be given,

and all over the place to the Member for St. Augustine for being able to bring this today to fruition, after a decade of struggle. [*Desk thumping*]

I am very proud of the land settlements area too, in the sense that we in the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs are having many problems. Some have been raised here this afternoon, where state lands have been allotted for recreation grounds and facilities and there are people squatting on them. In order to implement the programme we first have to take much time to have them remove legally—although they are there illegally—and then pay them for crops which they planted.

For example, we had a problem with the Tacarigua sporting development lands. We have one right now at the Yolande Pompey Recreation Ground area where we are to build a swimming pool. We should have started since last year, but there is a squatter giving us some worries. That is why it is a good thing to address the whole question of squatter regularisation because of the time it takes to go through all the bureaucratic steps. Therefore, the area with the Land Settlements Division is very important because it should make it easier for us to address those problems and then to go ahead with sporting development.

One area I refer to again in which I thought there was a flaw, in that, if one looks at the Schedule on page 24, one will see that no reference is made to squatting in Tobago. It is very clear that an error was made by the institution addressing this Bill. Perhaps they did not communicate with the Tobago House of Assembly. There is this feeling all over the place that Tobago does not have squatting. Mr. Speaker, we have squatting in Tobago and, therefore, I would tell the Minister, the representative for St. Augustine, that we have a number of areas we would want to see put under the Schedule, because this is a Bill to deal with the law in Trinidad and Tobago. [*Interruption*] I am just helping my Minister, the representative for Tobago West. I have no problem. [*Interruption*]

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Do you all not talk in the Cabinet?

Mr. Speaker: Order please! I want to indicate that the night is young; all Members will have an opportunity to talk and nobody would be denied that opportunity. It is unnecessary to interfere with the Member during her contribution.

Hon. P. Nicholson: We have the Smithfield and the Roxborough Estates.

3.50 p.m.

We have squatters at Signal Hill, Blenheim, Speyside, Louis D'Or, Buccoo and Castara. I would like the Member to pay attention to these areas. As a matter of

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fact, I would remind the Member when we are in the committee stage about this because there should be a section for Tobago and these areas should be under the schedule areas. We have hundreds of squatters in Tobago and we would like their problems to be addressed. As Member for Tobago West I want to make that point very clearly. When we speak here we are speaking for Tobago. I just represent Tobago West but I am talking for the whole of Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, this Government has achieved a great deal. The Government is extending the facility to the forgotten in our society. We want them to get homes and I am sure that the Minister has another programme he is going to link with this for the low income citizens to be no longer landless; so that they can truly experience self-esteem and feel pride in themselves and their country.

Mr. Speaker, the provisions of the Bill will have far reaching effects. It will nurture and strengthen the co-operative spirit in the country. It will nurture and strengthen the credit union approach; people learning to save more to address their own problems and the community spirit will also be strengthened. Just as we used the Sou Sou Lands Programme—when you see the nice houses at New Grange, some of the people assisted each other to build them. If you go to Tobago you will see the beautiful housing development that can stand up to any in Trinidad. Hopefully, it will build community bridges with the other levels of the society.

It will not and cannot deal with all the ills but I look forward with hope and confidence to the finalization of this people-centred, community-based project.

I want to congratulate the Member for St. Augustine again for being able to bring this task that we were attacking for over one decade into fruition. I want to congratulate and thank him and I look forward to Members on the other side giving all the support that is necessary for the advantage and development of the squatters in this country.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Patrick Manning (*San Fernando East*): Mr. Speaker, I rise to make a brief intervention in this debate following the very excellent contribution of my colleagues the Member for San Fernando West and the Member for Diego Martin East.

Indeed, we considered for a while whether it would not have been appropriate, following those two contributions, to suggest to the hon. Members opposite that we go to a select committee on this matter because while, in principle, we agree with this question of de-regularisation of squatters, that has been a long standing PNM policy with which you, Mr. Speaker, will be well familiar, we have some

difficulty with the actual wording of the legislation and some of the difficulties that are presented as a consequence of the way the legislation is drafted.

I would like to direct the attention of hon. Members to December, 1986. The new government, National Alliance for Reconstruction had just come into office and the hon. Member for St. Augustine had just been announced as the new Minister of Housing and Settlements. I well remember what followed because the Member for St. Augustine had been an advocate of “squatters’ rights”—and I put that in quotation—which had been articulated in such a way that it virtually appeared to the national community that he was promoting lawlessness in Trinidad and Tobago. The very point about the preamble to the Constitution and who is entitled to what. The point so eloquently made by the hon. Member for Diego Martin East that everybody has a right to land and so forth, was precisely the point of departure that led, in December, 1987 to a widespread movement all over Trinidad—I do not know that it took place in Tobago—where people just began to capture land all over the country culminating in an address, a very impassioned and emotive address to the nation by the then Minister of Housing and Settlements, the hon. Member for St. Augustine.

Those who forget their history are condemned to repeat it. The hon. Member for St. Augustine will, I am sure, recall that all this came about because of the way he conducted his business prior to the accession to government office. [*Desk thumping*] Those in whose hands the business of government is entrusted must have a proper concept of governance. If they do not, it can lead to the development of problems in the society that may have been unanticipated by them. Whatever they may think it is not good enough. What concept of governance is associated with a Minister seeking to carry out the mandate of his Prime Minister, which is quite proper, that he should seek to bring about a greater measure of efficiency in the conduct of affairs in his own Ministry by putting a gun in his pocket, going to a legislative body, accosting someone and then putting this gun from his pocket to his waist? What concept of governance leads to a Member of the Cabinet operating in that way?

In the same way, Mr. Speaker, when the PNM addressed squatting on December 2, 1977 in the budget presentation for 1978, it was the Minister of Finance and Prime Minister at the time who addressed it in these terms. It is a quotation from the budget:

“In respect of squatters on state lands their tenancy will be regularised.”
Which is what we are seeking to do now. This is how Dr. Williams put it:

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“This will not extend to unauthorized additions to the squatting population moving in after the announcement of this policy.”

In other words, he declared an amnesty for squatters on the day the announcement was made, December 2, 1997. There is a concept of governance and there is an understanding of your society that leads a PNM government to declare an amnesty in this way. In other words, one makes the announcement and does not leave the door open for transgressing of the law in a way that happened in December, 1986. It is the reality. When we said it we were *[Interruption]* You will have your chance to reply.

Mr. Humphrey: Read the rest of that. Read about the 6,000 lots a year which were supposed to be provided and tell me how many *[Inaudible]*.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the Member for San Fernando East is entitled and should be permitted to make his contribution without interruption.

Mr. P. Manning: The hon. Member for St. Augustine is interrupting with a very powerful voice. That is not the way he looked in December, 1986. He was in tears on the television, he wondered what could have gone wrong. In Harmony Hall, which is close to where I live, people had just come in, put down a stake as they did in the wild west when new frontiers were being opened up, marched 10 paces in one direction, put another stake, turned, marched 10 paces and people were just taking—*[Laughter]*—that is what happened. They were just taking up land in December, 1986.

When the Minister realized that the liability for such a development could be placed at no other doorstep but his own—and the then Prime Minister did not back him. He put him on television and told him to undo what your irresponsible actions and behaviour before have now brought about in Trinidad and Tobago. You would believe, therefore, that the Minister concerned would have understood that if ever you operate in such a way where the door is left open, then you are courting trouble in Trinidad and Tobago. I cannot understand how this Minister could have brought a Bill to this Parliament with clause 3(1) included in it. This is how clause 3(1) goes:

“(a) A squatter in respect of his actual occupation of State Land on which there is a dwelling house before the appointed day;”

As of now, in this debate, neither the Minister nor anybody else on the Government side has indicated to this honourable House what is the appointed day. That is important because I have a suspicion that the appointed day is going

to be a day in the future rather than a current time or a day in the past. Indeed, even now as this debate is taking place and as it becomes clear to those in our society who are so disposed that we are trying to regularise squatters and anybody found in place on the appointed day will have their tenancy regularised, what it does is provoke those in our society who are so minded to act in a certain way. The Minister of Housing and Settlements understands this well. If he does not, he should understand it well enough to know that one does not come to the Parliament with legislation written in this way. But if he does not understand it, the Members for Couva South and North do. The question I ask is, why? Why in the face of our experiences in this matter—because the Member for Couva North was in the government at that time—would they want to come and do that? The door is wide open. Whoever wants to go and squat could go and squat and just wait for them to announce the appointed day. That is what this legislation, as it is now worded, seeks to do.

4.05 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, you hear them saying San Fernando East across the floor and you may believe that is a joke. [*Laughter*] It is no joke. Because, you see, the hon. Member for Oropouche, and I regret he is not here today.

Miss Nicholson: The Member for Oropouche is not here today. Do not talk behind the man back.

Mr. P. Manning: Mr. Speaker all I would ask is, “Was he advised that the House would be sitting today?” It is no fault of mine that he is not here, nor the fault of the parliamentary staff. He should be here. The Member for Oropouche has been operating in the San Fernando East constituency in a highly improper manner. In 1994—and I am indebted to the hon. Member for Tobago West because, as she pointed out, it was they who started a pilot project under the Inter-American Development Bank programme of squatter regularisation. She is quite correct. [*Interruption*] Quiet, boy. [*Laughter*] [*Interruption*] You are looking straight ahead, not to your left.

Mr. Speaker, it was in 1994, under the very Inter-American Development Bank arrangements, that the government of which I was a proud part and which I headed, took a decision and began implementing the regularisation of squatters of Blitz Village in Pleasantville.

Mr. Humphrey: I have the whole file.

Mr. P. Manning: You have the whole file; I have it, too. I have most of it. [*Interruption*] Is that correct? I have most of the file.

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Mr. Speaker, I think it is a credit to the staff of the National Housing Authority and the Project Implementation Unit, that that project was completed in one year. I did not think that was possible but it happened. But in regularizing the squatters in Blitz Village in Pleasantville, we ended up with a number of lots that were not occupied by squatters at that time.

The question therefore arose as to how these lots were to be allocated. Who will be the beneficiaries of these lots? I am indebted to the hon. Minister of Housing and Settlements for making a document available to me. The document talks about the guidelines that the National Housing Authority is using, I imagine, under the direction of the Minister himself, to allocate these unauthorized lots.

In fact, the document says that the lots were not allocated during the construction stage because they did not wish to start the occupation of those lots while the regularisation was in progress and before proper surveys were done to properly demarcate each particular lot.

I think it is instructive to show you the detail in which the policy had been written on this matter. First priority level for allocation of lots, level A, next of kin, son or daughter of beneficiary household, family living in beneficiary household. Second priority, level B, next of kin, son or daughter of beneficiary household, without family living in beneficiary household. Third priority level, relatives of beneficiary household with family resident within development area. Fourth priority, level D, relatives of beneficiary household without family resident within the development area. And fifth priority, level E, relatives of beneficiary household, resident outside the development area. That is the criteria they said they used.

Mr. Speaker, before any proper occupation of the lots could have taken place, squatting began on those lots again. The Minister of Planning and Development, the hon. Member for Oropouche, has been saying to individuals that they could go in there and squat and that they have the protection of the Minister in so doing. He has been telling them to do that.

Indeed, two weeks ago, when demolition had been taking place, they demolished the households of persons who were in place before some of the others, while leaving some of those who were in occupancy later, entirely unscathed.

Mr. Humphrey: Not true.

Mr. P. Manning: It happened! It happened in Pleasantville. There was a day when it came to my attention that demolition was to have taken place and I went

on site and that was the only day, I understand, that they did things in accordance with what was their stated policy.

Mr. Humphrey: Not true.

Mr. P. Manning: I was there. It was not the police at all; it was the National Housing Authority that did it; it had nothing to do with the police; under political direction. You are trying to create mischief as usual.

Mr. Speaker, the hon. Minister gave me one document associated with the policy, but what he did not know is that I have two others, because in implementing this policy that sounds so laudable, let me tell you what it has now led to, Mr. Speaker. It has now led to a list of people who are to be removed from the land and a list of people to whom the land is allocated.

I crave your indulgence, Mr. Speaker, to read out this list without making any comment about it. I am just going to read the list and I am going to read the list, because I do not have the authority in Opposition to lay the document on the table. If I had that authority, I would have laid it without reading it, the list of persons to be ejected from the land.

Gerald Arcia; Chandroutie Ram; P. Hackett & Gregory Leonsingh; Andre Cadogan; Gillian Pariag; Annis Legall; Ann Marie Joseph; Sharon DaAbreau; Unknown; Unknown; Unknown; Louise Dublin; T. Moonassar and/or P. R. Maharaj; Joycelyn Cuffy-Julien; Timothy Patrick; Natalie Hills; Junior Bowin; Marie Emmanuel; Judy Jackson/Sonny Guevera; Sonny Guevera; Randolph Russell Unknown; Sheryl Volman/Wayne Bekome; Angel Sharon Marcano; Unknown; Unknown; Unknown; Unknown. Those are to be evicted.

Those to come in—Deonarine Singh; Roopnarine Singh; Doodnath Singh; Shammie Dookie; Kenny Harrilal; Jenny & Raymond Ramdhanie; Tazim Mohammed; Suraj Dookie; Suresh Dookie; Indra Maharaj; Kaloutie Seecharan; Sabita Maharaj; Romeo Subiah; Ricky Gunai; Chandranath Kalloo; Madanlal Ramkellawan; Rajesh Roopnarine; Davenand Roopnarine; Shameta & Nadan Rampersad; Megnath Maharaj; Rishi & Nadira Seemungal; Michael & Shelly Botas; Ann Daniel; Rookmin Mootee; Vera Ramdoolar; Ricky Ramdhanie; Cheryl-Ann Boodoo; Theresa Ann Joseph; Charlene Simon; Shawn Kevin Henry; Seldon Telesford; Shurnon Ramkellawan; Gabriel Mitchell; Christopher Mitchell; Sheila Sieunarine; Sabritree Bajnath.

Those were at level A. This is level B, in accordance with that policy.

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Abraham Mendoza; Jameel Mohammed; Ameer Mohammed; Inshan Mohammed; Steve Seenarine; Sherry Simmons; Tateram Ramkellawan; Gajraj Ramkellawan; Ramnarine Roopnarine; Ravi Roopnarine; Edwin Taylor; Alfred Figaro; Michael Taylor; Choon Kissoondathsingh; Auaraj Kissoondathsingh; Andre Williams; Lyndon Allen; Jason & Jeromey King; Jason Clarke; Kent Luces; Mc-Kennon Thomas; Sherry S. Maharaj; Lester Gajadhar; Chandranath Salick; Mascel Toussaint; Errol Ragoonathsingh; Michelle Henry; Eva Jaikaran; Garvin Bachuss; Carolett DaAbreau; Keita Placide; Desmond Abraham; Vicash Mahabir; Shankar Mahabir; Sharm Bajnath; Wayne Scipio; Sharda Ramkellawan; Anthony Ramdhanie; Sattie Maharaj; Samdaye Kisson; Jaggernauth Katwaroo; Cynthia Annette; Roland Baptiste; Elsa Hills; Lynette Kellawan; Michael Livingston; Timothy Patrick; Peter Donaldson; Natalie Hills; Ricardo Baptiste; Artherly Phillip.

Mr. Speaker, I ask you one question: To what conclusion is a dispassionate observer in this matter expected to come? That is why, Mr. Speaker, when a government enunciates policy, especially when a government turns out to be as untrustworthy as the current Government of Trinidad and Tobago, [*Desk thumping*] we have to be very, very careful indeed.

Mr. Speaker, there is squatting in John John on state lands. There was a fire. The PNM government, of which I was a part and which I headed between 1991—1995, took a decision to build some apartments to house those who were the victims of the fire, in addition to other persons in the area who were in need of housing accommodation. That was a policy decision we took. It is two years now that the apartments are completed. Nothing has happened and the Member for Point Fortin sits there, smiling like a Cheshire cat, comfortable with the fact that he is now sitting with a group of people—

Mr. Panday: You sick man.

Mr. P. Manning: —who have completely undone the policy of which he was a part and which he articulated so eloquently when he was on this side.
[*Interruption*]

4.20 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, it is still there. Instead of giving it to the people of John John, we are hearing all kinds of talk about putting football people up there. The nearest football field to John John is the stadium. How did we get from building houses for squatters who were dislocated as a result of a fire, and other categories of qualified

personnel, to putting footballers in? Or worse, how did we get from that to a situation where, today, those apartments are unoccupied and deteriorating? Money is being spent to provide security for those buildings and the Government and the Minister of Housing and Settlements, the hon. Member for St. Augustine, who has demonstrated throughout his career that he has all this heart, demonstrate absolutely no heart for the persons who were fire victims in John John who were squatting and who today—but for an act of God, a twist of fate, a different government—would have been occupying those buildings which were built for them.

While that is taking place in John John, there is a Chinese crew in Trinidad, brought here to build schools. Is it schools? What are they building? We understand labourers are coming to Trinidad and Tobago in a circumstance where we have labourers here; in other words, a government trying to solve the unemployment problem of China with 1.2 billion people, while being unable to solve the unemployment problem of Trinidad and Tobago with 1.2 million. [*Desk thumping*] They have taken the very people and put them in houses in Cocorite, Glencoe and Valencia, houses which could have been used to assist in alleviating the squatting problem in Trinidad and Tobago, or houses which otherwise could have been made available to deserving beneficiaries who are citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. There is something fundamentally wrong with this Government's concept of governance.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Minister of Tobago Affairs (Dr. The Hon. Morgan Job): Mr. Speaker, I am indeed happy to rise in support of this Bill. I do not think I have to restate to all and sundry in this country that I would not have done so if I had felt that this Bill, in any way, vitiated the substance of this Constitution which I have in my hand, especially with respect to private property.

