

*Leave of Absence**Friday, April 28, 2000***HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES***Friday, April 28, 2000*

The House met at 1.29 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 three Members of this honourable House who have asked to be excused from attendance of sittings of the House. The Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West has asked to be excused up to May 26, 2000. The Member for San Fernando West has asked to be excused up to April 30, 2000; and the Member for Laventille East/Morvant has asked to be excused for April 28, 2000. The leave of absence which these three Members seek is granted.

Additionally, I wish to draw to the notice of hon. Members that since the last time this House sat, a former Member of Parliament who had served in the Senate from the periods 1971—1976 and 1981—1986 as an Independent Senator, has died. He died on April 11, 2000 at age 73 and it may well be that both sides of the House may wish to express condolences.

**MR. VERNON GLEAN
(DEATH)**

Mr. Jarrette Narine (*Arouca North*): Mr. Vernon Hewittson Glean born in the year 1927 and died on April 11, 2000 at the age of 73 years is a sad loss to the trade union movement in Trinidad and Tobago and the wider community. He did make his three scores and 10 plus three, Mr. Speaker. He started to work on the Port of Spain docks in the year 1946 at the age of 19 years and became the First Vice-President of the Seamen and Waterfront Workers' Trade Union between 1967 and 1968. A turn of hand in 1969, because of the surprise resignation of the President General of the SWWTU, caused the fondly called "Comrade Glean" to become the President General of the Seamen and Waterfront Workers' Trade Union.

Between 1971 and 1976 he was appointed an Independent Senator to represent labour in the Upper House. During this period he also became President of the Trinidad and Tobago Labour Congress and I had the honour to serve on the General Council of the Labour Congress. My colleague from the other place here was also at that time serving on the General Council and I think he was the Public

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Relations Officer of the Labour Congress at that time. During that period he became President. He then again served from 1981—1986 for the second time as an Independent Senator representing labour in the Senate. He also received the Chaconia gold medal national award for services rendered to the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, Comrade Glean served on the following state boards: the National Petroleum Company; Plipdeco; the Port Authority of Trinidad and Tobago; the Workers' Bank and the Small Business Development Company. He also served in a number of non-governmental organizations throughout Trinidad and Tobago. Most notably, he was a member of the Port of Spain Rotary Club; a founding member of the TTARP, the Trinidad and Tobago Association of Retired Persons.

Comrade Glean retired as President of the Seamen and Waterfront Workers' Trade Union in 1990, but continued to serve in an advisory capacity up to the year 1996. He was a man of deep compassion; a truly national leader. He was a person who was admired throughout the length and breadth of the Caribbean and internationally for his advancement as the President of the Seamen and Waterfront Workers' Trade Union. He was admired because of his courage, his integrity and honesty. He also possessed excellent negotiating skills and brought major benefits to the working class of Trinidad and Tobago.

Today, we on this side sadly join with others in Trinidad and Tobago and the working masses of this country to pay tribute to him and to extend condolences to his bereaved family: his wife Linda, his children, relatives and also members of the Seamen and Waterfront Workers' Trade Union. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Valley: And me his cousin.

Mr. J. Narine: You are his cousin? It is known that Comrade Glean was a very ardent supporter of our political party and came up in an era when he had to negotiate against government, but that did not compromise his position. Regarding his service in the Senate for two terms as an Independent Senator, he was chosen because he had a voice in the Labour Movement.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for giving me this privilege to speak on behalf of the Opposition in Parliament.

The Minister of Labour and Cooperatives (Hon. Harry Partap): Mr. Speaker, we too on this side join in paying tribute to the late Mr. Vernon Glean who served as a Senator in the Upper House. Mr. Glean had a long and distinguished career in the labour movement. He served, as was noted, as a Vice-President and then President General of the Seamen and Waterfront Workers'

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Trade Union. He was also a member of the Labour Congress and he was always fearless in his defence of the working people of this country. Mr. Glean was also a part of the team that sought to unite the labour movement and he leaves a legacy of service to workers in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, we on this side extend our condolences to his family on his death, and we pray that God may give him eternal rest.

Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members I, for my part, wish to be associated with the condolences which have been expressed concerning the passing of former Senator, Vernon Glean.

It was my good fortune when in another life—[*Interruption*] in another life—[*Laughter*]—I held the office of Minister of Labour, Social Security and Co-operatives to have had dealings with the former Senator Glean and the formidable Seamen and Waterfront Workers' Trade Union. One thing that I think one would always be able to say of Senator Glean is that he was capable of disagreeing without being disagreeable; a quality which would do many of us well to emulate. He was able to disagree without being disagreeable.

He has obviously served this country well. He has held very high positions and, indeed, it is very significant that he was in the Senate as an Independent Member, notwithstanding that one has taken note of what the spokesman on behalf of the Opposition has said. [*Laughter*] Whatever his shade of political opinion, it was my view that he was one who was capable of being objective, which is the important thing.

Hon. Members, I feel very strongly about associating with the comments which have been made and I, on your behalf, will ask the Clerk to direct a suitable letter of condolence to his bereaved wife and children. I accordingly ask Members of the House to stand for a minute's silence in his honour.

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY (MISCELLANEOUS AMENDMENTS) BILL

Bill to amend the Geographical Indications Act, 1996; the Patents Act, 1996, the Protection Against Unfair Competition Act, 1996; the Layout-Designs (Topographies) of Integrated Circuits Act, 1996; the Protection of New Plant Varieties Act, 1997 and the Copyright Act, 1997, brought from the Senate [*The Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs*]; read the first time.

Defence (Amdt.) Bill

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DEFENCE (AMDT.) BILL

Bill to amend the Defence Act, Chap.14:01, brought from the Senate [*The Minister of National Security*]; read the first time.

**TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO NATIONAL
STEEL ORCHESTRA (AMDT.) BILL**

Bill to amend the Trinidad and Tobago National Steel Orchestra Act, 1999 (No. 19 of 1999), brought from the Senate [*The Minister of Culture and Gender Affairs*]; read the first time.

LAW REFORM (MISCELLANEOUS AMENDMENTS) BILL

Bill to amend various Acts, brought from the Senate [*The Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs*]; read the first time.

PAPERS LAID

1. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Environmental Trust Fund for the year ended December 31, 1999. [*The Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs (Hon. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj)*]
2. Report of the Auditor General on the Public Accounts of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago for the financial year October 01, 1998 to September 30, 1999 and on other selected audit activities. (*Hon. R. L. Maharaj*)
3. Annual report and annual audited statement of accounts of the Trinidad and Tobago Securities and Exchange Commission for the year ended September 30, 1999. (*Hon. R. L. Maharaj*)
To be referred to the Public Accounts Committee.
4. Report of the Public Accounts of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago for the financial year 1999. (*Hon. R. L. Maharaj*)
5. The Family Proceedings (Amendment) Rules, 1999. (*Hon. R. L. Maharaj*)
6. The Family Proceedings (Amendment) (No. 2) Rules, 1999. (*Hon. R. L. Maharaj*)
7. The Civil proceedings (Amendment) Rules, 1999. (*Hon. R. L. Maharaj*)
8. The Civil proceedings (Amendment) (No. 2) Rules, 1999. (*Hon. R. L. Maharaj*)
9. The Adverse Trade Practices Order, 2000. [*The Minister of Trade, Industry and Consumer Affairs (Hon. Mervyn Assam)*]

1.45 p.m.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

**Mason Hall Secondary School
(Construction)**

- 47. Dr. Keith Rowley** (*Diego Martin West*) asked the Minister of Education:
- (a) Could the Minister indicate when technical and engineering drawings for the Mason Hall Secondary School, Tobago, were completed?
 - (b) Could the Minister state why the construction of this school has not commenced and identify the specific impediments which resulted in any delay?
 - (c) Could the Minister further state:
 - (i) When construction of the school will commence?
 - (ii) When construction will be completed?
 - (iii) When the first intake of students will occur?

The Minister of Education (Hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar): Mr. Speaker, education is one of the items on the Schedule to the Tobago House of Assembly (THA) Act No. 40 of 1996. This means that the implementation of policy in relation to education in Tobago is the responsibility of the THA. This fact has led to the requirement that the implementation of projects under the Fourth Basic Education Programme and also under the Secondary Education Modernization Project (SEMP) is really under the hand of the THA with the assistance of the Ministry of Education and the ministry's project unit.

Development of the Mason Hall Project, therefore, has required *inter alia* a memorandum of understanding between the THA and the Ministry of Education as well as a "no-objection" from the bank funding the project. Specification of the site, a prerequisite for the finalization of technical and engineering drawings, has required finalization and rationalization by the THA of its plans for road construction in the vicinity of the proposed school site and indeed it required a minor re-siting of the school.

In response to the specifics of the Member for Diego Martin's question,

- (a) the technical and engineering drawings for the Mason Hall Secondary School, Tobago, were completed, subject to statutory approvals, in March 1999. Approvals have been received from Town and Country Planning Division while those from the Water and Sewerage Authority and the Ministry of Works and Transport and Public Health authorities are awaited.

