

Leave of Absence

Friday, January 28, 2000

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, January 28, 2000

The House met at 1.34 p.m.

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I wish to advise that I have received communication from the Member for Port of Spain South who has asked to be excused from today's sitting. I had also received communication from the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West who had asked to be excused up to February 12, 2000. The leave of absence which they both seek has been granted.

PAPER LAID

Annual Report 1998 of the Controller, Intellectual Property Office. [*The Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs (Hon. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj)*]

**CITRUS BLACK FLY INFESTATION
(CONTROL OF)**

The Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources (Hon. Trevor Sudama): Mr. Speaker, I take this opportunity to inform this Parliament of the current programme of the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources for management of the Citrus Black Fly infestation problem.

The citrus industry is a significant contributor to the agricultural sector. There are approximately 1,125 farmers in Trinidad who cultivate an estimated 2,800 hectares in the citrus sector. Employment in the industry is estimated—
[*Interruption*]

MEDIA REPRIMAND

Mr. Speaker: It seems as though at every sitting it is necessary for me to enter into reprimand with the members of the media with respect to things that should not happen in this House. I am afraid that one is going to have to revisit the circumstances in which you are allowed to come in here and perform.

I ask you please to observe the courtesies that should be observed in this House.

**CITRUS BLACK FLY INFESTATION
(CONTROL OF)**

The Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources (Hon. Trevor Sudama): Mr. Speaker, employment in the industry is estimated at between 1,500—2,000 persons. The industry has experienced positive growth over the past 10 years with production increasing from 2,814 tonnes in 1990 to 12,361 tonnes in 1999. During 1999, the industry contributed approximately \$15.7 million to agricultural GDP in real terms.

It is, therefore, of critical concern to the agricultural sector and this Government that the threat posed by this pest be minimized or nullified in the shortest possible time.

The Citrus Black Fly is a major pest of citrus and also of several fruit tree crops including avocado, banana, cashew, coffee, mango, papaya and guava. This pest has been reported in the Caribbean as early as 1913 when it was first found in Jamaica. It has subsequently spread throughout North, Central and South America and the Caribbean and was first observed in Trinidad in 1997 with official confirmation by the International Institute of Entomology in February, 1998. To date, Citrus Black Fly has not been confirmed in Tobago.

This pest can cause serious losses to citrus with an estimated reduction in yield of up to 80 per cent. Large colonies of immature stages of the insect are found on the underside of leaves and even on fruits resulting in entire orchards appearing black in colour.

Recent response initiatives by the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources have included a preliminary survey to ascertain the present distribution of this pest. To date, Citrus Black Fly has been positively confirmed throughout most commercial citrus orchards and backyard trees along the East/West Corridor, Cumuto, Talparo, Todds Road and in South Trinidad. Citrus nurseries have also been adversely affected.

The Citrus Black Fly is therefore now the most important pest affecting citrus and without prompt islandwide intervention will cause the demise of the entire citrus industry. It is also anticipated that with the increasing levels of pest infestations within our orchards, citrus production for the 2000 harvest and beyond will be adversely affected.

To address this threat, the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, together with Caroni (1975) Limited and the Co-operative Citrus Growers Association have developed a sustainable, long-term integrated pest

management for the control of the Citrus Black Fly. This programme involves several components including:

- (a) the conduct of islandwide surveys
- (b) the introduction of natural enemies
- (c) training of staff for the mass production facilities for natural enemies
- (d) establishment of mass production facilities for natural enemies
- (e) a public awareness campaign
- (f) training in biosystematics.

Citrus Black Fly has previously been successfully managed within the region through classical biological control involving the introduction of parasitoid insects.

Mr. Speaker, in response to the challenge of the Citrus Black Fly, the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources has also agreed to collaborate with the Centre for Agriculture and Biosciences International (CABI) for execution of activities into the introduction of natural enemies and establishment of mass production facilities.

The Centre for Agriculture and Biosciences International is the premier institution involved in integrated pest management strategies with strengths in biological control. Following the international guidelines as set out in the Code of Conduct for the introduction and release of Exotic Biological Agents, CABI will provide technical assistance in the following areas:-

- preparation of dossiers on candidate parasitoids.
- quarantining of these parasitoids
- establishment of cultures of the parasitoids in Trinidad
- initiation of releases of the parasitoids into infested citrus orchards
- staff training in parasitoid taxonomy and rearing techniques

The Centre for Agriculture and Biosciences International has had a proven track record in the area of biological control for many years and had assisted the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources with the biological control of the Hibiscus Mealybug in 1995—1996 through the importation of exotic insect species. The Centre for Agriculture and Biosciences International is thus highly qualified to carry out the activities as listed above.