I have spent most of my adult life in Trinidad and Tobago declaring, quite clearly, that one must have law. If there is no law there is no freedom; you can have no rights; you are living in a state of nature where life is nasty, brutish and short. For trying to educate the constituency of the Member for San Fernando East and others on his side, they closed down my radio programme. They made sure that the public did not hear what I had to say. So that I am here to defend the public interest and I will deal, before I am done this afternoon, with the blatant fabrication and falsification of fact which allow some people to believe that the matter at Mucurapo is a problem created by the Government of which I have the

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honour to be a part. I have the Cabinet Note where decisions were made by the Member for San Fernando East, as Prime Minister, and his Cabinet. In a very mischievous way, the Member for Diego Martin East has come here this afternoon to mislead people to believe that this problem is a problem manufactured by my Government. But we have some time yet before we get there, for those of us who will wait.

Before I get into dealing with matters which I do not think are of such dangerous substance—and I say, dangerous substance, because people are unwilling to accept a fundamental truth in this country: that ideas are the most powerful instruments that men do create. Before you decide to kill somebody, except you are mad, you must have an idea. Before Hitler decided to build gas chambers to fry seven million people, he had to have an idea.

Indeed, when people come into this Parliament, as I was telling my colleague a while ago, this Parliament has too often been used as an instrument to subvert the public welfare. I heard this again this afternoon. The Member for San Fernando East read out two lists, and I want to repeat them for your benefit, Mr. Speaker. In one list there were names like: Joseph, Da Abreau, Douglin, Cuffy, Patrick, Bowrin, Emmanuel, Guevera, Russell, Marcano. Then he went to another list which had names to be allocated lots. There were names like: Singh, Dookie, Harrilal, Tazim, Mohammed, Maharaj, Seecharan, Gunai, Kalloo, Roopnarine, Megnath, Maharaj, Mootee, Ramgoolam, Mootoo, Ramkellawan, Sieunarine, Bajnath, Mohan, Roopnarine, Kissoondathsingh, Salick, Jaikaran, Mahabir, Ramdhanie, Kissoon, Katwaroo.

The question asked by the Member for San Fernando East was: “Mr. Speaker, one question which comes to mind: To what conclusion is a dispassionate observer expected to come?” Then he goes on after that to talk about John John. I am advised that at John John they spent \$6.9 million of scarce taxpayers’ resources to build 23 units at an approximate cost of \$300,000 each.

You see, the press in this country is part of our problem. I have always said so. I have been a great defender of the freedom of the press, but I often reminded people that when John Guttenberg in Germany invented the press, a very wise man said he does not agree with the invention because it would allow the propagation of falsehoods. If you think it through you will understand what is going on. Nowhere are you going to read in any newspaper tomorrow that these apartments cost \$6.9 million in total; that the unit cost was \$300,000 and that the purchase price for any one of these people is \$130,000.

I am saying that in the context that the Member for San Fernando East is putting it across to the public that there were squatters in John John living in shacks and he is pleading on their behalf, which he has a right to do. I, myself, do not see why they should not have shelter. I do not see why they should not live somewhere, but he is putting across that these squatters should be accommodated in apartments that his Government built, costing \$300,000. At that rate, you do not have a budget in Trinidad and Tobago sufficient to settle any squatter anywhere. The Schedule to this Bill lists areas such as:

Maracas Valley, St. Joseph
 Madras Settlement, Cunupia
 Picton Quarry, Laventille
 Simeon Road, Petit Valley
 Williamsville, Tabaquite
 Mappipire Road, Morvant
 Dundonald Hill, Port of Spain
 Beetham Estate Phase IV
 Jonestown, Arima
 Eastern Quarries
 Waterhole, Cocorite
 St. Mary's Village, Moruga
 Demerara Road, Wallerfield
 Bourg Mulatresse
 Bamboo Settlement No. 3, Valsayn
 Maturita Triangle, Arima

Most of these areas are in the East/West Corridor. If you listen to it carefully and you look at the statistics—and I have done statistics at every level, up to Ph.D. level and I know—

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

4.30 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.00 p.m. *Sitting resumed.*

Dr. The Hon. M. Job: Mr. Speaker, I was on the point of reading out the list of areas and schedules that are to be affected in the first instance by this legislation. I want to continue so that the public will get a good idea of the kind of mischievous use to which this Parliament is being put.

Blitz Village, San Fernando

New City, Valencia

Warden Road, Point Fortin

Embacadere, San Fernando

Malick, Barataria

Upper Leon Street, Laventille

Sogren Trace, Laventille

Bagatelle, Diego Martin

Zone "8", Arima

Five Rivers, Arouca

Morvant, Old Road, Morvant

Second Caledonia, Morvant

Jean Avenue, Diego Martin

River Estate, Diego Martin

Fairfield Estate, Princes Town

Bon Air North, Arouca

La Paille, Caroni

Las Cuevas

Brazil Village

Ackbarali Trace, Arima

Graham Trace, Sangre Grande

Lawrence Wong Road, Longdenville

Dam Road, Point Fortin

Alexis Street, Morvant

Mr. Speaker, and the public of Trinidad and Tobago, all these areas are in the East/West corridor or in areas, in terms of the politics of this country, that were traditionally PNM except for, maybe, Williamsville, Tabaquite, St. Mary's Village, Moruga, Bamboo Settlement No. III. Those are the only identifiable areas on this list that one can say are UNC areas. The majority of the beneficiaries of this Bill by any law or statistics must necessarily be people who are traditionally supporters of the PNM, or as some would say, formerly supporters of the PNM. Therefore, one sees there are books written on how one can lie with statistics but there are also books written to explain how the press, media and the politicians can mischievously deceive, and this is our problem in this country.

The press tomorrow is not going to record anything I say. They are not going to record that I said in this Parliament today that when you multiply, for example, 50,000 squatting families by the price Mr. Manning is claiming he spent for a unit on the John John flats, \$300,000.00 comes up to \$15 billion. Is any Standard V, first or fifth former coming to a conclusion that that is the way to address the grievances, the necessities and needs of poor people who are squatters in this country; to build houses for each of them to spend taxpayer's money to the tune of \$300,000.00 per family? That is the indication of the Member for San Fernando East's representation in this honourable House, and he is totally bogus. It is not only fallacious, but deceitful. It is mephistophalian as I like to say. It is devilish, it is demonic. We have to stop using Parliament for those kinds of purposes and I challenge the media to represent what he said and what I am saying now so that the public could make a firm, dispassionate, logical judgment why people were killed inside this Parliament and the reason they are coming here again to start the same kind of malicious propaganda which is to mislead people to commit acts and to support the kind of behaviour that might lead some to such a desperate juncture once again.

Mr. Speaker, I have to continue with some of their representations which I believe are in the nature, to use one of their words, of provocation because they have nothing to do with the substance of what this Bill is about, which is to give people who have acquired rights in law. Nobody needs to go over the history of injunctions with respect to adverse positions. The people have acquired rights in law. It happens that the resources of the state are not unlimited and, therefore, the question of demarcating boundaries and going in with cadastral survey and surveyors to put the correct things—we know we are not going to have the resources and we are not going to have the money to do it, but in the mean time people are living there and, therefore, we have to deal with that.

Before I go on to some other things, I was handed a list that the hon. Member for San Fernando East read and what he did not read. Again, the deception and

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deceitfulness—he did not read “the applicants who are next of kin, son or daughter with family, and this list was not generated during the administration that I am part of, but one that he led. I understand that the IADB funding developed the criteria and the list and created the conditions that ended us up in this country with these names. This was not the doing of Mr. John Humphrey, the Member for St. Augustine. It was the doing of the PNM administration under the Member for San Fernando East. It said, “applicants who are next of kin, son or daughter, with family resident within the beneficiary household.” What are we to do? What we are getting here is an implication that this Administration of which I have the honour to be a part, has been deliberately manipulating events to get rid of people of African decent and put in people of East Indian decent. Nothing could be further from the truth.

When the hon. Member read these two lists and asked the question what conclusion one had to draw.*[Interruption]* Mr. Speaker, I have much to say and I do not want to be deflected from my path.

I advise this honourable House that land in Trinidad and Tobago—and I will quote from several documents to make the case—even before Emancipation, prior to the proclamation in 1834, and the end of Apprenticeship in 1830, there was squatting in this country and throughout the 19th Century, several Governors tried to deal with the problem. Nobody ever dealt with squatting in this country. It is not something invented by the PNM. They might have engineered things so that you got an immigration problem which ended up as squatting; regardless of people who feel that the real politics of this country must necessarily address that problem.

I disassociate myself from those people who want to make it out that if you could only give people a piece of land, you would not have a problem of squatting in Trinidad and Tobago when, in fact, the demographic circumstances in which we live clearly indicate that especially in the era after 1955 there was massive immigration into Trinidad and Tobago and indeed, when the NAR government generated a policy of amnesty, the policy of amnesty covered people who were not born here. I do not know if they all accepted the amnesty but this Bill quite clearly states that one has to be a citizen or resident of Trinidad and Tobago to access these provisions.

5.10 p.m.

There must be some legal status in this country. Because of that necessity, we ought not to be afraid of that immigration and population explosion. I have the contribution of the Member for San Fernando West where he suggested that there

should be some kind of condom policy or castration policy. He said that we would not solve this problem of squatting until we find a way to prevent people from breeding. He said it and I would look for it. That is not the issue. We must clear some of our fundamentals. We must understand that the issues which have been raised here are very profound and fundamental, in the sense of the way in which we govern the state.

I would quote for the record of *Hansard*, the benefit of all the Members of Parliament and the citizens in this country. Every secondary school in this country should have in its library, a copy of this book entitled, *Theory of Economic Growth* by W. Arthur Lewis. This is one of the most profound West Indians that ever lived in the Caribbean. He got a Nobel Prize for economics. For some strange reason we never hear about Arthur Lewis. We hear about other historians in the sense of managing our Caribbean societies. The young people need to get on to the ideas of Arthur Lewis.

We are talking about land. In terms of property, the book states:

“Capital formation is one of the conditions of economic growth. At the existence of a law of property is one of the conditions of capital formation. By property we mean the legal right to exclude other people from using a particular resource. This right may vest in a private person or any group or in a public authority. The numbers enjoying the right may be large or small, but whoever may exercise this right of exclusion is fundamental.

This is emphasized because the term property is so often used to mean only private property. A battleship owned by the government is as much property as the farmer’s acre. It is property because despite the fact that the battleship is in some theoretical sense, belonging to all the people, in law and in practice individual members of the public are excluded from having anything to do with battleship except under strict authorization.”

The legal concept of property is enshrined in all economies, capitalists, socialists, feudal and otherwise. The troops could not be protected against the public at large. It would certainly be abused, misused and hardly any person would find it worthwhile to invest in its improvement. The legal protection of property is extended to all resources as soon as they become scarce.”

He went on in that vein. I advise the school children and people who live in this country that this idea of the ancient sanctity of private property is enshrined in the Constitution. Part I section 4 states:

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“It is hereby recognised and declared that in Trinidad and Tobago there have existed and shall continue to exist, without discrimination by reason of race, origin, colour, religion or sex, the following fundamental human rights and freedoms, namely—

- (a) the right of the individual to life, liberty, security of the person and enjoyment of property and the right not to be deprived thereof except by due process of law;”

I have my copy of the Old Testament. I am told that Leviticus is the Greek for laws. The Hebrews just as the people in Hamurabic, that part of the world which used to be Babylon, the land of Ur and the Chaldees and the Hindus had the wisdom to understand that one must protect private property. Leviticus Chap.23:23—31 talks about land and Chap. 25 from verse 23 onwards deals with the right to property and land and how you cannot dispossess.

I have an excerpt from *Aristotle’s Politics* where he criticized certain aspects of Plato’s interpretation of what Socrates said. We are talking about land and private property. Much of the discussion here has forced me to say these things because I do not think that people understand the profundity and importance of having these ideas cleared. By the time I get to deal with this question of what the administration of the Member for San Fernando East did with respect to the Muslimeen’s issue, people would understand that even they were in a state of misconception.

This is what Aristotle said with respect to private property, its value, fundamental sacredness and necessity. There cannot be civilization without property. There cannot be law without private property. There cannot be freedom without private property. All these things are derivative from private property, from the right to own land and to exclude. All these ideas about freedom of the press and the individual did not come about in a feudal society or in any of the societies that we know have evolved in Africa, China or India. They came out of the societies of some of my ancestors from Europe, the Romans, the Greeks and those ideas which came to fruition in the 17th and 19th Centuries in the age of the Industrial Revolution, when the burghers attained enough power to protect their freedoms and rights.

The free press is a capitalist institution which comes out of feudal society. Way back in the 5th Century B.C. Socrates understood that when he wrote the play *Antigone*, where in defiance of the king who wanted to take her brother’s body and feed it to the crows, she decided that there were ancient laws which gave them

certain kinds of rights and she was going to obey them. In that context, Aristotle was writing about that society. He stated:

“All persons called the same thing mind in the sense in which each does so, may be a fine thing, but it is impracticable. If the words are taken in the other sense, such a unity in no way conduces to harmony. There is another objection to the proposal. For that which is common to the greatest number has the least care bestowed upon it. Everyone thinks chiefly of his own. Hardly, at all of the common interest and only when he is himself concerned as an individual, for besides other considerations, everybody is more inclined to neglect the duty which he expects another to fulfill.

As in families, many attendants are often less useful than a few. Each citizen will have a thousand sons who will not be his sons individually, but anybody will be equally the son of anybody, and all of them would be neglected equally and alike. Indeed, there is always a difficulty in men living together and having human relations in common, but especially if they have in common, property. The partnerships of fellow travellers are an example to the point for they generally fall out over everyday matters and quarrel about every trifle which turns up. Property should be in a certain sense, common, but as a general rule, private.”

The idea of this Bill is to ensure that the citizens of this country enjoy the benefit of private property. It is not about communism. There are other important reasons which derive therefrom. I mentioned that the hon. Member for San Fernando East wants to hoodwink this country into believing that he was doing them a favour to build the John John Towers. I repeat for the benefit of all the people who are being hoodwinked to believe, as the Member for San Fernando East suggested, one cannot find the money now or in the future, to house people in John John or anywhere else in this country, at \$300,000 per family.

5.20 p.m.

That is impossible. It is not intended to make sense. His proposals are intended to commit mischief in this country. It can mean nothing else. I, therefore, would like to dissociate myself from it, so let me make reference to some parts of the contribution of the Member for San Fernando West and then I will come back to some of the fundamental ideas.

I did say that land will always be an issue in this country. Land will be an issue because many people had been elevated to a level of incompetence and therefore

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ran Cabinets as *primus inter pares*. As a consequence of their lack of skills, they never encouraged the population to know free markets—markets where people make arrangements on their own behalf are the best guarantee that people will be properly served.

When they are boasting about houses at La Horqueta and Maloney, it reminds me of what this Government has done at Maloney. I think it is beneficial to this country, at this time of crisis, to be reminded that the African-denominated religions in this country were given 25 acres of land at Maloney to be used by the people who are Orisha, Baptist or who have anything to do with African religions. It is important, Mr. Speaker, that you allow me to tarry a bit on that.

As a young man, I had spent a good portion of my life travelling in Africa, Brazil, parts of Central and South America and in the Caribbean. I know from my studies and from diligent research that the religions from Africa are as authentic as any other religion—Roman Catholic, Islam and others. So the same felicity with which governments now and in the past have accommodated the Christian religion, Islam or Hinduism is to be applied to the religions of Africa. It is very curious that it had to be an “Indian” prime minister who had the courage, understanding and empathy with the people who led African religions, to give them 25 acres of land.

In quoting his former leaders, one fellow said that he was the best and greatest Prime Minister and Father of the Nation. The grandfather of the nation did not give the black people any land for their religion, neither did the father. Hopefully, there will not be a grandson.

These things are not trivial, because we are in crisis. Many people will mischievously abuse and manipulate ancient, atavistic hurts and feelings for political profit. We ought to be mindful, when we are dealing with land that in the history of mankind, struggles over and about land have caused some of the most bloody wars and disasters that humankind have ever seen.

I used to be in East Africa, Tanzania and Uganda. I know these areas, and the problems in Rwanda and Burundi are very much about land. There are problems of population pressures in those highly rich, volcanic soils in Central Africa where there are too many people. The highest population density is in those areas of Rwanda and Burundi, and the fight between the Hutus and the Tutsis is primarily about land.

I will enlighten the mind of the people that those who use ethnicity and introduce these racist considerations by reading lists selectively without giving a

background, deliberately sowing the seeds of ethnic, partisan hatred and hurt by so doing, are treading on dangerous ground. I will never stand in this Parliament without using the opportunities that have been afforded me to quicken in the public mind that irresponsibility that some people like to tolerate until it is too late. Human feelings and the floods of emotion that end up in ethnic strife and sectarian violence cannot be controlled when they get out of hand, so do not start them! We will not be able to say, like they did in Guyana, that all the people east of the river should stay on that side and all the people on the west, on theirs. In Trinidad and Tobago, the people are too mixed up in one small space, and it will be a disaster unmentionable in its consequences. We want to keep focusing on that.

I now make some points with respect to the contribution of the Member for San Fernando West. Sometime between 3.20 and 3.35 p.m. on March 6, he states:

“At the moment, the Ministry of Housing and Settlements, aided by international lending agencies, has developed a plan whereby there is a programme to provide for service lots and there are service lots in Valencia, in Buen Venue, in Gasparillo. You also have a programme for developing low-cost housing...”

He goes on to comment:

“...It is incumbent upon the Government to ensure that when homes are built by private contractors, they are built to specifications and to the high standards set by the Ministry.

We have had a history in this country, and here I am not blaming governments; it is a fact of life; it happens; whether it was the PNM, the NAR or even the UNC Government. What contractors tend to do, is to build substandard homes. They look good when they are painted and new, and the people who are responsible for testing the quality do not do it. And there is inadequate housing, housing which deteriorates and within the space of two to three years, the defects become more than evident.”