- (b) the construction of this school is to be undertaken by the THA. Execution of the relevant memorandum of understanding with the THA was completed in October 1999. Once this was done, the relevant joint steering committee and project monitory units established the statutory approvals in relation to the plans received, the THA could go out to tender, utilizing the appropriate tendering mechanism. The critical issue here would be the confirmation of the availability of funds. To the best of my knowledge, tenders have not yet been invited, and I am advised that confirmation of availability of funds was recently forwarded to the THA on March 28, 2000.
- (c) Given all the circumstances, the current projection is as follows:
- Construction of the school is projected to commence by June 2000;
 - Construction/completion is projected for August 2001; and
 - Projection for the first intake of students is September 2001, all things being equal.

Thank you.

Miss Universe Pageant

48. Dr. Keith Rowley (*Diego Martin West*) asked the Minister of Tourism:

- (a) Further to the stated losses incurred by the Pageant Company in the hosting of the 1999 Miss Universe Beauty Pageant, could the Minister state whether additional expenditure was incurred by the State and/or its agencies to assist or facilitate the hosting of the event?
- (b) Could the Minister state the total actual expenditure contributed by TIDCO, CDA, the THA and any other agency or department of Government to facilitate the Miss Universe Pageant?

The Minister of Tourism (Dr. The Hon. Adesh Nanan): Mr. Speaker, all expenditure directly associated with the hosting of the 1999 Miss Universe Beauty Pageant has been accounted for in the audited accounts of the Trinidad and Tobago Pageant Company Limited. This included expenditure for works undertaken by the Tobago House of Assembly (THA), the Tourism and Industrial Development Company of Trinidad and Tobago Limited (TIDCO), the Chaguaramas Development Authority (CDA) and other state agencies on behalf of the Trinidad and Tobago Pageant Company Limited. The financial statements of the Trinidad and Tobago Pageant Company Limited were presented to this honourable House by the hon. Minister of Trade & Industry and Consumer Affairs on February 04, 2000.

Mr. Speaker, additional projects undertaken by state agencies which might have facilitated the hosting of the pageant really formed part of the development programme of the respective agencies and were accelerated to take advantage of opportunities presented by the pageant.

For example, with respect to the Chaguaramas Hotel and Convention Centre, it had been established that over the years, the hotel and convention centre were being maintained at considerable cost to the state but since that valuable asset was largely unutilized, very little revenue was gained from it, resulting in a drain on the authority's limited finances. The upgrade of the Chaguaramas Hotel and Convention Centre was approved under the 1998 Public Sector Investment Programme and commenced in August 1998. When it was announced that the heliport in Chaguaramas was selected as the venue for the pageant, on the recommendation of the board and management of the CDA, Government agreed to accelerate work on the hotel and convention centre since this was considered a good opportunity to derive some immediate gains from the pageant and to implement a strategy for marketing the hotel and convention centre. In other words, Mr. Speaker, the 1999 Miss Universe Pageant provided a window of opportunity for the Chaguaramas Hotel and Convention Centre, the Chaguaramas Development Authority, and the Chaguaramas Peninsula.

In addition, Telecommunications Services of Trinidad and Tobago Limited (TSTT) undertook the following developmental works:—

- a network: replacement of a 640 outside plant access concentrator with a remote switching centre with a capacity of 1920 lines with a fibre optic transport link into the network;
- cellular services: the establishment of a new digital cell site to provide excellent service coverage to the area;
- data communications: establishment of a node of managed digital data network to support leased and switched data communications.

Mr. Speaker, the Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission also undertook development work in the Chaguaramas Peninsula, which resulted in high supply reliability and minimized customer interruption time. In this regard the Chaguaramas substation, which was constructed during the United States occupation of the Peninsula, was completely refurbished and upgraded in early 1999 to coincide with the hosting of the pageant.

In conclusion, I wish to state that apart from the expenditure shown in the financial statements of the Trinidad and Tobago Pageant Company Limited, no additional expenditure was incurred by TIDCO, the CDA, the THA or any other agency of Government to facilitate the hosting of the 1999 Miss Universe Pageant.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, a supplemental question. Is the Minister saying that the expenses, to which he refers, for the THA and the CDA—all those expenses to which he refers—were presented in the statement laid in the Parliament?

1.55 p.m.

Dr. The Hon. A. Nanan: Mr. Speaker, I said in my answer, with respect to the expenses, they were part of the development programme, and that was included in the budget, and I am sure the hon. Member is aware that when we came into office the unemployment rate was over 19 per cent and it is now 11.7 per cent, so we are in the process of job creation, Mr. Speaker.

Dr. Rowley: A further supplemental. Since the Minister has conceded that those expenses were not—I am asking him again, what was the specific amount incurred as he has described by the Chaguaramas Development Authority (CDA) in 1999 in order to facilitate Miss Universe, which he said was accelerated later on?

Dr. The Hon. A. Nanan: Mr. Speaker, I do not have that information at hand, but I will gladly produce it for him in terms of numbers.

Dr. Rowley: Maybe he might have that for the Tobago House of Assembly. If you do not have it, the question again is: what was the amount spent by the Tobago House of Assembly consonant with the hosting of Miss Universe? Do you have that figure?

Dr. The Hon. A. Nanan: The Member is misleading the House. What I said in the reply was, they were part of the development programme for the various areas, so it was not to facilitate the pageant, it was just accelerated. Apparently the Member did not understand my reply.

Dr. Rowley: Another supplemental, Mr. Speaker. I am not questioning the Minister about what the purpose was. The question was, how much was the amount incurred by each agency? I am not questioning the purpose of the development programme, but expenditure was incurred and I ask him, how much did the Chaguaramas Development Authority spend and how much did the Tobago House of Assembly spend in the context he described?

Dr. The Hon. A. Nanan: Mr. Speaker, I will get that information subsequently for the hon. Member.

**Ministry of Works and Transport and Ministry of Local Government
(Moneys Due and payable on Contracts Awarded in 1996)**

49. Mr. Kenneth Valley (*Diego Martin Central*) asked the Minister of Finance, Planning and Development:

- (a) Could the Minister inform the House what is the total sum of money that is due and payable on contracts awarded since 1996 by the Ministry of Works and Transport and the Ministry of Local Government?
- (b) Could the Minister state when these amounts would be paid?

The Minister of Tobago Affairs and Minister in the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Development (Dr. The Hon. Morgan Job): Mr. Speaker, the total sum of money that is due and payable on contracts awarded since 1996 by the Ministry of Works and Transport, as at March 31, 2000, is \$3,613,024.00. This debt was incurred in 1999 against receipts which were expected to be made into the Road Improvement Fund.

With respect to the Ministry of Local Government, the total sum is \$26,577,233.10. This debt is in respect of scavenging contracts, water contracts, school repairs on behalf of the Ministry of Education, river works and outstanding Unemployment Relief Programme accounts from the Ministry of Works and Transport.

The amount payable by the Ministry of Works and Transport is subject to final agreement and finalization and provision of funds. It is expected that the outstanding amount will be paid by May 31, 2000. The outstanding amount with respect to the Ministry of Local Government will be paid as soon as funds become available.

**Tobago House of Assembly
(Investment Re: ADDA Limited)**

50. Miss Pamela Nicholson (*Tobago West*) asked the Minister of Finance, Planning and Development:

- (a) Would the Minister of Finance inform this House whether the investment by the Tobago House of Assembly of US \$2 M in ADDA Limited was passed to the Attorney General as recommended by the Auditor General?
- (b) Would the Minister of Finance please state what legal guidance and support the Attorney General has provided in this matter?

The Minister of Tobago Affairs and Minister in the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Development (Dr. The Hon. Morgan Job): Mr. Speaker, the answer to part (a) of the question is yes.

With respect to part (b), the Attorney General has indeed provided legal guidance and support to the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Development which included the retention of the services of the law firm of Greenburg & Traurig to ascertain and advise on the court proceedings which were brought by the Tobago House of Assembly against certain individuals. The law firm has recently submitted a status report on the proceedings and this report is being studied by the Solicitor General's Department and a report for the consideration of Cabinet is in the process of being finalized.

Miss Nicholson: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary. The report which the Attorney General received, would it be laid in the House so all of us could have a copy of it?

Dr. The Hon. M. Job: Mr. Speaker, I guess in terms of the possible libellous notion and other things, Cabinet would consider whether or not it is helpful to the public and to the country to lay the report in Parliament. A decision has not been made on this, but I suspect that these considerations would guide the judgment.

Miss Nicholson: Another supplemental, Mr. Speaker. Could the Minister tell us what was his thinking of the Auditor General's report re: the US \$2 million in the ADDA Limited scenario? Was it not for the country to be informed about what is taking place?

Mr. Speaker: It is veering a little too far away from the question, that supplemental is not quite in order.

