

*Leave of Absence**Friday, April 23, 1999***HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES***Friday, April 23, 1999*

The House met at 1.37 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. They are the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West who has asked to be excused up to May 7, 1999 and the Member for Caroni Central. They are excused.

VENTURE CAPITAL (AMDT.) BILL

Bill to amend the Venture Capital Act, 1994 [*The Minister of Finance*]; read the first time.

NATIONAL INSURANCE (AMDT.) BILL

Bill to amend the National Insurance Act, Chap. 32:01 [*The Minister of Finance*]; read the first time.

OLD AGE PENSIONS (AMDT.) BILL

Bill to amend the Old Age Pensions Act, Chap. 32:02 [*The Minister of Social and Community Development and Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs*]; read the first time.

PUBLIC ASSISTANCE (AMDT.) BILL

Bill to amend the Public Assistance Act, Chap. 32:03 [*The Minister of Social and Community Development and Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs*]; read the first time.

PAPERS LAID

1. Report to Parliament by the Integrity Commission on its activities for the year 1998. [*The Attorney General (Hon. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj)*]
2. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the San Fernando City Corporation for the year ended December 31, 1990. [*Hon. R. L. Maharaj*]
3. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the San Fernando City Corporation for the year ended December 31, 1991. [*Hon. R. L. Maharaj*]

Papers Laid

Friday, April 23, 1999

4. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Trinidad and Tobago Racing Authority for the year ended July 31, 1994. [*Hon. R. L. Maharaj*]
5. Annual Audited Financial Statements of Trinidad and Tobago Export Trading Company Limited for the year ended March 31, 1997. [*Hon. R. L. Maharaj*]
6. The Defence (Rates of Pay and Allowances) (Amdt.) Regulations, 1999. [*Hon. R. L. Maharaj*]
7. National Insurance (Benefits) (Amdt.) Regulations, 1999. [*Hon. R. L. Maharaj*]
8. National Insurance (Contribution) (Amdt.) Regulations, 1999. [*Hon. R. L. Maharaj*]

Papers 2, 3 and 4 to be referred to the Public Accounts Committee.

Paper 5 to be referred to the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee.

9. The 1997 Annual Report of the Environmental Management Authority. [*Hon. R. L. Maharaj*]
10. The Fifty-First Report of the Salaries Review Commission of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Hon. R. L. Maharaj*]
11. The Fifty-Fourth Report of the Salaries Review Commission of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Hon. R. L. Maharaj*]
12. The Fifty-Fifth Report of the Salaries Review Commission of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Hon. R. L. Maharaj*]

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Agreement between GTECH Corporation and National Lotteries Control Board (Expiration of)

39. Mr. Kenneth Valley (*Diego Martin Central*) asked the Minister of Finance:

Would the Minister state:

- (a) the date on which the agreement between the GTECH Corporation and the National Lotteries Control Board expires?
- (b) the gross annual sum received by GTECH either through fees, commission, management or other charges for each year from the commencement of the contract?

- (c) how many nationals and how many expatriates are employed by GTECH?
- (d) whether the National Lotteries Board intends to renew the contract with GTECH and if so, why?

The Minister of Finance (Sen. The Hon. Brian Kuei Tung): Mr. Speaker, the initial agreement between GTECH Trinidad and Tobago and the National Lotteries Control Board of Trinidad and Tobago which was entered into on July 4, 1994 expires on July 3, 1999. This agreement provides for a renewal period of up to five years.

The gross annual sums paid to the National Lotteries Control Board of Trinidad and Tobago to GTECH Trinidad and Tobago are paid as a percentage of sales. The payment, for each of the years following the commencement of the contract are as follows:

July 1994—June 1995	\$80 million
July 1995—June 1996	\$85 million
July 1996—June 1997	\$84 million
July 1997—June 1998	\$84 million

GTECH Trinidad and Tobago employs 52 persons. All employees of the organization are nationals of Trinidad and Tobago: there are no expatriates employed with GTECH Trinidad and Tobago.

The National Lotteries Control Board has submitted a proposal to Government for the renewal of the contract between the National Lotteries Control Board and GTECH Trinidad and Tobago. The National Lotteries Control Board has indicated its satisfaction with GTECH Trinidad and Tobago whom it considers to be the leading provider of on-line services lottery systems worldwide. This proposal is being considered.

Mr. Valley: Mr. Speaker, the Minister mentioned that there are 52 employees at GTECH Trinidad and Tobago who are all local. However, given the funds which are being paid to GTECH Trinidad and Tobago, I wonder whether the Minister would explain to the House the rationale for renewing the contract.

Hon. B. Kuei Tung: Mr. Speaker, I thought that rationale was already existing in July 1994 when the Member was a Member of Cabinet. His Cabinet

Oral Answers to Questions
[SEN. THE HON. B. KUEI TUNG]

Friday, April 23, 1999

gave a contract to GTECH Trinidad and Tobago for five years with a renewal option for five years. So I do not understand how I could consider something which was already paid for.

Mr. Valley: Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: Is that another supplemental?

Mr. Valley: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: May I hear it please?

Mr. Valley: Sure, Mr. Speaker. There is an option to renew. However, given the fact that we have all local persons employed at GTECH Trinidad and Tobago, which in effect, has been doing nothing for \$84 million and so forth—

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, please understand that I would permit a supplemental question if it is simple and straightforward. It cannot be in the form of a statement. I would approve it provided it is straightforward.

Mr. Valley: Mr. Speaker, what is the Government's rationale, given the experience over the last five years, for renewing the contract?

Hon. B. Kuei Tung: Mr. Speaker, I am glad the Member admitted that they gave a contract to GTECH to do nothing, but I cannot understand how he could admit that—how the former Minister, who was a member of Cabinet could admit that they gave a company, which they knew was going to do nothing for five years, an average of over \$80 million per year and then asking me what option is given to me. The option which was given to me was the contract which was provided by Cabinet to these people for five years with an option to renew for a further five years. I am wondering what option is available to me. I am merely saying that the proposal which we have now resubmitted is under active consideration.

**Construction of Administrative Complex, Arima
(Abandonment of Plans)**

40. Mrs. Camille Robinson-Regis (*Arouca South*) asked the Minister of Works and Transport:

- (a) Would the Minister indicate whether the Government has abandoned plans to construct the Administrative Complex in Arima?
- (b) If the answer is in the affirmative, would the Minister state:

- (i) the reasons for the decision;
- (ii) what are the alternative plans as regards the court house for the Arima district?

The Hon. Minister of Information, Communications, Training and Distance Learning (Dr. The Hon. Rupert Griffith): Mr. Speaker, the answer to question No 40 (a) is no. The Government has not abandoned plans to construct the Administrative Complex in Arima. Cabinet Minute No. 2401 dated December 30, 1998 agreed, among other things, to the construction of administrative complexes in Arima and various parts of Trinidad.

Plans for the construction of the Arima Administrative Complex have been on the drawing board for many years. There have been feasibility reports, recommendations, and proposals by previous Governments, including the last one, yet nothing solid has been raised. It seems that it was all fruitless planning.

The Government of the day wishes to advise that work on the realization of the Arima Administrative Complex is in progress. The Minister of Public Administration is in the process of acquiring private lands at the corner of Broadway and Woodford Streets, Arima to provide the space for this office block. Cabinet has agreed, among other things, to the purchase of private parcels of land required to consolidate the Government's office block in Arima.

Thank you.

Mrs. C. Robinson-Regis: A supplemental Mr. Speaker. Would the Minister indicate if there is a date for the commencement of construction?

Dr. The Hon. R. Griffith: I cannot give a specific date, but as I said in my response, work is ahead with respect to the start of that construction.

Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation (URP Allocations)

41. Mrs. Camille Robinson-Regis (Arouca South) asked the Minister of Local Government:

Would the Minister indicate the allocations under the Unemployment Relief Programme (URP) to the Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation:

- (i) for the year 1998, and the actual expenditure for the same period; and
- (ii) for the 1998/1999 period?

The Minister of Local Government (Hon. Dhanraj Singh): Mr. Speaker, for the year 1998, \$12.1 million was allocated to the Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation for its Unemployment Relief Programme. However, it is to be noted that the financial year was changed as of September 30, 1998. The actual expenditure, therefore, for the period January to September 30, 1998 was \$9,136,025.00.

For the 1998/1999 financial year, the allocation for the Unemployment Relief Programme was \$90 million. This represented a 30 per cent reduction when compared to the 1998 Unemployment Relief Programme.

Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding the reduction in the overall Unemployment Relief Programme allocation for 1998 and 1999, all the PNM controlled corporations, with the exception of the Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation received approximately the same, or an increased percentage of the total allocation when compared to the 1998 programme. In fact, percentage-wise, Point Fortin had its allocation increased from 2.5 to 3.52 per cent. San Juan/Laventille had its allocation in terms of percentage increased and maintained around 17.5 per cent.

The Arima Borough Corporation's allocation increased from 2.5 to 3.52 per cent.

1.50 p.m.

However, in the case of the Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation, because of gross mismanagement of its 1998 allocation, its allocation for the new financial year 1998/1999 was reduced.

Hon. Member: *Gadahar.* [Laughter]

Hon. D. Singh: Accordingly, the Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation's allocation for the financial year 1998/1999 was \$7.35 million which amounted to almost 11.48 per cent of the total allocation to municipal corporations for the Unemployment Relief Programme for the year 1998/1999. This was a significant drop from the 15 per cent allocation or \$12.1 million in 1998.

While most of the PNM corporations, with the exception of Tunapuna/Piarco, were able to have the same allocations, mostly percentage-wise, most of the UNC corporations had deductions both in dollar terms and in percentages. Most of the UNC corporations had reduced allocations, both in dollar terms and percentages.

Finally, the expenditure as at March 31, 1999 for the Tunapuna/ Piarco Regional Corporation Unemployment Relief Programme was \$4,043,063.

Thank you.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Supplemental, Mr. Speaker. I am asking the Minister whether the amount quoted included money for the paving of roads in that corporation, particularly the roads in Malabar, Maloney and La Horquetta?

Mr. D. Singh: Mr. Speaker, the moneys allocated to the Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation for the Unemployment Relief Programme were not utilized to pave any roads. However, I wish to state that some of the moneys allocated for the Unemployment Relief Programme—and the Auditor General will be coming in soon—was used to repair the corporation's building, purchase air-condition units, which they have not paid for—the Ministry has just received the bills—and to fix up the Chairman's office. He has a very expensive office, so he used the Unemployment Relief Programme funds, which were supposed to create relief for the unemployed, to fix up his office and buy an expensive desk and conference chairs.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Second supplemental, Mr. Speaker. Would the Minister of Local Government indicate whether the figure he has quoted includes the money paid to Unemployment Relief Programme workers to canvass for the United National Congress?

Mr. Speaker: First of all, you have to establish that what you are saying is so and there is no question that hinges on that, so I am afraid I would not permit that. The question you asked had nothing to do with that and if you are making a statement with respect to certain other things, you have to lay the foundation for that which you have not done. [*Dr. Rowley attempts to rise*] No, please. I am dealing with her.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Does that mean that once I can establish that, I can pose that question officially to the Minister?

Mr. Speaker: Yes.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Dr. Rowley: Just a point of clarification on the supplemental. Did I hear the Minister correctly saying that the allocation to Arima was 3.52 per cent of the overall allocation and, if so, what was the average allocation, given that we have 14 corporations? Is that an error in his statement or is that actual fact, 3.52 per cent for Arima? Because it does sound—

Hon. D. Singh: Mr. Speaker, I will answer the question if the Member for Diego Martin West will allow me some time to look through the data.

Dr. Rowley: No.

Hon. Member: You just read it.

Hon. D. Singh: Mr. Speaker, the Arima Corporation and the Point Fortin Corporation definitely had increases in their allocations, both in percentage and dollar terms for the year 1998/1999.

Dr. Rowley: The Minister said 3.52 per cent was allocated to Arima and I just wanted to be sure that I could take him at his word. Can I ask him what is the average percentage for a corporation? Does 3.5 per cent sound accurate?

Hon. D. Singh: Mr. Speaker, as quoted here, the Arima Borough Corporation had its allocation increased from 2.5 per cent to 3.52 per cent. Of the sums allocated, in one year the base was \$130 million and in the other year, it was \$90 million.

**San Juan/Laventille Regional Corporation
(URP Allocations and Expenditure)**

42. Mr. Fitzgerald Hinds (*Laventille East/Morvant*) asked the Minister of Local Government:

Would the Minister indicate the allocations under the Unemployment Relief Programme to the San Juan/Laventille Regional Corporation:

- (i) for the year 1998, and the actual expenditure for the same period; and
- (ii) for the 1998/1999 period?

The Minister of Local Government (Hon. Dhanraj Singh): Mr. Speaker, let me first clear up something here. The data were compiled by public servants. These public servants are reliable and trustworthy and I am sure that you—
[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Order please! I appeal to the Member for Diego Martin West not to remain in his chair and shout across at people. Now, I will try to maintain order. That does not help.

Hon. D. Singh: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In response to the question, for the year 1998, \$14.1 million was allocated to the San Juan/Laventille Regional Corporation for its Unemployment Relief Programme. However, it is to be noted that the financial year was changed as at

September 30, 1998. The actual expenditure for the period January to September 30, 1998 was \$10,655,305.

For the 1998/1999 financial year, the allocation for the entire Unemployment Relief Programme was \$90 million. This represents a 30 per cent reduction when compared to the 1998 Unemployment Relief Programme. Notwithstanding the reduction in the overall URP allocation for 1998/1999, all the PNM-controlled corporations with the exception of the Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation, received approximately the same or an increased percentage of the total allocation when compared to the 1998 programme.

In fact, percentage-wise, Point Fortin Borough Corporation—and I repeat the same thing from the question that went before—had its percentage of the total allocation moved from 2.5 per cent to 3.52 per cent and Arima 2.5 per cent to 3.52 per cent—you cannot check; [*Laughter*] I told you the public servants prepared this—an increased allocation, while the Port of Spain City Corporation received approximately the same.

In the case of the San Juan/Laventille Regional Corporation, its allocation for 1998/1999 was \$11.25 million. [*Interruption*] Yes, \$14 million out of \$130 million, and \$11.25 million out \$90 million. The percentage is greater.

In the case of the San Juan/Laventille Regional Corporation, its allocation for 1998/1999 was \$11.25 million which amounted to almost 17.58 per cent of the total allocation to municipal corporations for 1998/1999. This compares favourably with the 17.5 per cent allocation, \$14.1 million in 1998.

Finally, the expenditure as at March 31, 1999 for San Juan/Laventille Regional Corporation was \$5,125,314.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Port of Spain City Corporation
(URP Allocations and Expenditure)**

43. Mr. Eric Williams (*Port of Spain South*) asked the Minister of Local Government:

Would the Minister indicate the allocations under the Unemployment Relief Programme to the Port of Spain City Corporation:

- (i) for the year 1998, and the actual expenditure for the same period; and
- (ii) for the 1998/1999 period?

The Minister of Local Government (Hon. Dhanraj Singh): Mr. Speaker, for the year 1998, \$4 million was allocated to the Port of Spain City Corporation for its Unemployment Relief Programme. I hope they have taken out their calculators by now. It is \$4 million out of \$130 million. [*Member whistles*] However, it is to be noted—

Mr. Speaker: No, one second please. It is not the first occasion on which I have heard a whistle coming from the Opposition Benches. It happened on the last occasion and I could not identify the person and on the occasion before the last. I ask whoever is doing it to desist. This is not the place to do that.

Hon. D. Singh: However, it is to be noted that the financial year was changed as at September 30, 1998. The actual expenditure for the period January to September 30, 1998 was \$3,714,760.

For the 1998/1999 financial year, the allocation for the Unemployment Relief Programme was \$90 million. This represents a 30 per cent reduction when compared to the 1998 Unemployment Relief Programme. Notwithstanding the reduction in the overall URP allocation for 1998/1999, the Port of Spain Corporation received approximately the same or an increased percentage of the total allocation when compared to the 1998 programme.

You see, I am speaking in percentages; you all are talking in dollars. Get that clear.

In fact, percentage-wise, Point Fortin Borough Corporation—and I repeat the same figures, again—had an increase from 2.5 per cent to 3.52 per cent; San Juan/Laventille, its percentage last year was 17.5 per cent of the total, this year it is 17.58 per cent of the total; and Arima Borough Corporation, 2.5 per cent increasing to 3.52 per cent. In the case of Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation, because of gross mismanagement in the allocation of its 1998 programme, its allocation was reduced from 15 per cent of the total of 1998 to 11 per cent of the total for 1998/1999.

In the case of the Port of Spain City Corporation, its allocation for 1998/1999 was \$3.15 million which amounted to almost 5 per cent of the total allocation to municipal corporations URP for that year. This compares favourably with the 5 per cent allocation in 1998.

I must add that most of the UNC corporations had decreases, both in percentages and actual dollar terms. Take for example, the Chaguanas

Corporation, its allocation in 1998 was 5 per cent of the total; this year it is 4.92 per cent. Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo, 11.3 per cent; this year it is 11.25 per cent. Siparia, 6.3 per cent last year; this year, it is 6.25 per cent. Penal/Debe, 6.5 per cent; this year it is down to 4.9 per cent. Princes Town, 7.5 per cent; this year, it is down to 7 per cent.

So, Mr. Speaker, there were actual decreases in the UNC corporations, while there were increases in the PNM-controlled corporations.

Finally, the expenditure as at March 31, 1999, for the Port of Spain Corporation, was \$1,380,102.

Mr. Williams: Supplemental, Mr. Speaker. I want him to clarify something for me, please. I believe I heard him say with response to part (i) of the question that the \$4 million allocation was 3 per cent of the budget but then I believe in the latter part, when he was comparing the percentages, he said that the 1998 percentage was actually 4 per cent and there was an increase to 5 per cent this year. Which is it for 1998, is it 3 per cent or 4 per cent?

2.05 p.m.

Hon. D. Singh: Mr. Speaker, I must say that under this Government we can stand up in this in the Parliament here and give—

[Words Expunged]

Hon. D. Singh: I could deal with him.

Dr. Mohammed: Easy Dhanraj, you are loosing your cool.