Citrus Black Fly Infestation (Control of)
[HON. T. SUDAMA]

Friday, January 28, 2000

The Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources has also requested technical assistance in the execution of its long-term integrated pest management programme for the Citrus Black Fly from the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation in Agriculture (IICA) specifically in the area of training.

In the 1999/2000 Development Programme Estimates, no funds were allocated to control the Citrus Black Fly. However, following an approach by the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, Cabinet has agreed to provide funds to the extent of \$314,500 in the first instance, through virement from other allocations. These funds will be expended in the following manner:

- (i) initial payment of \$177,188.00 to the consultants;
- (ii) the payment of \$80,038.00 or the lesser sum as assessed as due and payable for Phase II of this project from March 2000 to June 2000; and
- (iii) the funding of public awareness programmes on the biological control of the Citrus Black Fly costing \$57,000.

Mr. Speaker, my ministry has already prepared technical guidelines to assist our citrus farmers to deal with this threat in the short term. At the moment, temporary relief can be achieved by spraying with certain chemicals as identified by the ministry's scientists. Already, farmers can contact any district or county agricultural office for advice on temporary measures recommended for controlling this pest.

These short-term efforts are to be supported by a public awareness and technical guidance component of the programme which will be launched soon.

Mr. Speaker, scientists in the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, have gained valuable experience in the area of biological control as demonstrated by the successful management of the hibiscus mealybug. We intend to bring this experience to bear as we face the new challenge of the presence of the Citrus Black Fly. Together with our able collaborators—CABI, FAO, IICA, and CARDI—we are confident that the threat posed by the Citrus Black Fly will be overcome in a timely and successful manner. We want to assure our citrus farmers and processors that this Government will do whatever is necessary to effectively combat the presence of this pest in our country.

Thank you.

REPORTS OF CRIME IN TOBAGO

The Minister of Tourism (Dr. The Hon. Adesh Nanan): Mr. Speaker, recently the daily newspapers highlighted reports of crime committed against tourists in Tobago.

Crime is always a matter of concern to Government and the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. We are particularly concerned when such incidents affect foreign visitors.

As you are aware, Government has earmarked the tourism industry as one with much potential for the development of the economy and several initiatives are being undertaken to develop the tourism sector in Trinidad and Tobago. Therefore, any negative reports on Trinidad and Tobago will adversely affect our efforts.

Mr. Speaker, as Minister of Tourism, I took action immediately to review the situation in Tobago and to investigate the reports in collaboration with the Minister of National Security; the Minister of Tobago Affairs and Minister in the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Development; the Secretary for Tourism in the Tobago House of Assembly; the President and other members of the Trinidad and Tobago Hotel and Tourism Association, Tobago Chapter; officials of the Tourism and Industrial Development Company of Trinidad and Tobago Limited and other industry stakeholders.

Very frank and cordial discussions were held with all of the stakeholders involved. An area was visited where there was a recent report of a crime committed against a tourist.

1.50 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, it was recognized that there was a need to implement certain measures immediately and also to put in place structures and systems which were of a long-term nature in order to tackle the problems of crime in Tobago. I am pleased to report that several important recommendations emanated from the deliberations. Some of the major recommendations were:

- (1) Increase resources to combat crime in Tobago, particularly manpower and vehicles;
- (2) Acquire tracker dogs immediately;
- (3) Establish a "Night Court" system to handle expeditiously, charges of crime against foreigners;

Reports of Crime in Tobago
[DR. THE HON. A. NANAN]

Friday, January 28, 2000

- (4) Develop programmes aimed at the establishment of sustainable employment in communities;
- (5) Pursue the re-establishment of a Police Marine Branch;
- (6) Provide a hot-line;
- (7) Upgrade the public relations and communication systems and processes of the police; and
- (8) Increase safety tips and advisories and related signage.