Scarborough General Hospital

51. Miss Pamela Nicholson (*Tobago West*) asked the Minister of Health:

- (a) Is the Minister aware that there is an almost total breakdown of services at the Scarborough General Hospital?
- (b) Would the Minister please explain:
 - (i) why only three doctors (one a retiree) are assigned to run the important Accident and Emergency Department of the Scarborough General Hospital on a twenty-four hour rotation basis?
 - (ii) why is there no operating theatre at the Scarborough General Hospital and when does he intend to make that service available to the people of Tobago?

- (iii) why is the Scarborough General Hospital unable to access scans and laboratory services from other health institutions in Trinidad?
- (iv) why is there lack of basic amenities such as sugar, milk, toilet paper and paper towels at the hospital?
- (v) why are there dysfunctional sewer lines for several months draining waste on the hospital compound and the adjoining street?

The Minister of Health (Dr. The Hon. Hamza Rafeeq): Mr. Speaker, I am advised that almost all the services at the Scarborough Hospital, with the exception of the surgical operations, have continued without interruption save for a few days when the nurses instituted protest action. During that time, all the wards remained adequately manned though with reduced staffing levels. In fact, the statistics for the last six months revealed that the level of services remained almost constant for that period.

The Accident and Emergency Department is currently staffed with a complement of four full-time doctors; in addition, two part-time doctors are assigned to take additional calls. I have the names of the doctors who are assigned, and I can provide them to the hon. Member.

The major operating theatre was recently upgraded at a cost of \$500,000. During that time, emergency operations, both minor and major surgeries, were carried out in the smaller operating theatre located in the Accident and Emergency Department. The only outstanding work to be done, is the installation of an air-condition unit which will be done within the next two weeks.

The Scarborough Hospital is able to access laboratory services from the Port of Spain General Hospital and scans from the Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex, on a fee for service basis.

It is my information that the stocks of some items did run low during a restocking period, but that has now been rectified.

The Works Department of the Tobago House of Assembly is presently in the process of connecting the Scarborough Hospital with the central sewerage system in Scarborough. The completion of this work has been delayed due to difficulties being experienced in sourcing specific parts to complete the job. The Works Department has confirmed that work will re-commence on the project the next week with a view to completing it as soon as possible.

However, I am advised that there is no effluent draining in the hospital's compound or in any of the adjoining streets.

Miss Nicholson: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. Is the Minister aware that one of the—he is saying that there are four doctors, there are three—doctors, the retiree, has withdrawn his services?

Secondly, is the Minister aware that major operations in Tobago are not taking place because it does not have the major operating theatre, only minor, and Tobago is in a very disadvantageous position because of this? The information which he has given, he should do closer investigation to give us the facts here.

Thirdly—

Mr. Speaker: We must deal with one supplemental at a time, something that arises out of the answer.

Miss Nicholson: There are a number of—

Mr. Speaker: No. You cannot do it like that because the answer he gives may satisfy you. It is only if that does not satisfy you and something leads off the answer, then you can ask it, but you cannot give him a list like that. I approved the first supplemental question. Do you mind repeating the first one again?

Miss Nicholson: Mr. Speaker, is the Minister aware that the answer he has given is incorrect in terms of the doctors assigned to the Accident and Emergency Department of the Scarborough Hospital? Is he also aware that one of the three doctors has also recently withdrawn his services?

Dr. The Hon. H. Rafeeq: Mr. Speaker, I have a note from the Chairman of the Tobago Regional Health Authority, dated April 25, 2000, that is three days ago, and this names the doctors who are currently working in the Accident and Emergency Department. There are four full-time doctors and two part-time doctors. That is my information.

Miss Nicholson: Mr. Speaker, another supplemental question. Could the Minister tell us whether he is in charge of the Scarborough Hospital as Minister of Health in Trinidad and Tobago?

Dr. The Hon. H. Rafeeq: As Minister of Health, I have the responsibility for the health of the population of Trinidad and Tobago, but the Tobago House of Assembly also has responsibilities and the Tobago Regional Health Authority also has operational responsibilities.

Mr. Manning: Is the Minister saying that he does not have direct responsibility for the operation of the Scarborough Hospital?

Dr. The Hon. H. Rafeeq: I am saying that I do have responsibility, but I do not have all the operational information at my fingertips because that is done by the Tobago Regional Health Authority. That is all I am saying.

Miss Nicholson: Can I ask this one? I do not know if I could ask this one.

Mr. Speaker: You could always ask it, and I would decide whether it is a fit supplemental.

Miss Nicholson: Mr. Speaker, is the Minister aware that there is no operating theatre at the Scarborough Hospital to deal with major surgery in Tobago?

Mr. Speaker: I allow that question.

Dr. The Hon. Hamza Rafeeq: Mr. Speaker, I answered that question already. I said that the major operating theatre was refurbished at a cost of \$500,000. I said there was one outstanding piece of work to be done which is the air-conditioning unit and the operating theatre in the Accident and Emergency Department is performing both minor and major emergency surgeries.

Miss Nicholson: Mr. Speaker, could we go further and ask the Minister if he ever visited Tobago since—*[Interruption]* He is the Minister of Health, Mr. Speaker, and health is critical.

Mr. Speaker: With the greatest deference, there are questions that you gave notice of and they are answered. To ask him if he has ever visited Tobago is not really—

Miss Nicholson: Can I rephrase the question?

Mr. Speaker: Okay, ask him.

Miss Nicholson: Has the Minister ever visited Tobago since the major operating theatre has been done and where did he get the information that operations are taking place there?

Dr. The Hon. H. Rafeeq: Mr. Speaker, there are two questions: one is whether I visited, and the other is from where I got the information. The answer to the second part of the question; I got the information from the Chairman of the Tobago Regional Health Authority. As to whether I visited, I have not visited, but I will be visiting on Tuesday next. *[Desk thumping]*

Miss Nicholson: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased my question has forced the Minister to respond. Is the Minister aware that sewer waste from the dysfunctional sewer lines is coming into the kitchen?

2.10 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: With the greatest deference, that was the last part of the question which the hon. Minister answered. I mean to say you may not accept it, but he has answered it.

Miss. Nicholson: It is a supplementary.

Mr. Speaker: No, no, it is not supplementary. The fact that you have not got the answer that you want does not make that same question a supplemental question.

**Tobago House of Assembly Administrators
(Appointment of)**

52. Miss Pamela Nicholson (*Tobago West*) asked the Minister of Public Administration:

- (a) Could the Minister of Public Administration please inform the House whether Cabinet agreed to the creation of seven positions of Administrators in the Tobago House of Assembly some seven months ago subject to final classification by the Chief Personnel Officer?
- (b) Could the Minister confirm that the positions of Tobago House of Assembly Administrators form part of the public service and that appointment to these positions must be made by the Public Service Commission—the body responsible for making appointments to offices within the public service in Trinidad and Tobago?
- (c) Is the Minister aware that appointments have been made to these positions by an authority other than the Public Service Commission?
- (d) If the answer to (c) is in the affirmative, could the Minister state what action his Government proposes to take to deal with this situation?

The Minister of Public Administration (Sen. The Hon. Wade Mark): Mr. Speaker, Cabinet, by Minute No. 1098 dated May 06, 1999, agreed to the creation of one position of Clerk, Tobago House of Assembly, and seven positions of Administrators, Tobago House of Assembly. The Cabinet decision was confirmed on May 13, 1999. Cabinet's agreement was subject to final classification, thereof, by the Chief Personnel Officer. The Chief Personnel Officer has since finalized the classification process, and on December 03, 1999 obtained the approval of the Minister of Public Administration for the classification of the post of Clerk, Tobago House of Assembly in Range 61 and the post of Administrator, Tobago House of Assembly, Range 68. The Public Services Association had been consulted and was in agreement with the proposed classification.

The Constitution and the law mandate that the appointment of persons to the post of Clerk, Tobago House of Assembly, and Administrators, Tobago House of Assembly must be made by the Public Service Commission, the body responsible for making appointments to offices within the public service.

No appointments have accordingly been made to these posts, given the status of the classification exercise referred to earlier. However, the Tobago House of Assembly has made administrative arrangements for the performance of these duties by assigning senior officers to perform the functions of the post of Administrator.

Now that the classification exercise has been completed, it is expected that appropriate recommendations will be made to the Service Commissions Department, for the approval of the Public Service Commission for the filling of the vacant positions of Administrators and Clerk on the establishment of the Tobago House of Assembly.

Miss Nicholson: One supplementary question, Sir. If the Public Service Commission did not appoint the Administrators, is the Minister stating that the Tobago House of Assembly can put people to act in these positions from a politicized perspective?

Sen. The Hon. W. Mark: Mr. Speaker, as I said, the Tobago House of Assembly has made arrangements in the absence of the classification and approval of appointments by the Public Service Commission. Now that the classification exercise has been completed, the Public Service Commission is about to make appointments to the position of Administrator. In the mean time, the Tobago House of Assembly has institutionalized an interim arrangement involving senior public officers who are currently performing those duties.