Mr. Speaker: The outburst that we have just heard from the Opposition Benches is not on and will not be tolerated. I direct that it be expunged from the record, and I advise that if anybody should try that again for the day, the possibility of that person being excused from the House for the day would be very real. Please continue.

Hon. D. Singh: Mr. Speaker, I was making the point that, for the first time in this Parliament one can get reliable information on the operation of the URP. *[Desk thumping]* Where before, nobody could know where moneys were being spent and how the moneys were being allocated and to which region, here it is that we can come to this Parliament and tell you how much money was allocated to all the regions.

Mr. Williams: Mr. Speaker, I do not believe that I have got an answer.

Mr. Speaker: That is the answer he has given to you.

Mr. Williams: Further supplemental, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Could I hear it please.

Mr. Williams: I believe I heard the Minister in his attempt to answer—

Mr. Speaker: Just give me the question.

Mr. Williams: Does the Minister believe that an allocation of \$3.15 million to the largest urban centre of the nation—is an adequate amount to assist with the unemployment, particularly in the inner city areas?

Hon. D. Singh: Mr. Speaker, in 1998, while we had \$130 million allocated for the programme, we had considerable debts to pay off. The sum of \$25 million so far, in debts, has been paid off. So when you are working out your percentages, take off that \$25 million in the first instance.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, when the moneys were allocated to the various corporations, it was done based on employment statistics compiled by the Central Statistical Office (CSO). It is based on the unemployment ratio which was compiled by the CSO and supplied to the Ministry. Based on those ratios, we allocated the moneys. Whilst Port of Spain is a big urban centre, nobody is living in the heart of Port of Spain.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Members, I wish to draw to the notice of the House that under Standing Order 19(6), question time will end at 2.15. I simply advise that we have but five more questions on the Order Paper for the day.

Mr. Valley: Under Standing Order 19(7)—the second part of 19(7), states that for questions which are down and as long as the Member signifies before 2.15 to the Clerk, those questions can be deferred to the next sitting. I have consulted with my Members and they are asking that those questions—which I have informed the Clerk—be deferred to the next sitting of the House.

Mr. Speaker: No, we have not come to that yet. I was just indicating that—

Mr. Valley: No, Mr. Speaker, what I am saying is that under Order 19(7) it states that anytime before 2.15 a Member whose question has not been answered can indicate to the Clerk that the question be deferred. I am merely informing you that I have informed the Clerk and that I have consulted with my Members.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, fine.

Dr. Rowley: Supplemental question. In view of the fact that, at an earlier time the Government indicated that there was no over-expenditure on the URP for 1997, could the Minister now explain what he just said that there was \$25 million from 1998 which was used to pay bills for 1997, since there was no over-expenditure in 1997?

Mr. Speaker: That does not arise from this question. The supplemental has to arise on this issue, and something that the Government may have said otherwise does not arise on this. Next question please.

Mr. Valley: Mr. Speaker, we would like to have all the others deferred.

Mr. Speaker: You want all the others deferred? Very well. *[Interruption]* Yes, the strict interpretation would be at 2.15 p.m., it could be. Question No. 44 please. I rule that we will go until 2.15 p.m. any after that will be deferred until the next sitting.

Arima Corporation (URP Allocations and Expenditure)

44. Mr. Jarrette Narine (*Arouca North*) asked the Minister of Local Government:

Would the Minister indicate the allocations under the Unemployment Relief Programme (URP) to the Arima Corporation:

- (i) for the year 1998, and the actual expenditure for the same period; and
- (ii) for the 1998/1999 period?

The Minister of Local Government (Hon. Dhanraj Singh): Mr. Speaker, for the year 1998 \$2.0 million was allocated to the Arima Borough Corporation for its Unemployment Relief Programme. However, it is to be noted that the financial year was changed as at September 30, 1998. The expenditure for the period January—September, 1998 was \$1,714,676.00.

For the 1998/1999 financial year the allocation for the Unemployment Relief Programme was \$90 million. This represents a 30 per cent reduction when compared to the 1998 Unemployment Relief Programme. Notwithstanding the reduction in the overall URP allocation for 1998/1999, the Arima Borough Corporation as well as all the PNM controlled corporations received approximately

Oral Answers to Questions
[HON. D. SINGH]

Friday, April 23, 1999

the same or an increased percentage of the total allocation when compared to the 1998 programme. In fact, percentage-wise, Point Fortin, San Juan/Laventille and Port of Spain all had increases in their allocations.

It is to be noted in the case of the Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation because of gross mismanagement in the allocation of the 1998 programme, its allocation was reduced for the 1998/1999 programme.

In the case of the Arima Borough Corporation its allocation for 1998/1999 was \$2.25 million which amounted to almost 3.52 per cent of the total allocation to Municipal Corporations (Unemployment Relief Programme) for 1998/1999. This is in comparison with its 2.5 per cent allocation of \$2 million in 1998.

Clearly, notwithstanding the decrease in the total allocation to the programme, the PNM Arima Borough Corporation received an increase in its allocation, and in dollar terms the increase is \$250,000—in case you cannot check.

Finally, the expenditure as at March 31, 1999 for the Arima Borough Corporation was \$800,319.00.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

2.15 p.m.

**NIPDEC AIRPORT CONTRACT
(BOARD MEMBER ASSIGNMENT)
(ALLEGATIONS OF MISLEADING THE HOUSE)**

The Minister of Finance (Sen. The Hon. Brian Kuei Tung): Mr. Speaker, I have been authorized by Cabinet to make the following statement. It will be recalled, Mr. Speaker, and it has been recorded, that on March 12, 1999 the hon. Member for Diego Martin Central stated that he was speaking on behalf of the Member for St. Ann's East who was absent, asking the question listed as question No. 26 which I now quote:

- “(a) Will the Minister advise the House whether the Board of the National Insurance Property Development Company Limited, (NIPDEC) has assigned one of its members direct responsibility for overseeing the Northern Construction Limited, Yorke Structures Limited and Coosal's Construction Company Limited (NYC) contract between NIPDEC and NYC at the Airport?
- (b) If the answer to the above is in the affirmative, will the Minister:
 - (i) name the board member, and state the level of remuneration being paid by NIPDEC to the member; and

- (ii) inform the House whether this individual is otherwise employed, the nature of this other employment and the level of remuneration he or she receives related to the other employment?"

Mr. Speaker, you would recall that at a sitting of this honourable House on March, 12, 1999 my response to question No. 26 was as follows:

- “(a) No member of the Board of Directors of the National Insurance Property Development Company Limited, NIPDEC, has been assigned direct responsibility for overseeing the Northern Construction Limited, Yorke Structures Limited and Coosal’s Construction Company Limited contract between NIPDEC and NYC at the airport.
- (b) The NIPDEC board, however, did appoint one of its members, Mr. T. Romano, in April of 1998 to represent the board at such meetings as may be held with external parties pertaining to the Airport Development Project. Mr. Romano is also Executive Director of the National Insurance Board, which is the sole shareholder of NIPDEC, and receives no remuneration from the board of NIPDEC in respect of this special responsibility.”

That response accurately transmitted the information supplied to me by NIPDEC to whom the Ministry of Finance had sent question No. 26 with a request for the information sought in the question.

Mr. Speaker, hon. Members will recall the imputation of misleading this honourable House following my response. The Member for Diego Martin West, by supplementary question, asked whether any additional compensation was paid for the assignment, to which I replied in the negative. Having given this information, I provided this honourable House with further information. I did this in the interest of full disclosure and in accordance with the principle of full transparency [*Desk thumping*] which is so vigorously pursued by this Government and which the Government [*Desk thumping*] [*Inaudible*] (Amdt.) through Act. No. 3, 1999 is seeking to deepen and strengthen in all aspects of governance and in the procedures of Parliament.

I informed the House that Mr. Trevor Romano, the Executive Director of NIPDEC, had been appointed to represent the board of NIPDEC at meetings with external parties on matters pertaining to the Airport Development Project, but that Mr. Trevor Romano received no remuneration for the assignment. I was not, Mr.

NIPDEC Airport Contract
[SEN. THE HON. B. KUEI TUNG]

Friday, April 23, 1999

Speaker, as privileged at that time to have in my possession the confidential NIPDEC documents which the Member for Diego Martin West has in his possession. I did not have any of the minutes of the board of NIPDEC nor any of the internal documents—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Order please.

Sen. The Hon. B. Kuei Tung: I did not have any of the minutes of the board of NIPDEC nor any of the internal documents of NIPDEC that the Member for Diego Martin West has in his possession. Mr. Speaker, as a result of statements made by the Member for Diego Martin West in my absence from the House on Friday, April 9, 1999 I requested that NIPDEC check and verify the accuracy of the response to question No. 26 which had been provided to the Ministry of Finance. After reviewing NIPDEC's minutes of meetings of the board of directors and other documents pertinent to the matter, the company's executive has reaffirmed that the information supplied to me and which I gave to this honourable House is accurate.

At this point, Mr. Speaker, I would like to lay for the information of this honourable House two documents: (a), a request from the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Finance dated February 11, 1999 to the Acting General Manager, NIPDEC and, (b), the response from NIPDEC dated February 19, 1999. In order to elaborate, the facts are as follows. In April 1998 the board of NIPDEC resolved that Trevor Romano, a director of NIPDEC, should represent the board at such meetings as might be held with external parties relating to the airport development project. For undertaking this assignment, that is, to attend meetings with external parties, Trevor Romano has never been paid any remuneration.

In September of 1998, with respect to a different matter unrelated to the airport, the board of NIPDEC decided that Noel Garcia, the General Manager, should proceed on leave and that Margaret Thompson be appointed to act as General Manager and Trevor Romano to act as liaison between the General Manager and the board. The board further decided that for undertaking these additional responsibilities Margaret Thompson and Trevor Romano should both be remunerated. The facts above stated are reflected in the minutes of the board of NIPDEC. There is, therefore, absolutely no connection between the attendance by Trevor Romano at meetings with external parties relating to the airport project and the payment of any remuneration to Trevor Romano and Margaret Thompson for the additional responsibilities delegated to them by the board pursuant to the departure of Noel Garcia on leave.

Mr. Speaker, it is to be noted that the Member for Diego Martin West, on his own admission, is in unauthorized possession of copies of the relevant minutes and documents of NIPDEC and this raises very serious questions. The Member for Diego Martin West has sought to deliberately mislead this honourable House. To carry out his desire to malign me, he has sought to link the assignment of Mr. Trevor Romano to attend meetings with external parties relating to the airport development project, for which Mr. Romano receives absolutely no remuneration, with the remuneration given to Ms. Margaret Thompson and Mr. Trevor Romano for the additional responsibilities required of them in the absence of NIPDEC's general manager. To support his deception, the Member for Diego Martin West purported to read NIPDEC's accounting documents into the record. However, he did not read the entire document, for to have done so would have revealed the deception of which the Member for Diego Martin West is guilty.

At this point, Mr. Speaker, I wish to lay two other documents, (c), a letter of certification from the Secretary of the Board of Directors of the National Insurance Property Development Limited and, (d), confirmation from the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Finance. These letters of certification confirm that the board of NIPDEC did not seek or obtain approval from the Minister of Finance for the payment of any honorarium, gratuity or other consideration to Mr. Romano, as it was determined by the board of NIPDEC that this was not the business of the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Speaker, I have produced incontrovertible documentation to this honourable House that establishes beyond any doubt that I did not and could not have misled this House regarding the remuneration paid to NIPDEC executives as the Member for Diego Martin West so maliciously and so recklessly alleged. There is absolutely no evidence to support the fabrication constructed by the Member for Diego Martin West in his effort to discredit me. What is evident from all of this is that the Member for Diego Martin West's vilification of me in this matter is a joint enterprise involving the Member for Diego Martin Central, the Member for St. Ann's East, together with other persons, to get Kuei Tung.

Whereas in the past I have largely ignored the sustained attempt by Members on the other side to discredit me and the excesses to which certain Members of the media have targeted me for vilification, I think the time has come when I must seek redress, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*] I am advised that certain members of the press may have exceeded the extent of privilege and consideration is being

NIPDEC Airport Contract
[SEN. THE HON. B. KUEI TUNG]

Friday, April 23, 1999

given to determine whether they have contravened the privileges of this House in respect of unfair and inaccurate reports.

I, therefore, have instructed legal counsel to take necessary legal action and advise me whether there have been breaches of privilege of this House by the hon. Member and sections of the media. The parliamentary caucus in the Government is also considering whether the conduct of the hon. Member for Diego Martin West and sections of the media have contravened the privileges of this honourable House. Under no guise, Mr. Speaker, should Members attempt to mislead the House or to make statements, under the cloak of parliamentary privilege, which scandalize and sully the reputation of other Members or persons outside of the House.

It is most regrettable, Mr. Speaker, that the hon. Member for Diego Martin West, as an experienced Member of this House, has resorted to such conduct and it must be considered a poor example for other Members of this House to emulate. Mr. Speaker, I respectfully submit that the Member for Diego Martin West owes this honourable House and every Member of the House, including the Leader of the Opposition, an unqualified apology for deliberately misleading the House.

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, I respectfully submit, indeed I demand, that the Member for Diego Martin West should refrain from making false and cowardly attacks against me in my absence. I thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker. Order, please.

INNOGEN
(UNSATISFACTORY AGREEMENT)
[FOURTH DAY]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question. [December 11, 1998]

Be It Resolved that this honourable House condemn the unsatisfactory manner in which the Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Company (TTEC) entered into an Agreement with the firm “InnCogen” for the supply of electricity by InnCogen to TTEC; and

Be It Further Resolved that this Agreement be voided and that the choice of the provider of the electricity requirement of TTEC be made through the system of public tender [*Mr. Kenneth Valley*].

Question again proposed.

Mr. Kenneth Valley (*Diego Martin Central*): Mr. Speaker, I would like to make my statement. I want to counsel my friend that I am speaking this afternoon and I do not want him to say that I am saying things behind his back. He should hold his seat because I have a few things to say about what he just said. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker. The Opposition Chief Whip knows that the procedure he was just trying to adopt is not in the books, so it is not on. He knows that.

The Minister of Tobago Affairs (Dr. The Hon. Morgan Job): Mr. Speaker, I rise to make a contribution on the motion brought. I want to congratulate the Opposition for being so persistent in its concern for the public welfare on matters having to do with corruption. Using the *Hansard* records, Mr. Speaker, I plan for the rest of my time to elucidate in sundry ways, mostly not so subtle, that this country has for too long been burdened by a culture, a lack of interest, a way of life and institutions that were not equal to the task of seeking and protecting the public interest which goes under the name or the rubric, corruption.

2.30 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, I have, in my hand, the *Hansard* report of the statements made by the hon. Member for Diego Martin Central. He made the statement—at least one of the statements—which I intend to deal with, Mr. Speaker. On this issue, sometime between 3.05 and 3.20 p.m. on the particular day, the Member for Diego Martin Central did say:

“The issue of corruption which now seems to pervade governmental activity is really a sore point in our society and, while one would admit that corruption is a problem all over the world and for all times, I think we are all aware of what happens with societies if action is not taken to stem the tide of corruption.”

He goes on to elaborate, Mr. Speaker, and I quote him. He says here:

“I remember the Prime Minister spoke in that debate...”

And I presumed he is talking about some previous Prime Minister.

“so the Prime Minister is also aware of the effects of corruption on the society.

Mr. Robinson was making the point then, that corrupt practices undermine the integrity of public administration. On some issues with respect to corruption, he said:

...corruption must be taken seriously and must be taken seriously for the following reasons:

Inncogen (Unsatisfactory Agreement)
[DR. THE HON. M. JOB]

Friday, April 23, 1999

1. It is a highly infectious disease and it spreads throughout the society.
2. It produces inefficiency and distortions in economy and prejudices healthy economic growth.
3. It increases business and other costs.
4. It undermines the stability of democratic governments.'

I am quoting the famous Sociologist, Gunnar Myrdal. He says:

And he goes on. I am not going to quote all that.

Mr. Speaker, I want to remind the Members opposite and all the people of the country of that famous statement in Shakespeare's play, *King Lear*, where he says:

“Through tatter'd clothes small vices do appear;
Robes and furr'd gowns hide all. Plate sin with
gold,
And the strong lance of justice hurtless breaks;
Arm it in rags, a pigmy's straw does pierce it.”

What I am saying, Mr. Speaker, following up on the statements by the Member for Diego Martin Central, is that, indeed, we ought not to use the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago to make invidious attacks on individuals and, in fact, to mislead the public. When I read the statement—and I am quoting again here from the *Hansard* record:

“When, for the first time, there is the perception of corruption surrounding the office of the Prime Minister, and the Prime Minister stays silent and/or refuses to have even a commission of inquiry to get to the facts—perhaps there is a logical explanation, I do not know—all we want to do is hear the facts.”

Mr. Speaker, I want to emphasize the statement made by the Member for Diego Martin Central:

“When, for the first time, there is the perception of corruption surrounding the office of the Prime Minister...”

Mr. Speaker, the statements which I have in my hand, by the hon. Members for Diego Martin West and Diego Martin Central, centered around these kinds of ideas, the question of process and the nature of corruption in the society. I do

believe that in this debate these matters ought to be developed, because they are in the public interest.

It is, indeed, true to say that in the granting of contracts there are great opportunities for making corrupt gains, and I think the public needs to understand that the thrust of the argument, as if, one wants to lead people to believe that once one tendered there would be no corruption, is not, in fact, the truth. I want to make some comments on that, because people must be made to come to terms with the fact: that the mere fact of a tendering process does not in and of itself ensure against corruption.

The process of approving an investment project can be an irresistible temptation for any kind of unscrupulous person and, indeed, Mr. Speaker, when one goes to places—I have lived in places in South America, in Africa where that is the major way one makes money. There is not much business going on, but one gets government contracts. One has foreign aid, loans coming in from the World Bank, the IMF and one builds roads and hospitals. One tenders for contracts and this is the way the politicians make money.

What I am saying here, civil construction projects like roads, courts, hospitals, by their very nature are projects for making corruption. And all the processes having to do with bringing designs and scrutinizing the designs, who are the people scrutinizing these designs? They are bureaucrats who have connections to politicians. There are individuals who have an interest, sometimes in choosing a particular design or a particular project, because it is a low bid and they know that there are going to be clauses in the contract that would mean that after they have won the contract, they would be able to come back and make all kinds of recommendations and adjustments that would inflate the cost of that project.