Mr. Speaker, for the benefit of my colleagues on both sides, when I look at the contributions from the other side, they are focusing on housing and the doings of the Minister of Housing and Settlements. Housing is a problem that has to do with the market for an asset called a house, an asset called a piece of land and the services of a house. I do not discern in their contributions a logical distinctiveness between a house as an asset, a piece of land as an asset and the services of the house as something someone wants to purchase. I raise this to advise the national

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community that one of the reasons there is a squatter problem is the socialist imperative, the stasis decisions of previous PNM governments which, because of their mercantilist understanding, refused to allow private citizens to make arrangements, within the context of a market, for the services that they need.

There is no law in this country or in nature; no universal human rights declaration that says that every human being in Trinidad and Tobago must own a house. One can rent a house until one can do better. In fact, in many squatter settlements now, many people are renting.

What we have had in Trinidad and Tobago, since this imperialist mercantilist PNM dispensation, is a situation where they enforced rent restrictions and frustrated the evolution of, and development of, a market for all these distinctive assets of which I am speaking. Whenever they did it, they did it for the benefit of a few. They used the resources of the many, canalized it through NIB, with the collaboration of certain government state banks, to give the upper-class the benefit of supergrade houses, call it varinstall or whatever they called it.

5.30 p.m.

The poorer people who were not in the loop were left to squat in disorganized settlement areas all because of their mercantilist and narrow-minded understanding. I want the Member for San Fernando West and all the people who are of goodwill like him to understand that part of the restructuring of our ideas must be to allow the evolution and development of a market for housing, and the attendant financial arrangements that would satisfy that market to the benefit of everyone, including those who were left out from the PNM's dispensation. It is not only that their ideas about a market for housing left out so many people, Mr. Speaker, there is an important consideration.

I wrote a book once and I said that the only integrated housing estates in Trinidad are squatter settlements. Focus on that, Sir. The only ethnically integrated housing estates in Trinidad are squatter settlements, except for those which the private markets supply. Until very recently, all the Government housing estates in this country were like bantustans, very ethnically divided, kind of racially pure. That is what one gets when the state intervenes with its narrow-minded proclivity. We do not want a housing market in this country to continue to distort and impose that kind of solution and that is one of the reasons I want to raise that issue.

I also know with respect to land as we are talking about land, as indeed, the Minister of Housing and Settlements said that we wanted to give people enough

land so they—and the former Minister of Housing and Settlements, the Member for Tobago West had said that there was this Sou Sou land concept—could plant something in their backyard.

Mr. Speaker, I had said before I came in here that if I told the people all that I knew it might cause a riot and the same way the Member for San Fernando East read out names spuriously and said who got lands, I can ask him to look at the people who got land at Wallerfield. I was there when that project was started in 1965. I was a young graduate, I started it. I then went to Carlsen Field a couple years after. If the names are read, it would tell a story the same way the Member wants to tell a story. At a later stage of my life, I also had to deal with regularising squatters and transferring leases. I used to literally run a certain ministry in this country and I remember writing a letter to a permanent secretary and advising the Minister that if the state had land, it must take control of it, because what I was seeing was a market for land that was operating quite apart and distinct from the intentions of the government. I do not want to embarrass anyone here, but from where I was, all the files had to pass through my desk, and from what I was seeing in terms of the operations of that system, it was not consistent with the Constitution where it said that there shall be no discrimination in this country. There is the right of every individual to life, liberty, and no person shall be discriminated against because of their race, language, country of origin or anything. There are so many skeletons in the cupboard and I do not like it when I hear people reading out a list to poison people's mind tendentiously.

I continue with the Member for San Fernando West's contribution and he is talking about titles given and he goes on to say something like some squatting developments are havens for criminals. This is not Morgan Job speaking. I have a way to state the facts and I admire that he said that, but if I had said that, the PNM press or its columnists would say that Job say that all the black people in the squatter settlements are criminals. This is what the Member for San Fernando West said. He goes on to say that "in those days it was Shanty Town, now it is called Beetham Estate. There is in my constituency, a squatting development on the train line and every time there is an incident of some criminal activity, the first place the police look for the alleged criminal or perpetrators of crime is in those squatter developments."

Mr. Speaker, now clearly this is a statement—if I used the kind of way the press and the PNM has maligned me and ill-treated my name—that I can use in the same context to say that this Member is saying that all the black people in Trinidad

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are criminals, and that all the people in squatter settlements are perpetrators of crime. That is how they do it. But I want to be more sensible than them. What I am going to say is that squatter settlements and the problems which this Bill is supposed to deal with are not merely about the assets that I call a piece of land, a house and the services of a house. It has to do with community and culture, and a way of life with the kinds of attitudes and beliefs and behaviours which parents hand on to their children.

If a child is growing up in a shack from birth into maturity, that child must be confronted with certain life conditions that are going to be impressed on its mind, distinct from a child who is growing up in a reasonable decent house with toilets and baths and separate rooms. We are talking about the absolute egregious neglect of the former PNM government to do anything about changing the culture in these settlements. Sometimes even I might say, the deliberate manipulation of their parlous state, the deliberate manipulation of their poverty, the deliberate manipulation of their illiteracy, the deliberate manipulation of their penury for political profit. They cared, they did care to keep people in a state of dependence, in a culture of deprivation, the better to manipulate them.

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. [*Hon. R. L. Maharaj*]

Question put and agreed to.

Dr. The Hon. M. Job: Thank you Mr. Speaker, and thanks to all the other Members including those who said no. This Bill is of such a great moment to this country I am amazed that all those on the opposite side can see in this Bill to criticize is whether or not it is an invitation for people to start to grab land. To me, that is the least important aspect of this Bill. It can, in a sense determine the fate of this nation. If it is thought through properly what this Bill is about, it is the core of the meaning of "I am my brother's keeper." It is at the core of the meaning of evolving a society based on private property and individual initiative. It is about culture, and I want to spend a few moments to explain what I mean by that. I will say something, not to repeat exactly what the Member for San Fernando East has said, but to say that there is some meaning in what he has said. I have put in my notation in the column that slums are about people, not about shacks. The ancient people had it to say that if a pig is taken from its sty and put in a palace, you do not get a prince, you get a royal pig. [*Laughter*]

We are dealing with a fundamental idea that what this Bill and this Government is about is ensuring that the culture and the ideas of people which are to be translated to the next generation are conducive to an understanding of the ownership of private property. It has been said that the Chinese shopkeepers who used to have their little children coming out and helping in the shop used to win the island scholarship because they could count money. I do not think it is a trivial thing to make a comment or reference to the people who said the reason why the Chinese used to be bright in maths is that they used to be counting money in the shop. It is a very profound observation and it is linked to what I am saying, that children learn from the environment and the influences around them. If a whole underclass is going to be maintained, when we say 50,000 squatting families, we are talking about 200,000—400,000 persons, I do not know—with all those children growing up there in a state of lawlessness close to a state of nature, those children are not being helped. The Government should be very busy, they should have been in the days of the PNM. When they had money in the oil boom years to do something, they conspired with their friends and alliances to put down some concrete blocks in Maloney one on top the other to stew black people. There was no playground, no community centre, not even a school. There was money, and money was no problem. They said so. Money became no problem. There was no library, no museum, no conservatories, nothing in terms of social infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker, a house is not a home they have said, and a housing settlement is a type of community when it is developed or made devoid of all these other appurtenances which are conducive to civilized living. That is what the PNM did. Put concrete block upon concrete block and hurled a set of people in some deprived bantu stands and have them ranting and raving that they have a great government that cares about them, and all the while leaving them absolutely illiterate. When I was there 20 years ago saying that one of the biggest problems in this country was illiteracy, that man over there, that one, had conference after conference in Chaguaramas and we are "97 per cent illiterate." Year after year, right here and we are "97 per cent illiterate!" This man was talking about Mars perhaps, to have people living there who are 97 per cent illiterate, not in Trinidad, not anywhere in his constituency. Nowhere was there a population in this country that was 97 per cent illiterate. Illiteracy was condemning the whole underclass of his constituents to crime and banditry and he did nothing about it, he just manipulated their ignorance for political profit. That is what their housing and social policy was about. That is why they do not understand that this Bill is not merely about house and land. They do not understand it, so they come here and

hour after hour drone along that the Member for St. Augustine is about sending people to squat. I do not agree with that myself. Anybody who has heard me has heard me talk about those things. I want to quote the Constitution again to make some things clear for all and sundry.

Hon. Member: When are you getting to the Cabinet Note? You are running out of time.

Dr. The Hon. M. Job: Yes, before I forget. Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I need more time than I have, but let me just—before I forget. Lest we forget. That is a Kipling—do you remember Kipling's "Lest we forget"?

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Diego Martin East, and indeed, the hon. Member for San Fernando East raised the spectre of an alliance or some kind of collaboration, some kind of understanding, or some kind of trickery on the part of this Government having to do with the problem at Mucurapo. Since the late 1960s I have been a frequent visitor to Woodford Square, sometimes as a participant and sometimes a pulpit preacher and I still do that. I was there before I came in here and I heard one Yasin Abu Bakr with a book—which I did not see so I could not be sure—on which he put his hand and said it is a Qur'an and said I swear in the name of Allah that I and Mr. Manning plan the coup and if I lie may the wrath of Allah come and consume me and my wife and all my children.

5.45 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, after Bakr spoke, Mr. Ballack went on the rostrum and did likewise. He put his hand on a book. I did not read the book so I cannot be sure, but I am telling you what I saw. There were about 7,000—9,000 persons beside myself in the square. He said, "I swear in the name of Allah that I was the man who went as a go-between, between the Imam and Mr. Manning concerning the plotting of the coup."

Subsequent to that, the Member for San Fernando East said he would sue. I have not heard about any lawsuit as yet, Mr. Speaker. He said he would pay his children's school fees with the money from the lawsuit against Bakr. His children are still going to school, they were not thrown out of school so they were getting money somehow, and no lawsuit was filed, as far as I know.

In my hand I have the Cabinet Note where the Government—the Member for San Fernando East was the Prime Minister—made a decision long before the Member for Couva North was the Prime Minister, with respect to the lands at Mucurapo. I also have the statement by Brig. Joseph Theodore which was reported in the *Daily Express*:

“Theodore, we will not back down

My fellow citizens of Trinidad and Tobago I wish to assure you that the Government will enforce the law.”

Mr. Speaker, without law we have no liberty and no freedom. I have always stood for that.

“The Government will take the necessary measures to make sure that the Jamaat is subject to and governed by the laws of Trinidad and Tobago.

“That is the obligation of the Government. It is our duty and we will discharge that duty.”

On the evening of July 27, 1990, I called in, because I lived in Africa and I was in Brazil during the military regime in the 1960s as a young student and I understood what these things meant. I remember losing my passport and I had to literally hide; get people to put me in the trunk of the car to get to the British Council in Rio De Janeiro to get that document on my person. If I did not have that document on me, with the climate in Brazil at the time, I could have disappeared. That is how it was done, Mr. Speaker. I know these things and I understand them. I was also in Kampala when Idi Amin overthrew the Kabaka of Buganda.

On the evening of July 27, 1990, therefore, I made sure that I read Psalm 133. I am saying this in the context of what I have to say about this matter. I will repeat what I said the following morning because Mc Comie would not let me in, he told me all kinds of foolishness; that they would kill me. I said: “It was my life, let me die, do not tell me what to do with my life. I want to say something. I want to say that the people do not understand that this kind of wildness, this kind of stupidity, belongs to Africa, South America or Asia, not to here.” Mr. Speaker, I did not hear my colleagues on the other side who were making a lot of noise this afternoon say anything about that. The following morning when I did get through; when they were fed-up with me, I read Psalm 133 for the benefit of the nation.

“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!”

Some of you must have remembered that.

“*It is* like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, *even* Aaron’s beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments;

As the dew of Hermon, *and as the dew* that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the Lord commanded the blessing, *even* life forever more.”

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I went on to advise the people that whether they were Muslim, Christian or Hindu, all of us are in this together, and we should support the Government. I want to repeat it for the benefit of that gentleman over there, because he seems hell-bent on continuing to create dissension and to reap political profits out of every moment or opportunity, notwithstanding the cost to this country. That was the behaviour then and it is the behaviour now.

The national community must understand that this is not a threat to Morgan Job. If this country descends into the cataclysm of 1990 and the consequences that must be derived therefrom, it is not something which is disadvantageous to Morgan Job. It is disadvantageous to us all, especially the poor, because I can afford to leave here. I have enough property, assets and brains, I do not have to stay here. I did not have to stay here in 1990 either and I did not have to say the things I said. I said it then, and I continue to say what I said on the radio when he was calling Ken Gordon every morning to threaten to take away his radio licence so that I would not speak to the people.

The Government, under Prime Minister, Patrick Manning, made decisions concerning the lands at Mucurapo, and I am reading from that Cabinet decision:

“After due deliberation the interministeral team was of the view that whilst it appears that the predecessors of the present occupiers may have been granted permission to enter onto the two parcels of land, the effective occupation was only in respect of the parcel owned by the Corporation.”

That was a Cabinet Note for all the people in this country who are being misled into the demonic conspiracy to exploit this crisis for partisan political benefit, thereby putting this nation in peril. Those people, they made a decision, which is the exact decision we are trying to implement according to the law in this country today! I will read the Cabinet Note again:

“After due deliberation the interministeral team was of the view that whilst it appears that the predecessors of the present occupiers may have been granted permission to enter onto the two parcels of land, the effective occupation was only in respect of the parcel owned by the Corporation.”

In the final analysis the team proposed that the issue be resolved by offering the present occupiers a lease of the Corporation’s parcel, only, for 25 years, with an option to renew for a further period to be used for religious, cultural and related purposes.

The Port of Spain Corporation is in agreement with this proposal. In order to regularize the occupancy of the lands at No. 1 Mucurapo Road, Cabinet is asked and Cabinet agreed that:

- (1) The Port of Spain City Corporation grant to the Jamaat Al Muslimeen, the present occupiers, a lease of 25 years with an option to renew for a further period of all that parcel of the Corporation's land, known and assessed as No. 1 Mucurapo Road.
- (2) The lease to be restricted in use for religious, cultural and related purposes, and that the lease be otherwise, in the usual form, granted by the Corporation."

Mr. Speaker, one does not have to be intelligent to understand what this is saying, neither does one have to be intelligent at all to understand the mischief that is afoot.

Hon. Member: What is the date of that Cabinet Note?

Dr. The Hon. M. Job: August 5, 1993.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: Who was the Prime Minister?

Dr. The Hon. M. Job: Patrick Manning, of course. *[Interruption]* Mr. Speaker, I am running out of time. I think this is such a great opportunity for me because it is not often that I get a chance to speak.

Before I end, Mr. Speaker, let me go back to some of the points which I made when I started. This country would do itself absolutely no good until it understands the way Parliament has been mischievously manipulated for the benefit of partisan gains. It has frustrated the development of this society. I have some excerpts from historical documents relating to land. This is another part of the mischief that is going on. The hon. Member for San Fernando East read some names like Katwaroo and so forth, not telling people that the majority—perhaps 90 per cent—of the people who would benefit from this Bill, are those who traditionally have voted for PNM; people from Diego Martin, Arouca and Morvant.

5.55 p.m.

The list is here. That is the evil which is compounded by the necessary avoidance of edifying people concerning the history of land and land ownership in Trinidad. The documents clearly show that long before emancipation, there were African people in Trinidad owning land given to them by the Government. Lord

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Harris, when he came after emancipation, assisted that policy. They selectively point the mind of innocent children to grievance, to a statement or policy of one Lord Glenelg. I do not have it on this paper, but they can look it up. Lord Glenelg, who was the Secretary of State said that throughout the empire, they must only sell land in blocks of one square mile, which is 640 acres, which was designed to prevent the blacks from getting land, but there were people who, before Lord Glenelg's time, in Trinidad, in Valencia, in First Company, Second Company,—all over the place—it is documented here—were given land.

Up to the time of emancipation, the Mandingo people, it is recorded here, made a boast that they had bought out the freedom of all their people, and some of the richest people in Port of Spain were Mandingoes. The Mandingoes whom Thomas mentioned at the head of his list were Moslems from that part of West Africa between Senegal and the Gambia. It was not strictly a tribal name.

“During the last years of slavery, the Mandingoes have retained their cohesion and corporate sense centred on Islam, and they formed a distinct, close society. In the 1830s they included several wealthy and respectable individuals in Port of Spain.

The owners of houses and properties acquired through successful huckstering, they co-operated to buy the freedom of their enslaved countrymen, who were then compelled to labour for the society until their purchase money had been paid back.

In 1834, it was the Mandingo boast that they had freed all their compatriots from slavery. They had regularly appointed priests. Jonas Mohammed Baat, who died in 1838, was the patriarch and leader of the Port of Spain Mandingoes.”

They go on to talk about the Yoruba. Maureen Warner states:

“The Yoruba were the dominant group in Trinidad. The basis of an African unified tradition which gave cohesion and cultural dynamism to the whole African population.

The Yoruba tradition made a distinct imprint on the Creole culture of Trinidad in the 19th and early 20th century. Its influence is clear in Shango and other African, Christian cults, in calypso and in traditional self-help financial organizations like sou-sou.”

Mr. Speaker, we are talking about the way people are manipulating ignorance for political profit. They go and tell people how the Indians got land in exchange for

passages; that was part of the agreement for Indians to come here. Nothing is further from the truth.

I am telling you about African land ownership long before emancipation. In 1869, Governor Gordon agreed to grant the request of 25 free Indians for grants of Crown lands in exchange for forfeiting their claims for a return passage to India. He had hoped that this action would do much to induce a large portion of the Indian immigrant population from being mere temporary sojourners to become permanent colonists, a result greatly to be desired.