Miss Nicholson: Mr. Speaker, could the Minister tell this honourable House if he has any idea of when the Public Service Commission would be addressing this position?

Sen. The Hon. W. Mark: Mr. Speaker, as you are aware, the Public Service Commission is an independent institution under the Constitution, and they operate at their own pace in the context of these matters. [*Desk thumping*]

AGRICULTURAL SMALL HOLDINGS TENURE BILL

A Bill to reform the law with respect to tenure and occupation of small holdings used for agricultural purposes by private and State-regulated bodies; to regulate the relationship between landlord and tenant in respect of such holdings, and for other related matters, [*The Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources*]; read the first time.

**DESALINATION PLANT
(AWARD OF CONTRACT)**

[Second Day]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question [November 26, 1999]:
Whereas serious concerns have been expressed by some members of the public as regards transparency and equity in the award of the contract for the construction of a Desalination Plant;

And Whereas serious concerns exist that such a plant is not necessary and will have adverse effects on the environment;

Be It Resolved that this House condemn the manner in which the contract has been awarded for the Desalination Plant and also call upon the Government to cancel this controversial contract.

Mr. Speaker: What had happened here, on the last occasion, was that the Minister of Public Utilities was, in fact, on his legs. He had been granted an extension of 30 minutes, and has a balance of some 16 minutes of speaking time.

The Minister of Public Utilities (Hon. Ganga Singh): Mr. Speaker, in my contribution on November 26, 1999 in dealing with this Motion, I dealt with the transparency of the process through a chronology of events starting with the public advertisements, the independence and integrity of the members of the evaluation team, the criteria for the evaluation, the rate system utilized and the results of that.

Secondly, I dealt with the rationale for desalination at Point Lisas, for the industries of Point Lisas in Point Lisas and I pointed to two authoritative reports: the Water Resources Management Strategy for Trinidad and Tobago. A World Bank Funded Water Resource Management Strategy Report done by DHV Consultants in association with Delft Hydraulics and Lee Young & Partners. It is the most up-to-date and most comprehensive report in the water sector in this country.

Secondly, I dealt with the Water and Sewerage Authority Report and analysis of the various options to supply water to Point Lisas done by the technocrats within the Water and Sewerage Authority.

Mr. Speaker, I want to add—for this honourable House to note—that back in 1998, the World Bank had supported the recommendation contained in the Water Resource Management Strategy Study undertaken by DHV Consultants. The Aide Memoire of the World Bank mission to Trinidad and Tobago, under Dr. Rafik Hirji, Senior Resource Management Specialist, dated August 05 to 12, 1998, clearly supported the approach undertaken by the Government with respect to the pursuance of a desalination option.

Page 2 of this Aide Memoire says and I quote:

“One of the significant conclusions of the water resources planning presentation was that since sizeable addition to total water supply would only become available in the longer run, the desalination option may have to be explored in order to meet current and short term deficiencies in supply.”

Mr. Speaker, so authoritatively we have the World Bank Funded Report supported by the World Bank and the WASA report supported by the senior technocrats of WASA. They went through the various options. The options that the Member for Port of Spain South alluded to and the hon. Member for Diego Martin enunciated in the Appropriation Bill debate.

2.20 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, as far as we on this side are concerned, all those options could not fly in the face of the reality of both of these reports. I want to demonstrate the approach taken by the Opposition and I want to make reference to the option where they came to this honourable House to speak of reusing water from the Beetham, the San Fernando and Arima sewerage plants. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I call that the Rowley plan because, you see, the hon. Member for Diego Martin West, early in my tenure as Minister of Public Utilities, came to me with a proposal to utilize the water from the Beetham Sewerage Plant and pipe it to Point Lisas.

I entertained that proposal and I had technocrats from WASA and the Ministry look at the proposal. It is clear that we were looking for a solution in order to reroute the water from Point Lisas into the domestic water supply system. It was found that, as a result of the nature of the discharge from the Beetham wastewater treatment area that that could not be a functional and practical approach to providing water in Point Lisas. The fact of the matter is, the Beetham plant remains an environmental disaster for this country and it is only now we are dealing with this matter and on that matter, later on in my presentation you will see, Mr. Speaker.

I want to read for this honourable House from a report that shows how the approach taken by the Opposition falls flat on its face. I am quoting from page 61 of the *Water Resource Management Strategy Report* for Trinidad and Tobago. The heading is “Re-use waste water from treatment plants”.

“This measure assumes that the waste water effluent from the three major waste water treatment plants in Beetham, San Fernando...and Arima can be used to satisfy local industrial water demand. Although the capacity of the Beetham site seems interesting as a source, the location of the plant implies a

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large investment in the conveyance of the water towards the industrial areas. The capacity of the San Fernando plant is negligible compared to the water demand of the industrial areas.”

Assessment of these measures, Mr. Speaker:

“these measures are not promising and will not be analyzed further.”

Basically, Mr. Speaker, the experts were saying, “Do not bother. Do not even think about it in utilizing that for industrial water”. So you see, that too flies in the face.

The second issue I want to deal with this afternoon is that of the environment. Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member for Port of Spain South is an engineer by profession and he is aware that, having regard to the Point Lisas Estate, the desalination plant does not pose an environmental hazard for that area. He raised the issue of salinity discharge into the Gulf. I would read from the *Environmental Impact Assessment Report* that was submitted to the Town and Country Planning Division and for which, on the basis of the submission of that EIA, outline planning permission was granted.

I quote from page 2 of the Executive Summary of the *Environmental Impact Assessment* done by Eco Engineering with Dr. George Sammy as head of that Ecoengineering Consultants Limited, one of the premier environmental engineering consultancy firms in Trinidad and Tobago. I quote from the third paragraph:

“The effects of hypersalinity on marine organisms and mangrove were studied as part of this EIA, and it was determined that the impacts are not significant up to a concentration of 40 parts per thousand. The combined effluent will not exceed this concentration. Thus, significant salinity impacts are not anticipated. Oceanographic modelling has also indicated that the salinity will revert to background levels before the discharge plume reaches any of the other industrial users of seawater in the Point Lisas area. Therefore, no impacts on their operation are anticipated.”

Mr. Speaker, what it was saying is echoed by Prof. Julian Kenny who had this to say, and I quote:

“the desalination plant will not have any major negative impact on the environment.”

This is from the *Independent* Newspaper of September 24, 1999. So the motion already fails. It fails on the question of process, it fails on the question of the adverse impact on the environment, it fails on being able to enunciate options that were not utilized. But you see, Mr. Speaker, the water crisis that we inherited, which was a legacy of the Opposition for 34 years, is really a crisis in governance. It is the failure of those, when they were in power, to balance delicately the competing demands of the domestic user, industries, agriculture and the environment.

Mr. Speaker, what was the legacy of that side? They confined domestic users, in particular those in south and central Trinidad, to rain-fed water during the rainy season and truck-borne water during the dry season. They confined the agriculturalists to rain-fed agriculture during the rainy season and no agriculture at all during the dry season. Yet, the hon. Member for Diego Martin West has the audacity to say, as reported in a newspaper, Mr. Speaker, that "Whenever you spit anywhere in Trinidad you have flood". I could not believe that. This is because, when he had the opportunity to spit all about and make Trinidad this big spittoon and engage, as Minister of Agriculture, in flood management and irrigation control, he did nothing. Therefore we had rain-fed agriculture, Mr. Speaker. In addition to inadequacy of water for domestic and agricultural use, the industrialists in Point Lisas were getting potable water 24 hours a day, seven days a week. That was the kind of imbalance in the approach.

When we took office and then had the responsibility for public utilities, we took a philosophical stance on this matter, in that we measured the quality of our democracy by the way the poor amongst us had access to water, and we took that approach. What are the results today, Mr. Speaker? With the south water project we have brought relief from La Filette to Icacos to Moruga to Rio Claro to Siparia to Penal to Point Fortin and to Tobago. Mr. Speaker, 780,000 people have benefited from the south water project. Under the north water project, 286,000 people will benefit, and under the Tobago water project all 40,000 people will benefit.

I want to tell the hon. Member for Tobago West through you, Mr. Speaker, that there are water supply projects in Tobago. A contract was awarded to Trinidad Oilfield Supplies on December 15, 1999 for the Courland Water Treatment Plant. A contract was awarded to NH International for the Hillsborough west area and a contract was awarded to General Earth Movers/UEM on the Richmond area project. So you see, Mr. Speaker, we have concentrated on every area. We did not discriminate according to region or location.

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We took another approach and that is why the testimonials for what is now happening in the water sector abound. I would not call upon my good friend the Member for La Brea to tell us what is happening in his area. He has already gone public with that. But, Mr. Speaker—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Breaux: Mr. Speaker, would the Minister give way?

Hon. G. Singh:—the ordinary people who have benefited enormously are people like Zora Haywood of Cottage Restaurant in Point Fortin who went on TV giving testimonials; like Molly Ali, a businesswoman of Peter Hill, Mayaro and Mr. Ulric Williams of Ulric’s Barber Shop. The testimonials abound in this sector.