I am saying this, Mr. Speaker, because when I am reading through these statements, and while I was here listening to them, I had a sense that the thrust of the argument, focusing the mind on tendering and transparency, was leading people to believe that in a naive kind of way, we would solve the problem. This is not to say that I am an apologist for corruption, or an apologist for any kind of chicanery, or any way in which you can—should I say—circumvent the normal process and earn corrupt gains. But I think it is essential, given the thrust of the argument, given the way that no effort was made to seek to focus the mind on the political manipulation of the tendering process and, on the way bureaucrats, given the kind of veto power that they have—all over the world, in Africa, Nigeria,

Inncogen (Unsatisfactory Agreement)
[DR. THE HON. M. JOB]

Friday, April 23, 1999

India, Venezuela next door, much of the corruption have to do with people who have a veto power. They can say no. Those people are: policemen, public servants, doctors, engineers, they are in a position that if one has to get something done, a form to sign, approval to be made to run a water pipe, to get some house built or some factory removed, because this individual can say no, he extracts a rent.

I am saying, Mr. Speaker, in some of these cases, these strategically placed, high-level officers are the source and the nature of most of the corruption that you find in these less-developed countries, and for the benefit of the Parliament and for the national community, I did not hear a lot of emphasis being placed on this.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Diego Martin Central also made a statement suggesting that the process of corruption was new; the way that this Government, of which I am a part, and therefore, I will also be accused of being part of this thing; the way the process went on, “it was not properly done” and this process is the focus of the matter. I am quoting from *Hansard* of December 11, 1998:

“ I was comparing the PowerGen transaction and making the point that 52 firms received tender documents; 15 of those firms were short-listed...”

He went on, and on, and he talked about these things being out of that process.

I thought I would just, in a sense, lay bare the fact that even if one went along with their processes one does not necessarily have the kind of transparency or the foolproof insurance against corruption. Be that as it may, Mr. Speaker.

The way the arguments are brought to the House is as if we are in the nature of a new wave, a new phase of corruption that this country has never had to deal with before.

Honourable Member: Yes, we have.

Dr. The Hon M. Job: I am hearing the sounds which are suggesting that people do believe their own propaganda.

I just want to say that this Government, of which I am a part, has been acting feverishly—I say feverishly—to deal with what, in fact, are the real issues and the solutions to corruption. I am saying this in order to rebut and to refute the argument that the Opposition is saying that we are a new nest of corrupt people whose every day, every moment and every waking thought is about how we can make a little greed, a little corruption. I can tell the nation, Mr. Speaker, that the Government of which I am a part, has just been discussing laws that we need to

improve, new laws that we need to write. For example, the Law Commission of Trinidad and Tobago has just presented a document to the Government which was initiated by the Attorney General since this Government took office, on strengthening Trinidad and Tobago's anti-corruption legislation.

Mr. Speaker, in that paper there are various anti-corruption laws and strategies; there is evidence from other jurisdictions. We are looking at freezing assets, tracing assets, what is the role of the Director of Public Prosecutions, confiscation of property, corruptly acquired wealth, lifting the attorney—that is the lawyer—and client privilege, the nature of the kinds of evidence, calling for new offences called 'illicit enrichment', the way one would protect whistle blowers. There is a chapter concerning preventing corruption in the procurement process, code of conduct, corruption in relation to private and privatized bodies; performing public functions, bribing foreign officials.

Mr. Speaker, these are issues that are in process now, and the reason why I think I need to talk about that in terms of joining this debate and dealing with the statements is that I am sure in my mind that when the Member for Diego Martin Central tells this honourable House and, thereby, the nation that it is the first time in the history of this country that the Prime Minister of this country has been suspected or implicated in corruption, I do not understand at all where these people were living in the last 30 or 40 years.

2.40 p.m.

I have here a book by a certain Jeremy Taylor—I do not know the man—entitled *Going to the Ground*. I know that the gentleman about whom Mr. Taylor is speaking is someone whom I admire greatly. I myself wrote a book and a set of essays, and I did say that one of the things that people little recognized in Trinidad and Tobago is the burden of responsibility that the late, great Dr. Eric Williams carried on behalf of all of us by keeping this nation together, keeping it out of stress—except for the events of 1970—and some other blips during his tenure.

We did not degenerate into the mass inefficiencies that we witnessed in South America; we did not degenerate into the kind of situation that exists in some parts of Sri Lanka and places like that, but Jeremy Taylor is here making a statement that is germane to this debate, Mr. Speaker, and I need to read it into the record. He writes:

“Integrity in public life was a major pillar of party programmes from the beginning; yet Williams died surrounded by corruption and scandals. There is

Inncogen (Unsatisfactory Agreement)
[DR. THE HON. M. JOB]

Friday, April 23, 1999

no evidence that he was personally involved, but he cannot have been ignorant of them, and he made no move to weed out the offenders.”

He cannot have been ignorant of them! I am saying that in a consistent manner to refute the argument made here that for the first time in the history of this country we have a Prime Minister whose name has been swirling in the midst of corruption.

In that context, I just want to list the long chronology of events. I remember, it was either Lloyd Best or Dennis Solomon, some one of our acting savants that said, “You cannot have the 40 thieves if we had no Ali Baba”. I do not know if that has any implication for these people, but we all know the story of Ali Baba and the 40 thieves.

When one thinks about Ali Baba and the 40 thieves, one thinks about the Lock Joint contract; the equipment that we just took off the port and using some of that for the Miss Universe competition—equipment that was there for the last 20 years, almost 30 years; we do not know what it had to do with the racing complex. One also thinks about the purchase of aircraft for BWIA.

Mr. Speaker, I am saying this because I want to tell the nation, I think the records will not be complete and people will be suffering from being victims of misleading statements when we say that this Government and, to be more precise, this Prime Minister, is the first one whose name has been involved in any *mauve langue* about corruption. This is not to say that I am condoning allegations or in any way judging them. I am just dealing with the matter of fact that was raised in the debate here.

To continue, one thinks about the Tesoro deal—we know the end of that. We even had a storming of the Parliament. The debate on Friday, July 27, 1990 was about that same Tesoro affair when the Muslimeen came in and shot up the place. As a consequence of that, we have suffered greatly. There is a light burning out there as a consequence of that. Sam P. Wallace won his contract. I was in this Parliament sitting on this side when the Government wrote off \$120 million for which we could not find any account. There was no file anywhere in this country where we could say on what the Government spent this \$120 million. So, in order to clear the books, I was in the Cabinet when they decided they would have to close the books on it. Mr. Speaker, \$120 million! Somebody must have been running the country at the time.

One thinks about Pegasus. That is recent. Even Severn Trent and WASA. We came in and met all these things taking place. There were talks about PowerGen even before we came into the thing. Selwyn Ryan wrote a book where he said that corruption was the nature of the game. And one can go on and on. I do not want to do that, but I want to agree with the Opposition that, indeed, this question of people abusing the public trust for corrupt gain is something that we cannot afford to leave idly; we cannot afford not to do anything.

The statements of both the Member for Diego Martin West and the Member for Diego Martin Central are replete with comments and suggestions, I cannot dwell on them, but I agree with all of them where they are saying that the welfare of the children of this nation has been put in jeopardy. I am seeing here in the statement from the Member for Diego Martin West on page 18 where he says:

“If we did not have corruption in the InnCogen affair, the school he wanted built somewhere down there would have been built.”

Let me quote this *Hansard* from 22nd January, 1999 from Dr. Rowley:

“You know what galls me here, Mr. Speaker? Day before yesterday morning I had to go to the Carenage school, which is on the verge of being closed down, because this Government is content to have the boys and girls in space only enough for the girls. In the new school project, not a brick has been laid there since November, 1997; but now, the sewer system in the school yard, with all the boys and the girls, is malfunctioning, stinking up the school and providing a health hazard in an era of cholera alert. The Ministry of Works and Transport comes and digs two holes in the school yard, exposing people’s children to health hazard and physical danger, and tells the school principal that they do not have money to fix the stinking sewer in the school yard. But our Government could find money for the balance to be used for York corporate purposes and \$31 million for the Big Spring Guarantor. [*Desk thumping*] I say, Mr. Speaker, if you could find money to give away like this, find money to fix the Carenage cesspit. [*Desk thumping*] But all they see, Mr. Speaker, is not servicing of the people’s needs; all they see is opportunity for corruption.”

All they see is opportunity for corruption and they would not find money to fix the people's needs? That joining of corruption and welfare of the underclass of people, I join with the Opposition in making that clear in the public mind, because if this country is to have any future, we have to be a world-class nation in terms of

Inncogen (Unsatisfactory Agreement)
[DR. THE HON. M. JOB]

Friday, April 23, 1999

the fight against corruption. We have to assume leadership in the world in terms of how the Government and the Opposition in Trinidad and Tobago joins together to make sure that children do not go hungry, that people do not go unemployed, that school buildings do not go unrepaired, books not there and teachers not paid, on account of the fact that the resources that should have been applied thereto go away in corruption. So I agree with them.

I remember that the former Prime Minister, Mr. Manning, went somewhere and when he had just returned and was still at the airport there was a scandal about Lenny Saith and some shopping mall that he built, where he borrowed from Workers' Bank or NCB some \$15 million. The debt at that time was \$15 million outstanding and it was written off, and all over the country, people were asking, "Why should Saith get his \$15 million written off?" They then asked the incoming Prime Minister and he responded, "That is Saith's and the bank's business!" .

I am putting it to you, Mr. Speaker, that this kind of callous unconcern for the alternative uses of scarce resources and funds—that one guy could get \$15 million written off—has implications for school buildings, for the cesspits in school yards and for books. That is the kind of concern I want to join with the Opposition to energize the public mind to understand. The Member is quite right when he is raising the issue of corruption here and saying that, indeed, if this Government is a corrupt Government, what it is, in fact, doing is denying poor people things that they deserve, and that should not be! We ought to condemn that! This is why I want the public to understand, because they do not know.

I do not know that there are many people outside there who are aware of these things. I was in Cabinet yesterday and we discussed a Bill concerning integrity in public life which addresses things to do with corruption. That is in addition to what I just quoted from here, Mr. Speaker, concerning this question of a Working Paper produced by the Law Commission on strengthening Trinidad and Tobago's anti-corruption legislation.

These things must be known by the public. They must understand that one of the reasons we can have this debate here today is because of the neglect, the abandonment of executive responsibility, the duplicity and, I should even say, compliance with corruption of past governments of which, for the most part, they were PNM governments. That fact must be in the record. We must understand that corruption is about tradition; it is about culture; about how institutions work to corral and to nail—if I might use the local term—the corrupt people.

I do not know that in the history of PNM, any one Minister in that government—with all the public knowledge of corruption during all those years, not a single one of them was ever even censured. As a matter of fact, Lord Kitchener wrote a calypso: “If they say I ‘tief’ is meh damn business”—a whole calypso and everybody was glad! That was the culture, the idea, that if one is a smart man and can ‘tief’ money and get away with it one is a hero. That is the kind of culture that we have here!

They do not lock up people when they are corrupt or when they steal \$100 million. They lionize them! That is the kind of pickaroon perversity that is so subversive of law and order in this country. That is the kind of demonology, the kind of deviousness, the kind of thing that allows a government—the first official act they would ever commit is to go and indulge the whole nation in obeah. One cannot deal with corruption by encouraging obeah. One has to deal with corruption because one has a way to logically focus the mind on the things that one must do.

So, when the Members for Diego Martin Central and Diego Martin East were on their feet, they had a burden of duty to explain when they were raising these issues of the denial of people what they were planning to do. They should have been talking about implementing the recommendations of the Green Paper on Integrity in Public Life that was done by the NAR Government. They should have been talking about implementing or establishing—like the people in Hong Kong did in 1974—a commission against corruption. They did not do that: establish an independent commission against corruption.

Mr. Speaker, there is a statement somewhere in this document where they list, I think it is 27,000 cases that were investigated since that commission was set up in Hong Kong and there were 7,600 convictions. They have some police powers. They do not try people, but they have police powers to the extent that they can arrest people, take evidence and take fingerprints; and it works. They had the opportunity to do that. They stood here and spent two hours but did not talk about that. All they were doing was pillorying and focusing the mind on the trivial, *mauve langue* and making a big issue.

This reminds me that this is not what we need. We need to be talking about what is to be done. This society has gone through too many decades of “ole” talk and robber talk. Robber talk has become a culture. If one can cuss people and

Inncogen (Unsatisfactory Agreement)
[DR. THE HON. M. JOB]

Friday, April 23, 1999

make a big fuss—as Jeremy Taylor says in one of his essays here: *My Kingdom for your Vote*.

The purpose of politics, Mr. Speaker, as many people on the Opposition side have seen, because when Mr. Taylor was writing this thing, he was writing about them—this Government was not in power then. This essay was written in 1991. In context, I am saying that what they should have been doing was telling the nation what we need to do. They should have talked about why they did not do those things, and if they did not do them, that they are very sorry and then apologize. They should then have said, “But now we are insisting that this UNC Government do those things that must be done in order to clean up these Augean stables that stink to high heaven with corruption that we see that is drowning us. We want to do something about this corruption that is denying young people, and this is what is to be done: Do this! Do that!” But we did not hear that.

2.55 p.m.

What we are hearing is what Jeremy Taylor is talking about here. He is saying that when we were preparing to go up for an election in the Opposition party this is what the people tell you. As soon as he is interviewed by the screening committee, he is getting indoctrinated into robber talk. He was a keen young fellow, full of bright ideas about a better life and serving the people, right. He states:

“the first thing to get out of your head is being an agent of the people. You’re an agent of the party, and don’t ever forget it. You fix up people’s problems to bring glory to the party, and get us all re-elected. Got that: And if you’re elected, you sit quiet in parliament till we tell you to speak and you vote when we tell you to vote.”

That is what our politics is about. This was written in 1991. This Government was not here—and the way to do that just go and say anything that people want to hear, you don’t have to worry. If people want cow, tell them you are giving them cow; if they want goat, tell them that you are giving them goat; if they want bread; tell them that you are giving them bread. They want to hear about corruption, say that you are going to end corruption; if they want dollars, tell them you are going to give them dollars; if they do not want anymore corruption, say that you are going to end corruption. People have to see the millennium coming. That is what they are. Just do that.

Mr. Speaker, this is the formula for the kind of politics that we heard in this debate: say anything; once it sounds good, say that. Accuse the Government of corruption. Taylor was talking about that because he must have been here when Kitchener was singing “if ah tief and they say ah tief is meh damn business”. They are not proposing anything, Mr. Speaker. This Government comes here with bill after bill—and I hope when we bring it to the floor to debate they are going to support it clause by clause, because that is what you have to do. You must have the legislation. I hope that in the package that the Attorney General is bringing he is going to bring an independent commission against corruption like they have in Hong Kong. So that that legacy and disaster, where we had people like O’Halloran flaunting corruption in the faces of decent people and getting away with it; and building twin towers in Toronto, more valuable than all the assets that were built in Port of Spain; that kind of bankruptcy of morality must be ended when you do something about corruption! You come here Friday after Friday talking about corruption. Wasting time! To stop it, we must do something and to do it we must be reminded of what we did not do and why we did not do it.

Mr. C. Imbert: Sit down.

Dr. The Hon. Job: I remember a certain Member who is only telling me “sit down”, saying that politics is about saying anything you want; and I am here Mr. Speaker, to remind this country that this Government is doing something. We are not talking about corruption. We are about making suggestions. *[Desk thumping]* We are about doing something about corruption. *[Interruption]* You see, misusing the English language again. *[Laughter]*. We are here about doing something about corruption. *[Laughter]* You understand? We are here about engaging the public mind to understand that we have to empower the Director of Public Prosecutions to issue notice requiring a declaration of assets from every person. That is what we are here about. We are here about getting the public to understand that there are certain concessions that they must make in their own self-interest. We do not have these laws now. The reason we do not have them, probably, is that we thought that they were kind of draconian and totalitarian and might lead to an interference in people’s rights.

Mr. Speaker, you have to live in the real world, and I have said, I used to have a radio programme and I used to tell people that, perhaps, that 19th century statement—some famous jurist said: it is better that 100 guilty men go free; or 99 guilty men go free than one innocent man get hanged or be judged guilty. I have always had a problem with that Mr. Speaker, not that I do not have a concern for

Inncogen (Unsatisfactory Agreement)
[DR. THE HON. M. JOB]

Friday, April 23, 1999

innocent people, or due process; but I am saying that in the real world we are living in now, we have to increase the probability. We have to understand that too many people are ignorant and illiterate about mathematical concerns. They do not understand the question that we live in a real world where probabilities and statistics are the stuff of nature.

When Werner Karl Heisenberg developed his Heisenberg uncertainty principle, he uncovered a whole can of worms, but this matter applies here because in the real world that we live in now; the probability is that the drug baron, the money launderer, the crooks as politicians will have their way because the laws are so dedicated to protecting the innocent, they will never catch the guilty. That is the thing we have to deal with.

I want to repeat what I am saying, that in the context of modern law reform and the matter of corruption, that ancient principle that sounds so virtuous and so good, about the protection of the innocent lest some guilty man be condemned, we have to review that. Because the problem now, is that with modern technology and all these billions that these criminals and drug barons have, the laws that we have, in fact, are protecting them. That is why one could not have PNM regime lock up anybody.

If I might concede from a logical point of view the extant laws which this Government inherited, still operate on the principle that I am enunciating—*[Laughter]* I am not a judge. I am not in a court mister. So that what I am, in fact, saying is that because we did nothing to refocus the laws and the institutions in the context of the reality of man in society, we are playing the fool with corruption and with people's lives. It has to stop. We must have another concept, which is grounded in the reality that we have to increase the probability of ignorant, corrupt people injuring drug barons; catching them and locking them up and sequestering their assets and taking it away and sending them down for good. That is what we have to focus on and that is, in fact, the process that I know this Government is engaged in—allow the confiscation of corruptly acquired wealth. We have to do that.

Lift the attorney client and privileges in certain circumstances in order to aid investigations. As I understand it, there are lawyers on the other side, I think the Constitution and the laws that we operate with now prohibit the confidential relationships—like between a priest and a confessor. You go to the priest and tell him last week I did something, I committed fornication, adultery, or whatever.