One has to take that in the context against what Lord Harris said. Lord Harris, just like Governor Gordon after him, said that one could not afford to emancipate the Africans and not make them peasant proprietors. All of these towns like Tunapuna and Arima, along the east, were settled after emancipation, according to the policy of Lord Harris in the first instance, and Governor Gordon later, to make sure that the Africans were able to buy land at a pound per acre, and sometimes a couple of shillings, and encouraged them to apply for the Crown lands they squatted on. In addition to that, all the Montserrat hills and valleys that were put to cocoa in this country were cleared by black people, or those who clearly in the context of Trinidad and Tobago, were not white. Some of them were mixed—Carib, African, a callaloo, they are still there.

I have to wind up. We have to deal with the fact that this Bill, properly understood, would create a fund and pool of assets in the hand of lower class people. I grew up in a house—and I am not saying this for partisan political purposes. I am saying it because I know what I am talking about as a matter of individual experience. I remember when my father used my grandfather's land—which he owned—and I heard about the deed very early, I was in primary school. I am from a land-owning tradition, which is why I own land. I have property. I can go on the radio, this is why I did not care what they said, because I know that I could not starve in this country because I am an asset holder.

I am saying that the economic consequence of this is to create a whole land-owning class of thousands of people who are now propertyless and landless, and more importantly, their children will come to understand the benefit of property. *[Desk thumping]* That is what these people do not want. They do not want any independent people. They do not want enough Morgan Jobs who could say close down the station, but I will say what I want! That kind of liberty, that kind of freedom which comes from property ownership, they never want. They want a

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race of dependant people tied up in shanty towns and squatter settlements, herded like “bachac” in a line to vote for PNM.

In the meantime, he gives one man \$15 million from a state bank—the Government owns the bank—and when they ask him in the airport how he could give the man this \$15 million, he said that is his and the bank’s business, but the Government owns the bank. That is their idea of property ownership and distribution: keep these people powerless, propertyless, hungry, indigent, with nothing. This Government wants to liberate them and set them free! That is the purpose of this legislation. [*Desk thumping*] The economic consequence, in terms of a massive circulation of assets and property is that he could create business. He could go to the bank and say, “This is my deed, give me a loan.” That is what it is all about. [*Desk thumping*]

When Mr. Robinson, as Prime Minister, asked me to help him set up the Small Business Development Company, that man over there went around telling people that Mr. Robinson wants everybody to sell; who would buy from them? Wickedness! That is what they are about, yet they are talking about “We care”. “We care to enslave you!” That is what the Member for San Fernando East cares about. “We care to mischievously use your ignorance, dependence and indigence so that we could claim and keep power forever!”

Magnamus prevalebit! That is what they did. People cannot read English. Write their names big like the Twin Towers and they do not know it, but they will tell them about *magnamus prevalebit* to “bamboozle” people with obeah. They took down the dragon from the Red House. That is their kind of politics. Keep them in that kind of magical world of insecurity with everybody dreaming.

Mr. Speaker, I am grateful, even if I did not say all I wanted to say about the physiocrats. [*Laughter*] I will have other times. The policy of this Government, as I have outlined it, is to uphold the law, and I do appeal to the national community to understand that in the matter of the Muslimeen, the matter of land ownership, this Constitution is the highest law, and any action that is not consistent with it is null and void. Any action! If one is going to have a political leader who is determined to exploit the hurt, grievance, insecurity and angst, the fears of a society so that he might become Prime Minister again, we have a problem.

Thank you.

6.05 p.m.

Mr. Fitzgerald Hinds (*Laventille East/Morvant*): Mr. Speaker, I rise to make a contribution on the State Land (Regularisation of Tenure) Bill, 1998.

Mr. Speaker, I read, I think it was in yesterday's paper, of some citizen of Trinidad and Tobago expressing his thought that the days of the good old debate in the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago seems to have been a thing of the past. He made reference to the Sinanans, Seukerans and others. I understood in part what the writer was saying. Quite apart from parliamentarians, we in the Caribbean have had the benefit of the wisdom of men like George Padmore, CLR James, Eric Williams, and the man who the last speaker in this debate, the Member for Tobago East referred to, Sir Arthur Lewis. Each of those individuals has made a lasting contribution to the development of their respective countries in the Caribbean and, indeed, the Caribbean as a whole.

I used to say up to about a year ago, whenever I hear the Member for Tobago East speak, I would immediately remember Mighty Sparrow. It is because Sparrow sang a song called "*Capitalism Gone Mad*", and every time I heard the Member for Tobago East he reminded me of that song. I used to say, "intellectualism gone mad". But, when I listened to his wild ramblings this evening, his name calling, his rhetoric, his pulling bits and pieces from documents that he read, and so well retained, with no philosophy, no independent thought of his own, I recognized immediately, that Member, Ph.D. as he might be, I cannot even consider the concept of intellectualism gone mad.

Mr. Speaker, I am sure that if Eric Williams were alive and walked the streets of Port of Spain today, he would be honoured, revered, lifted up and praised. I am sure if CLR James—who I have had the opportunity to meet in his later days in London—were to walk the streets of Laventille, for his independence and original thought, for his shining intellectualism, he would be honoured and praised. I am sure the same could be said about George Padmore and Sir Arthur Lewis. Ten, fifteen or twenty years from now, the same could never be said about that Member. Never!

I am not criticizing him. I am merely responding to the fact that I sat here for over an hour and listened to his ramblings and his unjustified misunderstanding and criticism of PNM's contribution in this country and I feel sad and sorry for him. I understand fully well why he does not win the love and warmth of the people of this country, he cannot walk the streets of Laventille, Belmont and Port of Spain, they all say that man—I mean, you know what they say, Mr. Speaker. He does not

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win their hearts and their love, notwithstanding his apparent ability to read and retain and to spout it out for audiences that he has grown accustomed to in Woodford Square.

So let us address our minds to some of the things relating to the Bill that he had to say. He spoke, and I must address this question, about the flats that were developed recently in the John John area for the fire victims. He made a lot of play about that. It was simply the intention of the then government to rehouse these people in an area in which they lived for all of their lives. The simple cost of the project was what it was, but in that case, like in many other housing developments that we had established, we would have subsidized those units so that it could have met with the financial abilities of the people for whom they were intended.

To this day, the very flats, whether they were worth \$300,000 or whatever, stand empty. The people living in that area, some of them still homeless, must pass every single day and look at that building that was intended for them and it remains unoccupied to this very day. Those people have already made their judgments, they know that the PNM constructed those decent housing units for them and they stand idle and empty to this day because of the thinking of this Government. That thinking was expressed by the Member for St. Augustine about a year ago when he said that those houses are simply too good for the people in the area, or words that are interpreted as such. Reasonably so.

Mr. Speaker, I heard the Member for Tobago East join the Member for St. Augustine and expressed a view that is so wrong that—I mean, but I am forced to address it. I am not an historian. I have read bits of the history here and there. The Bill has to do with the regularisation of squatters. The Member for Tobago East sought to put some kind of philosophical underpinning to the measures in that Bill.

Mr. Speaker: I wish to advise hon. Members that we are getting a little too much crosstalk while the Member for Laventille East/Morvant is making his contribution. I ask you please to desist.

Mr. F. Hinds: I am entirely grateful for your input, Mr. Speaker. Now that the crosstalk is over, I can lower my volume a bit.

Both the Members for Tobago East and St. Augustine wrongly pointed out that squatters acquire rights by law, to land, by virtue of being there, particularly, and I am sure they are referring to squatters on state lands. It is trite. It is a first principle that is well known to any first year law student that one can never adversely possess state land. One never can. So when the Minister—who gets the

benefit of advice from the Member for Couva South, who is the Attorney General, and I imagine sometimes from the Member for Siparia—comes to this House to tell us, and by extension the national community, that squatters, acquire rights by virtue of their being there for however long, that is absolutely and totally erroneous and misleading.

Mr. Assam: The Attorney General said that?

Mr. F. Hinds: Yes.

Mr. Assam: Did the Legal Affairs Minister say that?

Mr. F. Hinds: I said they presumably get advice. Mr. Speaker, perhaps it is yet another bit of evidence of the obvious division that exists in the thinking of the members of the Cabinet.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Tobago East suggested that the Member for San Fernando East, in his contribution, said that they were moving out, from Blitz Village in particular, Africans, and replacing them with Indians. I sat here and I never heard anyone say that. When one has experience with the Members from the other side as I have, one can understand how they have the tendency, as they have demonstrated in that yet again, to twist and to distort what is being said. When the Member for San Fernando East read the list, he simply asked the question: to what conclusion would an objective impassionate person come? The ordinary man is looking on at our actions in Government and in this Parliament in general, but there they go, that is the trend of this Government.

I heard the Member for Tobago East—and I listened to him fairly carefully—express an ideological difference from the Member for St. Augustine. Now, the Member for St. Augustine is reputed and reported to be of communist, socialist orientation. I read where the Member for Couva North admitted that his groundings came in the socialist movement, and nothing is wrong with that. Nothing is inherently wrong about that. But when one listens to the Member for Tobago East, if one listens well to his philosophical urgings, if any exist, one can hear that he is at variance with the Member for St. Augustine because he respects the right to ownership of property, but he tries to bridge that by telling us that this Bill is now going to bring the squatters in, bring masses of people in so that they too could become land-owning people in Trinidad and Tobago.

But I am sure in his heart—you see, he has to sing in the way in which he sings, because he, like most of us, is on what a friend of mine will call the “WIFM band”—what is in it for me. I heard him sing this evening, I understand fully well. I

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heard from his discourse a difference in his concept of property and in his concept of the management and ownership of property, how property should be distributed, from the concepts that I heard the Member for St. Augustine espouse as he launched these measures last week in this Chamber, but more will be heard about that in due course.

Finally, I heard the Member for Tobago East utter another piece of abject and total nonsense, that all Government houses in this country were—how he described it, he said they were ethnically pure. In other words, all the houses were owned or occupied by one ethnic group in this country. Well, anyone with any knowledge of that will know that it cannot be so, it is wrong and misleading, but that is very, very Job-like, it is the kind of thing that the Member for Tobago East will say and it is the very reason he cannot feel the warmth and love of the people of this country, the people who he claims to speak for, and it will continue to be so.

Mr. Speaker, I want to move to some degree of analysis of some of the measures in this Bill. The Member for St. Augustine spent some time too, making reference to the fact that coming out of the emancipation period, the ex-slaves—how did he put it? They developed, or they had some common law right to land. No lawyer in this country is aware of that. The only person in this country aware of that is the Member for St. Augustine. I know of no such concept in the land law of this country. None! So I want him to revise his thinking on that. He should approach the Attorney General, he might get some advice from him on that and he would learn that that is not so. There is no such thing.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, may I once more appeal to the hon. Members for La Brea, Arouca North and Chaguanas for silence. Please, it is rude and distracting to be talking so loudly while a Member is making his contribution. The *Hansard* reporter is placed between both of you and it is extremely difficult for her to accurately record, apart from being discourteous to the hon. Member for Laventille East/Morvant. I ask you gentlemen please, if you need to converse go behind the Chair, go to the washroom, go outside. Please.

6.20 p.m.

Mr. F. Hinds: Mr. Speaker, the Member for St. Augustine took the Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago and sought to find justification in his outlandish view, as I have already described. Let me make it clear, like every speaker on this side, we have no difficulty with and, in fact, we have come to this Parliament on two occasions past in an effort to regularise squatting in Trinidad and Tobago.

The Member for Tobago East told us, quite correctly, that in the 40s, 50s particularly and 60s we had people coming to Trinidad and Tobago from other islands in the Caribbean chain and they found comfort in Trinidad and Tobago. They were very welcome and they were allowed to make a home here and out of that many of us have come to existence in Trinidad and Tobago ourselves. We have no difficulty with that. We do not want, as is usually the case, to be misrepresented in the national community as being opposed to regularising squatters. But what we must do is to ensure that when we pass legislation in this Chamber, it is good and sensible legislation so that the public servants who must apply it in due time will have little or no difficulty in so doing. We have to ensure that we create settlement and stability, social and otherwise rather than confusion and chaos. Everything this Government has done to date has the potential for chaos. This Bill is yet another example.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister sought to use the Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago to find justification for his view that squatters must all get their own land. I browsed the Constitution carefully. He made reference to the preamble and rights. I do not know if he was speaking about the rights enshrined in sections 4 and 5 but I perused them closely and could find no such thing. Again, I urge him to seek the advice of the lawyer and esteemed Attorney General. But then again, he may not come up with anything useful because it is the very Member for Couva South who used the Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago in a case some time ago when we sought to regularise the business of the vendors selling on the streets of Port of Spain. He took them to the courts of this country, gave them a sense of false hope telling them they had a right to livelihood and the government was in breach of the constitutional provision. We make provision in the Constitution for the right to life, not the right to livelihood *per se*. He went to court and sought to explain to a judge at first instance that the constitutional provision enshrining a right to life gave the vendors a right to a livelihood to sell. Chalk and cheese; Job and C L. R. James; Tobago East and Padmore; east is to west.

Mr. Speaker, no doubt, as you may very well recall because you read the law yourself, the matter was kicked out of the court in quick order and the vendors recognized that, yet again, they were taken for a ride on his way to political power in this country. They understand that. If the Member for St. Augustine went to the Member for Couva South seeking to get advice on his misinterpretation and misunderstanding of the provisions of our Constitution, he may be at a loss nonetheless. It takes me on this side to let him know the Constitution cannot be so construed and it will go nowhere.

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Mr. Speaker, clause 3(1) of this Bill was alluded to already by the Member for San Fernando East. He made the point and I merely want to reinforce it before I continue, in clause 3(1) (a) which says:

"A squatter in respect of his actual occupation on State Land on which there is a dwelling house before the appointed day;"

In other words this Bill applies to such a person and he pointed out correctly there is no certainty as to what is the appointed day. That, he pointed out correctly, could lead to confusion.

Mr. Speaker, we want to suggest that the Government consider—if it is not going to take this Bill to a select committee as we are urging—at least putting some kind of time frame. It can say, for example, [*Interruption*] It is so bad the consensus of view is that it must go to a select committee. I make no further suggestion on the point.

Dwelling house as defined in this Bill means:

“a building or part of a building used mainly as a dwelling or residence and includes land occupied therewith, not exceeding 5,000 square feet more or less;”

We are urging for that reason and to avoid the confusion that is looming large as a result of the passage of this legislation if, sadly, that took place, that this Bill be taken before a select committee for further consideration.

Mr. Speaker, I want to move to clause 11. Again, this is a clause that has attracted the attention of Members on this side previously in this debate. This Government's policy in this Bill is to grant certificates of comfort. This confers security from ejection in accordance with clause 4(1) of this Bill. The Minister, as he piloted this Bill, was very critical of PNM's policy as we sought to deal with the question of regularisation of squatters. He made much of the question of a certificate of comfort. A certificate of comfort is a legal document once it is issued in accordance with the terms of the legislation. If the government of the PNM did not grant certificates of comfort but decide as a matter of Government's policy, as it has in many cases, not to remove the squatters, what difference does it make really? I submit it makes no real difference. The big play about the certificate of comfort, I do not see it—particularly when you bear in mind the potential for the disaster that the Member for Diego Martin East pointed out. Once one has a certificate of comfort, for whatever reason, if you seek to remove him he can bring an action against the state either by way of a breach of a statutory duty which this will impose or it might be a question of a judicial review action. Who knows?

Mr. Speaker, in light of those comments I want to reinforce the suggestions of the Member for Diego Martin East and San Fernando East that this is something that needs to be looked at very carefully before we proceed along this rocky road.

Mr. Speaker, the very clause 11(4) says:

"Upon receipt of any such application within the prescribed period,..."

and this is speaking about an application that comes after the prescribed period a person may apply if his house is outside of the designated area:

"Upon receipt of any such application within the prescribed period, the Division shall issue a certificate if it is satisfied that the dwelling house is situated on State Land."

The use of the word "shall" makes it mandatory and that is a difficulty. Because there may be any number of reasons why the division may not want to. If it does not, a good lawyer will have the affected person say that this legislation imposes an obligation and you will have further chaos which is yet another reason why this Government must stop, look, listen and proceed with caution as we have been advising all the time, during this debate. I subscribe wholly to the view of the Member for Diego Martin East that clause 12 of this Bill should either be radically reformulated or deleted in its entirety. I need not go through it again. He has dealt satisfactorily with the analysis of that.

Mr. Speaker, as he piloted this legislation, the Member for St. Augustine took pains to put on record the PNM's 1991 Election Manifesto and to enumerate what was a summary of our policy in respect of squatter regularisation and he criticized it no end. He reminded us that that Manifesto said that we will be searching for a methodology based on comprehensive regularisation of settlement sites which, of course, should be adopted:

- “2. The legal framework should set out a workable procedure of regularization.
3. The law must deal effectively with existing encumbrances and interests in State Lands which hinder regularization.”

He found himself criticizing that, a sober and sensible approach; an approach that is consistent with, I think it is section 50 of the Constitution, the provision for good governance. If I am wrong with the section I stand corrected. What is wrong? How can one criticize a policy that demands that we deal effectively with existing encumbrances and interest in state lands which may hinder regularisation?

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That is a sober approach. Not to run vaille-que-vaille into the thing. Not to do what this Government is suggesting to us in this Parliament.

- “4. Simplified procedures for the grant of leases should be adopted.
5. An authority to resolve and arbitrate on factual and legal problems which may arise.”

This Minister came and told us that if you observe these tenets as we outlined them in our manifesto, it will take 30 or 40 years before you can achieve anything. He wants to sacrifice accuracy for speed and in his mad haste—and I mean no disrespect to him—and anxiety to tell the national community, in the usual populist manner, that they are doing good for them, chaos and confusion will be the end. Because our policy was clear. We sent teams out who marked out the plots that the squatters were on and having marked them out numbered the houses so everyone knew exactly where they were allocated. Places they may have been for a long while past; then they will come to this authority and upon meeting certain predetermined criteria then they would be given the go ahead and they would be regularised.