Mr. Speaker, action has already been taken on the above-mentioned recommendations. I am advised that the Commissioner of Police has detailed additional police officers from Trinidad to Tobago, and efforts are being made to acquire tracker dogs from abroad. Literature detailing safety tips will soon be distributed to industry partners such as travel agents, airlines and hotels in order that visitors could be informed of precautions to be followed to ensure that their visits are safe and enjoyable. In addition, a public awareness programme entitled "Crime against our livelihood" is due to commence shortly in communities in Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, with regard to the request for night courts, the Minister of Tourism, by letter dated January 10, 2000, wrote the Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs bringing to his attention, the increase in the reports of criminal activity as this was adversely affecting the promotion of tourism in Tobago. I pointed out to the Attorney General that the delays expressed in the judicial system are hampering the fight against crime in Tobago.

There are grave difficulties faced by victims of criminal activity who are foreign visitors, as they cannot remain long enough on the island to allow the prosecution of persons. The success of these cases is heavily dependent on the victims' evidence; without their evidence the matters would either be dismissed by the court or just not proceeded with by the prosecution.

Mr. Speaker, this failure by the judicial system to determine cases quickly obstructs the fight against crime. I am sure hon. Members will appreciate why the Minister of Tourism brought these matters to the attention of the Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs and sought his assistance. The Attorney General indicated that the administration and management of the judicial system has been entrusted to the Chief Justice. This is one of the pillars of our Constitution in order to preserve the independence of the judiciary.

The Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs has informed me that the Chief Justice is fully aware of the gross delays in the criminal justice system. He has also informed me that the Chief Justice is fully informed of the Government's concerns about the need for action to be taken by the Chief Justice to have a more expeditious and efficient system of criminal justice.

The Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs, however, has advised that should these delays in the criminal justice system continue to pose problems, he intends to prepare for Cabinet's approval, legislation to compel judicial officers to hear and determine cases within a given time frame, and to provide for a mechanism whereby in special circumstances, cases would fall within an accelerated system and so must be concluded within a shorter time frame. Failure by judicial officers to have such cases heard and determined within a given time frame could lead to the officers being either disciplined or even removed from office by the Judicial and Legal Service Commission.

Mr. Speaker, Government has taken the necessary steps to have the night courts system continued, notwithstanding the non-implementation of the report of the Salaries Review Commission. The Judicial and Legal Service Commission has not accepted the proposals of Government on the matter of terms and conditions of employment for magistrates attached to night courts, independent of the said report. Nevertheless, Government will continue to monitor the situation very closely and we are pursuing all of the recommendations which have resulted from our discussions.

We wish to ensure that our citizens appreciate the efforts of Government in developing the tourism industry. At the same time, we will continue to implement strategies to ensure that the population is actively involved in the developmental process and that the citizens share in the benefits of development.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

DECLARATION OF 2000 AS YEAR OF THE CHILD

The Minister of Social and Community Development and Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs (Hon. Manohar Ramsaran): Mr. Speaker, I wish to address this House today on a topic which is of utmost importance to our society—the well being of the nation's children. On this note, I advise you that Cabinet has approved a proposal put forward by the Ministry of Social and Community Development that the year 2000 be declared: "Year of the Child in Trinidad and Tobago".

Declaration of Year of the Child
[HON. M. RAMSARAN]

Friday, January 28, 2000

Mr. Speaker, the year 2000 in this country will reflect a myriad of activities geared towards improving the status of all children in Trinidad and Tobago, including creating awareness of the issues which impact on the survival, protection and development of children.

My colleague, the Attorney General, in 1999, mandated a team of legal draftpersons and representatives of key social sector ministries to conduct a comprehensive review of all children's legislation with the aim of achieving conformity with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. This exercise entailed the amendment of some legislation, while other pieces of legislation were drafted to address the gaps in rendering protection to children under the law.

Mr. Speaker, the draft legislation was examined by Cabinet and then brought before this House. At this juncture, a decision was made to refer the entire package of legislation to a joint select committee with a view towards arriving at a consensus on the best way forward with respect to formulating Bills, which will effectively provide for the protection of children. These Bills are as follows:

- (1) The Children's Authority of Trinidad and Tobago;
- (2) The Children's Homes, Rehabilitation Centres and Foster Care Bill;
- (3) The Family Court Bill;
- (4) The Miscellaneous Provision (Children) Bill; and
- (5) The amendment to the Children's Act.