The priest is not supposed to go and tell anybody. Lawyers and their clients have a similar kind of relationship. What we are suggesting is that, that kind of relationship, in the context of the world that we live in, is dangerous to a free and independent people.

Introduce a new offence called “illicit enrichment” which imposes a reverse onus on persons to explain any significant increase in assets which are disproportionate to the person’s assets and income.

Mr. Speaker these are the things that these people should have got up here, in the context of all that they said—

Mr. Hinds: We had that.

Dr. The Hon. Job: They should have indicated it to the public and discussed the laws that they did not make, and should have indicated how they are going to support this Government in doing these matters that I am enunciating here. Because that is the way we are going to deal with this InnCogen matter and all the other matters that they are going to raise every Friday—because it seems to me that economic development is only about raising these matters.

There is another aspect—and I say that and I hear the chattering from over on the other side—I do not understand why in this day and age when we have Internet and all these questions of expectations and publicity and the importance of how people use information—I am looking for the Member from Diego Martin’s speech. What I am saying, Mr. Speaker, these people come into the House here and then they go and say these kinds of things about Trinidad and Tobago which must mean that they have no interest in helping the Government and the people. I can see that if they are not interested in the Government they could, at least, be interested in the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

When the Member for Diego Martin West gets up and says: “but now given what is happening in Trinidad and Tobago today, reputable firms are going to have to think twice before they come here” and the rest of the statement Mr. Speaker is, in fact, supportive of what I put as a note here “blackmail against Trinidad and Tobago”.

Mr. Speaker, I need to say that in the context of a debate against corruption, I do not understand why we should be maligning ourselves and creating the kind of circumstances that are logically unfair. I say “logically unfair” in the sense, Mr. Speaker, that most people in this Parliament today must have heard the name Mobutu—

Inncogen (Unsatisfactory Agreement)
[DR. THE HON. M. JOB]

Friday, April 23, 1999

Mr. P. Manning: Say that name again.

Dr. The Hon. Job: Mobutu.

Mr. P. Manning: Oh yes, Mobutu Sese Seko

Dr. The Hon. Job: Mobutu Sese Seko, Ziquabanga. Then you had people like Augusto Pinochet. There was Saddam Hussein. I do not know who there was in Nigeria—Yuma Bongo—all over the world you had them.

Mr. Speaker, I am calling those names because I want to make the point of how unfair it is for people who should know better to come in here and make a statement: Now, given what is happening in Trinidad and Tobago today, people would not want to come and invest here. They would think twice.

3.05 p.m.

Pinochet was killing people; they were disappearing them. Everyone knew that. I understand he is in England now awaiting extradition to Spain to be tried for some of his crimes against humanity. All these tyrants—Saddam Hussein—built the air fields and bunkers and helped them to build missiles. These people are coming to say, you have a Government here where nobody is training them, nobody is threatening to discipline them, nobody is locking them up. Everyday the press is massacring the character of innocent people on this side. Everyday! All the newspapers. They are even destroying the country by telling everybody that you cannot walk in broad daylight in Trinidad and Tobago because of crime.

I am sure if I were living in New York and reading the front page of some of the newspapers here, I must form the opinion that the only place in the world that you would not want to be is Trinidad and Tobago. You and I know this is not true. Trinidad and Tobago have crime, there are many young people created by the PNM running and roaming wild. When I was telling them for 25—30 years that they should deal with these people, the single-parent mothers, the Member for San Fernando East closed down my programme.

Ken Gordon called me and said, the Prime Minister called me and say you say this about him last night. All kinds of things. He and the state enterprises. All I was doing was telling them that the worst was yet to come if you do not deal with all those wild, little strumpets running around. They did not do it. They went around telling people that they are 98 per cent literate when half of the people coming out of the classroom—you must have known that because I have a document prepared by your Government that says it is no longer any secret that

illiteracy and crime are inextricably linked. You were the Prime Minister at the time so you are responsible. If you did not know at the time, the Minister of Education should have told you. You closed down the programme when I was trying to educate people.

Mr. Speaker, I am saying these things because I want to say there is a context in which all these statements made by these people ought to be put. It is not true to say that this Government is of such a nature in the context of corruption that it would prevent foreign investment. This statement is an unfortunate one. I think I called it blackmail against Trinidad and Tobago because Mobutu and all these people were killing people by the thousands and foreigners were going there to make money. They were going to Pinochet. They were going to Libya; Gadaffi was getting money for investment. I do not know anything going on in Trinidad and Tobago initiated, instigated, orchestrated, or organized by this Government that would suggest anything mildly close to what some of these demons have been doing elsewhere in the world and they were getting foreign investment. Instead of the Opposition coming to join us and say “these are bad times; we have to suffer with the worldwide downturn and oil prices, the Asian flu.” Instead of coming and focusing the mind on all these things, we come here to tell the people nobody would invest in Trinidad and Tobago. That is so unfortunate. We do not need that kind of thing!

I want to continue listing my chronology of things we need to do. We need to stop this InnCogen kind of thing. If in fact, it did happen in the past and can happen in the future, we need to introduce laws to protect it—this is what this Government is about—so that informers might thereby feel safe against victimization. We need to introduce special provisions to address corruption in the procurement process. I spent a little time on that before, not directly, but what that means—you have this thing about invoicing and over-invoicing and using invoicing to launder money.

I spoke when they were opening the bridge up there. I know that before I left here in 1977 to go abroad the PNM was building a bridge across the Tacarigua River near the orphanage, the bridge was in progress I am sure you know about it. I left here in 1977 and I spent six years abroad, and when I returned on New Year’s day in 1983 the Tacarigua bridge was not built. Traffic was being diverted everyday and until about two or three years after I came back here in 1985, they said the bridge was done. It took 10 years to build a bridge from here to where the Member for Diego Martin Central is. That is corruption, that has to be corruption.

Inncogen (Unsatisfactory Agreement)
[DR. THE HON. M. JOB]

Friday, April 23, 1999

I just helped the Minister of Works and Transport to open a bridge in Valencia and when they were turning the sod, I said, I hope I do not have to come back here 10 years from now to say this was another Valencia bridge. Mr. Speaker, I have the pleasure to tell you that last week I was there opening the bridge, under two years, and it is five times the span of the Tacarigua bridge. So that is corruption.

Mr. Speaker, we have to put all these things in context. I am glad they opened up the debate by referring to all these things, and telling us that for first time in the history of the country, we have to deal with a history of corruption. *[Interruption]*. That is what you said., I am quoting what you said. You said for the first time in this country—that is what you said, not what I said. I did not write your speech for you; if you ask me to write a speech I would charge you \$2,000. You said that.

Mr. Speaker, let me quote what he said. “When, for the first time...” This is what he said, Mr. Speaker. That is how they use this Parliament to misinform people Friday after Friday, *ad nauseam*, corruption, corruption, corruption.

Mr. Speaker: You have to try to show me less of your back. If you will talk to me and not directly to the other side it would limit the cross-talk.

Dr. The Hon. M. Job: Mr. Speaker, I would quote because the public must get this on record to understand the mischief which is committed in this Parliament every Friday. Mischief, misleading people. This is what the Member for Diego Martin Central said. “When, for the first...” *[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker: If he does not do it, you cannot contravene the Standing Orders. *[Interruption]* It is not necessary.

Mr. Valley: If the hon. Member would give way. He is not quoting the Member for Diego Martin Central correctly. I did not say it is the first time we have to deal with the issue of corruption. The quote is clear: “It is the first time there is an issue surrounding corruption that points to the highest level of governmental authority in the land.” That was the point which was being made. It is not simply correction.

Dr. The Hon. M. Job: Mr. Speaker, I am quoting from the *Hansard* which says:

“When, for the first time, there is a perception of corruption surrounding the office of the Prime Minister, and the Prime Minister stays silent and/or

refuses to have even a commission of inquiry to get the facts—perhaps there is a logical explanation, I do not know—”

That is simple English. I am saying that anyone who makes a statement like that is either totally blind, deaf and dumb to the reality of the facts of Trinidad and Tobago.

I am going to quote from the late, great former Prime Minister. Some people do not think he is great, but let us call him great.

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

Motion made, That the hon. Member’s speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [*Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar*]

Question put and agreed to.

Dr. The Hon. M. Job: Thanks to the hon. Members on both sides for extending my time.

I do believe that once in a while we ought to join each other in raising the level of debate, or at least discussing issues that can have some impact on the way the public thinks. I remember the last time the Member for Tobago West spoke she was complaining that the press was not going to give her a fair reporting on what she was saying and I was telling myself—*[Interruption]*

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when the Member was speaking on the Constitution (Amdt.) Bill she made the statement which suggested that at the time of the day the press was not going to give her the coverage she was to get.

Miss Nicholson: I never said so.

Dr. The Hon. M. Job: In my own judgment I was saying maybe I should protest now because they do not give me fair treatment.

Anyhow, on the question of corruption about which we are talking today, we should join again with a little historical reconnaissance. I have a statement made by the former Prime Minister, Dr. Eric Williams when he said:

“We began our career with a powerful campaign for morality in public affairs. It would be difficult to say that this was either in line with the Westminster model or in keeping with the democratic tradition.”

Inncogen (Unsatisfactory Agreement)
[DR. THE HON. M. JOB]

Friday, April 23, 1999

I am quoting this for a specific purpose because I want people to understand that this Government did not invent the circumstances we are burdened with. There was a clear understanding, even if in a perverse kind of way, that we needed to do more about corruption and did not do it. The impotence had to have a reason that comes out of an understanding and analysis of a statement like this.

He went on to say:

“The Westminster model in the first place was associated with election bribery and corruption. Dickens Eatanswill election was no exaggeration of Victorian elections, it was taken from real life. The purchase of parliamentary seats made it possible for many West Indian slaveowners and Indian nabobs to enter Parliament. At the level of the British colonial empire, Clive in 1772 summed up the whole age by his famous reply to the charges of corruption in India, ‘By God, Mr. Chairman, at this moment I stand astonished at my own moderation.’”

And he went on to talk about corruption in the context of Trinidad and Tobago. He said:

“The whole question of local agents and foreign influence has now become a major issue in Trinidad and Tobago, going to the heart of our proposed integrity legislation and the opposition it has evoked: that the requirements should be limited only to the government and the government side of Parliament, and should exclude independent Senators and others.”

I am quoting this, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because I do not want people to be left with the impression that the first time corruption is an issue in Trinidad and Tobago is when Mr. Panday is the Prime Minister. It has always been and nothing has been done about it. No equal institutions were set up like the independent commission against corruption in Singapore and that commission was existing when this speech was made. This is the same speech where Lee Kwan Yew was excoriated, pilloried and villified for saying that Trinidadians are going to put themselves in great jeopardy because they have a carnival mentality.

As I speak to you now, Singapore is one of the richest nations in the world. When the unemployment rises to 2 or 3 per cent they have unemployment. We have an endemic structural unemployment of about 15 per cent or thereabouts and we tolerate this when we are dealing with corruption in a very trivial way. This is what I am trying to say. What the statement is telling you is that the man was saying “Why are they talking about corruption in Trinidad and Tobago? England

is corrupt, British democracy grew up in corruption. All of them are corrupt, so why are you worrying about us?" That is what the statement is saying if it is read carefully. It is a most frightening statement.

3.20 p.m.

But these are the kinds of statements that were made in an authoritarian and totalitarian fashion to cow people into submission. When people started to talk after the oil boom was collapsing, one of them said, "Why are they saying these things? Are they prophets of doom and gloom?" You must not have talked about corruption in those days. So, we are talking about it now and the people of the Opposition are talking about it as if they are virginal, as if their party has been the instrument of a blinding and pure light in this area of corruption.

Nothing could be further from the truth because the genesis of our corrupt social circumstances, whether it was the Unemployment Relief Programme, the Development and Environmental Works Division or the Port—they used to call the Port, Party Group Nos. 2 or 3, or something like that. When five men were needed at the Port, there were 50; when 500 were needed, they had 5,000. I had relatives working there.

Mr. Assam: WASA; TSTT; T&TEC.

Dr. The Hon. M. Job: All of them just overloaded and when they talk about corruption as a meaningful influence on the nation, look at the same Caroni (1975) Limited issue they are always talking about and in this Cabinet you cannot sit to talk about Caroni (1975) Limited. Who is it that bought, nurtured and nourished Caroni (1975) Limited in this country? Whatever is going on there, it is not the UNC Government caused it; the UNC Government can do something about it and is committed to doing something about it, but it is not the UNC Government that made that situation there; it did not make the situation at the Port.

Look at what happened to Ispat and all these places. I mean, the chronology is so damning and they come in here to talk this nonsense about the first time anybody ever associated a Prime Minister with corruption is with the UNC. So, who did say you cannot have the 40 thieves without Ali Baba? To whom were they referring?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not know if you read the *Arabian Nights* and those stories, but *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves* is a recognized story. We read it; you read it; we read it when we were small. Ali Baba is the head of the 40 thieves. So

Inncogen (Unsatisfactory Agreement)
[DR. THE HON. M. JOB]

Friday, April 23, 1999

when people were saying you cannot have the 40 thieves without Ali Baba, what were they talking about?

Then, they are coming here to say how much corruption is undermining—look at this thing. I am talking about Venezuela. These are notes that I put together about four years ago. We are in 1999 so it must have been in 1994 or 1995. I took something from the internet just recently by President Chavez who said—

Mr. Valley: Stop the talk about Venezuela.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Dr. The Hon. M. Job: One of the reasons Venezuela is in such a paltry state is because they cannot balance their budget without ending corruption which takes up a significant proportion of their budget.

President Chavez said:

“We will try to balance income and spending to end corruption which takes up much of our budget.”

So, in all that, I am in agreement with them. We go through this whole thing—Arturo Uslar Pietri—Venezuela’s one-man national conscience on his 90th birthday in mid-May 1996 decried the state’s extent of profligacy in Venezuela.

“Sixty years ago...”

He said—

“...he called on Venezuela to sow its oil riches in order to secure a prosperous future for its people. Instead, the state, not the people, reaped the harvest and that over 20 years, Venezuela received the equivalent of 18 Marshall Plans in oil income, only to end up in the catastrophe that we are in today.”

He goes on like that, the same kind of corruption and it comes out of ideas. If you have the wrong ideas, you cannot deal with corruption.

Corruption is not a matter of accusing one man or one Minister, or something like that. It is about dealing with the whole system; the whole school system; the whole set of ideas; the way you employ people; the way you promote people; that is what it is all about.

So, when they come here to talk about InnCogen and then they divaricated into ideology; they start to talk about voodoo and race. How does voodoo and race come into this thing? Mr. Speaker, let me just detour a bit to make a comment on

Inncogen (Unsatisfactory Agreement)

Friday, April 23, 1999

that. They come in here to talk about race and voodoo, then they say and I quote from the *Hansard* of January 22, 1999:

“When I asked about the process—InnCogen may very well have won the bid—I do not know, but there was no bidding. And when I asked why was the process so brutalized and bastardized, the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago in his typical disgraceful response, chose to bring it down to an issue of race; goes down to the sod-turning ceremony and...”

started to talk about race.

“But, of course, he did not ask the beneficiaries of the company who are hiding their identity in the Cayman Islands...”

He went on to talk about race and people’s conduct.

Mr. Speaker, what does Soodhoo and voodoo have to do with a debate about InnCogen? What does it have to do with it? There is always some subtle kind of devious way to bring in images and emotions that might deflect people from matters of substance and, therefore, bring out the barbarous wild side of human nature, that kind of atavistic concern that sometimes leads us into the wildnesses of the world, into the Kosovos of the world and into the situation in Sri Lanka. All these are areas and instances where people, because they did not deal with corruption, because they did not deal with the way the state allocated its resources, because they did not deal with the way of transparency and fairness in development, they ended up hurting and harming themselves and here we are fuelling those fires by these kinds of subtle imagery, talking about race, Soodhoo and voodoo, and all that. That is irrelevance, Mr. Speaker.

I continue, again, to make a few comments from this document which I am reading which is the evidence that we on this side intend, as no other government had intended, to really come to terms to break the back of corruption.

I make some comments concerning the independent commission against corruption that they have in Hong Kong. In 1974, the Hong Kong people set up this independent commission against corruption and empowered it:

“...to investigate any complaint of corrupt practices and to arrest without warrant any person who is reasonably suspected of being guilty of an offence...”

That comes under the purview of—

“...the Prevention of Bribery Ordinance...”

Inncogen (Unsatisfactory Agreement)
[DR. THE HON. M. JOB]

Friday, April 23, 1999

That is what this Government is doing. This Government is not talking about corruption, it is in the process of doing something about it. You will never, ever be able to come to terms with corruption in the way the Opposition is suggesting that we should come to terms with it, if all they want to do is come to Parliament every Friday—they have had the opportunity; they were in Parliament for 34 years, three decades and four more years, in which the Member for San Fernando East was Prime Minister for four and a half years, or something like that.

They left this country perhaps more corrupt than it ever was, than they met it, corrupt enough for them to come in the middle of the night to put a defecating bird on top the Red House to fool people that that was a way to lead them to light, liberty, freedom and prosperity. They did that. They were not about focussing on matters of substance. They were about leading the mind into necromancy. They were about leading people into “obeah” and about doing all kinds of things to manipulate the emotions.

As Jeremy Taylor says, when you get out there, all you have to do is find out what people think they want and tell them you are going to give them that. They want a goat, say, “I will give you a goat”. They want bread, say, “I will give you more bread than you can eat”. They want cock fighting, say “Look, I will bring back cock fighting”. Anything they say they want, give them that. That is their kind of politics. So, people want to hear about corruption, talk about that. Panday corrupt! Everybody is corrupt. Talk about that. Friday, next week Friday, the next Friday after next week Friday; talk about corruption. Well, what is that all about, Mr. Speaker?

We have to be dealing with matters of substance as Mr. Panday and his Cabinet is doing. We are going to pass laws. Yesterday in Cabinet, we looked at the Integrity in Public Life Bill and approved it. We have the Law Reform Commission talking about corruption. This is the way we are going. We are bringing in legislation and the Prime Minister has instructed the Minister of Education to reform the curriculum of the primary schools—I think they are working now on the secondary schools—to deal with all these issues so that children, when they come into school, will come into an environment where they understand about morality in public affairs and, more importantly, where they start growing up understanding that if their behaviour is lawless and devious, it is going to cost them something.