It is putting the cart before the horse to do it otherwise as we pointed out, because if you get the certificate of comfort and your boundary is not clear you are getting a certificate of comfort for a plot of land that is undetermined. You are not sure. There may be a dispute about boundaries and the law books are replete with cases, criminal and otherwise: matters reach into the court because of boundary disputes. Therefore, one would think that you need to get boundaries sorted out properly before you regularise. You may find that you give a certificate of comfort which gives the man some kind of entrenched permission or position and then you realize that the land runs over some watercourse or for some other reason or, indeed, because the boundaries are not clear, he cannot have the land. And yet the Minister, in piloting this Bill, sought to criticize that sober and sane approach to the management of squatter regularisation.

6.35 p.m.

So Mr. Speaker, the criticism should be directed, not at the PNM. Our policy was clear and certain and it was certain to avoid the confusion that looms large, if this Bill were to find its way through this honourable Chamber.

I listened with interest as well to the Member for San Fernando East and I was taken aback. I was surprised to learn that as we speak, demolition of squatters' houses is taking place in Trinidad and Tobago today. I was doubly surprised, because as he piloted this legislation, the Member for St. Augustine said, and I quote:

“They deliberately chose to go at 2.00 a.m. or 3.00 a.m.—when persons were asleep, their soundest sleep is at that time of the night—into an area with police, armed in battle fatigues, fully armed with SLRs and SMGs, dogs and with a wrecker squad of criminals with pickaxes and sledge hammers in their hands deliberately demolishing houses...”

Mr. Speaker, when you listened to the Member for Tobago East, in the closing part of his contribution, he made reference to a problem that now faces Trinidad and Tobago, about the rule of law. We have never had any trouble with that. He made reference to that. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Assam: So when they declared a state of emergency, what happened?

Mr. F. Hinds: Mr. Speaker, I need your protection.

Mr. Speaker: I am sure that you can cope with that. *[Laughter]*

Mr. F. Hinds: Thank you very kindly, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Member: Teach him the art. He does not know.

Hon. Member: And when you smoking your joint—

Mr. F. Hinds: Mr. Speaker, this is the point that we must make time and time again. This country can never be in safe hands. You heard the comments, classlessness *par excellence*. This is the problem, even if this Government does things that are technically sound and technically right, they have lost the moral authority to speak to the people of this country. They have lost it.

Mr. Assam: That is what Abu Bakr tell you! You spoke with Abu Bakr!

Mr. F. Hinds: Because the nation is saying that they are classless, that they have demeaned ministerial office, they have brought ministerial office to a level that was hitherto unknown in this country and we will have the task of rebuilding the psyche and the respect for ministerial office in this country when we return to government. We will have difficulty, because that is the conduct, and I could go through the entire Bench with a few exceptions. They have demonstrated baseness and classlessness from the time they came here.

Mr. Assam: What is your moral barometer?

Mr. F. Hinds: But God will relieve us soon, Mr. Speaker. *[Interruption]* Let me continue as I attempt to deal with the provisions of this legislation.

Mr. Speaker: Order! Order!

Mr. F. Hinds: Mr. Speaker, at clause 15(3), it reads:

“Upon full payment of the premium and annual rent reserved, infrastructure development costs, cadastral survey costs and all fees and stamp duty in respect of the preparation and registration of the deed, the person entitled to a Statutory Lease shall be granted a Deed of Lease for one hundred and ninety-nine years in respect of the land and any previous minor estate in the land shall cease to exist.”

There are several things about that subclause. I think I should deal, first of all, with the question of the 199 years. The Member for Diego Martin East has already explained and established that if you are dealing with statutory leases and you are having an opportunity to address them in this Bill, then it might be a very good opportunity insofar as rationalizing the law in Trinidad and Tobago is concerned, to consider making all statutory leases even, level the playing field as it were. That will manifest—at least demonstrate; at least it will show thinking; it will show seriousness. So, Mr. Speaker, I agree entirely with the Member for Diego Martin East as he made the point.

I want to deal in particular with the first few lines of that subclause. It means, after the fact, after the individual has gone through the first two stages of the measures purported in this Bill; one, he gets a certificate of comfort and two, he gets a statutory lease. It is then that the Minister is proposing in this Bill to go through the rudiments that we would have done beforehand, because it is at this stage that the applicant will be expected to pay the premium and the annual rent reserve, to pay for the infrastructure development costs, if infrastructure is possible, because the way they are going about it, they are not making provisions for putting down any lamp posts, any water systems, any sewer systems. I mean, they are just doing it in a *vaille que vaille* manner. But if infrastructural development is possible, then at that stage the applicant has to pay the cost of cadastral survey costs.

So that he criticized our policy, because the person would have had to have a cadastral survey done, and then would approach our authority. They still have to do it. But, again, you see, this is how this Government operates. It hides its steel tower behind a velvet glove and every piece of legislation that comes to this House, there is carried behind it somewhere, some stinging detail. It appears beautiful on the face, but when you examine it closely, it spells danger, Mr. Speaker.

That is why I do not consider it too farfetched; I do not consider it too distant and too difficult to grasp that behind this Bill, particularly when we are not clear

about the appointed day and when, as the Member for San Fernando East has properly explained, all manner of things could happen before the appointed day is eventually named or established; you can have all kinds of devious things taking place. We know them well, so we must watch them carefully.

So, Mr. Speaker, for those reasons, we are saying yet again that this Bill must be the subject of the scrutiny of a parliamentary select committee because, as it stands, even with minor amendments, it could do more harm to our society and the squatters, in particular, than it would do good.

Mr. Maharaj: You can discuss it some more.

Mr. F. Hinds: Yes. We sure will.

The Minister, as he piloted the legislation, spoke as I said earlier, about emancipation and the rights of the slaves at that point. The Member for Tobago East pointed out that prior to that time, 1834 or 1838, the ex-slaves, many of them—the Mandingoes—had rights and they had owned large amounts of land in this country. Mr. Speaker, the Member for Tobago East told us that it took the present Prime Minister, to transfer for religious purposes to various groups, he said Baptists/Orishas in this country, state lands amounting to some 25 acres.

Mr. Speaker, last Sunday I visited the Lopinot site where, history has it that it is a slave cemetery and, for that reason, it has significance for the Emancipation Support Committee and the Emancipation and Freedom Committee, two organizations that operate in our social environment.

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I attended a celebration that they had last Sunday and I thoroughly enjoyed it. There was festivity; there was drumming; there was poetry; there was story telling; there were classes teaching people to use a few words from certain African tribes; and I was in the midst of it all day, enjoying the beauties of it. I thought long and hard of my ancestry as I bathed and enjoyed it. It gave me an entirely good and refreshing feeling.

Speaking to some of the leaders of that organization on that day, they pointed out an area, the area in which we were and they indicated that they had made efforts and, in fact, there was some promise years past to that organization to make these lands available to them. Somewhere along the line, other plans seemed to have taken over and housing developments came in the area making use of some of the space that they considered was allotted to them. Some of them belong to my

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constituency, Laventille/Morvant, and I take this opportunity in the debate on this Bill to call on the Government, to be very co-operative of spirit, in spirit, when very soon they are approached by the members of that organization, to grant them that land, formalize the lands and even more lands for their religious purposes.

They outlined to me a plan to establish a kindergarten school, a school of their religion, a church and other such infrastructure, which will require significant amounts of land. Well, the Minister and the Member for Tobago East boasted of how generous the Member for Couva North was with 25 acres to some religious organization or organizations, and I have undertaken, on behalf of those persons with whom I spoke on Sunday, to use my seat in this Chamber, to exert best efforts to ensure that they will meet with the good favour, if we could call it that, of the Government, when formal approaches are made in the not too distant future. I shall be looking very keenly.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in my constituency, we have a major squatting area. It began in 1993 and it is still on the way, far from completion in terms of putting in the infrastructure, and my constituents have asked me to raise the matter in this debate in this Chamber. I am advised that it was the subject of some litigation. The Member for Point Fortin will know well of the project of which I speak in the Malick area. I am told that there was some settlement. I have not been able to make thorough investigations since I got this information only a couple days ago. But I am told that it was the subject of some settlement and a new contractor has been put in place.

We, of the last PNM administration, demonstrated our keenness to regularise the squatters in the area and to develop the land for their well-being and their comfort, and I ask the Minister to use his good office and to be very speedy in looking into this matter, with a view to ensuring that the project continues and is brought to a successful conclusion.

6.50 p.m.

Because of the absence of infrastructure in that area, including water, at present—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The speaking time of the Member has expired.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. F. Hinds: Thank you kindly.

The people in that area and, indeed, in other areas, experience extreme hardships and, as their representative, I ask the Minister to look into this matter. I have written him on the subject and I look forward to a speedy response and I propose to make my contribution ensuring that this project is settled so that the people can live happily and, of course, in peace.

I had an opportunity to review a magazine, if you like; a public service special, as it was called by this Government, some months ago. It was published in the supplement to the *Express* newspaper, on November 16, 1997. I had a look at the Government's attempt in that supplement to tell Trinidad and Tobago about its accomplishments for the two years it had, by then, spent in Government.

Hon. Member: Excellent!

Mr. F. Hinds: Excellent lies. I read, in particular, the section which had to do with housing, under the rubric, "A comprehensive housing plan". I know that the present Minister of Housing and Settlements was part of a government between 1986—1991 and I know that so, too, was the Member for Tobago West. I know after the Member for St. Augustine was elbowed out, the Member for Tobago West soldiered on. The statistics will bear me out that housing plan or not, the records will show, sadly, that not one single house was constructed under that government during those years—not a single house.

What stands against the name of the Member for St. Augustine is his lofty ambition for the creation of a sewer system which will be a tourist attraction in Trinidad and Tobago. He has said so. What stands against his name is the establishment of a trinity dollar which palpably failed. The very idea was aborted; the thought was so absurd.

When I read the so-called accomplishment of the Ministry of Housing and Settlements, I was amazed. According to the calypsonian, Brother Alpha B, as he sang this year, when I read the article, "ah jump". Listen to this:

"Government has implemented a comprehensive approach to housing. The principal areas of operations include squatter regularisation, infrastructure upgrade of squatter communities, the development of serviced lots."

This Bill is the comprehensive effort to regularise squatters; a Bill which has taken a beating in this Parliament from the time it was launched. We have demonstrated beyond any doubt that this Bill is so defective that it has to be

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discarded even, and certainly at best, sent through the scrutiny of a select committee. We just cannot go on with this. It would be an insult to the people of Trinidad and Tobago and to the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago.

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

But worse was to come. Listen to what this Government in this document claims to have accomplished in its two years. I read five paragraphs from the bottom.

“Under the NHA’s Accelerated Housing Programme, 48 apartments at Ramdial Mahabir were completed...”

Could you imagine that? It is here.

Hon. Member: I started it; you did not complete them.

Mr. F. Hinds: So you are saying that we did not complete them. But this document claims that they have been completed.

Hon. Member: Well John completed them.

Mr. F. Hinds: In his mind.

Hon. Member: Little boy!

Mr. F. Hinds: Mr. Speaker, there we go. The Member for Princes Town—another example of his classlessness. But he cannot help it. It is the way he has been taught, or not taught. But I would not be distracted. I have a PNM ethic, PNM standards, to which I subscribe and I shall maintain them to the hilt. [*Desk thumping*] One Member of the other side had the temerity to suggest to me as I walked in this Chamber today that I could make my application for some UNC membership. If ever you saw me do that, you could tell yourself with certainty I am temporarily insane, at a minimum.

Hon. Member: You would move from permanent insanity to temporary insanity.

Mr. F. Hinds: Just for the fear of the embarrassment that the Members for Arima and Point Fortin have caused, it is not even to be contemplated. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, may I once more please appeal to you. I assure you that there are powers vested in these Standing Orders which I am able to use and which I will use if it becomes necessary. Please continue your contribution, Hon. Member.

Mr. F. Hinds: I am entirely grateful, Mr. Speaker. Let me complete the paragraph:

“Under the NHA’s Accelerated Housing Programme, 48 apartments at Ramdial Mahabir were completed and 112 units at Almond Drive Apartments were completed.”

Every day, including yesterday, those persons in my constituency come to me making enquiries about how they can access one of those apartments. We all can see they are far from complete. Yet, this Government, with its penchant, with its proclivity towards distortion, lies and untruths, tells this nation that they have been completed. While it may seem insignificant in the scheme of the more serious problems it has created which confront the nation today, I must make the point that this is yet another example of this Government’s ability to mislead people, and the people of this country are not foolish. *[Interruption]* Shabbazz is my rastafarian brother and I love him.

Hon. Member: He is your replacement.

Mr. Speaker: Order please!

Mr. F. Hinds: And we will let no bald head come between us, especially no crazy bald heads. *[Laughter]*

7.00 p.m.

It is a lie and as innocuously as it appears, hidden away in many other words in a Sunday supplement since November 16, and I will let the people of this country know that they all are distorters and purveyors of untruths so one can see what you are, more than they have seen already.

Mr. Speaker, it says further:

“At existing housing estates, major repairs and the upgrading of buildings were carried out.”

I know of none in my constituency. I immediately know the Member for St. Joseph with his rather interesting mind will say: what have you all done, and I will immediately tell him, we put the houses there. Housing was the priority. The Member for Tobago East does not have a clue. I understand he was squatting somewhere himself, but we put the houses there. Housing was the priority. As I have indicated time and again, as the old people used to say, like stick break in these people’s ears and even in the face of truth they tell their usual lies.

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When we came into government in 1991—the Manning administration—the task was one of social rebuilding and social stability. We had just gone through an upheaval in 1990, Port of Spain was flat. People were scared, citizens were packing up to leave Trinidad and Tobago. We very quietly and very soberly went about the task of creating social stability in the country so that people could have gone about their business: school, work, church quietly and in peace again and we accomplished it such that by 1995 that was all a forgotten matter; not for the historians, but for the people in the street, business as usual in Trinidad and Tobago, and we went on with the nation's business. A fact often overlooked.

In terms of the economy, I do not have the statistics before me but I remember well, inflation was over 20 per cent, foreign reserves were in the negative, minus figures, unemployment was in the realm of 20 and 25 per cent, leaving out of a work-force of 510,000 people in Trinidad and Tobago, close to 100,000 people were unemployed in 1991 when we came into office and when we left unemployment had fallen significantly. Foreign exchange reserves were in the pluses. Inflation had fallen. All the macroeconomic indicators were in place again. Confidence had started to flourish so that the fact of the matter is we had just come out of a nasty social state of affairs in Trinidad and Tobago and seven years or so of structural adjustment when government just had to arrange its affairs to create economic stability in the country again. The PNM administration from 1991—1995 simply had not the resources to deal with the social problems that they will be quick to highlight.

When the Member for Tobago East blindly and misleading tells us that they put up housing estates, and so forth, I will tell him that there was a time in this country, 30 years ago, when there were eight and twelve scholarships per year being offered and one had to be exceedingly and extremely bright to be lucky to get one, today, like they say in the cinema advertisements, there is a school next to you. Children do not have to travel miles to go to school unless they choose to.

Mr. Assam: But this Government has increased the scholarships.

M. F. Hinds: I am talking about island scholarships. In any event, I do not want to be distracted by the Member for St. Joseph. I simply want to remind them that we built this city, this country, the People's National Movement, under solid leadership for all the years.

We will establish a bridge and they will come and paint it, and applaud themselves; we will build superhighways across the country, they may extend the lanes and applaud themselves. It is like some trusting in creation and not in the Creator.

Mr. Speaker, in respect of the houses of which I spoke in my constituency, in the Dorata and Leon Street areas the buildings are old now, they need repainting, there are exposed electrical wires, and I am hearing this. I wrote the relevant departments asking them to give attention to them and when I speak like this the Member for St. Joseph and others would say, "what you all did about it?" But we tell them, this Government is in a better position than any other Government in this country, to carry out extensive social development and deal with these matters in this country. Do you know what Mr. Speaker? They inherited a strong and growing economy. They inherited an economy which was growing by four plus per cent per annum. They inherited a strong economy.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the debate cannot proceed on the basis of one person speaking and being asked questions by the other side to which he responds. It cannot be done like that. In many places if one is making a contribution and efforts are being made to distract the person, it comes over in some quarters that the person is making so much sense that one is trying to put him off.

I ask you please, everyone is going to have a chance to speak. Hold your fire, take notes. Do as the Member for Tobago East very often says he does. He does not interfere with anybody. Please, I ask Members, let us proceed along those lines.

Mr. F. Hinds: Mr. Speaker, I am genuinely grateful, but I venture to suggest it might require more.

Mr. Speaker: I have dealt with it.

Mr. F. Hinds. Yes, Mr. Speaker. As I was indicating to this honourable House the records will show that insofar as developing squatting settlements is concerned, a very social concern, a necessary one, putting in the necessary infrastructure, rebuilding and repairing schools and doing all of the things that they untruthfully claim to have done, they were in a better position to do it. But, that is now a matter of history, they have squandered that opportunity as well.

I was reminded by my colleague, the Member for Port of Spain South, that a considerable amount of the national income was spent divesting our economy, putting in place large industrialized elements in the economy with a view to these producing money for Trinidad and Tobago, not in the short term, but in the long term; but they forget that.

7.10 p.m.

Perhaps, only the people in Couva South and its environs would appreciate the value and beauty that is Point Lisas because they see it everyday. The people in my

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constituency do not see it everyday, so probably, they do not regard it as important. Those elected Members of Parliament and Ministers of Government on the other side cannot hide behind the excuse which I have just established with some of the people who are not in their position. They ought to know. They are the shapers of policy in the government, for the nation.

When I heard the Member for Tobago East decry and denigrate the sterling efforts of the People's National Movement and its solid contribution to the building of the fabric that is Trinidad and Tobago, I knew that something is wrong. I know that this country can never be in safe hands, because obviously, there is a void in his knowledge bank. If he does not know his past he would not know where he is going, because he has no present on which to build any future. This is why they operate like headless chickens, metaphorically.