Mr. Speaker, Government, through the Ministry of Social and Community Development, continues to meet the full operational costs of the four large children's homes in Trinidad and Tobago: the St. Michael's School for Boys, the St. Dominic's Children's Home, the St. Mary's Children's Home and the St. Jude's School for Girls. Through annual subvention, the ministry also supports a large number of smaller children's homes, as well as NGOs that run programmes directed toward the survival, protection and development of children.

2.00 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, there are other initiatives which will be taken during 2000 which, I trust, will serve to greatly enhance this country's capability to implement policies and programmes to ensure the well-being of our children. On Monday, January 31, 2000, I will take up my seat as Trinidad and Tobago's representative on the Executive Board of the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF).

Membership on this board will entail attendance at three regular sessions and an annual session each year of a two-year term allotted to this country—via a rotation system with Bolivia and Cuba—for the periods 2000 and 2002. I hope to make a valuable contribution to the deliberations of this board and to raise the key concerns of our country regarding the welfare of children and their families.

Mr. Speaker, it is indeed an honour to serve on the executive board of an agency which, through financial and technical assistance, has been seeking to equip our social sector agencies with the skills and knowledge to attain the survival, protection and development, not only of children, but of our families as well. We all know the old adage, Mr. Speaker—stronger families result in stronger communities.

Mr. Speaker, focus is being placed on children not only in Trinidad and Tobago, but in the wider Caribbean as well. The Fifth Ministerial Meeting on Children and Social Policy in the Americas is being hosted by the Caribbean Region in Jamaica, in October 2000. This event will give the Caribbean nations the opportunity to bring to the forefront the specific challenges facing our children.

As part of the Executive Planning Committee for the ministerial meeting, Trinidad and Tobago is obligated to engage in a number of sensitization activities as a prelude to the meeting in October. These activities include a poster competition, the widespread dissemination of the Lima Accord which emanated from the Fourth Ministerial Meeting and which embodies the goals for children to the year 2000, the conduct of youth fora and national consultations which will create awareness to the goals of the World Summit for Children.

The ministerial meetings are conducted biannually as a follow-up to the 1990 World Summit for Children. The meetings serve as a monitoring mechanism to review the goals set for the survival, protection and development of children and to revise the goals in order to address emerging situations which negatively impact on the status of children in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Trinidad and Tobago actively participated in the second meeting in Bogota, Colombia in 1994; the third meeting in Santiago, Chile in 1996 and the fourth meeting in Lima, Peru in 1998.

A team of UNICEF consultants is presently hard at work along with officers of my Ministry and personnel of the Central Statistical Office, as well as other key ministries, to effect the successful conduct of a multiple indicator cluster survey. The MICS, now a global term, is a data collection strategy which is intended to

Declaration of Year of the Child
[HON. M. RAMSARAN]

Friday, January 28, 2000

provide information with respect to the attainment of the goals of the 1990 World Summit for Children.

The MICS will also aid Trinidad and Tobago in providing a comprehensive report at the global review of goal attainment scheduled by the United Nations General Assembly for the year 2001. It will also provide data for this country's report for the Fifth Ministerial Meeting in October of this year.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Social and Community Development is also seeking to improve the status of children in Trinidad and Tobago via the establishment of two databases which will serve to guide policy formulation and programming with respect to children's issues.

The Child Indicators Monitoring System (CIMS) will collect data on all child indicators in order to facilitate the on-going review and update of the goals of the World Summit for Children which are embodied in this country's National Plan of Action. This project is being implemented by the Central Statistical Office, while the NPA Committee, under the aegis of the Ministry of Social and Community Development, maintains oversight on the project.

The second database, the Children in Need of Special Protection Monitoring System, will apply initially to four groups of children: abused and neglected children, institutionalized children, children with disabilities and children in conflict with the law.

The project will be co-ordinated by the National Family Services Division of my Ministry and there will be liaison with all sector agencies—both government and non-government—to collect data on children in need of special protection measures and to translate this information into legislation, preventive and remedial action, advocacy and public education activities, all geared toward the transformation of negative child care and development practices into child-friendly practices.

Mr. Speaker, UNICEF has also provided assistance for the promotion of child rights in Trinidad and Tobago. Again, under the aegis of the Ministry of Social and Community Development, Child Rights Week was celebrated during November of 1997 and 1998. In 1999, in keeping with the United Nations General Assembly's commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the signing of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Trinidad and Tobago joined the global community in celebrating Child Rights Month during November.