What we have is the culture that was evolved by the PNM where each man is for himself and when you look at their leadership and role models, what they are signalling to you is that each man must be for himself at the expense of everybody else, a kind of free rider problem and it starts from the primary school.

The document to which I referred that the former Prime Minister had knowledge of, said that. It said that you can go into the primary schools in this country and you will see little criminals breeding there. They are behaving and you already know that this one is lost and that one is lost. They are lost. They knew that and they did absolutely nothing about it. They left them. Once you voted PNM; that was okay; you could go and kill people, rape them and do anything. Make sure you voted on election day for PNM. That is their policy.

They really did not care about people because if they cared, they would have left a better country for us to live in. They did not do that. They did nothing about corruption which means that you have to do something about education; you have to do something about parenting; you have to do something about guidance; you have to teach people from early that thou shalt not covet a neighbour's wife, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that belongs to him. From early they have to be taught that.

You have to tell them what my mother told me: that you never envy people for what they have because you do not know what they did to get it and if you knew, you would not want to do that. So leave them with it. [*Laughter*] That is how you deal with corruption, from early; not to come in Parliament every Friday regaling people—the thing is getting boring and [*Laughter*] annoying. Talk something sensible; leave a legacy so when people read *Hansard*, they must read something sensible.

When somebody reads the record of these people, all is corruption, corruption, corruption, corruption, corruption, corruption. Every Friday afternoon, it is corruption. Is this what you were elected for? You have people out there killing each other. People are under stress and all kinds of problems in this country, but you are coming here wasting time Friday after Friday talking about corruption.

Is that the morality, the sense of decency and dignity and responsibility that an Opposition party must display in this country? You are here to jointly run the country. That is what you need to do. You need to come in here and tell people what they are not doing right that they should do right. That is what you are coming here to do, not as Jeremy Taylor said, if the people want to hear about

Inncogen (Unsatisfactory Agreement)
[DR. THE HON. M. JOB]

Friday, April 23, 1999

corruption, talk about that. That will not get you re-elected. That is gross irresponsibility. That is the kind of Government, the kind of leadership and the kind of moral and intellectual bankruptcy that has pushed this country to the edge of the abyss where so many are wallowing already in despair in the quagmire of moral decadence and decay, driven there by PNM, coming here talking about corruption! The most corrupt people are the people who are misleaders. That is what corruption is all about.

Corruption is about leadership that misleads; corruption is about an abuse of the principle that you are responsible by your actions to guide those innocents, those ones who are there and who look up to you. So many little children in this country grow into corruption because all the people they ever had as role models were URP foremen, DEWD foremen and Crash Programme foremen, about whom everything was devious and demonic. They did not live by anything lawful, but the boys on the block saw them and they did not see anything else so they wanted to be like them. That is the PNM programme.

That is what corruption is all about and you cannot come in here every Friday without coming with any concrete programmes to say, "Mr. Speaker, this House should recognize that the PNM had in process and we had a set of people sitting together telling us that we must set up an independent commission against corruption and these are the things that we were trying to do and we want to hand over to the Government our proposals so this country." They are not doing that.

They are here braying, bleating, prattling, lampooning and wallowing in ignorance and stupidity and misleading people that they really care about corruption. How come they cared so much about corruption and O'Halloran died in his bed? He nary spent a day anywhere under any threat. Everybody knew about that. I read out a whole long list here. The chronology, it will take days to read out. You would not get enough time to speak for you to read it out. Not a thing they did.

This Government is doing something. We are talking about the fact that Singapore has an independent commission against crime, that from 1974 to 1995 the Hong Kong Commission carried out a total of 29,976 investigations which resulted in 7,674 prosecutions. Of these prosecutions, 1,523 were directed against public servants and 1,570 were concerned with private individuals. There were 235 prosecutions against staff members of public bodies, three against members of the British armed forces and 4,343 offences involving offences with people in

the private sector. That is a record that the PNM should have known about and if they cared about corruption, they would have come and talked about it and they would have been hearing about it. But, no, their history is not about that. Their history is about Mr. 10 per cent. That is their history. That is their tradition, that every time you spend \$1,000 on repairing a school building, \$800 goes in “bobol” and corruption. That is their methodology.

3.35 p.m.

I am not about joining them to waste time about corruption. I started by saying that it is a good thing that they are doing, by focussing the public mind on corruption, because, this Government also wants to deal with it. The evidence that I am giving here is consistent with a Government that accepts its responsibility to empower the people to seek in their own interest those rules, laws and institutions that they want to build up to deal with the question of corruption.

The Independent Commission in Hong Kong is empowered, like I said, to arrest people, to investigate complaints without warrant, once they are reasonably suspicious under the Prevention of Bribery of Ordinance, the Corrupt and Illegal Practices Ordinance and the Independent Commission Against Corruption Ordinance.

The Independent Commission Against Corruption is even given the power to detain suspects at its offices for up to 48 hours if a senior commission officer considered it necessary for further enquiries. It may also grant bail to persons to attend at its offices at a particular time and may take fingerprints and photographs of arrested persons.

The Commission is also given the powers of search and seizure by warrant, from a magistrate, with respect to any place which may contain evidence of the commission of corruption. Furthermore, the Commissioner is empowered to enter any government premises and require any government servant to answer questions concerning the duties of any agent of the government or public servant and require the production of all records, books and documents relating to a government department in the possession of any servant of the government.

The Commission, however, has no prosecution powers. All evidence gathered by the Commission is to be passed on to the Attorney General’s Chambers who advises on which cases should be prosecuted. The consent of the Attorney General is necessary before any prosecution can be instituted.

Inncogen (Unsatisfactory Agreement)
[DR. THE HON. M. JOB]

Friday, April 23, 1999

The success of the Independent Commission Against Corruption has been attributed to a three-pronged approach to fighting corruption: investigation, prevention and education. Mr. Speaker, I want to repeat that: the success of the Hong Kong Independent Commission Against Corruption has been attributed to its three-pronged approach to fighting corruption: investigation, prevention and education.

Apart from investigating complaints, the Commission is mandated to advise on measures to prevent corruption. It, therefore, examines systems and procedures in government and public bodies to identify and reduce corruption opportunities. It also offers advice to private and professional organizations. Through a community-based strategy, the Independent Commission Against Corruption educates the public against the evils of corruption to harness support in the fight against corruption. From the statistics, we know that this Commission has been effective.

Mr. Speaker, if you analyze the whole corpus of work by these people on the Opposition on the InnCogen matter, there is more “*mauvais langue*” in it; there is more bitterness in it; more election hype in it, than any matter of substance. There is no recommendation as to what to do about corruption—not a single word. Nothing about education of the public. If the public in Trinidad and Tobago is to be educated about corruption, it cannot honestly and sincerely be done with any true purpose, unless you can deal with all that chronology of malpractices and disasters that were created by the PNM. You have to tell people—any sensible child in any schoolroom would ask the question: “Why did this go on and why were we so impotent to do anything about it?” Then, their Attorney General would, have told you: “Well, given the nature of evidence and given the nature of the laws that were established, we could not do any thing about it.” People knew that.

This Integrity Commission that we have now is like—as one former Police Commissioner said: “I am a toothless bulldog”—a bulldog without a mouth, not even one without a tooth. But, it was good for the people to have it so. What we are saying, it is not good to continue with it so. This Government is doing something about it, not talking about InnCogen and talking about this and that to malign people and destroy people’s character in the media. We are not doing that. We are talking about education, investigation and prevention. Many people do not understand that in the long run being a part of a corrupt culture and a corrupt process hurts. It is like somebody said: “even criminals want to live in a lawful society”. Because if criminals were living in a society where life was nasty, brutish and short, they also would be in jeopardy. If every bandit knew that when he puts down his possessions another bandit could come and take it, he would not

like it—so the bandits want to know that they have laws. Even if the bandits want to pervert the law, they use the law.

Hon. Assam: And they use it when they could.

Dr. The Hon. M. Job: Exactly. You understand, which is why I am saying that these PNM people here are an embarrassment, because all the fundamental subtleties that have to do with the attack on corruption, they have left them to drift with the wind. They never focussed on them. The myth: those people who are in possession of the knowledge and capability and the know-how live off illegal and corrupt gains—that is what the PNM was about. They were not about educating people in Trou Macaque and Sea Lots and about how to avoid corruption, because that is how the people there live.

They put a truck-load of material today; tomorrow morning it is not there. The foreman built three houses for each one of his deputies. He is a PNM and he is getting work so he have to vote PNM. So why must you tell him not to do that? That is the end of that. Everybody knows that, that is not a secret. I do not understand why these people are so boldface and without shame—coming in this House to talk about corruption when they took a whole society for 40 years and turned it into a den of thieves, a moral quagmire, squalor. Why have they done that to us? And come here to talk about corruption.

Miss. Nicholson: You are crazy.

Dr. The Hon. M. Job: What is that? Like you were not listening to me all the time. Some people are deaf. Do you understand? Mr. Speaker, I have often said and I have heard that change is the only permanent condition. You change the status quo by doing those things that are germane, that are relevant to changing it. And, talking the way the PNM has been talking, is not about changing it. It is about mobilizing the ethnic anxiety, it is about mobilizing ignorance and grievance. It is not about doing anything. I am talking about things that are being done. Not about things to do. We are in the process of doing things.

The next government that comes in, the next generation of people—they would not be humbugged. They would not be left in jeopardy, because they would knock the institutions and the laws that were there, that were equal to the tasks of arresting, of locking up, of sequestering assets, of—stripping people of property. We want those laws here. We want people there. We want bodies there. We want

Inncogen (Unsatisfactory Agreement)
[DR. THE HON. M. JOB]

Friday, April 23, 1999

the moral environment to be there. This is why we are educating people. This is what is stated here—education—and we have to agree.

The Minister of Education and myself are in a committee, where we were most of last year, looking at the primary school curriculum. These are some of the things which we say must be on the curriculum. From early o'clock, there are children in this country who are in a situation of jeopardy because they do not have the kind of parenting that you and I had. The school must become a surrogate parent. The school environment, curriculum and the teachers must be able to perform the role of parents so that the children are morally guided; so that they understand all these things which I am talking about. That is what has to be done. Do not come in and use the Parliament and the privilege of Parliament to malign people and to mobilize the mobs and the masses outside there. No! That is not good enough. I am here, and I stood here this afternoon, to use the opportunity, as best I could, to deal with what I thought would be the major lines or argument.

I remember Eugenio Moore and Doddridge Alleyne with the King George V Park—that was about corruption. Eugenio Moore stayed home for many years on half-pay, or something like that, because he claimed he was instructed to do that by a certain gentleman, whose name I shall not call, but I mentioned it before. All these kinds of things and they come here to say that the first time the Prime Minister was linked with corruption was Basdeo Panday. They are not serious, they are not honest and that is not fair. It is not fair to be saying those things and putting them on the records. We need to understand these things. There is much more that I can say on that.

I opened my statement by quoting Shakespeare's *King Lear* which suggests that when you are big, you are big. Shakespeare was referring to the judges and the fact that judges in those days were corrupt. I understand that. Many people do not understand—like Dr. Williams quite rightly said—the Westminster system of British democracy did not evolve in a morally upright environment.

Mankind, in the old days, when Amos said: “let justice flow down like the waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream”, was talking about the kings and the high priests who were not following the law, that were using the power of the law for their own fulfilment and their own privileges and of putting the ordinary people, the ordinary Hebrew people, in a great deal of jeopardy.

They were talking about corruption saying that corruption is not just a matter of talking about it, it is a matter of getting people to understand that one wants

appropriate laws and institutions that would enable these laws to work to protect the weak and the meek. Corruption is mainly a problem of protecting the poor people, protecting the weak and the meek. Because if a “fella tief” two bags of cement on the old project and built a house for a “deputy”, when one adds up the number of people who did that compared to what O'Halloran built for one twin tower, it is nothing.

3.45 p.m.

So people were being left to do that so that they could steal on a grander scale—you know, I read somewhere, Mr. Speaker, that since Christ walked the earth it is not yet a million days. I think it is something like less than 600,000 days. It is a long, long time and people would steal billions, numbers that boggle the mind, and they stole hundreds of millions to build a twin tower in Toronto for hundreds, Can. \$300 million, Can. \$400 million, Can. \$500 million. There are poor people here and you have them “tiefing” a bag of cement and killing one another for a ten-days. That is corruption, Mr. Speaker.

I was happy for the privilege to share some thoughts to support the Opposition. This is what I was really doing, you know. They do not understand that. I was supporting them for raising the issue of corruption, but advising them that they need to do better than wasting people's time every Friday saying the same thing over and over again. They need to be joining the Government to make sure that we build the institutions, pass the laws, set up an independent commission and do all those things, including getting an education system that works, that will leave us better off than the PNM left us.

These people should be ashamed. They should be in sack cloth and ashes. They should hide themselves every time they hear the word, “corruption”. In this country there should be no one who is a PNM member or wears a balisier tie and should hear the word, “corruption”, who should not duck in a corner or underneath a bridge. They should all be ashamed of themselves, instead of coming here and wasting people's time every Friday on this issue. These people are shameless. We have to stop this. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Kenneth Valley (*Diego Martin Central*): Mr. Speaker, I rise to wind up this debate that started on December 11, 1998. Today is April 23, 1999 so we are talking about a little over five months. Before December 11, 1998 this matter was raised in the budget debate which was debated, I think—when was it—in October, some two months before. Unlike my colleague, the Member for Tobago East, who

Inncogen (Unsatisfactory Agreement)
[MR. VALLEY]

Friday, April 23, 1999

seemed to suggest that this debate is simply one of corruption, we on this side see this debate touching on corruption at the highest political office in the land and that is—[*Desk thumping*] [*Inaudible*—the difference. It is not simply about corruption.

All over the world, Mr. Speaker, the Member made the point, whether it is Venezuela, whether it is Nigeria, whether it is India, we hear about corruption in politics. I contend, however, that as far as I am aware, it is the first time that in Trinidad and Tobago where we have a situation, yet without explanation, that touches the highest political office in our land. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker: Now, I want us to be very careful about what we are doing. The Standing Orders forbid any Member to make certain allegations or impute certain things against any Member of this House. Nothing is wrong with talking about corruption, generally, but if the hon. Member is going to make an allegation, a specific allegation, of corruption against any Member of this House, it will not be permitted unless it is a substantive motion. Regardless of whatever has happened in the past, this is what I am ruling, because it infringes against the Standing Orders. I have no problem with general comments concerning corruption, but if one is going to single out any Member of this House, either on the Government side or the Opposition or any Member of the Senate, I am going to stop it.

Mr. K. Valley. Thank you for your guidance, Mr. Speaker. When I opened this debate on December 11, 1998 in the quote that I had to use a while ago to correct the Minister, I made the point reading from the *Hansard*, that it is the first time there is an issue surrounding corruption that points to the highest level of governmental authority in this land.

Mr. Speaker, I am saying that there is a perception. I am not saying that the Prime Minister is corrupt. I would be the last person to say that. I am saying, however, that there is a perception, and unless the Prime Minister—and he still has the opportunity because, since this touches on him, he can get up after me and explain this situation. [*Desk thumping*] That is all I want. I want to know that there is no corruption surrounding the office of Prime Minister. That is all I am saying, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I just want to read the Standing Order for the avoidance of doubt. Standing Order 36(5) says:

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

If I understand you to be imputing improper motives to the Prime Minister, I am stopping you.

Mr. Valley: I hear you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: If I understand you to be doing that, and I want your assurance that that is not what you are doing.

Mr. Valley: That is not what I am doing, Mr. Speaker. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please. All I am saying is that that is not going to be permitted in this House in respect of the Prime Minister or yourself or anybody else, or of a Member of the Senate, whatever has happened in the past. This is the Standing Order and, until such time as this House changes that, that is what we are going by.

Mr. Valley: Mr. Speaker, I am guided and I assure you that is not what I am doing. I am saying that the evidence—and I would—

Hon. Member: Which evidence?

Mr. Valley. Mr. Speaker, I will simply restate the issue as we see it. I am saying that unless there is some type of logical explanation—and, Mr. Speaker, let me say why it is important. In any society, one expects that there is going to be at least one person who is going to guard the guards. In our system we know as a fact that from time to time a Minister may go out of line and we look to the Prime Minister, whoever he is, whoever he may be, to keep that Minister in check.

Hon. Member: Absolutely.

Mr. Valley: In other words, in our system, Mr. Speaker, I see it as a responsibility of the Prime Minister to ensure that a Minister who crosses the line is disciplined. I was extremely worried, or perturbed, perhaps, is the better word, by the editorial in Wednesday's *Express*, which spoke about what happened in the House with the Minister of Finance and then went on to point out that he is not alone. What I am saying, Mr. Speaker, is that unless we are careful as leaders in this society, then there will be a perception out there and we need to take stock at this time.

The whole purpose of this motion is really to point at the dire economic and social consequences which will flow unless we have a rational explanation of what really transpired in that InnCogen deal. [*Desk thumping*] That is the point, Mr. Speaker. I am not imputing—I do not do that. You know me, Mr. Speaker. I

Inncogen (Unsatisfactory Agreement)
[MR. VALLEY]

Friday, April 23, 1999

do not point fingers. I am not doing that. I am saying that this thing has been going on for too long, some seven months, and we need to hear from the Prime Minister exactly what happened. When one looks at this editorial, Mr. Speaker, and the editorial talks—

Mr. Speaker: Again, you know, if a Member cannot impute certain motives to a Member, surely a newspaper editorial cannot do it. To come and say, “Well look, I ain't saying it, you know, it is an editorial that is saying it, to my mind—

Mr. Hart: That is wrong.

Mr. Speaker. No. I do not think that the Member for Tunapuna ought to question me while I am on my feet. I think that is improper and I will not have it. All I am saying is that we are going to look very carefully at being able to introduce things that you cannot introduce yourself by saying, “I am not saying it, you know, but look what somebody else is saying.” All I am asking is that we be very careful in our introduction of these things. It is like, in law, asking leading questions.