Mr. Speaker, those on that side have an ability to only talk absently. They cannot translate their talk into practical solutions to help poor people. Water, whether you say *maji* in Swahili, *pani* in Hindi, *agua* in Spanish or water in English, means one thing: life in all forms and shapes. In the Holy Qur’an it is said, “And from water we created every living thing”. That is why we have embarked and articulated a vision of water for all. Water for all we intend, Mr. Speaker, to make a fundamental human right in this country. Water for all we intend to ensure brings an end to the kind of discrimination hitherto which our people suffered. The over one million people in this country who have benefited and who will benefit from the sustainable development plan upon which we have embarked, they have kept faith with us. It is by design that they have benefited and it is clear because it was the first dry season in years when there were no protests for water. If anybody protests now it is because the PNM will contrive to bring about those protests.

You see, Mr. Speaker, water for all carries with it that crystallized vision of water security in our society. We have a record of achievement in this sector and water for all carries with it an end to the kind of gender discrimination, dependency and standpipe politics that took place. Water for all is a depoliticization of water, Mr. Speaker. It is an attempt to bring about the universal appreciation of water for everyone. [*Mr. Manning rose*] Mr. Speaker, I would normally give way, but I have only a few minutes left. It is water for all—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: No, no, no. The person who calls time is I. There are two minutes left.

Hon. G. Singh: I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your indulgence.

What we have engaged in for the water sector is bringing about practical solutions to ensure that the future for water security is there. It is clear, therefore, that this Motion is without merit. In fact, what the mover and the seconder of the motion should do is to congratulate this Government for achieving so much in the water sector in so short a space of time. Mr. Speaker, I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Keith Rowley (*Diego Martin West*): [*Desk thumping*] Mr. Speaker, I join the debate once again to make a few points. However, I want to begin by clarifying the record to say that there is no Rowley plan. It is rather unfortunate that a Minister of Government who is responsible for a major sector of public business steers away completely from the issues at hand and seeks to mislead the public.

Mr. Speaker, as you would know, or as you may know, outside of my parliamentary duties I practise professionally as a geologist. One of the services I provide to the public at large is hydrology and in that capacity I happened to accompany a group of local businessmen, investors, who sought my services as a geologist. I accompanied them to the office of the Minister as they sought to discuss with him the potential for private sector investment with respect to the upgrade of the Sea Lots Sewer Treatment Plant. It is in that context that I went to the office of the Minister. It is, therefore, quite wrong, improper and deceitful for the Minister to seek to give the impression here that there is any PNM plan of such a nature, and to seek to impugn my involvement in my professional capacity. That much is on the record.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, the Minister has just identified for us a situation where he said that, as a result of the South Water Project, 700,000 persons are benefiting; and as a result of the North Water Project, 270,000 persons are benefiting. Mr. Speaker, WASA is producing 165 million gallons of water for 1.3 million people. According to the Minister's mathematics, if we remove the 700,000 from the south water project that he has brought on stream and the 270,000 from the north water project—which gives a total of 970,000—it leaves us with 320,000 people who are benefiting from the 165 million gallons of water.

So it appears as though the bulk of the water that the country was producing was for the benefit of a handful of people. Mr. Speaker, you can believe that if you wish, but that is the story of the Minister. [*Interruption*]

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Mr. Speaker, it appears as though the Arena Dam, the Mora Dam, the Hillsborough Dam, the Navet Dam, the North Oropouche water facility and all the other water facilities in the country were not benefiting the population, because it takes this magician to come in four years and provide beneficial water supply to 900,000 out of our 1.3 million people. You could believe that if you wish. I will come back to that.

Hon. Member: Not a drop in Maraval.

Dr. K. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, what is clear from what the Minister has done is to prove the point that Satan can always quote scripture to justify sin. What the Minister has sought to do is to tell us who in the World Bank approved it; which technician approved it; what the World Bank say; what this one say; and what that one said. All of that is missing the point completely.

Mr. Speaker, I want to go on record and say the PNM—and any person in this country who is reasonable—has no problem with a Government initiative to provide water for all. That is a commendable initiative and whether you put it by the year 2000 or 2001 that is just not the important point. The mission of water for all is what is important. I do not think anybody in this country is opposed to that.

What this Motion seeks to do is to identify what has been done and when one looks at what has been done to determine whether that which was proper, most beneficial and most cost-effective is what has been done, the Minister has steered clear of that completely seeking to give the impression that there are persons opposed to the supply of water and for 34 years, previous governments did not provide water and so forth—rhetoric which cannot stand scrutiny—because everybody knows the kinds of activities that took place over the years to provide water in this country, even though more is required.

Mr. Speaker, what this Government did is that, being the Government of the day now, when it fell to them to continue to build on and to improve the water supply [*Words expunged*] and to create favours for their friends to the detriment of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. That is the issue! [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker: No. No. [*Words expunged*] I ask you please to conform with the Standing Orders. You could make your point but you have to make it within the confines of the Standing Orders. That could only mean one thing. Please.

Dr. K. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, I thank you very much for your intervention and I withdraw the statement insofar as it runs afoul of the Standing Orders. I want to demonstrate to you what has been done, because this is what is before the House, notwithstanding all the approvals of who did what.

Mr. Speaker, what this Government has sought to do is to provide water for our water system by a process of desalination. In a circumstance where the state-owned Water and Sewerage Authority is producing 165 million gallons of water, only 12 million gallons of that 165 million gallons was servicing Point Lisas. So it is misleading to say that we were servicing Point Lisas to the detriment of the population. Understand that! It was 165 million gallons in Trinidad and only 12 million gallons was going to Point Lisas, but the crux of the matter was that 12 million gallons was earning more than half of WASA's total revenue and that earning was being used to subsidize the domestic rate. So 12 million gallons was earning so much that there was a cross-subsidy from that to the households of Trinidad and Tobago. What this Government has done is to use the excuse to say that, because we are providing 12 million gallons to Point Lisas, we must take that out of the system and give it to private sector persons whom they have selected under dubious circumstances. I will come back to that.

Mr. Speaker, the bottom line is that from WASA's present facilities where WASA is producing water at less than \$1.00 per cubic metre and selling that water for \$7.00 a cubic metre at Point Lisas, using the great profits to subsidize the public, WASA has chosen to invite private sector participation and to buy the same water that WASA produces for less than \$1.00 per cubic metre at \$4.00 per cubic metre. The Government tells us that is a good deal because having bought it at \$4.00 a cubic metre, it will be sold at \$7.00 and make a profit of \$3.00. It sounds like good business—if you miss the point—from their own supply. The Water and Sewerage Authority was producing water at less than \$1.00 and selling it for \$7.00 and getting the full \$7.00 themselves. That is the issue which the Minister has steered clear of completely, but comes here to talk foolishness about me coming into his office to do other matters.

Mr. Speaker, the issue which the Minister has not touched on at all, is the fact of what is happening with the contract. Why is WASA buying water at \$4.00 per cubic metre when it is producing water at less than \$1.00 per cubic metre? Why does WASA have to enter into a US \$120 million project to desalinate 12 million gallons, when WASA is already a producer of as much as 165 million gallons per day? Twelve million gallons is a drop in WASA's ocean, but that caused the Government to go and get involved in US \$120 million desalination project.

Mr. Speaker, what is the situation with respect to that? In a year's time, selling to Point Lisas, let us look at what WASA is going to do tomorrow. There will be a great song and dance and fanfare tomorrow, because this administration would have upgraded—not build from scratch—the Caroni/Arena Water Treatment Plant at Piarco Airport from 165 million gallons per day by a further 15 million, and tomorrow you would see all the public relations and the Carvellites from that.

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Mr. Speaker, what the Government has done is to spend TT \$130 million on that upgrade, all of which was done from beginning to end; from concept to upgrading tomorrow in 18 months' time. One hundred and thirty million dollars to produce 15 million gallons of water. So WASA knows that you could spend \$130 million and get 15 million gallons, but it is the same WASA that enters into an arrangement with that desalination company to spend \$800 million to give us 29 million gallons of water. Ask yourself if that makes economic sense.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to repeat it for you. The desalination project is US \$120 million and the capacity by the year 2002 is supposed to be 29 million gallons. The upgrade you will hear about tomorrow that the Government is making a fanfare about will produce 15 million gallons that only cost TT \$130 million.

2.45 p.m.

If, in fact, they were producing more water, if the Water and Sewerage Authority had chosen the option of continuing to supply Point Lisas that 12 million gallons from its own supply of the plant that it is upgrading tomorrow, WASA would have been earning in one year \$138 million, forever and ever supplying from its own source. Instead, they have entered into an arrangement to buy water at \$200 million a year for the next 20 years, to pay \$4 billion to their friends.