Again, through UNICEF funding as well, the Ministry launched a project—the Promotion of Child Rights in Communities—in 1998. Five target communities in

both Trinidad and Tobago served as the venues for the dissemination of information on child rights through a combination of interactive drama, panel discussions and the distribution of relevant literature. This project was well received and served to alert the Ministry to a host of social problems which impact on families and communities.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child embodies a cohesive plan of action for ensuring the survival, protection and development of children. The Convention is not a static mechanism and the United Nations General Assembly has utilized it as a pivot to address emerging situations which pose a threat to the safety of children.

Mr. Speaker, these are situations such as the increasing incidence of HIV/AIDS, the use of children in armed conflict and the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. In 1998, my Ministry commissioned an exploratory study into the Nature and Extent of Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and the Sale of Children in Trinidad and Tobago.

The study verified that minors, both male and female, are involved in commercial sexual activity while the trafficking of children could not be determined. Children are also placed at the risk of illicit sexual activity when they take up living on the streets. Statistics indicate that during the last decade, the number of children living or working on the streets has risen; thereby evidencing the need for greater thrusts in parent education and family reunification.

Government, through the Ministry of Social and Community Development, assists the Credo Foundation for Justice in the operation of the Drop-In Centre for Street Children at Nelson Street, Port of Spain. The programme of the centre is geared toward the rehabilitation of the street children and reunification with their families.

The Young Men's Christian Association, another non-governmental organization which has made great strides—locally and internationally in youth development—has also implemented programmes, with Government's assistance, to address the street-children issue.

Mr. Speaker, I am of the opinion that the provision of more secondary school places and the institution of an increase in technical/vocational training will give our youngsters an alternative to life on the streets. Let us be proactive in addressing the needs of our children instead of reacting to a wave of societal ills.

In 1998, my Ministry and Servol, with assistance again from UNICEF, implemented a project which was geared toward equipping parents with the

Declaration of Year of the Child
[HON. M. RAMSARAN]

Friday, January 28, 2000

knowledge to utilize positive parenting practices. The community-based Parent Outreach Programme placed trained parenting facilitators in pre-selected target communities. This year-long pilot project indicated that there was a need for an expansion of this programme and my Ministry is currently devising a proposal to implement parenting education programmes to reach all cross-sections of the society.

Mr. Speaker, it is against this backdrop that my Ministry sought to have the year 2000 declared as Year of the Child in Trinidad and Tobago. It is our intention that both the civil society and the corporate sector will become attuned to issues affecting our children and will come forward as collaborative partners to build a better world for our children and our children's children to live in.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

CARNIVAL 2000

The Minister of Culture and Gender Affairs (Sen. The Hon. Dr. Daphne Phillips): Mr. Speaker, thank you for this opportunity to make a statement on Carnival 2000.

The National Carnival Commission will launch Carnival 2000 at the Clubhouse in the Queen's Park Savannah on Sunday, January 30, commencing at 11.00 a.m. All preparations for carnival this year by the interest groups are focussed on ensuring that Carnival 2000 would be positively and particularly impressive, reflecting the significance of a year which represents a new century and, possibly, a new millennium.

In terms of funding for Carnival 2000, Government has done its part in contributing to the smooth preparation and flow of all aspects of the event by both facilitating, through the provision of full infrastructure and support systems, as well as providing full funding way in advance, to the three interest groups responsible for the main events.

In December, 1999, funds were provided to Pan Trinbago in the sum of \$4.4 million; to the Trinbago Unified Calypsonians Organization (TUCO) in the sum of \$3.015 million and to the National Carnival Bands Association in the sum of \$2.5 million. These sums represent the full contribution to these organizations by Government for Carnival 2000.

The organizations are also expected to benefit from full access to their gate receipts from shows, sponsorship from the corporate sector, advertisements and contributions by concessionaries.

The prudent management of these funds by all interest groups will contribute to the successful showcasing of our Carnival 2000. Much emphasis is also being placed on the co-ordination and improved funding of Regional Carnival which encompasses activities conducted outside of the main carnival centre in Port of Spain and environs. Regional Carnival is to be launched on January 28, that is today, this evening, at the Parang Headquarters in Arima.

Government has also been encouraging and supporting the long-term development of pan as the indigenous national instrument through its emphasis on entrepreneurial development and engagement of pan as an industry with professional expertise in music, in management and in business acumen.