Mr. Valley: I understand. I understand, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Valley: Mr. Speaker, let me, first of all, disabuse your mind because this editorial has nothing to do with corruption. This editorial dealt with telling untruths and allegations of Minister Kuei Tung misleading the House and then it pointed out that it appeared that other Ministers did the same thing. What bothered me in the article, Mr. Speaker, is when the editorial also said that the Prime Minister himself misled Parliament when he said that the Government was not contemplating an extension of the appointment of the Chief of Police. He had to be corrected and he had to be corrected by the Prime Minister of Barbados on another matter. It is a very cynical editorial, Mr. Speaker, and that is the point I am making.

All I am saying is, we need, in our democracy, to send certain signals and if we fail to do that then we must not be surprised when all types of things happen. It does not matter what it is because people have a feeling. It boils down to what I think was said—who was it? I think it was Cypher—“If the priest could play, who is me?” I am trying to make the same point. Without imputing any motives, I am saying that it is needed in this country because without that anything would happen. Mr. Speaker, when a people becomes frustrated, you know, those people

at the margin, one can never really tell how they would react. If the feeling is that our leaders do not care, that they are doing their own thing, that they are, in fact, filling their own pockets, then the feeling of “me too”, it is very easy at the lower levels.

Earlier this afternoon the Minister of Finance came here to attempt to explain away what occurred on the last occasion. I know a while ago you were telling me about going round and round but the Minister attempted to go round and round and, in fact, merely implicated himself much more. Mr. Speaker, I say that type of behaviour can flow from the concept of, “If the priest could play, who is me?” When one considers—understand what has happened, Mr. Speaker.

It seems to me that there are two issues here and I would like to deal with them for two minutes; one is whether the Minister deliberately attempted to misinform the House, but the second and more important issue, to my mind, is the stipend that, in fact, has been paid and is being paid to the Chief Executive Officer of NIB. Mr. Speaker, let us deal with the first issue. The Minister, earlier this afternoon, said, “The Member for St. Ann's East asked one question that I was answering and then it came up”. I just want to refer to it because the point I am making—

Mr. Speaker: InnCogen.

Mr. Valley: I hear you, Mr. Speaker. A central issue that I see coming out of InnCogen is that it is sending certain signals to the society and certain signals to other Ministers of Government with which, if we are not careful, we would have real difficulty.

4.00 p.m

Mr. Speaker, let me just read the InnCogen Motion once more. What the InnCogen motion asks, is:

“Be it resolved that this Honourable House condemn the unsatisfactory manner in which the Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission (TTEC) entered into an Agreement with the firm ‘InnCogen’ for the supply of electricity by InnCogen to TTEC; and

Be it further resolved that this Agreement be voided and that the choice of the provider of the electricity requirement of TTEC be made through the system of public tender.”

I contend, Mr. Speaker, that there are about three issues coming out of this matter. The first is, what I call the dire economic and social consequences that

Inncogen (Unsatisfactory Agreement)
[MR. VALLEY]

Friday, April 23, 1999

flow from the awarding of the contract without the safeguard of the public tendering procedure. We have to understand that this contract is a 30-year contract without public tendering. I draw an example, simply, with what has happened with the cement industry in Trinidad and Tobago.

A few months ago, Trinidad Cement decided that it was going to increase its price—I think they increased it by something like \$35.00, an 18 per cent increase. Some people decided that was publicly unfair. Even after the Minister attempted to talk with Trinidad Cement they would not budge. Some people decided that there is competition, so they are going to bring in cement and sell it at \$28.00. Suddenly, this company who argued for this increase of \$35.00, can now be offering the same cement for \$21.00 or \$22.00.

Honourable Member: \$17.00.

Mr. K. Valley: I understand, \$17.00, or something like that. The point I am making is the importance of competition. As soon as they got some competition they knew that they could reduce their price. I told the Minister earlier that if—I hope it does not happen—for whatever reason, they run the importers out of the market, he should take steps to ensure that there is price control and cement is at a lower price. That is a different issue. I am making the central point of the importance of competition. Because, what has happened in the InnCogen transaction, there was an absence of competition and of the public tendering procedure. What we have, instead, that some people came, pretending that they were getting involved in co-generation, when in fact, they were independent power producers. I think we have gone through that; I do not think we even need to restate the case. It is extremely clear that here you had some persons coming, saying they want to build four plants with a requirement of some 20 megawatts for the four plants and saying: listen, given the minimum sized plant that we can have is some 25 megawatts, we want to sell the excess electricity to your grid, co-generation.

In fact, what has happened, Mr. Speaker, is that up to this day we have none of the plants, in spite of the fact that the Minister gave us the assurance that there was supposed to be some ground-breaking in April of last year. It is now more than one year and twelve days. It was supposed to be April 11, of last year. On the last occasion we heard from the Member for Oropouche, that there was supposed to be a ground-breaking in April, this year. *[Interruption]* April is not finished, you have a few more days. Even so, Mr. Speaker, here you have four plants with a

total requirement of some 20 megawatts, but the plant that is being built is for some 220 megawatts, 10 times the size. So, one sees clearly, you cannot be talking about in excess of 200 megawatts, when your own requirement is 20 megawatts.

Understand this. We spoke about the conditions of the contract, the Minister jumped and told us that it is the same thing as PowerGen, and that is the give away, Mr. Speaker, because the fundamental difference between PowerGen and InnCogen, is that one came as an IPA, subject to public tendering, while the other came as the co-generation. While one, correctly, would use an IPA contract for PowerGen, one cannot use an IPA contract for InnCogen. Because, if you are talking about co-generation, if you come to me and say: fellow, I want you to buy my excess, then you cannot come and tell me about “take or pay;” you cannot come and ask me to have somebody guarantee your obligations. [*Desk thumping*]. You are telling me, “Do me a favour. I have my own requirements here, but I have some excess and I want you to take it from me, please”. Therefore, you should give me a very good price. You should price it at marginal cost, first of all, and do not tell me anything about take or pay, or 99 years’ commitment.

That is quite different, Mr. Speaker, where T&TEC has a requirement and, says listen: “I do not want to build plants, and so forth, I want to out-source”. That is the new thing in town—out-sourcing—no problem. “So, I want to find somebody out there who would take on the responsibility of supplying me with what I want, electricity generation. I do not want plants and that sort of thing; I do not want that headache. I simply want electricity generation. That is what I want”. And T&TEC goes out, rather than borrowing money, or using its own equity to build a plant, they gave somebody else that problem of getting the equipment. Obviously, the person who is coming into a country and looking at T&TEC’s situation would say: “Yes, we need a Government guarantee, it has to be ‘take or pay’, because you are my only purchaser”. It is not a situation where you are selling excess; it is now, you want me to supply you; you are my main purchaser. So, it is quite different. That is an IPA. That is why it is important that such an arrangement be bounded by public tendering. [*Desk thumping*]

I would agree with the Member for Tobago East, that the public tendering procedure may not be foolproof, but I would guarantee that it has to be 100 per cent better, in terms of assuring the best price possible under a transaction, than the rules of a co-generation that turns into an IPA.

Mr. Speaker, when one looks at the information, and one sees that T&TEC knew clearly what it had to do, that T&TEC was following along a certain course

Inncogen (Unsatisfactory Agreement)
[MR. VALLEY]

Friday, April 23, 1999

which was derailed by the Government and, in fact, when we see certain information concerning the relationship between certain high functionaries of that Government and this individual, we have to ask questions, and unless there is a rational explanation, those questions; would not go away. We need answers, Mr. Speaker. *[Desk thumping]* What is the reason for failing to use the tried and tested system of public tendering for this IPA?

When I speak about public dire economic consequences, if you look at the terms of this agreement, first of all, let us examine this concept of “take or pay”. We have seen what is happening already with respect to some of the large users of electricity: the ISPAT plant, NUCOR, and a number of others which are now on the back burner. When one sees that and one considers—like my colleague from Diego Martin West, he made the point when he spoke—if in fact there is a “take or pay” with InnCogen, remember, there is also “take or pay” with PowerGen.

4.10 p.m.

Who are they going to cut back? The firm in which they have a 51 per cent ownership, or one owned by their friend? But it is no longer owned by the friend. He has gone already. He got his 5 per cent—\$30 million—and has gone.

In addition to the fact that T&TEC may now be burdened with having to pay for something it cannot use which, of course, really means the ordinary citizen—Mr. Speaker, you and I—having to pay for that, one cannot be assured that the price given is the best because of the absence of competition. More than that, while under the PowerGen agreement the commitment is for 15 years, in this case, it is for a 30-year period. But, even more than that, the Government is under an obligation for some 99 years; the earlier of 99 years, or whenever InnCogen were to leave Trinidad.

So, when we looked at this transaction and saw clearly that it makes no economic sense, we had to ask, really, what was the rationale? Why did we get involved in this transaction? What were the mitigating circumstances? I submit, Mr. Speaker, that unless there is that rational explanation we would face social consequences also. As I said, Cypher had it right: “If the priest could play, who is me?” *[Desk thumping]* I was merely making the point that what we see happening with the Minister of Finance, or what we see happening at NIPDEC, is simply a case of, “if the priest could play, I will play too. *[Desk thumping]*”

Mr. Speaker, look at what has happened at NIPDEC. I have to come back to that, because I am saying that is a direct consequence of transactions such as

InnCogen. From the information that is available, we have an individual who is the Chief Executive Officer of NIB, the Executive Director who is also a Board Director of the subsidiary, NIPDEC. Here on September 10, 1998 the Board is telling him to assist, to act as the liaison, as it were, with the Acting Chief Executive Officer of NIPDEC, and the Board giving the Chairman of NIPDEC the authority to fix the stipend of this Chief Executive Officer.

The Chief Executive Officer of NIB earns, I am informed, a basic salary of \$25,000, he gets as a company car, he has entertainment allowance and a housing allowance. Okay? So, he has that, and in those jobs, Mr. Speaker, one works full-time in the employ of the company. When I came back home on a contract that is what my contract told me. So, I just had to work. He is supposed to be that liaison with NIPDEC, the Chairman is to approve the salary and the stipend, and the Chairman informs the Chief Executive Officer to pay him \$15,000 per month on top of his basic salary. Do you understand?

Dr. Rowley: Much more than the Prime Minister.

Mr. K. Valley: Poor fella! I have a letter dated January 13, 1999 that I will now read:

“The Board at its 185th meeting held on Thursday, September 10, 1998, agreed that a monthly stipend of *Fifteen Thousand Dollars* (\$15,000.00) be paid to Mr. Trevor Romano, who is the Board’s Liaison. The appointment is effective September, 1998.

As a consequence, kindly prepare a cheque in the amount of Sixty Thousand Dollars (\$60,000.00) which represents payment for the months September to December, 1998.

The relevant Memorandum from the Chairman, dated 13th January, 1999, is attached.

In addition, please make arrangements to ensure that the monthly payment is processed when salaries are prepared.”

Then, the next letter here signed by the Chairman, Edward Bayley says:

“The Board at its 85th meeting held on Thursday, September 10, 1999, agreed that the Chairman would determine the stipend to be paid to the Director, acting in the capacity of the Board's Liaison.

In this regard, a monthly stipend of *Fifteen Thousand Dollars* (\$15,000.00) should be paid from the month of September.

Inncogen (Unsatisfactory Agreement)
[MR. VALLEY]

Friday, April 23, 1999

Please be guided accordingly.”

Mr. Speaker, understand what has happened. More importantly, this letter is stamped “paid”, so that for all practical purposes, it was paid. The question asked in March by my colleague from St. Anns East was:

“26. **Mr. Kenneth Valley** (*Diego Martin Central*) on behalf of Mr. Martin Joseph asked the Minister of Finance:

- (a) Will the Minister advise the House whether the Board of the National Insurance Property Development Company Limited (NIPDEC) has assigned one of its members direct responsibility for overseeing the Northern Construction Limited, Yorke Structures Limited, and Coosal's Construction Company Limited (NYC) contract between NIPDEC and NYC at the airport?
- (b) If the answer to the above is in the affirmative, will the Minister:
 - i. Name the board member, and state the level of remuneration being paid by NIPDEC to the member; and
 - ii. Inform the House whether this individual is otherwise employed, the nature of this other employment and the level of remuneration he/she receives related to the other employment?”

And what the Minister said that afternoon, basically, was that nobody was employed.

Mr. Speaker: I am really trying very hard to see how far we could really justify your winding that into your reply on this. Really, I am having difficulty, because I did not stop you if you were saying, “Well, the whole point is that these are things we must look at,” but to go into detail on a statement which a Minister gave today and the question which arose sometime ago, I honestly do not think that this is how it should be done. We are still on the question with respect to InnCogen and T&TEC.

Mr. K. Valley: Mr. Speaker, I am guided again, because the only point I really wanted to make is that unless we are careful at the very top, we are going to have a “me too” attitude following, and I am making the point that this “me too” attitude appears to be popping up at different points. That is the only point I want to make, and I am merely using that as one example because there are one or two other examples I would give.

You are right. I ought not to dwell too much on this to go into detail. I simply want to ask the question of the national community: Is it right that an individual who is the Executive Director—the CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER of a parent company—for the board of a subsidiary, the Chairman of the Board at that—interfering really with small people's pension, because that is what NIB is—should favour this individual by giving him a stipend equal to 60 per cent of his basic salary for acting as a liaison?

When we go a little deeper, Mr. Speaker, we see that this individual is the person who signed the airport contract on behalf of NIPDEC. When everybody was asking who signed the airport contract, the Minister of Works and Transport said, “Not me!” but we find out that this is the individual who signed that contract. So, we have all types of questions coming up. I am making the simple point that enough is enough. Let us put a stop to it and get back on due course before we go down that slippery slope of corruption.

The Member for Tobago East said that we are always talking about corruption, but the thing has reared its ugly head to such an extent that we have to deal with it, and I support him in his call for strengthening the integrity legislation. The Minister of Trade and Industry will tell you that as a member of his committee, I was strongly in support of integrity legislation. The Attorney General will tell you that only two weeks ago I told him that he better come with integrity legislation soon, otherwise, I would be filing a question in the House asking what the Government is doing with the Green Paper report which we did some time ago. So, I am all for strengthening integrity legislation.

We have to call a stop, and I am asking Members on the other side, Members of the Government, whether they are aware of this situation. Mr. Speaker, that Minister is very slippery. *[Mr. Speaker rises]* Sorry about that. I take it back. *[Laughter]* The point I am making is that concerning the Winsure transaction, I do not know what he told this Cabinet, but he has an ability to tell people all types of things and they believe him. He went to the Cabinet and gave them a nice “cock and bull” story on this issue and it was as though they believed.

Friend, the question my colleague asked was extremely general. He asked if any payment was made at all, and the fellow said “no”! That is what he, in fact, said in this House, and now it is clear that this gentleman has been getting 60 per cent of his basic salary in addition to a stipend, and when it comes out that he is the person who signed that NYC contract, the question is—and we must ask—“Is

Inncogen (Unsatisfactory Agreement)
[MR. VALLEY]

Friday, April 23, 1999

it a pay back?" We must ask that, Mr. Speaker. If that is so, what is the message we are sending to our young people? *[Desk thumping]*

I will give another example. The sheriff—

Mr. Speaker: You could not have been referring to somebody in the House?

Mr. Valley: I am sorry, Mr. Speaker. No, Sir. I am merely referring to someone who described himself as a sheriff outside of the House. But the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre, as the Minister of Local Government—I want to read a letter that is supposedly signed by that Minister. This letter is addressed to Mr. Raman Mahabir, the Chief Executive Officer of the Tunapuna Regional Corporation:

“Dear Sir,

Recently, the Tunapuna Corporation undertook repaving works on Pinto Road. Please ensure the contractor is paid for the project.

Also, a request was made to repave Goya road. This work is still outstanding. Please pave this road immediately.

Funds for the above mentioned roads are available under Unspent Balances.”

Mr. Speaker: The Member is sure he is still on InnCogen?

Mr. Valley: I am. Let me try to explain the point I am making. As I said, I merely want to show two examples where I am saying that unless we deal with this, unless we put this back on track, unless we void this contract and do the normal public tendering, the "me too" syndrome will worsen. And I am saying that we need to stop it, because there seems to be evidence of this "me too" attitude already. I gave one example with NIPDEC and I am now dealing with one having to do with the Minister of Local Government. That is the context in which I am drawing reference as an example to support my general point that there might be a "me too" syndrome pervading the Government.

4.25 p.m.

The point I want to make here is that the Minister—this is the talk about decentralization out there. He is paving roads, giving contracts to contractors and then instructing the CEO to pay them. With that, Mr. Speaker the award of contracts is the preserve of the council, but that is not happening. The Minister is awarding contracts to his friends and then instructing—not the Chairman of the Corporation, he misquotes section 269 of the Act from time to time. Even under

that section if he has to speak with anybody, he has to speak with the council, but he does not do that. He instructs the CEO and Mr. Speaker, there are stories. I shall not go into those stories. All I am saying is that these are merely two examples of the “me too”: if the priest is playing, I would play too. That is the tune that I see coming out of the Government and I am saying unless we are careful we are going to have more of it.

In other words, even those who are, today, upright will say: “Boy, you know, if everybody doing it who is me.” You understand? That is what I see happening in our country, Mr. Speaker. *[Interruption]*

So that as yet, we have no rationale for this contract. It does not play with economic sense, and the social consequences are grave so that even at this time, I want once more, to ask the Government to provide the country with a logical basis for the award of this contract without the public tendering procedure, failing which, as the motion calls for, that the contract be voided and that we go out immediately for IPA to satisfy the requirements of T&TEC.

Mr. Speaker, given the rules used for the award of this contract, the society and definitely the next government must be able to pay *non est factum*, as the Latins would say. That is how you say it?—*non est factum*: It is not my deed. I thought I was entering a co-generation agreement and getting excess. I did not know that I was getting involved in IPA.

I am telling you, while the Minister of Public Utilities went to lengths to quote the Attorney General, stating that he gave the contract a clean bill of health, I do not think that the Attorney General knew that, in fact, he was given a sleight of hand. That is the basic thing with this contract as my colleague mentioned; it is the process. I think here on page 5, where the Member for Caroni East—Mr. Speaker, I wish to read from page 2 of the Attorney General’s opinion and he goes on to make the point that the Attorney General has given the okay to the agreement.

Mr. Speaker, I submit that that opinion does not deal with the basic issues of whether what was contemplated was finally obtained.