If their friends who have that contract are making 5 per cent or 10 per cent profit over the life of the contract, that is 10 per cent of \$4 billion. How much is that, my friend from Naparima? That is \$400 million; that is what is in it for them. If they are making 20 per cent net profit, that is \$800 million; if, in fact, they are making 40 per cent profit, you are talking about over \$1 billion in profit in the desalination of water for Point Lisas; that is what is at stake.

Mr. Assam: Are you against profit? Do you like losses?

Dr. K. Rowley: When you look at the fact that they are buying it for \$4.00 and selling it for \$7.00—if you look at the supplier's economics, the Water and Sewerage Authority is producing it at less than \$1.00. If we assume that it is costing the desalinators twice WASA's price to produce it, it is costing them \$2.00. So they are incurring a cost of \$2.00 and selling it to WASA at \$4.00, so they are making 50 per cent profit; if one accepts that assumption. If that assumption is right, then the profit over the life of the contract is \$2 billion.

If, on the other hand, one looks at the Barbados situation where the same company is selling water in Barbados at TT \$2.52 per cubic metre and they are selling in Trinidad at \$4.00, if one says that they are making \$1.00 profit in Trinidad and Tobago, that is 25 per cent profit. Twenty five per cent of \$4 billion over 20 years is how much? That is what we are talking about; that is what is at stake; hundreds of millions of dollars in profit that the Government, the Cabinet, has deliberately manipulated the system.

What they have done, and it is a pattern—this Motion is opportune, because tomorrow you will hear them talking. What this Motion seeks to bring before the public and highlights for the public is that notwithstanding the justification that they try to put before you, what is clear is that in every situation with the utilities it appears as though there is somebody in the Cabinet who has sat and figured out how to remove from the public asset base the cash cow of the utility. In this case of the Water and Sewerage Authority, this Minister, this Cabinet and this Government have removed from WASA the cash cow that is the Point Lisas purchasing unit. That is what they have done.

They have left the Water and Sewerage Authority with the supply to the country, which would be funded now from elsewhere, because they have given up their major source of revenue. That is our argument on this side: why did WASA have to give up its major source of revenue in that way? Because having done that, the Water and Sewerage Authority is now raising bonds right, left and centre around the country. How are those bonds to be repaid? By John Public. Understand something, Mr. Speaker, insofar as they have forgone hundreds of millions of dollars in revenue there—I do not know if he is aware—my friend from Naparima—that the cost at which WASA now sells water to the public is \$1.50 per cubic metre.

So if they build a plant, as they are doing now, to supply 29 million gallons per day and Point Lisas does not absorb that—and it would not—it means that any water coming from this system to the domestic system would be bought at \$4.00 from the desalination company and sold to the public at \$1.50. That does not make sense, does it? It is either you raise the price to meet the \$4.00 or you would be subsidizing and losing significant moneys by buying at \$4.00 and selling to the public at \$1.50.

When I raised that point in the budget debate and the Minister realized that he was confronted with this dichotomy and dilemma he, in here, said that no, the desalination plant will only supply Point Lisas, but we know that the contract is to supply 29 million gallons per day, and the intention is to supply domestic users as well, because other spokespersons from the Water and Sewerage Authority and

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the desalination company were saying that they are not confined to Point Lisas only. But how else would the Minister explain a contract to buy at \$4.00 and sell at \$1.50? He simply has to say, "It will only be sold to Point Lisas." That is all he had to say; but that is not true.

The Minister tells us that the Point Lisas demand is expected to grow; he told us that last October. He told us that Point Lisas with all the plants that are there now—since 1970 or whenever—using only 12 million gallons, that between now and the next five years demand will grow to 30 million gallons. When the industrial estate is already almost full of plants, with no further room within Point Lisas, unless you build a new industrial estate starting from scratch. But he knows that the water demand will double in Point Lisas, all of that to justify what they have done, to explain why they are building a plant to supply 29 million gallons when Point Lisas is only using 12 million gallons now and the growth will be very small in the future. So they tell you whatever they think you want to hear or whatever sounds good, but the facts are not borne out.

When I speak about a pattern of behaviour, I come back to the point about who we are dealing with. Who are we dealing with? Who are the people building this plant? If the Government by way of the Water and Sewerage Authority has entered into an arrangement to build this plant in Trinidad and Tobago, any Minister should be able to get up and tell us who the Government is dealing with. But no; the same Minister gets up here, in his usual cocky and *nouveau riche* style, and says to us that the Government has awarded a contract by way of WASA to a company called Ionics and Karamath; that is in the *Hansard*.

If you go to the Registry, Mr. Speaker, you will see a company called DesalCott and you will only see Karamath; there would be no sign of any Ionics; you see Karamath as the owner of DesalCott. You go to Point Lisas you will see DesalCott on the site earmarked for the desalination plant, but as far as the Registry is concerned, DesalCott is owned by Karamath. Incidentally, it is the same Karamath in Tobago who is being put off the Hilton project; who has also been put off the Villa project in Tobago and whose Courland project has been taken over by the bank.

That is the same individual whom this Government, like a thief in the night, has given the go ahead to build us this unnecessary \$800 million desalination plant that is earmarked to generate profits of somewhere between \$600 million and \$1 billion. I ask myself: how come some people are so lucky? Interestingly enough, it was this same Government, when they wanted to give the two gas stations—one at Richmond Street and one at Gasparillo—to a particular friend of

theirs for services rendered with respect to the purchase of Parliamentary seats—for which Karamath was the lowest tenderer for the two gas stations—ruled him out saying that he did not qualify to build two gas stations. But it is the same person who the Government eventually turns around and gives a contract, who owns a desalination plant called DesalCott to build for us an \$800 million desalination plant.

That is why the Minister has steered so far away from the facts, because all that I am saying here now is incontrovertible. I defy any Member on the Government side to get up and say that any of the figures that I have produced or the facts that I am putting on the table are not as they should be. That is what I want the Government to deal with. We are dealing with what they have done and what it means for the population.

When they tell you, Mr. Speaker, that they have given up \$4.00 out of every \$7.00 for the water they will sell at Point Lisas and that water will go to the public, the Minister has pointed out that 900,000 members of the community would benefit, but those persons are largely already on the Water and Sewerage Authority revenue base. All that is happening is that, in many cases, instead of getting water once a week, they might get it three or four times a week, but in terms of the revenue to WASA, that revenue is going to change very insubstantially.

Mr. Speaker, he made reference to certain reports that the Water and Sewerage Authority has, but what he has not told you is that the economic report has pointed out that even with the earnings from desalination, WASA is guaranteed to go into a deficit position, a further loss position in the near future—[*Desk thumping*]*—*that is what the report says. But as far as they are concerned, they would not be there when that happens, and even if they are there it would already be too late for the public to intervene. If you fall for the “mamaguy”, “ole talk” and public relations and leave them in office, by that time it would be too late when the chickens come home to roost.

Mr. Assam: It is your partner Ryan who said so, not us.

Dr. K. Rowley: Ryan? I want to point out to you, Mr. Speaker, how the pattern, this thing about the desalination plant, the pattern of controversy that has followed the award of every contract. We saw the Powergen public expressions that as a company, in which the Government owns 51 per cent, is producing excess and waste heat, was in a position to use that waste heat in the event that desalination was the way to go. The best position the country was in to desalinate

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was to use the excess heat from the PowerGen plant at Point Lisas to desalinate the sea water, because the excess heat is already there and the Government owns 51 per cent of the company that is producing the excess heat. All over the world where desalination is found to be the way to go, if you have power generation plants, you use that excess heat to desalinate; not in Trinidad and Tobago.

The Government blanks its own company; does not even allow the company to put in a bid to see what the company would have done, and marched on and gave this person who is publicly—every day when you look at the newspapers Karamath and his subcontractors are in trouble over a little project, but that is the Government's choice to desalinate. While I do not want to go into his personal business, I am saying that what we are seeing in the newspapers should be the cause of little confidence. When we got up and said that they were having difficulty raising the money for the desalination plant, some person at the Water and Sewerage Plant jumped in and said, "Oh, the Government is not paying any money, is somebody else paying it." Subsequently, we saw in the news, from the same principals in the company, that they were having difficulty sourcing the funding. Also, Mr. Speaker, it does not matter who is paying for the plant, the public is ultimately going to pay for the plant by way of the purchase of the water, because what the plant sells would have to cover the cost of the plant. Nobody is giving us a plant because they love us.

So when the Government approves a desalination plant for \$800 million to sell water in this country, the water users in this country would ultimately be required to pay for the plant. So it is nonsense for a Government spokesperson or anyone to tell us that it is somebody else paying for the plant. We are going to pay for the plant, and to do so we give up revenue that is required to keep public rates down.

3.00 p.m.