I have made my contribution to this Bill and raised a few matters which concern my constituents. I am satisfied that having examined the Bill thoroughly, the few areas which we have pointed out to this Government, raised sufficient concerns for us to be all agreed, that this Bill is woefully defective. This Bill needs further thought, notwithstanding the passionate cries of the Member for St. Augustine, as he told us his philosophy is that he wants to see everyone equal and happy in Trinidad and Tobago. Mr. Speaker, note, that he said that he wants to make middle class citizens out of these people. It means that he recognizes the distinction between the lower, middle and upper classes. I thought that he, with his orientation from the socialist communist days, would have seen no such distinction. He is aspiring to cause the people who are in these squatter settlements that he seeks to regularise, to make them middle class.

Perhaps, that explains why he has not allowed the people from John John to occupy those houses. He is reported to have said that the houses are too good for them. Probably, he feels that those units are not middle class. They are upper class. We of the People's National Movement put them there to house the people who lost their homes by that fire. We did not consider whether it was upper or middle. We had an opportunity and we built houses in which we felt they would be comfortable.

The argument that we did it for votes is fallacious. Twenty-three families were living there all along, presumably, according to the Member for Tobago East, voting for the PNM for all the years in every generation. If houses were built for them on the same spot, it would not make any difference. That simple bit of logic

might have escaped him. Mr. Speaker, I am happy to have had the opportunity to point that out and make my contribution to the Bill.

Thank you.

The Minister of Social Development (Hon. Manohar Ramsaran): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I take this floor to speak in support of this Bill to secure certain squatters from ejection from State Land; to facilitate the acquisition of leasehold titles by both squatters and tenants in designated areas and to provide for the establishment of land settlement areas”.

Before I go into my short contribution, I would refer to the contribution of the Member for Laventille East/Morvant. When he spoke about the Member for Tobago East as intellectualism gone mad, that was jealousy and envy as could only emanate from that side. However, I am indicating that they cannot stand the truth. They wish to keep our people in a sense of dependency and ignorance. Therefore, we must join with the Member for Tobago East to try to educate the masses.

When the Member alluded to the statement that they brought this Bill twice to this House and that we should have brought something good, is he admitting that they did not bring a good Bill to the House? This country is probably happy that they have put the PNM in opposition. I hope forever.

He mentioned the rule of law. A government is busy going about the nation's business, while those opposite attempt to incite division. It is because of a responsible and stable opposition that this country was allowed to be in peace over the years. I ask the Member to try to emulate the names he called, such as Capildeo and Seukeran. He boasted about unemployment and the revival of the economy. I ask him to claim the 35.9 per cent of the population which lived in poverty during that period. They boast about economic stability, but yet when the statistics come to the fore, 35.9 per cent of the population lived in poverty and neglect. There were squatters, as we are dealing with now, flooding throughout Trinidad and Tobago and roads riddled with potholes.

Recently, visitors who came to our shores commended this Government for what has been happening in this country over the last two years. When I read the *Daily Express* it spoke glowingly about this country over the last two years, I think this country is lucky that the Members on this side now form the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

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I know the Member for Tobago East dealt with the Member for San Fernando East. He mentioned paying fees to watch over the John John Towers. I would say something which happened in my constituency. A simple sporting complex in Chaguanas known as the Pierre Tahadille Sporting Complex was built between the years 1990 and 1991. Would you believe that during the PNM's term in office, that \$666,000 accrued in watchman's fees. It was only when this Government came into office, my colleague, the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre and Minister of Local Government paid that debt. Today, we can have the facilities of that complex. When they talk they should examine themselves first. They had no political will to open that centre. The cost of watchman's fees was almost more than the cost of the building. When they talk they should be careful about what they say.

This Government has tackled or has accorded highest priority to fighting poverty in this country. We took a different approach from the PNM. We are not making people more dependent on us. We are trying to give them the resources so that they would be self-sustainable. They would appreciate this Government for that. We want to cut out the dependency syndrome and make them proud people.

7.20 p.m.

When the Minister of Housing and Settlements, who is a member of the Ministerial Council on Social Development, presented this Bill, I saw it as another step in ensuring that our people are given the tools to make them self-sustainable. When a person owns land, as we all know, he can have a basis from which he can move on in society. He can get loans from the bank and he can start his own business.

The Member for Laventille East/Morvant said that we would leave the people without roads and infrastructure, but our record shows that this Government is building this country. People are the centre of our development, so that when we have a squatting area, we will ensure that they get all the amenities to make them happy.

In 1997, when this country was voted No. 1 in its fight against poverty, this was because we afforded the poor people in this country the basic amenities. When this Bill is passed, there will be the basic tenets of livelihood, which are food, clothing and shelter, for poor people. When shelter is provided for 50,000 families, imagine what will happen!

When the squatting community own their land and have comfort, they can then go to their backyards and have a garden and develop; grow box agriculture, as is

being introduced by this Government throughout Trinidad and Tobago. So many things can happen in a community. There can be cottage industries. There can be people working together in some bigger type of business. These people will develop themselves.

The essence of what I am trying to say is that this would afford our people the wherewithal to move forward. We cannot continue to give our people handouts: it is not fair to them. As the Member for Tobago East would say: "We cannot keep these people on a dependency syndrome". We cannot just give these people handouts so that they would vote for us. We have to treat them as human beings, lifting their dignity and making them proud of themselves, so that when they say that they are citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, the rest of the world will say that they are people who deserve respect.

Mr. Speaker, I am really very happy to support this Bill and to let the world know that this Government is saying that they need to deal with poverty from several fronts, simultaneously. This Bill is an example of that.

When new villages develop, there will be true social development. There will be people in communities who regard one another as friends and neighbours. Just imagine what will happen! In my own constituency, in the village of La Paille, the people came to me, so hopeless before they heard about this Bill. They had the feeling that at any time someone would break down their houses. When I gave them the comfort—not knowing that the word "comfort" would be mentioned in this Bill—that they would be taken care of by this Government that cares, they really felt happy. We will ensure that they have something to build on.

When people lack ownership of property, they seem hopeless. That is why when the Minister of Housing and Settlements came up with this Bill, I knew that he had his heart in the right place, that he cared about the poor people in this country. He is keeping to the theme of the Ministerial Council for Social Development, which is to ensure that the people of Trinidad and Tobago are given the sort of sustainable development that they so badly need.

This does not apply only to Trinidad and Tobago. Since the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen in March 1995, we have attended many international and world summits. There was a sub-regional seminar on Poverty and Young People for representatives of the English-speaking Caribbean and Suriname, which was held in Trinidad and Tobago. The objective of this seminar was to facilitate co-operation among social investment funds and other programmes and institutions which the countries of Latin America and the

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Caribbean have created for the purpose of improving efficiency, effectiveness and fairness in social policy, with specific reference to young people.

The second is the Hemispheric Conference on the Eradication of Poverty and Discrimination, Santiago, Chile, held on January 18 and 19, 1996. This was a follow-up to the Summit of the Americas which took place in Miami, Florida, from December 9—11, 1994, in which government participated and which resulted in this country being a signatory to the Pact for Development and Prosperity of the Americas.

Two of the principles enunciated at the summit were the eradication of poverty and discrimination in the hemisphere and the guarantee of sustainable development and conservation of the natural environment for future generations.

I am reading these, Mr. Speaker, to show that this country is, in keeping with our neighbours and the United Nations, ensuring that there is sustainable development in Trinidad and Tobago.

Specifically at this conference, representatives were asked to identify obstacles, evaluate progress with regard to the various actions proposed at the Summit of the Americas Action Plan and to identify new action and areas of co-operation in an effort to eradicate poverty and discrimination in the hemisphere.

The third meeting on Children and Social Policies in the Americas, follow-up to the 1990 World Summit for Children, was held in Santiago, Chile on August 8 and 9, 1996. The objectives were to review the progress made during the first half of the decade regarding the targeted objectives set by the World Summit on Children and Social Policies at the Narino Accord for the year 2000 and readjust objectives *vis-à-vis* the new challenges that may arise from current conditions in the Americas. Representatives were also expected to reconfirm their will and commitment to the children's well-being by signing the Santiago Declaration.

This was followed by the First High Level Meeting on Social Development, OAS Headquarters, Washington DC, February 1997. At this meeting, the objective was to define the contents of an Inter-American programme to overcome poverty and discrimination and to approve the proposed declaration and plan of action for the programme as outlined by a group of governmental experts and members of the Committee on Social Development of the Inter-American Council for integrated development of the OAS.

There is another one: World Summit for Social Development in Brazil held on April 6—9, 1997. Again, this was a plan of action and a follow-up to our poverty eradication.

In Trinidad and Tobago, in 1996, the Caribbean Ministerial Meeting for Poverty Eradication took place in Trinidad and Tobago. Here we formulated a directional plan for poverty eradication in the Caribbean.

In 1996, the United Nations Conference, Habitat II, to deal with the eradication of poverty, formed part of our international summit conferences. I would like to read from a pamphlet related to Habitat II.

“Over one billion people around the world live in inadequate conditions—without piped water, electricity, security of land tenure, access to roads or health facilities. In many parts of the world, the means available for production and financing of housing and urban infrastructure are too limited to meet basic needs. The United Nations Centre for Human Settlements, the Nairobi-based agency and secretariat for Habitat II, advocates the recognition by Governments that they alone cannot provide for the needs of their populations.

7.30 p.m.

Instead, Governments need to play an enabling role through reforming policies, institutions and legal frameworks. They should facilitate involvement of all the stakeholders from household, community-based organizations through to the private sector and local government. This would enable housing markets to work more efficiently and to guarantee equally to women and men security of tenure, access to land, access to credit and protection from arbitrary eviction. "

Mr. Speaker, our Minister of Housing and Settlements attended this conference and knowing the type of person he is, he must have felt at home because what I read here, would have definitely fallen into his portfolio as a person who would deal with the poor and dispossessed which was the centre of attraction at Habitat II. I pay public tribute to this Minister who, also as you know, has come to be known as the champion of this segment of our population, the champion of the poor.

Mr. Speaker, for too long many of our poor have been living in these squatting areas in uncertainty, and they cannot plan for the future nor improve their condition in terms of the environment because they have always been uncertain about their tenure. I said it before, and I would repeat it because how could anybody—we who sit here might have the opportunity to own our land that we live on, but just think about those poor people and when I hear they are being called criminals and so forth, it really bothers me. Do we care about poor people? Do we want to give them something with which they would be happy?

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When one listens to what is said in this Parliament sometimes we wonder whether the Members opposite really care about the poverty in our country. They boast about the economic development and how they have rebuilt Port of Spain and have done this and done the other. We have seen economic development in this country, not only now, but also in 1986 and 1991 because I know for a fact that it happened in certain parts of the country. Yet poverty, vagrancy and social ills in our country have grown, but the Members opposite would not claim that.

What I do not like about the other side, Mr. Speaker, they could boast, I do not mind. They could talk about what they have done, but when they come here and claim the responsibility for all that appears to be good, saying that they did it and we just followed, and blame us for the evil things in the society, I cannot understand this, Mr. Speaker. If they take credit, let them take all the credit, do not share it with us. They want to give us the blame and this is something I cannot handle, because when there are people on this side who care about poverty, who talk, and we do not only talk the talk, we walk the talk too. We want to ensure that this country is a better one because when one goes through this country one would see what is happening.

For example, it was last night when the Prime Minister opened the World Consumer Rights Day which was hosted by the Ministry of Consumer Affairs. The theme was on poverty and consumerism "Rallying for Change". It was hosted by the Minister of Consumer Affairs who is another member of the Ministerial Council of Social Development and this is what I like about this council. The members are speaking with one voice and we are rallying to the cause of the poor people in this country, and this Bill before us falls within the lap of our fight to eradicate poverty in this country. So when we sit here, we want to ask our friends opposite to make a contribution to this country. Let us know what we could do to make this country a better place. Let us not blame, let us not place credit because not everything one does should be for politics, but to ensure the social development of this country.

This Bill would make a positive impact on thousands of our citizens, who, as I have said before, Members opposite have been talking about helping, but could they really tell this country that they have helped the poor? If that was done, this Government would not still have to ensure in 1998, when we are facing a new millennium in the year 2000, that 60,000 families would be regularised as squatters. I am trying to show this picture because when we go to these conferences and hear what is happening in the world and see rich countries, their economy grows but their poverty also grows. I want to ensure that the

Government of the day does not allow the trickle down effect of our economy to get to the poor people, because then we are heading for serious trouble.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Housing and Settlements was with me recently when I launched community project and we wrote to 24 of the leading businesses in this country who responded almost 100 per cent to this meeting and gravitated to the idea. They said they would support the Minister of Social Development and his council and at our meetings so far they have agreed to adopt these communities. You will be surprised to know that there are villages in this country with about 200—300 persons and no access to roads, water, or electricity and we are starting to visit these villages from next week Tuesday. They are found in all parts of the country, on both sides of the political divide and we would be visiting, next week, Evergreen which is near the Carapo area. I think that is the constituency of Arima, Arouca South, and imagine this village is slam bam in the middle of the East/West Corridor about a mile from Arima, and they have nothing. The report which came to me shows that these people have nothing. They have no roads, no water, no electricity and yet the Members opposite say that these people supported them and voted for them.

We are then going to Brasso Venado, which is in the Tabaquite constituency, but this has nothing to do with the Member for Tabaquite. This little village was isolated and hidden from anybody. It was discovered and we are going there on Wednesday to see what we could do for these people. Then there is one called Cumaca in Toco/Manzanilla, which we would be visiting too. These people wrote to me and they want to be adopted.

Let me tell you about this adoption before it is misunderstood. It is not another handout. We are going to these villages to see if we could get those sponsors to give them scholarships for primary schools, secondary schools and establish sports and cultural groups and make their life more manageable.

When we talk—as the Minister of Social Development and as the chairman of the Ministerial Council on Social Development—we want to develop this country and the only way to do this is by helping the less fortunate in our society. That is why I feel extremely proud that the Minister of Housing and Settlements could make this bold step, because as it was acknowledged by both sides, this took 10 years in coming and I think that the people in this country would not find that 10 years too late—they would appreciate everything this Bill would afford them.

Mr. Speaker, this Government is saying that with full payment of the premium and annual rent reserve, infrastructure development costs, cadastral survey costs

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and all fees and stamp duty in respect of the preparation and registration of deed, the person entitled to a Statutory lease should be granted a Deed of Lease for 199 years in respect of the land. In other words, ownership and a stake in the community and this nation. This point is absolutely vital since the former squatter or landless citizen can now use his property as collateral to secure funding for business and other ventures.

Mr. Speaker, when one looks at this Bill in its entirety and what is happening in this country, and its social development, one would understand the importance of it. When Members opposite try to inject politics by saying we should have a joint select committee and delay this matter further, I sit here and wonder whether they really care about poverty and poor people in this country. If the delivery of the social services for our people continues to be delayed, I do not know what would happen, because poverty, as you know, is a threat to democracy and if there are 35.9 per cent of people living in poverty, and for one reason or the other, they say they are not going to the polls, just imagine what could happen in this country. It could lead to the eradication of democracy, for want of a better word. The demise of democracy. When people come here and "gallery" and say that they want water for a day or two and then they do not look at the picture of how we are developing Trinidad and Tobago, then we are heading for trouble.

Mr. Speaker, when people say they represent their constituency, they must not come here—as I just said the people from Evergreen are not seeing their MP—on a Friday and try to snatch the headlines and say they are good Members of Parliament, but they must be found in their areas.

I have written to all Members of Parliament about having a coalition against drugs in this country and only on this side I have had responses. This coalition is that each Member of Parliament would talk with their constituency leaders and I have started in my constituency and this is working. I addressed two schools this week and when you talk to these teenagers in school and they listen to you and we have experts talking about drug eradication, all this goes towards developing our country socially. I wrote to every Member of Parliament and only one Member spoke to me and he said because of the sort of Parliament we have that it is not allowed, it is a good idea, but he cannot support it.

Mr. Speaker, if we are serious about this country, the social development must come to the front burner and this is why when I speak to the Minister of Housing and Settlements, the Member for St. Augustine and other Members on this side, when we have our meetings and come up with ideas—for example the Minister of

Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources talks about getting this country green once more, about planting, going back to agriculture because this is another tool we can use to eradicate poverty. We have to go back to the land, we have to ensure that access roads are built throughout Trinidad and Tobago and we are doing it. The Minister of Local Government is improving the roads in the rural areas which would feed Trinidad and Tobago, and our Prime Minister is talking now about buying local. For example, we have had furniture where every piece is imported. Recently we had a meeting with the National Centre for Disabled Persons in San Fernando and they are building wheel chairs and furniture but they cannot get people to buy because we are so foreign-oriented in our mind, we import everything.

I would like this piece of legislation passed and the lesser fortunate brothers and sisters are given tenure. Dramatic community-led and driven efforts would be seen to improve many of these areas because of the stake they would have in their community. Again, I commend the hon. Minister of Housing and Settlements, my colleague, who has been at the forefront of the struggle to assist the landless and homeless, and who has been working tirelessly on this front for many years.

Mr. Speaker, before I take my seat, I would like to comment to this House, and particularly to those opposite, that when we come to Parliament to talk about the people's business, we must spare a thought for the less fortunate in our society, and when we hear people attacking each other's personality and trying to play games with the poor people in this country, we have to be very, very careful because, as I alluded before, poverty could be a threat to many things in this country, including democracy.

Mr. Speaker, I end by stating that this Bill is fully consistent with our policy and philosophy in dealing with poverty, using a truly integrated and holistic approach.

I thank you very much.

7.45 p.m.

Mr. Hedwige Bereaux (*La Brea*): Mr. Speaker, I wish to join this debate on the State Land (Regularisation of Tenure) Bill, more particularly described as "An Act to secure certain squatters from ejection from State Lands; to facilitate the acquisition of leasehold titles by both squatters and tenants in designated areas and to provide for the establishment of land settlement areas."

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My consistency has a peculiar problem in respect of state lands, generally, as it is described in this Bill. I had intended to make an extremely short intervention and to deal only with that. However, because of the comments made by the Member for Chaguanas, I will make a few comments on his statement and I may have to go a little longer than expected.