I go back again to the Minister of Public Utilities, when in his contribution he clearly stated—he is asking the Acting General Manger of T&TEC writing Mr. Paladino the Executive Vice-President of York Industries and it states quite clearly on the headline: “Purchase of Excess Capacity from Co-generation Facility.”

This was in a letter dated January 13, 1997. So that what was contemplated, at least, by T&TEC was the purchase of excess capacity from a co-generating

Inncogen (Unsatisfactory Agreement)
[MR. VALLEY]

Friday, April 23, 1999

facility—not, as the contract points out, that T&TEC must buy all or substantially all of the capacity of InnCogen. So that you would move from excess capacity, begging T&TEC to take up the little bit I have extra, after I have satisfied my own requirement of their plant, to making the contract one of all or substantially all of the capacity of InnCogen. So I am saying *non est factum*. It is not what I contemplated at all!

Dr. The Hon. Job: Either you heard, or it is what I would have it mean.
[Laughter]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the sitting is suspended for half an hour. [Desk thumping].

4.30 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.06 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Mr. Speaker: Was the Member for Diego Martin Central finished?

Mr. Valley: No, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. R. L. Maharaj: The Member for Diego Martin Central said he was going to be some time again.

Mr. Speaker: There is no extension on replies.

Hon. R. L. Maharaj: Then finish your reply.

Mr. Speaker: That is an interpretation which I have looked at very carefully, and I dealt with that with the Government which had tried to reply once on something.

Mr. Valley: I am guided, Mr. Speaker. If that is so, I think I had five minutes more. Let me find where I was.

The point I think is critical in this Motion is the process through which InnCogen became the preferred company to receive this contractual arrangement with Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission (TTEC), and what I see as the economic and social consequences flowing out of this. In my argument, I suggested there were quite a number of things wrong with this transaction.

Firstly, although InnCogen claimed to be a cogenerator, we saw clearly that its own requirements for its four plants, even if they are built with merely 20—25

megawatts while the plant size is some 220 megawatts, I have argued that one cannot, in such circumstance, consider 200 megawatts to be excess capacity. If the requirement were 200 megawatts, and the plant size was 220, then obviously, the 20 would have been considered excess and they would then have qualified as a co-generator. As a co-generator, one cannot be entitled to the contractual provisions that an IPA would require because we are talking about two different things.

In one case, we are talking about an individual or a company that is really asking someone or a utility to take my excess. In the other case, it is the utility seeking someone to provide electricity generation. In other words, they are outsourcing that requirement rather than financing it on their own. They are having someone else do that financing, someone else own the plant and so forth, and they are simply buying the electricity. In such a case, obviously, a seller would require strict contractual terms especially when he is dealing outside his host country and also dealing especially with a state company, and that is not the case that InnCogen said it was coming with. In fact, it said it was coming with co-generation.

Secondly, we saw clearly that the Government resisted the efforts of TTEC to link the plant with the power plant. TTEC made the point very early that if it is coming as a co-generator, then one ought to see a clear linking with its building of those plants and the power plant. Government resisted that, it was Cabinet's decision that instructed TTEC to delink that arrangement.

Mr. Speaker, we can compare what has happened in this transaction with what happened with the arrangement with respect to the post office, where the same Minister of Public Utilities found it useful to have a committee, a public tendering procedure, and do the thing in a transparent and legally acceptable way. One wonders if the Minister is aware that that is the proper way to do such a transaction, why did he choose this method in this instance if there is nothing to hide?

Thirdly, we see clearly that the whole concept of co-generation was meant to get a favoured friend in a preferred position, when we consider that on February 6, 1998, the Minister informed us that two of the plants would have their groundbreaking ceremony since April of last year and up to this time, nothing has happened; and when coupled with the delinking of the plant from the power plant, one sees clearly that the intention at all times from the beginning was to favour this particular company. What is worse, while there was InnerCob fronting for InnCogen, we see now that the transaction is wholly with InnCogen and parties of

Inncogen (Unsatisfactory Agreement)
[MR. VALLEY]

Friday, April 23, 1999

InnerCob have no shareholdings whatsoever. The 5 per cent shareholding which they had, they have gone with it and it seems they have collected their money and gone.

One can also look at the arrangement with InnerCob on the Caroni (1975) Limited lands where they got some 80 acres at substantially below market value when their own requirements for their fourth plant, by their own admission, is simply for some eight acres.

Finally, I repeat that unless we take steps to have that contract voided, we would be sending an extremely dangerous signal to the population of Trinidad and Tobago. I noted some examples where one feels that the whole tone of Government's activity is taking a colouring that cannot be considered to be in the best interest of Trinidad and Tobago. I give an example with respect to what has happened at NIPDEC and also the action of the Minister of Local Government with respect to the Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation where in fact, he seems to be favouring certain contractors and directing the PEU to effect payment.

Unlike my colleague, the Member for Tobago East, I do not see this Motion a simple one. I see it as talking about our way of life in Trinidad and Tobago, unless the correction—and I do not think it is too late to make that correction and get back on course or we would go down the slippery slope of some of our South American neighbours.

I ask my colleagues on the other side, those who still believe in morality in public affairs, those who are supporting the strengthening of the integrity legislation, to counsel their colleagues and to assist the Opposition in getting the Government back on course.

Thank you.

ADJOURNMENT

The Attorney General (Hon. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj): Mr. Speaker, may I mention that the Government intends to exercise its right to reply on this matter which we would do on the next occasion because I propose to move the adjournment of the House.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the House do now stand adjourn to Monday, April 26, 1999 at 10.30 a.m. May I say that on that day the Government intends not to stand in the path in which these Bills were laid in the House today. I spoke to the Opposition Chief Whip and we would go through all the stages of Bill No.

Adjournment

Friday, April 23, 1999

2 on the Supplemental Order Paper, the National Insurance (Amdt.) Bill, Old Age Pensions (Amdt.) Bill and the Public Assistance (Amdt.) Bill. In place of the Forests and Sawmills Bill which I indicated to the Opposition Chief Whip that we were going to do, following consultation, we would then do the Venture Capital (Amdt.) Bill which is very short, and then continue debate on the Constitution (Amdt.) Bill.

Mr. Speaker, it seems that the three bills: the National Insurance (Amdt.) Bill, Old Age Pensions (Amdt.) Bill and the Public Assistance (Amdt.) Bill may be by agreement. I was just throwing out that suggestion.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, before we get to the Motion for the adjournment, I wish to advise that there are five matters in respect of which leave had been granted to raise them. May I get some indication as to how many we are in a position to do today? The first one on the list is the Member for Toco/Manzanilla, on the mis-spending of public funds. Is he here?

Hon. Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: I therefore call on the Member for Diego Martin West, on the Motion, the failure of the Medical Board to make the medical register available for inspection by the public.

Hon. R. L. Maharaj: I thought we were ready for that one, that is the one we are not ready for because the Minister of Health is not here.

Mr. Speaker: It is an open secret that the Minister of Health is away. I mentioned today that he is excused and the Government indicated that it had a problem with respect to dealing with that today.

Dr. Keith Rowley: Is there not somebody acting for the Minister of Health?

Mr. Speaker: Somebody may be acting, in circumstances like that can it be dealt with on Monday?

Dr. Rowley: No, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Do you want to make it and have someone respond to it?

Dr. Rowley: Yes, I would like to make it—if that is okay with Members.

Mr. Speaker: If there is agreement of the House with respect to that we would allow it.

5.20 p.m.

**Medical Register
(Availability of)**

Dr. Keith Rowley (*Diego Martin West*): Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I will come straight to the point and I sincerely hope that when the Government responds, the problem I seek to address will be addressed once and for all. As you know, I raised this matter at another time in this House not too long ago, that there seems to be some difficulty with this agency complying with the provisions of the law under which the agency is established.

As you would know, the Medical Board Act, section 10(1) requires that the Medical Board shall keep a register of all the practitioners of medicine in Trinidad and Tobago. In simple language, that means a book in which the names, qualifications and other relevant data of all the doctors who are authorized to practise any aspect of medicine in Trinidad and Tobago, that record be checked. Section 10(4) of that law says that such a register which is required to be kept, must be available to the public at all times, and on the payment of a fee of \$1.00, any member of the public at any reasonable time must be able to peruse that register if such a person requires to do such. That is very simple and it is a matter of law.

I had the unpleasant experience in pursuing my duty as a Member of Parliament, investigating a matter of great concern to me and I dare say the national community, I heard that the medical register was not being made available to the public. I did not, contrary to impressions raised here this afternoon by those who seek to extricate themselves from their own quagmire, act irresponsibly or act on hearsay, I went in person to Mount Hope to seek to look at the register myself and I was denied access to the register. I thought that even if there were some carryings on which allowed this to happen, I indicated to the persons there the seriousness of the situation and the fact that it was a breach of the law of Trinidad and Tobago. I went away at 11.30 giving them time to rethink their position and I returned at 2.30 to once again be confronted with a denial of access to the register, as I am entitled to under law.

I know of other persons, including members of the media—even after I raised this matter here in the House, I would have thought that the persons involved in running the organization and I dare say, one of my esteemed colleagues, my

friend from Barataria/San Juan is a member of the Medical Board. In fact, it is on his signature that the register is being denied to me and the public.

Hon. Member: Imagine that!

Dr. K. Rowley: I would have thought that since he sat here and heard the concerns that I raised, that action would have been taken to make the register available so when the media went after, having been alerted by me, members of the media were confronted with the same denial of access.

I simply want to ask: Why is the Medical Board of Trinidad and Tobago not complying with the law? I ask further: What does the Medical Board of Trinidad and Tobago have to hide? Because, by the simple fact of the Medical Board hiding the register, the perception is being given that those persons whose names ought to be there, there is something to hide. All our doctors should be concerned about this because the public could come to the conclusion that maybe my doctor, or your doctor, or some doctor who is on that register, or who ought to be on that register, for some reason somebody who should or should not be there is hiding something.

What bothered me most in pursuing this matter is that one of the things I raised here in that Motion that brought this whole thing about was the qualification of a particular doctor. I raised the qualification of a particular doctor and I demonstrated to this House that the laws of Trinidad and Tobago made provision for qualifications to be entered on the register, but there are certain *caveats* and one of those is that a qualification shall be entered only if such a qualification is accredited in the country of origin. I also demonstrated that an officer of the state, at least one part of his qualification was not accredited in the country of origin and I asked whether, in fact, such a qualification was entered on our register, contrary to our laws.

Two Government spokesmen spoke and none answered. What I found is that in recent days as I filed this Motion, I understand that the medical register has now been made available at least to one person, or to 10 people. I sent someone there and the register is now being made available. I do not know if this means that the register is made available under the conditions of law which is "at all reasonable times to all persons", but the great thing and what concerns me most, is now that I have had partial access of some sort, I have discovered that the Medical Board does, in fact, have something to hide.

Mr. Hinds: Tell us. What is it?

Dr. K. Rowley: Because the matter that I raised about the qualification of a Government officer who claims to have a Ph.D. which I demonstrated in this House was bought at a place in the United States which is not accredited, the register is now made available and on the register is no mention of that particular qualification which I raised in the debate. So, one is led to believe that quite correctly, that qualification was never on the register.

But, Mr. Speaker, lo and behold, appearing in my possession is a letter from the Secretary of the Medical Board addressed to Professor Chandu Lal telling him that:

“It is a pleasure that the Council of the Medical Board of Trinidad and Tobago informs you that your Ph.D. Forensic Pathology...”

The very one that I demonstrated was bought in the United States, the Medical Board is saying to him:

“...is recognized as a specialist status.”

It goes on to say:

“Your name has been entered on the list of specialists of the Register of Medical Practitioners in accordance with section 10(1) of the Medical Board Act.

s/ Secretary,

Medical Board”

If you go to the register now, there is no sign of this degree on the medical register.

Today, I want the Government to explain to me why an agency like the Medical Board is co-operating with an individual to perpetrate a fraud on the public. Because, for a start, he is being addressed by the medical board as Professor Chandu Lal. He has no chair anywhere in the world—he never had—but he is being addressed as he was in the court, as Professor Chandu Lal. The letter says: your name has been entered on the register but you go there now and the register does not have it.

If this can happen with one doctor, the questions that arise are: Who took it off? Why? And, is it that we can now say that while the register was missing, adjustments were being made to it? Is that the situation? How many other doctors in this country are in this position? This should be of concern to every doctor in Trinidad and Tobago because their integrity is now under question because the

Medical Board of the Trinidad and Tobago is playing games with the register which is supposed to secure the integrity of doctors in Trinidad and Tobago.

So, today, I ask the Government of Trinidad and Tobago: Why is the Medical Board not making the register available in compliance with the law? And further, why is the Medical Board of the Trinidad and Tobago associating itself, contrary to the laws of Trinidad and Tobago, with fraudulent qualifications which we know are not worthy of being put on the register? Even after the board wrote to the individual to create that situation, I want to ask the circumstances under which this letter is not reflected on the register.

Mr. Speaker, this kind of thing has serious consequences and I would like to hear the Government's response and the Government's commitment that the medical register will be made available as per section 10(4) of the Medical Board Act and give us an explanation as to what has been going on with the medical register, especially in the case of this particular public officer whose qualifications seem to be going on and off the register, as I have demonstrated.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The misspending of public funds at the Sangre Grande Regional Corporation with respect to funds paid to maxi-taxi drivers to transport persons to Reinzi Complex, Couva, on Sunday, November 8, 1998. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Roger Boynes (Toco/Manzanilla): Mr. Speaker, actually there are two similar Motions on the Adjournment, one with respect to Reinzi Complex, which I would like to withdraw; and the other with respect to Mid Centre Mall which is the last on the list with which I would like to continue.

Mr. Speaker: Could I then suggest that you proceed with the deplorable condition of the Turure Road made unbearable by the heavy traffic engaged by the many mining operations in the area.

Turure Road (Deplorable Condition of)

Mr. Roger Boynes (Toco/Manzanilla): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Now, the Turure Road, as we normally call it, is a very important road in the entire constituency of Toco/Manzanilla. As I speak here, there are persons from that particular area who have ventured all the way from the beautiful town of Sangre Grande to grace this honourable House with their presence in order to see that their interests are, in fact, being served.

Turere Road
[MR. BOYNES]

Friday, April 23, 1999

As I was saying, that is a very important road in the entire constituency of Toco/Manzanilla. That particular road leads to several quarries in the area; it leads to the National Quarries Limited and several other large quarries in the constituency of the Toco/Manzanilla. Now, those quarries service many businesses throughout Trinidad and Tobago. Approximately 85 per cent of our houses throughout the length and breadth of Trinidad and Tobago are built from material coming out of that particular area, Turure and, lo and behold, Mr. Speaker, if you were to drive your beautiful Mercedes Benz up that road, I am sure that the very next day or the same day, you will have to take it to the garage.

That particular road is in a very dilapidated condition and moreso, the trucks that use that road night and day continually destroy that particular road. Let me also mention that on Sunday I held a meeting with the residents of that area; approximately 100 persons attended that meeting. There were also Special Branch people who attended that meeting. They probably wanted to find out whether or not I was going to indicate to the people to block the road come Monday morning.

However, Mr. Speaker, as I have always said and, as I said to the persons, all 100 of them, let good sense prevail. It is a vital link to the national community and they should not utilize the process of blocking the road as their first or any approach. So much so that I indicated to them that I would be bringing their concerns to this honourable Parliament and Parliament can then use its teeth to ensure they get their roads repaired.

5.35 p.m.

One of the problems with respect to that road is that when trucks use it, the dust that emanates into the atmosphere affects the residents of that particular area. So much so, that babies have been affected by the dust. They have been sick and hospitalized. Numerous persons have also been affected, health-wise, with respect to the dust emanating from that particular area. Several businesses have had to close down. There is a woman who is trying to have an ice cream parlour and she cannot open her shop, primarily because, she will be selling ice cream and dust. She has had to close down her business.

I am asking this honourable Parliament, through you, to let the people have some sort of comfort and have this matter resolved. It is not as though I am coming here just asking—for instance—the Minister of Works and Transport, through the Member for Fyzabad, through his Parliamentary Secretary, just simply to utilize his office to repair the road and also deal with the dust. I am not simply

doing that as the only course of remedy. I have also written to National Quarries Limited and I have asked them to utilize the same procedure and the same process suggested by the hon. Member for Chaguanas, whereby corporate citizens could adopt areas or poor villages. So, I have asked them—bearing in mind the benefits that they derive from using that particular road; and the residents derive the burden—if they can do what the hon. Member for Chaguanas has indicated, and adopt that particular area or village and take care of the road; ensure that the road is wet so that dust would not affect the residents.

In the past, the road used to be kept wet by National Quarries Limited. When the trucks were passing, the dust would not affect the residents in that particular area. I am asking, Mr. Speaker, even for the Member for Fyzabad to utilize his office to contact National Quarries Limited, to encourage them to adopt the village of Turre so that the National Quarries Limited can, not only benefit from the particular area, but the people as well could benefit.

The quarries are producing the gravel and all materials. They are taking out the materials from the belly of Sangre Grande and environs and taking it either down to Bechtel Atlantic LNG. Mr. Speaker, they are building other places from our raw materials and the people there are suffering. I am simply asking, in the best interest of justice, if the Member for Fyzabad could utilize his office to ensure that the road is paved, fixed and the residents are not affected by the dust. If he can also utilize his good office to kindly get National Quarries Limited and the other quarries in the area to adopt that residence, all will be well and they would have absolutely nothing to fear with respect to the residents acting up again.

I have indicated to the residents that the approach is, to utilize their Member of Parliament to come to the honourable Chamber and appeal to the Member in question, who heads that particular Ministry, and to the national community as a whole. They need assistance. They need your kind intervention, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

The Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Works and Transport (Mr. Chandresh Sharma): Mr. Speaker, let me thank the Member for Toco/Manzanilla for bringing this Motion. Perhaps, it is very instructive to note that since 1946 that area has had a government representative, except for this particular time. Since 1946, starting with Mr. Victor Bryan which was the St. Andrew/St. David/Nariva/Mayaro Regional Corporation then. It was only in 1995

Turere Road
[MR. SHARMA]

Friday, April 23, 1999

that things changed. The Member indicated that this particular road in question is a very important road in Toco. I want to agree with the Member, in fact, every single road is very important to all of us in Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] and in particular to the Ministry of Works and Transport.