Interestingly enough, Mr. Speaker, while we are doing that, I do not know if you notice the Water and Sewerage Authority's (WASA) new bills because WASA, like other utilities, is very concerned about its revenue. When they find themselves in the situation that WASA has found itself now, where it is going to give up its cash cow, it will have greater need to extract money on a timely basis from John Public. [*Desk thumping*]

I do not know if you all have observed your WASA bills. If you have done, you will observe that the way the Bill is structured, WASA is in effect requiring you to pay for your water in advance. [*Desk thumping*] While the Minister is giving

away \$800 million or more to friends of the Government, little old ladies, grandchildren, pensioners and public servants who are trying to make ends meet, WASA is saying to them: “pay for your water in advance.” If one looks at the bill one would see—in this case this is my own bill as an example. In case you want to know, it has no arrears on it. But I am showing you all the bill as an example. The bill was made out on February 07 and it covers the period March 01—May 31. Then WASA says to me: “The due date for the current billing is March 15.” Although the period for the water rate is from March 01—March 15, the bill for that period is due by March 15: before the end of March, before April and before May. In other words, the utility is saying: “pay for your water in advance” and if you do not pay in advance, they immediately put you into arrears. So when you get your next bill, if you did not pay before May 31, that next bill will carry you into arrears. It is the only system I know where one goes into arrears for having not paid for the product before the expiration of the date required for it to be paid for. That is what WASA is doing. [*Desk thumping*]

All this “ole” talk about “water for all by the year 2000” comes with this kind of extraction. I say, Mr. Speaker, this Motion is timely because water rate, electricity, telephone and health are probably the four most important expenses for any person in this country and they impact directly on the quality of life of every person in Trinidad and Tobago. That is why when the Government enters into this kind of skewed relationship with its friends to put money in its friends’ pocket by virtually extracting the money-making part of WASA and giving it to selected friends, it is the public in Trinidad and Tobago who will be the loser in the long run.

When we warned them for example, when we told them that they were embarking on the wrong process and the wrong attitude was being used, when they were going to give their friends another utility in the InnCogen deal, they pooh-poohed that. Last year the Minister told us about the need to have increased capacity from T&TEC by September and as a result of which we know all about how they went about giving their friends the InnCogen Plant. So T&TEC now ends up with two take-or-pay contracts: one at PowerGen and one at InnCogen, at a time when the consumption of power is less than when it was put in place last October.

Interestingly enough, Mr. Speaker, what we should concern ourselves about, when the Minister sought to justify what they had done at InnCogen: another utility being handled in the same way to the public detriment—in a statement that the Minister made here in February 1998, he told us that T&TEC was paying

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PowerGen US 1.86 cents per kilowatt hour. That is what the cost of power was in 1999. That is what T&TEC was buying power from PowerGen for. That is TT \$0.13. Having bought that [*Interruption*] Sorry that is TT \$0.11. It does not change my point. The point is the Government knows that because the Minister was here telling the Parliament that: we are buying the power at TT \$0.11.

In the interim, ISPAT had moved from being a fully state-owned company to a fully private sector owned company and had to come for an increase in rates. Would you believe that these people did not even ask for an increase to cover the cost of what they were paying for the power? If you ask—categories D3 and E, are very large loads in T&TEC—Category E pays \$6.14 per kilowatt-hour [*Interruption*] “Nah, nah”—

Mr. G. Singh: What is paid by T&TEC to PowerGen and InnCogen is the cost of conversion of the gas into electricity. What the Member is saying does not contain the gas pricing as yet.

Dr. K. Rowley: So it is worse than I thought then? If, in fact, there is another component of cost which I have left out, I am saying you are paying—the Minister told us that T&TEC is paying \$0.11 per kilowatt hour from PowerGen. As far as I am concerned, T&TEC should have an arm’s length arrangement with PowerGen because PowerGen has foreign private sector participation. It is no longer a question of government to government. There is private sector participation in PowerGen. The Government only owns 51 per cent. So T&TEC, in buying from PowerGen, must do so at an arm’s length arrangement, especially when it is selling that power to a fully owned private company. The Minister told us that T&TEC is paying \$0.11.

What I have in my hand—the Minister is now telling me no, there are other costs, so it is much more than \$0.11.

If one looks at the schedule of costs one will see rate E is \$6.14 per kilowatt-hour. What I want to ask the Government is, under what circumstances have we agreed to provide a private sector company with power at half the cost at which we are buying it?

Mr. G. Singh: There is something wrong with the Member’s calculations and understanding of the technical data. When the matter went before the Public Utilities Commission (PUC), all these matters were ventilated and it is the PUC, an independent body, who determine the rate. I think there is something fundamentally wrong with the Member’s calculations.

Dr. K. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, since the Minister wants to assist us, could the Minister tell us what is the cost that T&TEC is paying PowerGen for power? I will give the Minister a chance to answer that.

Mr. G. Singh: I do not have that information available but I can find out. However, I do not think the Member is right.

Dr. K. Rowley: I have it. Mr. Speaker, what I have in my hand here is T&TEC's "How to Read your Meter"

commercial rate B,

commercial rate A—domestic

commercial rate D1, D2 and D3

commercial rate E

Commercial rates E and D3 are those very large users. The rate for D3 is \$6.09. The rate for E is \$6.14.

3.10 p.m.

I am saying if you are selling to any person at 6.14 and this Minister who keeps interrupting me has told the Parliament that T&TEC is buying it at US 1.86 cents from PowerGen, these are the issues that should engage this country's attention. Because utilities have moved over the recent past from being totally state-owned to either private-sector owned or private-sector involved and, therefore, the question of rates and who pays what should be of interest to all citizens of this country and the most important instance of this happening was when ISPAT came for a review of its rates.

It was the first time it was not state-owned where T&TEC and ISCOTT were state-owned and, therefore, it was right hand and left hand of the same person. When ISCOTT was sold to become ISPAT, there was an arrangement where in the future there would be an adjustment of that power rate—when the adjustment time came, if T&TEC is not misleading the country, by T&TEC's own document—as I described, large user, in fact the largest user in the country is paying half the price that T&TEC is paying for the power it buys from PowerGen and the Minister is telling me that something appears to be wrong, without telling me what is wrong and what is right.

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I am not going to be misled by fulminations not generating the facts. The Minister and the Government have been very deceptive and, in fact, not only deceptive, but have now given tacit approval for official corruption in the country. *[Desk thumping]* As I speak here, we really do not know who is involved in the desalination plant; we do not know where Ionics is. The Minister speaks loudly and confidently: “We have given a contract to Ionics Karamath.” We cannot find any semblance of Ionics on the Company Register.

I asked the Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs to tell me with whom they had signed the contract for the football stadia and in this very place he had to admit he did not know and if that company had anything to do he had to admit that he did not know. When I asked him if he knew of a locally registered company called CONCACAF and if it had anything to do with the \$400 million contract, he had to admit that he did not know and promised to find out and tell me. He did not do that, but I am sure he will, but as of then, and even as of now, he has not told the country with whom we have entered into that arrangement of a \$400 million stadia and that is just another mirror image of the desalination arrangement. That is why I have to point out to you the importance of this debate because when we allow this to pass it is not only happening with water. It is happening with electricity, and with the construction of the stadia. It is a pattern of behaviour.

Mr. Speaker, let me draw your attention to something. They do not like the media, but I pay attention to the media. As far back as June 22, 1999 there was an article by Shaun Fuentes which pointed out what Jack Warner said.

“Local football fans wanting to attend international football matches involving the local team, will soon have to dig deeper in their pockets.”

Then he made reference to the Government’s \$400 million project and he said:

“As soon as contracts for the new stadia have been finalised, an approach will be made to each contractor for a grant of \$25,000 towards local...” football.

He went on to say:

“Let the contractors refuse and it will be the most difficult time they will ever experience in their construction lives.”

This is a private citizen threatening the contractors in this country that if they do not pay an extortion fee, they will have the most difficult time in their lives. This is reported in the *Trinidad Guardian* on June 22, 1999. Just in case it is said that the newspaper is mischievous, the same story is in the *Newsday* of April 17, 2000.

After the Government has gone ahead, this individual who has no *locus standi* with public money is threatening contractors that if they do not pay an extortion fee, they will have the time of their lives in this country. Now that the Government has given the contract to whoever, where is he involved? We have not been told who is responsible, but we know he is involved and the contract has been awarded.

The contract sum has jumped from \$169 million to \$400 million and he is now carrying out his threat so he sends to the contractor a form that says:

“On behalf of my Company.....I hereby pledge 2.5%.....of the contract.....”

The contractor is required to sign it and commit himself to it. I want to put this on record and I also want to read the accompanying letter from CONCACAF, a private international body, carrying out a threat to our contractors on behalf of Jack Warner.

It says:

“CONCACAF”

Meaning Confederation of North, Central American and Caribbean Association Football and the letter is signed by Jack Austin Warner.

“RE: REQUEST FOR CONTRIBUTION TO TEAM 2001

As one involved in this major sporting venture therefore you are invited to contribute two and one-half (2.5) percent of the value of your contract as an indication of your tangible support towards the training.....\$1 440 000 USD.”