I listened to the Member and much of what he said is like motherhood, something one cannot really controvert. He spoke about buy-local, Mr. Speaker. Trinidad and Tobago, under the PNM, has had a “buy-local” programme for a long time. He particularly attacked me with respect to water for my constituency, when he said I came here and made antics and so forth. I want it to be quite clear, I think I said it then and I will say it again—as the Member brought it up—I have been dealing with the question of water for my constituency for years, even during the time of the PNM and I make no apologies for it. When I spoke recently, parts of my constituency had not received water for eight weeks. If the Member thinks that is not dealing with the poor, poverty and the dispossessed, then I do not know what he means.

He also spoke about development. I know the general area where he lives because I am from that area. I know the days when we used to go to catch crab. I know what the state of his amenities are today. I know what the state of his amenities were when I returned to this country in 1977. We went to the same school, although he went after me. Therefore whereas no one could deny that under every government there are situations where the government does some development, and there are some other things which may not have come out the same, I do not want him to come here and give the impression that development started in his area or in any area in 1996. It did not.

I now return to the question of squatting, Mr. Speaker. Although the Members have indicated that this Bill has been in the making by various governments for 10 years—which is not quite correct, or if it was there for 10 years, it came against a certain background—in 1986, a State Land Regularisation Act was passed and that was intended to regularise squatters on state lands at a certain time. At that time there were 8,000 squatters in the country. Then suddenly the Government changed and because of the philosophy of the Member for St. Augustine, some parts of it—

PROCEDURAL MOTION

The Attorney General (Hon. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the sitting of this House continues until we complete the business before us, with liberty for us to decide whether we shall adjourn at a later stage, before the completion of the business of the House.

Question put and agreed to.

STATE LAND (REGULARISATION OF TENURE) BILL

Mr. H. Breaux: Mr. Speaker, as I said, in 1986, there were 8,000 squatters or thereabouts—one cannot really pinpoint such numbers with any degree of accuracy—and at that time an Act was passed by the PNM government. The NAR government then came into office and there was a dramatic increase in the number of squatters. I put that dramatic increase to the philosophy as enunciated by the Member for St. Augustine. As I said, some parts of that philosophy I tend to agree with because I believe one of the corporal works of mercy is to harbour the harbourless. I must also say that abject poverty and luxury cannot co-exist comfortably side by side.

I agree that at times it is the duty of the state to give some assistance to those who cannot support themselves; some mechanism must be put in place. Squatting itself is, in fact, manifestation of the failure of a settlements programme. I am particularly concerned that if we regularise the squatters on state lands today, what happens after today. One could bet one's bottom dollar that after all the existing squatters, of whom I spoke, are regularised, shortly some young person who might choose to get married and who might not be able to afford the price of land would choose to squat.

I have looked carefully at the designated principles in the Bill, and as I said, although the Bill itself contains a number of legal flaws, in my view the principle itself is one with which I and, I am certain, my colleagues would like to associate ourselves. This does not mean to say that we do not recognize the potential in the Bill to have certain demographics of the country. However, I believe, as an aware Opposition and enlightened political party, looking at our business, we would be able to deal with that when the time comes, if it is tried.

Mr. Speaker, after the defection of the Member for Point Fortin, as I like to call it, I would normally walk out when he speaks, but on a serious matter like this, I remained to hear what he had to say, as a former Minister of Housing and Settlements.

7.55 p.m.

I was concerned to hear him talk about lack of political will to pass a similar bill for regularisation of squatters in 1995 when, in fact, it was known that the Bill that was presented, or was about to be presented or laid in this House, did not have any provision for the regularisation of those persons who were squatting on lands belonging to state agencies. Anybody who knows about my position, which

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will be articulated further here, would know that any bill like that would receive some adverse comment from me, because in the constituency of La Brea and neighbouring constituencies of Point Fortin, Fyzabad and Siparia—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is one month directly from the day I had to be put out of this House. I do not want to be interrupted by the Member for Princes Town. He is free to interfere with me when we are discussing domestic violence and threatening females with a cutlass. He could talk to me then, but at this time, I would like you to protect me.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Member should ignore the Member and talk to me directly.

Mr. Beraux: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am speaking to you all the time, but he continues to obstruct me and I know he has no competence in this particular area. He has competence with putting cutlasses on females' necks.

As I said earlier, I was dealing with the area of lands owned by state agencies, and I could remember that when the Hon. Minister spoke about it here, the first thing I did was inform him about land owned by state companies. My constituency and the other constituencies close by suffer, in particular, from what I like to call an oilfield phenomenon. All the land in the La Brea constituency is either owned by an oil company under an oil mining lease, or under lease to an oil company. Although the oil mining lease is called a lease, it has certain extremely onerous conditions to the extent that it is almost impossible for the state to be able to give occupancy of that land without the concurrence of the oil company.

I will read for you an example of some of the terms and conditions in that lease:

“The lessee (Petrotrin) has the right inter alia:

(1) To construct on the demise lands buildings, houses, workshops, offices and tanks of all kinds including earthen storage reservoirs (temporary and permanent) and to erect and operate machinery, plant, installations, pipelines, conduits, pumps, treating plants, refineries and all or any erections or constructions.

(2) To establish on the demise lands camps, residences and settlements for the employees, labourers or other persons employed by or acting on behalf of the lessees.”

It means that in all of the La Brea constituencies, there is no state land available for the poor residents, the dispossessed residents, the landless residents to occupy, and

even if in the circumstances, the state were to choose to have a designated area based on the nature of the oil mining lease—and this is just the tip of the iceberg, there are several other onerous clauses in them—it has to be done with the total concurrence of the oil company.

I noticed in particular, with respect to clause 19, it says:

“The authority of the Minister to bring an area under the Schedule is subject to the following conditions:

- (a) that an Order pursuant to section 9 of the Town and Country Planning Act is obtained;
- (b) that the area is not—
 - (i) allocated for industrial, agricultural or mining purposes;”

Mr. Deputy Speaker, (vii) goes on to say:

“required by a state agency for the facilitation of its purposes.”

So, even though I see the possibilities of the designated areas, I am immediately alerting this honourable House and the Hon. Minister to the impending difficulties in implementing this legislation in respect of the lands owned by state agencies in the La Brea constituency.

There is the other problem. The state agency has its own land, and then it has a lease over the state lands. So, there are no state lands that could be designated to the young people and the landless people in the La Brea constituency and environs. There will have to be a serious political will. *[Interruption]* One will note that notwithstanding the fact that there are more than 2,000 squatters in the La Brea constituency, I could not reply to the Minister because they were not on state lands or, even if they were on state lands, they were on state lands controlled by the oil companies.

What has been happening is that since there has been discussion in this Parliament, and in the national community, about the regularisation of squatters, and it has come across that they would be regularising squatters on lands belonging to state agencies, there has been an attack on these particular squatting communities. I am going to take time off to read a letter which I wrote to Petrotrin.

8.05 p.m.

Just a part of it states:

“Yesterday, 1997 March 05 Tuesday on or about 1.00pm at Palo Seco Settlement, Palo Seco, I witnessed a horrific yet fortuitous incident, five (5)

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Petrotrin Police Officers three (3) in uniform at least one of whom was armed (pump action shotgun) together with certain employees of Palo Seco Agricultural Enterprise Limited (PSAEL) and a Petrotrin secondee Mr. Arman were assembled around a 15' x 15' shack.

Upon enquiry I was informed by Mr. Arman that they were conducting a demolition exercise. The shack is known to house a mother and six children varying in ages from 2 to 10. I immediately expressed serious and very vocal objections to the proposed action. To their credit the entire demolition crew seemed most uncomfortable with the task which they had been instructed to carry out. It is fair to say that even before my intervention the leaders of the demolition crew appeared to have decided to give the occupant of the shack an opportunity to raise her plight with Mr. Carlton Lewis Executive Director of PSAEL."

I just pointed that out but, quite recently, the Petrotrin police again intervened and they broke down two houses, small, but built of bricks. Broke it down! I am making these points to indicate clearly the kind of approach that one has.

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Mr. Speaker, it is known that geologists or oil companies are land—I do not want to use the word greedy, but geologists are eternal optimists, and therefore, they want as much land as possible. Some effort has to be made to ensure that the companies are brought within line to be able to recognize that these people who are living there, unlike persons in other parts of the country, they do not have the opportunity to access state lands because those state lands are in the possession of the very companies who are also behaving in an avaricious manner with their own land. This point about the occupation of 10 or 20 acres of land does not hinder oilfield activity at all. With the type of advances in respect of whipstock drilling and directional drilling and so forth, one can stay a few thousand feet and get the objective without coming on to the land. It is just a manner in which the companies have been operating for a certain time.

I recall that when I lived in another part of the country my uncles were able to apply to the state in those days and to get piece of state land if they so desired. That is impossible in the La Brea constituency. Impossible! I recall once the state wanted to put a development in Santa Flora and the company objected to them taking the land. The land is still there now and no development on it. There is a piece of land in Vance River which the state wanted to get in order for the National Housing Authority to put a development. The land is still there, the

company objected. The land is there, fortunately squatters have gone on to it. I would expect that they would, in due course—I know if this Bill is passed in the way it should be, after we do a certain amount of manicuring to the drafting, to the legal language in it—be able to acquire a certificate of comfort. I think it is long overdue.

Miss Nicholson: You would be pleased.

Mr. H. Bereaux: Yes, extremely.

I want to take this opportunity—I leave nothing to chance, nor do I expect that I will be reported, but I make no complaint for that—to put on the record of this Parliament the various areas in my constituency where there are squatters and where I expect that either they would be designated areas or at least they could get some protection. I speak of Vance River; Guapo; Quarry behind Nello; Webber Trace in Palo Seco; Alexander Village in Santa Flora—I have them all in my head—Quinam Road in Siparia; and in the constituency of La Brea proper, Point D'or and Square Deal Corner. I am just mentioning it because after this Bill has been brought to Parliament, I fear that as I leave here I will meet demolition crews and have to deal with them outside. I would prefer to have it recorded in this honourable House. As I said, Point D'or, Pier Road, and Sobo near Tank 100, all in La Brea.

So Mr. Speaker, whereas I have said that this Bill does address certain serious problems, and I feel comfortable, in principle, in supporting it, I want to definitely state that there needs to be some legal manicuring of the Bill. As much as I note that Members opposite are taking credit for it and, by all means, I have no problem with their taking credit for it, because it was brought here, but I do take objection to the Member for Point Fortin seeking to put the blame on a PNM administration when he was the person responsible for housing in that administration. I am not particularly blaming him alone for doing it, but when I raised the problem about the state lands—and I could remember very clearly, he was very honest about it—he said this only deals with state lands and you are going to have to help me to straighten out those handled by the companies.

Mr. Speaker, without much ado, I want to state that with some amendments, mainly to put the Bill in a manner which will permit comfortable administration and not cause any legal problems, I could see that we on this side will support this Bill.

Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I think that we could suspend the sitting for 30 minutes at this stage.

8.15 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

8.45 p.m.: *Sitting resumed*

Mr. Martin Joseph (*St. Anns East*): Mr. Speaker, I rise to make a brief intervention on the State Land Regularisation of Tenure Bill and to join with my colleagues on this side to indicate some of the weaknesses in this piece of legislation.

While they have indicated, and I agree with them, that we support the principle behind the whole question of the squatter regularisation, there are certain flaws which suggest that there needs to be some review. There is a suggestion that perhaps some select committee should take a look at it.

I want to focus on four areas very briefly. Clause 3 deals with the appointed day and what that is likely to do in terms of reaction of squatters. It gives a *carte blanche*, open ended opportunity for persons to abuse this piece of legislation in a particular way. I do not think I need to rehash in detail what speakers before me on this side stated as it relates to that particular clause 3 (1)(a).

I also wish to address Part IV which deals with leases and specifically clause 15 (3) which deals with the statutory lease and the 199 years. The hon. Member for San Fernando West had indicated what he considered the contradiction or discrimination where persons are now provided with a lease for 30 years and here they are talking about a lease for 199 years.

I want to put that in a particular context as it relates to the constituency of St. Ann's East. I have been making representations to the hon. Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources with respect to an outstanding matter affecting ex-servicemen from the Maracas/St. Joseph area. As it now stands, those ex-servicemen are provided with a 25-year lease. They have been making representations to previous governments with respect to a commitment that was made to them when they represented this country during World War II. We have no end of problems attempting to put in place a mechanism that will allow them to have a lease for 99 years. These are not people who are squatting. Lands from Cadburys were given to the state to give to these ex-servicemen. This was done after the war and we have been making endless efforts to regularise that situation. I am saying this to underscore the point where people who have been squatting and as a result of regularisation of their circumstances they are likely to get leases for

199 years and we have a situation where other people who are legitimately occupying lands and attempting to get those lands regularised are having difficulties with respect to that. I also have a personal difficulty with clause 15(3) as it relates to the situation with respect to the Ex-servicemen's Association from the Maracas/St. Joseph area.

I also have a concern with respect to Part V which deals with designated areas, especially clauses 17 and 18. With respect to clause 17 (2) the schedule accompanying this Bill identifies designated areas. There are three areas on this schedule which affect the constituents that I represent. The first area is Las Cuevas. I need to get a little clarification from the hon. Minister of Housing and Settlements as to specifically what area of Las Cuevas is affected. The reason I am asking is that I am sure the Member for St. Augustine is well aware that there is an outstanding matter involving residents of Pierre Trace and Rincon as it relates to a matter involving lands that belong to the state and private lands. That matter is still to be regularised.

The Homesteaders Farmers Association of Las Cuevas is now engaged in discussions with the Ministry of Housing and Settlements to deal with that matter because some of the lands belong to the state and some of the lands belong to the Las Cuevas estate. The situation involves some 176 occupiers. I am sure the Minister is aware of it. As a result, what I am hoping is that some information will be provided regarding what aspects of this Las Cuevas area, identified in the schedule, are affected and how that matter is to be resolved in light of the fact that there are ongoing discussions taking place.

I notice also on the schedule that Bourg Mulatresse and the Maracas Valley/St. Joseph are also identified. I want to raise the same question which my colleague from La Brea raised, that is, what about those areas where people are squatting occupying state lands and are not identified? For example, what about Upper Febeau Village in Laventille? What about the Maracas Bay area where there are some 767 persons who are occupying lands in that area but that area is not identified? At least I would like to know precisely what mechanism was used to determine these areas. I join my friend from Tobago West who also indicated that there are areas in Tobago which are not identified but are areas on which people are currently occupying state lands. There is a concern with respect to those areas. I indicated Upper Febeau Village in Laventille and the Maracas Bay area where there are large numbers of persons currently occupying state lands.

The other area is Part VII, the land settlement areas and specifically clause 25. If I can go back to clause 18 and join with my colleague from San Fernando West

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in indicating some concerns with respect to the power of the Minister. I know the Member for Tobago West took my colleague to task and said it was trite when he said that, in the hands of, perhaps, an unscrupulous Minister this clause can be manipulated in a way in which it can interfere with the demographics of the country. I must also place on record my concern with the ability of the unscrupulous Minister to use this clause in a way that cannot be the aims and objectives of what is expected from this clause.

Mr. Speaker, that will not be the case if we were dealing with a Government whose behaviour indicated that there was a certain amount of credibility and trustworthiness. But we are dealing with a Government that says one thing and its actions are something completely different. It is as a result of that that we have to raise some concerns. This is a Government that has come here and said it was going to deal with the airport situation and to date what has happened? This is a government that has come to this Parliament and said it was going to deal with the Soodhoo business and what has happened? And you see almost an unevenness with respect to how this Government deals with issue after issue. It is in that context that we must place on record our concerns.

Those on that side are saying the intentions are good. It is said that the road to hell is paved with good intentions. We cannot leave it up to the individual to determine how this clause will be implemented. Then the Minister is only carrying out policies of the Government. We have concerns with clause 18 and the ability of this Government to implement it without taking unfair advantage as it relates to the demographics of this country. The same comment relates to Part VII, clause 25 which deals with the land settlement areas. The Minister has the right to determine which areas are land settlement areas and he has the right to move people from one area and put them in other areas. We have concerns with respect to the way in which this particular clause can be used.

Mr. Speaker, again, I want to underscore two things. One; the issue with respect to the Maracas Ex-servicemen's Association. My understanding is that the matter is now before the Attorney General's office looking at the question of the 99-year lease. I am saying that it is passing strange that here people who are legitimately occupying lands and who are now attempting to ensure that their lease is extended from 25 years to 99 years based on the contribution they made during World War II are having difficulties with that and here I am seeing proposals for the regularisation of squatters and providing them with a 199-year lease.

I also wish to find out from the Minister, about an outstanding matter of Pierre Trace to Rincon. My understanding is that they want to move the people from a particular area for tourist development and put them in another part. I would like to get some clarification on that and also the Maracas Bay area where there are large numbers of people occupying state lands who are not in the schedule as designated areas.

9.00 p.m.

Mr. Jarrette Narine (*Arouca North*): Mr. Speaker, I assure you that I am only making a short intervention so as to clear up certain aspects of the Bill. I have some concerns for my constituency also, so that I would not go through the Bill as such, but I will try to stick as close as possible to the presentation made by the Minister of Housing and Settlements, and also that part of the Bill which deals with the Schedule.

There was much talk about the history of squatters and even the Minister alluded to Dr. Williams and squatters. He said in his presentation:

“When I was first a Member of Parliament, the late Dr. Eric Williams announced a policy on housing which had many planks of a platform. It was an extremely good policy.”

That was the first time that a government had alluded to regularisation of squatters. It is a fact, even at that time, that the government of the day looked at the aspect of people’s squatting, but tried to make it a legal entity, instead of having it lawless in certain aspects.