The Member further went on to say that materials are taken out of the belly of the area to go to other areas. He might be correct in saying that, but what does he get in return? Let me indicate what has happened in the last three years from the materials taken out from the belly and the returns:

Upper Rio Grande Trace—we have spent in excess of \$3 million;

B1/3 Bridge—over \$5 million;

B1/15 Bridge—\$4.8 million; and

B/3/2 Bridge—in excess of \$3 million.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, only on Friday, the Member for Toco/Manzanilla was involved in the opening of the Valencia Bridge which cost in excess of \$6 million. So, to come here and indicate that nothing is happening is very unfair. The list does not stop there:

Sookoo Trace in excess of \$500,000;

Genda Road in excess of \$800,000;

Boodhoo Trace in excess of \$800,000;

Huggins Trace in excess of \$500,000; and

Haig Trace in excess of \$800,000.

Mr. Speaker, it is very clear that we are very concerned to fix every single road in all of Trinidad and Tobago. In fact, only recently, we did Henry Road and Cherry Ann Avenue. We did the Kiwall Road for in excess of \$2.1 million. The Member for Toco/Manzanilla is very much aware of this. I get so many thank you calls from him. Fishing Pond Road, \$1.6 million; Sangre Grande/Oropouche Road, in excess of \$900,000 and North Eastern Settlement, in excess of \$567,000.

Mr. Speaker, what is very evident from what I have said so far is that the Government is committed to fixing every single road in Trinidad and Tobago. The road that the Member has raised is not an exception. We will fix every single road. Thank you very much. [*Desk thumping*].

San Pablo, Valencia

Friday, April 23, 1999

**San Pablo, Valencia
(Completion of Bridge)**

Mr. Roger Boynes (*Toco/Manzanilla*): Mr. Speaker, with respect to the San Pablo Bridge, I will raise in my contribution the need for the bridge to be completed as quickly as possible; and at the end of my contribution, I will hope that the hon. Member can tell me when the bridge would be completed. He did not tell me when Turure Road would be completed. I want to find out when it would be completed.

Mr. Speaker, the San Pablo Bridge is located in the Valencia area. That San Pablo Bridge connects the estates in San Pablo Road—approximately 25 estates are located in that particular area. The estates produce some of the best vegetables and crops in this country.

They produce cabbages, peppers, cocoa and coffee. Mr. Speaker, that particular area is really the food basket of the region and the beautiful thing about it is that the farmers' market, which is located in the heart of the Valencia region, which we fought so hard to ensure exists in Valencia at the moment, most of the produce from San Pablo Road is utilized in that particular farmers' market. Now some farmers also take their produce into Port of Spain, some go as far as Chaguanas and some will go to Sangre Grande.

5.45 p.m.

The produce there is very good but there is a hole in the centre of San Pablo Road. Do not get me wrong, Mr. Speaker. Moneys have been allocated for repairing that particular bridge. Work on that particular bridge has started since February. Do you know what has happened? The workers from the Sangre Grande Regional Corporation have dug a hole in the centre of the road at the bridge and every time I go there, if I get there after ten o'clock, not a single worker is on site. This has been going on time and time again and the people need to be assured that that bridge is finished before the rainy season begins.

Were the rainy season to start, Mr. Speaker, before that bridge is repaired, do you know what will happen? One young child or two may lose their lives because the river gets very high in that particular area. So I am asking the hon. Minister to utilize his good office to put some pressure on the administration and on his council. Let the council ensure that the bridge is built quickly.

Mr. Speaker, up to recently when I visited there, do you know what the workers told me? They realized that their protest action is getting them no place.

San Pablo, Valencia
[MR. BOYNES]

Friday, April 23, 1999

Now my network is so much at the heart of the constituency, from the time I hear of some action taking place. The people say, “Mr. Boynes, come up here. We need your support.” I have gone up there and met with the workers and when I asked them, “Why are you taking so long to have this bridge repaired” do you know what they told me, Mr. Speaker? They want a jackhammer. Since February they wanted a jackhammer.

We are at the end of April going into May and in this entire country the Sangre Grande Regional Corporation cannot get a jackhammer. Do you know what I have told them? I have told them I am going to raise it in Parliament here. I am also going to lead a delegation to the Minister. I told them, “Do not protest. Do not bu’n any tyre. We want to make sure that we get the job done.” If that fails I am going to make sure that I rent a jackhammer and give it to the workers to use, Mr. Speaker.

I have no difficulty in doing that. But for now, Mr. Speaker, I am asking the Minister to use his good office to ensure that the bridge in that particular area—because children who go to school use that particular bridge. As a matter of fact, there is one jeep on one side of that bridge which brings the farmers' produce to a certain point then there are other vehicles lined up on the other side of the bridge to take the produce from that point to the market. Residents in that area have to pay sometimes \$10.00 or \$15.00 to get a car to take them into that particular road whereas normally they would pay about \$2.00 to go into that particular San Pablo Road.

Mr. Speaker, this is no laughing matter. I am simply asking on behalf of the people in San Pablo Road, in the name of God, that the hon. Minister in charge of that particular bridge use his good office to ensure that the bridge is repaired as expeditiously as possible before the rainy season begins.

Mr. Speaker, the people have also indicated to me that I should use the opportunity to let the Council know that they want their road fixed as well. Their road is in a totally dilapidated condition. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Before we proceed, just for the sake of the record, because it may appear that I was laughing at what you were saying—what was said is, “Mr. Speaker, this is no laughing matter.” I just think that it should be recorded there that what—well, it will be edited, but just for the sake of the record I hope that it was not meaning—

The Minister of Local Government (Hon. Dhanraj Singh): Mr. Speaker, I want to alert this House about the actions of the Member of Parliament for

San Pablo, Valencia

Friday, April 23, 1999

Toco/Manzanilla. He raises these motions whenever he realizes or anticipates that work is going to take place on any project in the district of Sangre Grande. He comes to Parliament and raises these motions so that people will see that he is concerned about them and he is therefore gaining political mileage. He knows full well that work is about to take place on the said San Pablo Bridge. But, Mr. Speaker, the Member for Toco/Manzanilla was Chairman of the Sangre Grande Corporation before coming to this august House and that San Pablo bridge has been in a dilapidated condition for seven years now.

Hon. Member: Shame on you.

Hon. D. Singh: While he was Chairman of the Corporation he had all the resources he needed because he was Chairman of a PNM-controlled corporation at that time and the PNM was in power. Why did he not undertake the work to refurbish the bridge during his tenure?

Hon. Member: Shame, shame.

Hon. D. Singh: Mr. Speaker, we are about to start work on that bridge, again, but I will give you the history behind that in a while. But, Mr. Speaker—
[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please.

Hon. D. Singh: I am speaking about work being done by my Ministry of that Local Government. The hon. Member for Fyzabad spoke about work that the Ministry of Works was doing in the area of Sangre Grande. Millions of dollars were being spent in the area of Sangre Grande but yet, the Member for Toco/Manzanilla would come here—he is so impatient at this point in time. We on this side in Government have to sit and wait. Now and then we will get a road paved here and there and we will be patient, but he is impatient. When the PNM was in power I did not see them expressing any impatience the way they are now.
[*Desk thumping*].

Mr. Speaker, there is a bridge in Sangre Grande called Platanal Bridge. That bridge is 60 years old. Thirty years ago it was closed.

Hon. Member: Under PNM.

Hon. D. Singh: Mr. Speaker, in two weeks' time, under this administration, we will be opening the Platanal Bridge. [*Desk thumping*] What about the farmers living in Platanal who, for all these years have been producing all sorts of

San Pablo, Valencia
[MR. BOYNES]

Friday, April 23, 1999

vegetables and produce from the forest and so forth? The Member for Toco/Manzanilla was not concerned about them. He was Chairman of the Corporation. But, Mr. Speaker, what is also important, this is the first time that Toco/Manzanilla is in Opposition. In the history of this Parliament, several members of Parliament who were in Government, Ministers, represented the Toco/Manzanilla region. Why did they not fix the bridge at that point in time? But he wants this UNC Government—he knows we are working, you know. We will fix everything, Mr. Speaker, and we will give him the jackhammer too. [*Laughter*] [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker: The way you are sounding, it sounded as though you were going to give it to him in the figurative sense.

Hon. D. Singh: Mr. Speaker, I can speak for myself and for Members on this side. Since coming into office, whatever little moneys we get from time to time we are doing work with it. Earlier the Member for Diego Martin Central raised some question about some roads in the Tunapuna area being paved. The Member of Parliament for Tunapuna has been begging the PNM-controlled Tunapuna Regional Corporation to pave the said road. The Chairman of the Corporation does not like the Member for Tunapuna because he figures he has to get rid of him to get his seat.

I therefore, Mr. Speaker, from time to time have had to tell the Corporation to pave a certain road here and there and when the Corporation gets the road paved they do not want to pay the contractor, the contractor bonded by the Central Tenders Board. There is nothing big about that and the Member for Diego Martin Central knows that, yet still he wants to come here and say things and cast aspersions.

Mr. Speaker, besides the Platanal Bridge, the Cumacca Bridge for 18 years has been in a dilapidated state. That has been completed. [*Desk thumping*] Several local government roads have been completed in that area. Sangre Grande has been transformed by the amount of work that has been done. Take, for example, Brierley Street, Picton Road, Ojoe Road, St. Marie Emmanuel Road, Oropouche Road, Juteram Street. Mr. Speaker, the list goes on; Ramnath Terrace, Paul Street, Mary Street, Ramoutar Street, Adventist Street, Railway Road Extension. [*Interruption*].

Yes, Kowlessar Road. He spent half a million dollars recently to pave half of Kowlessar Road but I am coming to fix the other half, do not worry. Old Plum

San Pablo, Valencia

Friday, April 23, 1999

Road, DeGannes and Jawahir Road, La Sierra Road. Oh God, Mr. Speaker, more work than in my constituency; Sahadeen Trace, Beggs Trace and the list goes on; Foster Road, and we are paving, I think George Street now to Monte Cristo Park which will be formally opened next month. Monte Cristo Park, Mr. Speaker, has for years been a political football as he calls it. We have completed it. I understand there are now beautiful fountains in Monte Cristo Park. That is why he is panicking. *[Interruption]* Yes.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, on the question of the San Pablo Bridge, work started last year and, based on representations made by one Mr. Fournilier to stop work so that the farmers could get their produce out, that was taken into consideration. Have you ever head me start anything and not complete it?

Hon. Members: No.

Hon. D. Singh: No. Work was started. Because of representations made by farmers it was stopped. Rain started to fall and the money went back into the Consolidated Fund because the financial year was shortened last year. Work is about to begin on that bridge and we will be completing that work in a few months' time. I can assure the Member for Toco/Manzanilla that work on the bridge will be completed and he will be invited to the opening. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

6.00 p.m.

Sangre Grande Regional Corporation Misappropriation of Funds

Mr. Roger Boynes (*Member for Toco/Manzanilla*): I am glad that I heard the Member finally get to the San Pablo bridge and committed himself in the Parliament, that in a few months' time we would have that particular bridge. But, he also did the same thing when I raised a Motion on the Pt. Cumana pavilion and, up to this day, almost a year now, no work has been done on it. *[Desk thumping]* *[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker: You would recognize the purpose is not to respond to what is gone, but to deal with the mis-spending at this time.

Mr. R. Boynes: I am guided, Mr. Speaker. I wish to raise this Motion on the Adjournment and, how I would commence is that I have a few newspaper articles dated Monday, November 9, 1998. It is called here:

Sangre Grande Regional Corporation
[MR. BOYNES]

Friday, April 23, 1999

“PM calls for boycott BLOWS FOR THE MEDIA ...supporters attack reporters”

It refers to the UNC supporters. It reads:

“UNC supporters surround journalists at the party’s rally at Mid-Centre Mall in Chaguanas yesterday...”

November 8, 1998, *et cetera, et cetera.*

I raise that, because of the fact that maxi-taxi drivers came into my parliamentary office sometime around November 10, 1998, and they indicated to me that they were used by the Sangre Grande Regional Corporation to take UNC supporters, in UNC tee-shirts, to Mid-Centre Mall in Chaguanas on this particular day, Sunday, November 8, Mr. Speaker.

I have here a minute of the Regional Corporation, which also says at paragraph 5:-

“Visit by Honourable Minister, Seminars, Assembly, Transportation, Funding under URP, \$10,000.00”.

It is from that particular expense account, under the URP that the maxi-taxi drivers were paid. What happened is that they were told to make their claims to the Chairman of the Sangre Grande Regional Corporation.

“I hereby submit my claim in the sum of \$180.00 being the cost of transporting passengers to Port of Spain on November 8, 1998, with vehicle number...”

for instance HBA 2756.

Yours respectfully,

Alim E. Mamdee.”

The son of the UNC councillor.

Hon. Member: Corruption, boy!

Mr. R. Boynes: Mr. Speaker, I have all of these claims here. I raised this already with respect to another assembly in Port of Spain. What they told them to do is to make out their claims to Port of Spain, even though they took the UNC supporters to Chaguanas. I am asking the question, what was taking place on Sunday, November 8, in the country? What was taking place was licks like peas for the media. That is what was taking place on November 8 in Chaguanas.

Nothing else was taking place that you had to transport so many UNC supporters. They were transported into Port of Spain and, the maxi-taxi drivers have explained to me that they took them into Mid-Centre Mall, Chaguanas. They came to me because the Sangre Grande Regional Corporation was taking long to pay them. They started cursing on the steps of the Sangre Grande Regional Corporation and they left and came to me asking what they should do. I told them to make sure that they go and ask them for their money, because they have done them a service, so make sure that they get their money. It is a contract and if they have provided a service then they ought to be paid for it, and when they submit their claims to bring a copy of it to me. And they did so.

I am very annoyed, because the last time I raised this with respect to another assembly the UNC had in Port of Spain and, the very said Sangre Grande Regional Corporation transported members to Port of Spain, do you know what we were told? We were told that URP people needed to meet with other URP people, confirming that, yes, they used the money of the Sangre Grande Regional Corporation to transport persons into Port of Spain on a Sunday. URP persons! That is what they said, but it was not URP people, it was UNC people.

Mr. Speaker, the problem with this is that the whole town has a problem with this, because they cannot fix the San Pablo bridge, but yet they are taking \$10,000.00, more or less, to pay persons to go into Mid-Centre Mall Chaguanas, where blows for the media were taking place. We of the area have a problem with that, because the two-way road needs repairing and the council is wasting taxpayers' money. We of Sangre Grande have a problem with that.

We are from one of the poorest areas in the whole country. We have no factories there. Because of good representation by the "Marshall", that is why I am forcing them to do what I want them to do, and they will make sure that they have the roads fixed.

I am going to ensure that this Motion on the adjournment I am raising—mis-spending of public funds—be referred to the Public Accounts Committee and, I would ask the Member for Couva South, the Attorney General, to investigate this matter. This is high class abuse of public funds.

Hon. Member: Corruption.

Mr. Roger Boynes: We need the money in that particular area, Mr. Speaker, in order that we may have our roads fixed, because, as I mentioned earlier, we are

Sangre Grande Regional Corporation
[MR. BOYNES]

Friday, April 23, 1999

from a very poor area and we need every cent to be spent properly in the Sangre Grande Regional Corporation. I thank you, Sir.

The Minister of Local Government (*Hon. Dhanraj Singh*): Mr. Speaker, I sat here listening to the Member for Toco/Manzanilla. He is concerned about mis-spending and misuse of public funds. I am glad that he did not have the privilege, the honour, or the avenue to say that there was any mis-spending in all the roads, or all the bridges that we fixed for that area, costing millions of dollars, but rather, he is focusing on \$180.00, as he said, in his own words, for a maxi-taxi transporting people whom he assumes are UNC activists. I do not know today, who is a UNC activist, and who is not. On that side—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker: There may be some of us who are not interested in the answer, but the reporter is, and I am. So, I ask those who are not interested, please, to take it easy. We are entitled to hear the reply as, indeed, we were entitled to hear the matter raised, please.

Hon. D. Singh: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Nobody can say who is UNC and who is PNM, today. On that side, half of them are UNC, *[Laughter]* including the Member for Toco/Manzanilla.

On the question of misuse of public funds, I wish to remind the Member about the Monte Cristo Park. When we went into office, work was going on in the Monte Cristo Park. There were no drawings, or plans; nobody could have picked up any document saying what quantity of work was done. Contracts approved by the chairman, who was the then Member for Toco/Manzanilla, were signed, approved, or said to have been given, but there were no real contract documents—so to speak—and, moreover, they were contracts that went outside of his limit. I went in there and I said: Look, we want to do this park for the people of Sangre Grande. All the misuse—he sat down there quietly—and he is one of the persons guilty of misuse of public funds in Sangre Grande.

6.10 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: I wish that the hon. Member would retract that, because it sounds very much to me as an implication against the hon. Member, and I pointed out earlier today that whatever happened in the past, we will have none of that.

Hon. D. Singh: Mr. Speaker, I withdraw it. The funds were misappropriated in that project, and if I had pursued it, I would have been able to nail somebody! *[Laughter]*

Mr. Speaker, since the Unemployment Relief Programme has been transferred to the Ministry of Local Government, the Ministry has instituted a policy of accountability and transparency to ensure that all citizens obtain value for their money, equality of treatment, and that services are provided in an efficient and effective manner.

The Member for Toco/Manzanilla seems to be in a quandary as to where the maxi-taxi took the people. He read it out, in the first instance, that they went to Port of Spain, but he had another Motion that he withdrew earlier where he was saying that there was the misuse of funds for transporting people to Rienzi Complex on the same day! So, either they went to Rienzi Complex, Port of Spain, or as far as Chaguanas! *[Laughter]* So, he has to make up his mind, and in that scenario, the corporation has advised that the people in question were transported to a meeting place where they could showcase their accomplishments under the Unemployment Relief Programme. *[Laughter]* *[Desk thumping]*

Mr. Speaker, I am once again begging, through you, Sir, for respect for our local government bodies. Allow them the autonomy to implement their duties and provide effective and efficient services to all areas of Trinidad, including the area of Toco/Manzanilla. I hope that the Member for Toco/Manzanilla will not continue to fight the Sangre Grande Regional Corporation or bring spurious allegations against them. The success of that corporation is essential for the development of the region.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 6.13 p.m.