Several initiatives of Government point in this direction: the creation of a National Steel Orchestra with emphasis on training and music literacy of members; the funding of four annual scholarships at the degree level at the University of the West Indies since 1997 in music, with emphasis on pan and six other similar scholarships are being negotiated with a foreign university to commence in the year 2000; the creation of the Carnival Institute for preservation, training and research in carnival artefacts, including the development of pan as an instrument. All these, as well as Government's support for the Pan Development Fund and pan company which were recently launched. Cabinet is also to consider a proposal for the creation of a pan chroming company to be owned by Pan Trinbago.

We can, indeed, make the 21st century, the century of the steelband. The plan is for a self-sustaining steelband industry that will provide meaningful economic returns to pan practitioners, as well as to the national community.

All aspects of our carnival—pan, calypso and "mas"—hold great potential for significant preservation and industry development. The Carnival Institute will also function to the preservation of our calypso giants, as recently identified by TUCO's creative attempt and I quote: "At the watershed of the two centuries, to compile a compendium of what is worthwhile, durable, entertaining and noteworthy, taken from 100 years of calypso." This was stated by the feature speaker at TUCO's launch of its hundred best calypsos.

In calypso, in our general behaviour, in seeking enjoyment and fun as we launch Carnival 2000, we in the national community must also be mindful of the rights of others from unwanted invasion of the person, space or property. In our behaviour, we must be concerned with the need to protect the elderly; to protect women, especially young women and girls; to protect children from abuse, from undesired attention, from discrimination and from violence of any type.

Carnival 2000
[DR. THE HON. D. PHILLIPS]

Friday, January 28, 2000

2.15 p.m.

In all locations where carnival and related activities are taking place, we all have a responsibility to look out for those who are most vulnerable among us. Let us all make Carnival 2000 a positively significant, beautiful, safe and enjoyable event in our history of carnival.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

PRIVATE BUSINESS

Mr. Kenneth Valley (*Diego Martin Central*): Mr. Speaker, the Opposition believes that it would be in the national interest not to proceed with Motion No. 3 at this time and is asking for a deferral. [*Desk thumping*] We have had discussions, somewhat late, I must admit, with the Leader of Government Business who has informed us that they were prepared only for this Motion today. We are, of course, prepared to continue with Motion No. 1 on the Order Paper. In the circumstances, Mr. Speaker, we are not really prepared to proceed with Motion No. 3 on the Order Paper at this time, and we are asking that this Motion be deferred.

Hon. R. L. Maharaj: Mr. Speaker, this morning the Opposition Chief Whip spoke to me and indicated his wish. I did indicate to him that having regard to the time of the day, in light of what the Government had prepared, it was not possible for us to do any other Motion today, even if it was the Opposition's wish that it did not want to do this Motion.

Just for the record, I want to say that on the last day the House sat, the House was informed by the acting Opposition Chief Whip that we would be told what Motion would be debated today, and on Monday, I did receive a message from the Opposition Chief Whip that this was the Motion which it was proposing to debate. It is Private Members' Day and it is for the Opposition to determine which Motion it wants to debate. The Government would not want to come in the way of that because we cannot insist what Motion should be debated, but may I say that we were quite prepared to debate this Motion today. We believe it is in the national interest to have it debated as quickly as possible. On that basis, we differ, but we really cannot come in the way of the Opposition.

Mr. Speaker: We, therefore, have a situation in which the Opposition, whose day it is, and which had indicated it would have been prepared to proceed with Motion No. 3 is now saying that having regard to surrounding circumstances, they would like to defer it? That was communicated to the Government only today,

Private Business

Friday, January 28, 2000

and the Government has said that of the three Private Members' Motions, that is the only one it came prepared to deal with, having regard to the fact that on Friday, the Opposition was asked which one it would have proceeded with, and the Opposition indicated that would have been advised at a later stage which it did in fact do on Monday. So, we have a situation in which the Opposition would like to proceed with a different Motion today, and the Government has not come prepared to proceed with a different one today? That is the position?

Hon. R. L. Maharaj: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: In the circumstances, I do not think that it makes any sense trying to proceed with any of the Private Members' Motions. The Leader of the House may therefore care to make an announcement.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj: Mr. Speaker, I think we agree with what you have indicated, and I beg to move that the House do now adjourn to Friday, February 4, 2000 at 1.30 p.m.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 2.20 p.m.