Of the areas listed in the Schedule here, I notice that Five Rivers is taking the first spot on the schedule and this is the Milne Holme Estate. Most of it was developed and also tenanted to people in Five Rivers, who were paying to Milne Holme Estate. When it was sold to Government, there were some problems with Five Rivers and they then paid their part to Government.

During the National Alliance for Reconstruction regime, there was a difficulty in that they were offered the land at \$20,000 per lot and during our time in office from 1991—1995, representation was made at the time the Member of Parliament for Point Fortin, as Minister of Housing and Settlements, sat with the Residents’ Association of Five Rivers and I am pleased to note here, that most of the people who occupied lands there for about 40 years and over, got their lots for about \$8,000 and \$9,000 which was a drastic decrease in the amount of money that was first requested.

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There are many areas north of the Eastern Main Road in Five Rivers and past the Range Road where the junior secondary school is in Five Rivers, where there are squatters who were not regularised because they were not paying any land rent to the Milne Holme Estate. I think a survey was also done when we were in government and this survey will show how many persons were there and the occupancy of those lands. I suspect by now that there will be more persons there and that things will work out for the people of Five Rivers.

The Bon Air, North Arouca area, I think is an area which was started recently when Bon Air West was developed during the end of the National Alliance for Reconstruction period and coming into 1991—1995. Bon Air West now carries 900 lots and there were squatters in that area who were relocated to an area called Rice Mill Road off the Eastern Main Road in Arouca and there were a number of lots made available to the people there.

In particular, I would like the Minister to take note of a young lady who came in late at the Bon Air West site and who was told that she could go to the Ministry of Housing and Settlements, buy a form for a dollar, carry it to the justice of the peace in Arima, have an affidavit done and carry it back to the ministry. She is a very poor person, so she tried to pay some money on the parcel of land she occupied at Rice Mill Road. Apparently, she has paid \$400; she showed me the receipt yesterday. Her name is Camille Gibbs.

On February 4 this year, the demolition squad came, while she was at work and broke down her house with no prior notice. I know in the recent past there used to be notices given out to these people who were given a period of time to leave. This young lady, in particular, left for work and when she came back, her house was totally demolished; nobody told her anything when she made inquiries at the ministry. One week after, another set of people came and put down some concrete blocks in the area and blocked that parcel of land and told her that they got permission from the ministry.

So that I am appealing to the Minister, the Member for St. Augustine, whom I know is very kind-hearted to these—

Mr. Humphrey: That's the ministry, or the National Housing Authority.

Mr. J. Narine: National Housing Authority. That parcel of land is not on the map in Rice Mill Road. It was a dump site that she occupied, but in trying to get a home for her family, because she is a single parent, she did it the right way by inquiring, getting that form for which she paid a dollar, carrying it to the office of

the justice of the peace in Arima, had it signed, brought it back to National Housing Authority and even paid \$400 to National Housing Authority. I feel it is very unfair.

She was supposed to bring copies of those receipts to me today. I am certain that she would be at my office on Monday and I would write the Minister officially on this matter. I hope that he would give consideration to this matter. *[Interruption]*

The situation is that I am interested in having this young lady with her children housed somewhere. I told her that I am not the type of person to come with cameras and make a whole hullabaloo. I would have some discussions with the Minister. I thought this was the opportunity to do so. I would be in touch with the Minister eventually.

I remember in 1983 when I became a member of the St. George East County Council, I represented two polling divisions in the St. Augustine constituency at the time which was Carapo and La Horqueta. I have heard many Members on the other side speaking of La Horqueta and Maloney. They did not speak about Bon Air Gardens, but those were the three large developments that took place in that area over a period of time. I think that they do not have the facts right.

As a matter of fact, the first set of keys given out in the Maloney area, was given out in May, 1984. When I fought elections in 1983, there were no votes from Maloney because that area was totally unpopulated. It was a sugar cane estate belonging to Orange Grove. La Horqueta had about 50 votes, there was only one phase. Today, there are eight phases in La Horqueta. Bon Air Gardens had one phase and there are now three phases in Bon Air Gardens. So you would understand that in 1984, 1985 and 1986, all these housing developments were completed, but there was a criterion at the time for the People's National Movement in that if we had done the schools, the post office and other infrastructure, there would have been less housing for the people.

At the time, the PNM had gone about building 10,000 houses in Trinidad and, since then, not a single house has been built; we heard that before. But what happened at that time is that when Maloney was handed over and came on full stream in 1986, the PNM went into Opposition. When Bon Air Gardens came on full stream in 1986, the PNM went into Opposition. At that time, there were sufficient people to divide that area which I represented—from Waterloo Road in Arouca to La Horqueta Trace and the banks of the Caroni River, which was a large area, including Samaroo Village, D'Abadie and these areas—in two. So I had the responsibility, as a councillor in 1987, to take care of Bon Air Gardens.

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Maloney was also part of it and it was difficult at the time because the National Housing Authority still had the authority on these areas and, as a local government representative, I could not get these problems on the programme of works for the local government authority. We had to move motions, get them passed; they went to the President and then were handed over to local government. Today, it is okay. But, at that time in La Horqueta, the first school was already started and then a school was built in the NAR time in the northern section of La Horqueta. There was also a school to be built in Maloney, to accommodate 860 students. They cut it down to 450 and they built some additional schools.

Miss Nicholson: They put schools there.

Mr. J. Narine: We know that. Now the Minister here from Tobago West was also there at the time when they built the hard surface courts and so forth, but in the case of Bon Air Gardens, the Unemployment Relief Programme built three hard surface courts, one of which was donated by the National Gas Company. We had the school built even before 1986, so there were now 1,284 houses and recently 63 houses were built when the Minister was the Member for Point Fortin in our time. I can tell you that Sugar Aloes got one of those houses and he is well pleased with the area in which he lives because Bon Air Gardens is a beautiful area.

I am saying there was a wrong perception of what was taking place in these large housing developments. The priority was for getting people into those houses. So that in my time, as head of the Unemployment Relief Programme, we built two post offices, one in La Horqueta and one in Maloney. Up to today, those post offices remain built, not opened. I am just asking: why? Probably they are similar to the towers in John John.

Also, when we left office on this last occasion, there were two swimming pools to be built.

Mr. Assam: Speak on the Bill nah, man! Speak on the Bill!

Mr. J. Narine: I am speaking on what Members here spoke.

Mr. Assam: But you are irrelevant.

Mr. J. Narine: They stopped that swimming pool in Maloney, but built one in La Horqueta and it probably is just complete. So to come here and talk about these things, is misleading the House.

We also have the Sou Sou lands concept, Mr. Speaker. There were many persons who came back because husbands died and they were looking to have the

money refunded on these Sou Sou lands. Up to now there are persons in my constituency who never got back their money and they are saying that there was no cash flow and all sorts of excuses. I think that the Member for St. Augustine is quite aware of these persons who had paid money, who, for one reason or the other, did not occupy the lands, because some of these lands, going up Coryal and so forth, have no water or electricity.

9.15 p.m.

So they took people from Pasea at one point and carried them to see lands in Coryal, and when they passed through Sr. Marie Emmanuel Road and passed the last standpipe and the last pole for electricity, the people asked for the maxi taxi to turn around, because they were not going to be taken from Pasea where there are schools, markets, water, electricity and all the facilities available, to be taken up in that wilderness.

You would find that squatters like to remain near to towns. Arouca has all the infrastructure. There is a difficulty for them to get pipeborne water into their homes, but because of self-help, we were able to treat with these squatters over the years and carry the lines and erect standpipes in the areas. They could not get the connection to their homes, however, because they were not paying taxes.

Electricity was another difficult problem. *[Interruption]*

Dr. Griffith: What about Samaroo Village?

Mr. J. Narine: You would have your chance to speak. Why are you asking me about Samaroo Village? Nobody wants to see you anywhere in Arima, neither in Samaroo Village.

I am saying that lands must be surveyed. The Minister is saying that boundary plants called Rio were put down, I call them drasenia which is the botanical name. The reason for this is that no matter how you try to remove them, any small part of the root which remains will shoot up again. If the Member is saying that he is for the poor and would put down Rio plants and have people wait 30 years for the land to be surveyed so they could go to the bank with collateral to get a loan, and so forth, I am against that. People need leases to allow them to get loans from the bank. They cannot get a loan with a letter of comfort. A letter of comfort allows them to sleep at ease at night, so that the authorities would not come in the morning and break down their homes.

I am not a legal practitioner; I am not boasting to be anything like that, but I have had some experience with these things. This must be done in the proper

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manner in order to give these people a decent way of living. Previously the Ministry of Housing and Settlements would tell a person who is squatting to build a board house so when the land is surveyed and the house happens to be occupying two lots of land, it would be easy to remove that board house and replace it on one lot so that another person could get occupancy of the other lot.

At this point in time, I am certain when people get letters of comfort, the cost of building a board house as against putting up blocks, you would have concrete houses going up. So that we would end up like Peytonville in Carapo, where people built houses all over the place; there is no place for roadways; they do not know where to drop electricity poles; they do not know where to pass the water lines. I am saying that this has to be regularised in a proper manner.

Mr. Humphrey: Those people will not be regularised.

Mr. J. Narine: You will not deal with them. Are you saying that if a road should pass there, you will not take that person and relocate him to another spot?

Mr. Humphrey: Of course. If you could accomplish it, yes, but, remember, we are aiming for a particular status.

Mr. J. Narine: Mr. Speaker, the more the Minister speaks, the more confused we get here. He is saying that they are not going to be regularised but the Act is saying they are going to transfer them from one area to the other, if this area is for a recreation ground or anything like that. This is how I know it.

As a matter of fact, in Samaroo Village, there were five acres of land for a recreation ground which were occupied by squatters and there was an additional three and a half acres, and the occupants were relocated to that area. I am aware of that area because I always take care of the people in my village and those whom I represent. *[Interruption]* I always had a problem when you took money from us. The Member for St. Joseph was a chairman and—

Mr. Assam: I took money from you?

Mr. J. Narine: When you took money from the elected people, because you were a backdoor politician at that time.

Hon. Member: Still is.

Mr. J. Narine: Nothing has changed; still squatting.

Mr. Speaker, today I may be in that category where I need some place to stay and tomorrow fortunes may change and I can afford to buy an estate and build an

estate house. I do not know that we have any provision for that type of thing. I know for a fact that the Minister is someone who really cares for these people. I was a councillor at one time when a house was broken down in Carapo and the Minister was there with me to rebuild it. The problem with that was, a high house could not be built on the pathway where aircraft were lifting off. The gentleman built a flat house and he was allowed to stay. But it is different in other areas. I know of persons who occupy squatting areas and during the years they become affluent; they have estates; motor cars on the road, but they still occupy the squatting area. I would like the Minister to look into this. There are also situations where there are certain persons who have land but do not give it to their children. They wait until they die. If those children begin to squat, what should happen?

In 1986, when legislation came to Parliament, the Attorney General was Russell Martineau, a well respected person; there was also a form given to these people along with the document, where they would identify the location of their parcel of land. For example, it would state: "I live in Peytonville and I live on Kelly Street." They name their own streets, like Easy Street. We are very innovative people. I think some sort of measure by the ministry should be put in place to properly record the whereabouts of these squatters.

I know that it is late and most of the Members here have worked all week. I am going to be very short. *[Interruption]* If you want me to go for the next 60 minutes, I would do so, because I can certainly go through my notes here and continue. But in the interest of everyone here, I feel that we have had sufficient debate on this matter on either side. I must congratulate the Members on this side for going through the Bill and ensuring that this Government does not come here with legislation that would not fit the squatters regularisation at this point in time. I am saying that some of it is lawless. There are certain people who are squatting on two acres of land and they sell to others. There is a situation in D'Abadie where a parcel of land which was given out years ago for agriculture, between John's Lane and Boy's Lane, the Eastern Main Road and the bus route, and because of the development which took place along the Eastern Main Road, the owners were able to sublet to other persons.

9.25 p.m.

So they are occupying Government lands and they are renting those lands to other persons who have built proper houses on them. There are many areas that I can identify from my experience that would probably tell the Minister—because he too, has much experience in this business—that there are areas one has to really

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get into and do a proper assessment of them. As we have said, we are willing to support this Bill but the Attorney General must take it and look at it or put it to a select committee.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

The Attorney General (Hon. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj): Mr. Speaker, I propose to start my contribution this evening and, obviously, there have been comments made on the legal aspect of this Bill and, therefore, we will give consideration to it.

It is my duty to say that it is unfair for the Opposition to say that this Bill will fail because of its deficiencies and that it is not a good one and cannot be implemented.

When one looks at the history of this matter, one would see that since December 2, 1977 the then Minister of Finance Dr. Eric Williams, stated that one had to regularise squatters on state lands. What happened thereafter was it took until 1986 for a law to be introduced by the PNM to try to regularise squatters, just before the election. Despite the best efforts of the NAR administration to implement that Bill, it was not done. Then, the PNM got back into office and they took steps to try to implement it and could not. Here it is from 1977 that they tried to do it and could not.

We have come with this Bill with certain novel concepts recognizing that if one goes to survey every piece of land to have everything in place before one attempts to regularise it, it would fail. That process has failed. So what we are trying to do is to give security to persons who have acquired equitable rights on land, squatters who have occupied lands, who have had homes on the land. It is an effect of the law that they are protected from eviction, and can be given a Certificate of Comfort so that they would have that security. They can use that Certificate of Comfort to know that they do not have to worry, that they would live in peace and there would be attempts to regularise and resettle them and have the country planned in such a way that certain areas would be for them.

Mr. Speaker, it is totally unfair to have made all these comments about this Bill to give the impression that it cannot work. As a matter of fact, one only sends a Bill to a committee of the Parliament if there are problems with the policy of the Bill, but if there are problems with drafting, that is not the place for a select committee. Select committees of the Parliament deal with the question of thrashing out policy. The Government would have agreed on a policy and the Opposition

would have wanted to influence a change of the policy. A select committee of Parliament is for that purpose.

Mr. Manning: I thank the hon. Member for giving way. The point the Member is making is quite fundamental and that is, that a select committee of the House is put together for the purpose of dealing with policy. It is our understanding on this side that is precisely what a select committee is debarred from doing. Within recent times, in fact, it started with the NAR, we noticed the NAR put select committees together and allowed those committees to deal with policies but in the tradition of this Parliament, policy does not properly fall within the competence of a select committee.

Hon. R. L. Maharaj: I find it very difficult to accept that a person such as the Hon. Member for San Fernando East, who has had so much experience as a parliamentarian, and who has also occupied the office of Prime Minister of this country, misunderstands completely the function and role of Joint Select Committees of the Parliament.

If one merely had to consider the Equal Opportunity Working Paper which forms the basis of select committee consideration, one would see that it had to consider policy. As a matter of fact, the hon. Member for Arouca North said the other side had no problem with the Bill. They agreed with the policy of the Bill. The only problem we had on the other side was concepts in respect of what should be drafted, how it should be put and the drafting of it. Despite the fact that is the position and despite the fact that this Bill has been on the table for a long time, there has been no notice of any amendment and that is the seriousness with which the Opposition took this measure. Despite that fact, however, I make it quite clear that this Government is prepared to consider seriously the views expressed by the Opposition.

We would come back in about two weeks' time and we would be able to continue to present our views in respect of some of these measures. By that time the Opposition might be able to submit even at this stage whatever amendments they would like to propose.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot complete my contribution for tonight without in some way explaining that if it is thought that squatters do not have any rights, that is not correct. It is unlawful to squat and the mover of this Bill, the hon. Member for St. Augustine and Minister of Housing and Settlements made it quite clear that this

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Bill was not a licence for squatting. He said, it was recognized that squatters acquire rights. As a matter of fact, he quoted a case.

I think it is important to put on the record that the law of this country, as decided by the courts, is that if a person occupies state lands, and the state has closed its eyes to that person occupying the land and the person has improved the land, and the state has acquiesced that there are certain rights which are created in favour of that person, the courts have decided that it cannot go and demolish people's homes without certain processes.

So, we have to face the fact, as the distinguished hon. Member for Tobago East has stated, that we must be a government of laws, not a government of men, of views and emotion. We have to administer on the basis of law. If that is the law as it is now, and here it is that a Certificate of Comfort is being introduced as a novel mechanism, and if one looks for a Certificate of Comfort anywhere in any legislation, one would not find it. That does not mean to say it is not good. It represents a concept which reflects the existing equitable principles of the law and the Minister of Housing and Settlements should be congratulated for devising such a concept in order to assist in the implementation of such a difficult measure.

We are debating a very important issue and I find it very difficult at times to see the contempt with which it can be perceived that some of our leaders in our society regard squatters. Men and women cannot live in the sky, they have to live on land. I have seen, as a Member of Parliament, people who are living in houses in the day and in the night they are no longer living in houses—wife, children, affecting school, no security and here it is we are considering a measure which would give shelter to people and there is so much attack on individuals who have fought in order to protect the lives of individuals in our society.

9.35 p.m.

Some of us do not appreciate that a person who is a squatter and has a house, but cannot get electricity, would not have a refrigerator. The children have to study without electricity. Therefore, I would leave tonight with this message. I hope that it would try to influence us in coming back, so that we can get consensus on an important measure like this.

This Bill is to protect the people of Trinidad and Tobago and give them shelter, so that they would not do other things which can cause problems in the society. I want to make it quite clear, that I am not ending my contribution. I would continue on another day.

Thank you.

Adjournment

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ADJOURNMENT

The Attorney General (Hon. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj): Mr. Speaker, may I move the adjournment of the House to Friday March 20, 1998 at 1. 30 p.m.

May I indicate that on that date we would deal with the Public Sector (Arrears of Emoluments) (Amdt.) Bill which has to be passed before the end of March. We shall also debate the Waterworks and Water Conservation (Amdt.) Bill.

Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, before I put the question on the Adjournment of the House, I wish to advise that I had approved four matters to be raised on the Motion for the Adjournment of the House. I understand that there is agreement between both sides of the House that these four motions would be taken next week..

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 9.40 p.m.