Mr. Speaker, the contract fee for those stadia is \$443 million. What is 2.5 per cent of that? So here is Jack Warner, extorting and demanding from contractors \$11 million from a contract awarded by this Government. [*Desk thumping*] And these individuals reward that with a passport of diplomacy, the country’s gateway. So do not listen to them because they do not have the public’s interest at heart. Even when there is this naked irresponsibility happening, it has the support of the Government because from the time it saw this news article where contractors were being threatened and if they do not contribute they will have the time of their lives, any decent Government would never have gone and broken the law as it did. It broke the law and attempted to give FIFA the contract and had to admit last week that it has since rescinded that, but has given it to CONCACAF. Is this CONCACAF the one of FIFA of Switzerland, or is this the one of Trinidad where the chairman is the same Jack Warner and a number of foreigners as vice-chairmen?

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Mr. Speaker, as they enter this debate, the PNM pleads guilty to whatever they want to accuse us of. Do not waste time, do not attack the PNM. Deal with these facts and tell us if it is right that the Government is supporting the fact that a contractor, who is supposed to have put in a bid for a contract is supposed to pay 2.5 per cent of extortion fee.

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

Motion made, That the hon. Member's speaking time be extended by 30 minutes.*[Miss P. Nicholson]*

Question put and agreed to.

Dr. K. Rowley: I thank Members, and I thank you Mr. Speaker for the extension. I was saying that the contract was initially awarded to FIFA, ends up with CONCACAF and the Government is not telling us who this CONCACAF is, but we have done our homework and found out who it is: the same person, plus six or seven foreigners to manage \$443 million of our money. While that is going on, nurses are forced to leave the hospital to say to the Government they need an improvement in their earnings and better working conditions.

Today we heard of contractors who put out their money and supply the Government. Small business people are owed \$29 million and the Member for Tobago East, Minister in the Ministry of Finance tells us they would be paid if and when funds become available. So the small businessman who has put out his \$29 million and serviced the Government may get paid by May. They are being owed since 1996, but will be paid if and when sums become available, yet the Cabinet and the Government are prepared to break the law to put foreigners and Jack Warner in charge of \$443 million and demand 2.5 per cent.

I think that the Government must make a statement to the contractors because they would not have factored that extortion fee into their bid and, if they did, it would be naked corruption because it would be state money passed on to them to be passed back to those persons who control the football money. Do not tell me you are helping football, because the road to hell is paved with good intentions. Football is being run as a private enterprise in this country and if \$11 million is extorted from the public purse into football, it falls under private control. I hope that no contractor in this country in putting forward his bid had taken into account that he had to pay football emperors 2.5 per cent of his earnings.

Mr. Speaker, on any contract, a contractor is expected to make a return. I have checked with contractors around the country and the mark-up in a good contract is at best 10 per cent. When one extracts overheads of about 7 per cent, a contractor is expected to net about 3 per cent plus or minus. Let us say 5 per cent, so the contractor is expected to net 5 per cent, yet he gets an extortion letter. I wonder if FIFA is aware of this? If FIFA is aware of it, and sanctions it, this only proves to us that it is a mafia organization. How can an international body sanction this kind of extortion? A contractor working for the Government expects to make 5 per cent in profit, yet a FIFA agency is extracting 2.5 per cent of his net return. Something bothers me, Mr. Speaker.

The Government has been very careful in keeping this matter under wraps and all we know is that the project has jumped from \$169 million to \$443 million, and we ask, how did this happen and why did this happen? Not one of them on the Government side will say. All we have heard is that the Government could get a police station, it can get a television station, two seats and whatever goes with that: giving gifts to the Government. And if he offers you anything Mr. Speaker, beware of Greeks bearing gifts.

Mr. Speaker: How does the Speaker come into this? It is one of the cardinal principles of this type of Government that we operate, that you must refrain from bringing the Speaker into these things.

Dr. K. Rowley: I did not really mean you, Mr. Speaker, I was referring to the prospective candidate for Tunapuna. *[Laughter]*

Mr. Speaker: *[Inaudible]*

Dr. K. Rowley: I did not quite get that, Mr. Speaker. I missed the comment.

Mr. Speaker: You were not referring to me, you were referring to somebody from Tunapuna?

Dr. K. Rowley: Yes, the prospective candidate.

Mr. Speaker: I see.

Dr. K. Rowley: I thought you said: "That does not mean me."

3.25 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, we have dealt at length in this honourable House with how the Government has handled electricity. Look at your T&TEC computerized bill now. You will need a degree to read it. I do not want to make any accusation against T&TEC because I respect our public officials and I support our agencies, but I want

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to point out a matter of fact, that with the coming on-stream of the unnecessary InnCogen Plant, T&TEC's financial situation has gone from a position of a slight surplus to one of significant deficit. Every month they have to pay as per that contract because they have two take or pay contracts to buy more power than they can sell. *[Interruption]* Mr. Speaker, I am not going to take any word from these people you know. *[Crosstalk]* I am pointing out that when you look at how the T&TEC rate is structured; when you look at current charges details, you will see 12 columns of computer-generated figures which end up in a figure which says, "please pay this amount." The question I want to ask in this honourable House is: How many persons in this Chamber can get up and say, "I am confident that every charge I am asked to pay here—

KWH Consumption Charge

Service Charge

Total Energy Charge

Billing Adjustment

Fuel Charge

—and that this computer-generated bill has no error, which has not overcharged me in any way"? In today's world, it is possible to program a computer to chisel an imperceptible penny here and a penny there, to make up \$10 million in this country as easy as kissing hands.

Only recently, a number of major supermarkets in the United States of America have been charged for programming their computers in such a way that, with respect to purchase of foodstuffs; on a can of peas and on a can of milk, the computer takes a cent here and a penny there. When it adds up at the end of the day, the public was found to be bilked by hundreds of millions of dollars. I make no accusation, except to say, I would be very happy, indeed, if the Government gets up and tells us that as a result of the InnCogen deal, T&TEC is in a better financial position and, in fact, they have no problems with their finances. If the Government says so *[Interruption]* I am not believing you and I am not listening to you. Mr. Speaker, they have demonstrated time and time again that they are strangers to the truth. That is water and power.

I draw attention to the next utility to show the pattern of the Government's involvement in subverting the public interest. I do so by quoting for you the Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister. Acting Prime Minister Gillette

reported in today's *Newsday*. The article is headlined, "No conflict of interest, says Senator Gillette." And I quote:

"SENATOR Lindsay Gillette, who now acts as prime minister when PM Basdeo Panday is out of the country, said yesterday that he saw no conflict between his telecommunication businesses and his efforts in helping government dismantle the present TSTT monopoly."

He adds to that:

"Anybody is allowed to operate a telecommunication service..."

I did not know that. I thought you had to have a licence approved by the Government. The point I want to make is when he goes on to say—this is a Minister of Government who is sworn in this honourable House to look after the public's interest. Listen to his quotation.

"I think I have some knowledge of the telecommunications industry, and to negotiate our way into a free and open way against Cable and Wireless, you need people to understand and appreciate telecommunications. I think I have some of that knowledge to compete and negotiate against TSTT."

"Mout' open, tory jump out!" TSTT is owned, 51 per cent, by the people of Trinidad and Tobago but there is an Acting Prime Minister who is poised to negotiate against TSTT! And you want to tell me that we must trust this Government to handle public affairs. There is a pattern of undermining the public's interest and this one is signalling before it starts. In the case of InnCogen, we said, do not do it. They went ahead and said that they had a deadline of September 1999 to meet—they met it and they put T&TEC into financial difficulty.

We have said with desalination—do not do it; they have gone ahead and they are doing it, and they would put the public at risk in the very near future, of paying substantial increases in water rates to make up for the moneys lost as a result of loss of market in Point Lisas. Now, the Acting Prime Minister is telling you, on the *Newsday*, that he is properly qualified and educated to negotiate against TSTT. I want to ask you all a question: if a Minister of Government is qualified to negotiate against T&TEC, where the people's interest is in the majority, then who is he negotiating for?

Mr. Valley: Who is protecting our interest?

Dr. K. Rowley: Whose interest is he protecting?

Mr. Valley: And who is protecting ours?

Mr. Assam: That was your partner.

Dr. K. Rowley: Of course, he was my partner. I have sworn to operate without fear or favour, malice or ill-will, and as I stand here, I stand to protect the public's interest. [*Desk thumping*] I put the public on notice that we have been told how the negotiations will go with respect to the de-monopolization of the telecommunications service. You have been told on page 7 of the *Newsday* of Friday, April 28, 2000. If the people of this country choose to pay no attention, then what we get is what we will take.

This Government has assisted corruption. The Government has assisted public persons to be in charge of large sums of public moneys as in the case of the stadia construction. And the Government is well unaware that moneys are being made to leak out of those contracts into the hands of private citizens with the support and coercion of the Government's friends. The Government knows that. And the Government has gone one better: the Government came to the PNM, took somebody out who tells us that he is well prepared to negotiate against TSTT, in this day and age.

Mr. Speaker, this Motion, obviously, would not find favour with the Government. The Government has no intention of disembarking from the track that is embarked upon. That track is to remove from the utilities—whether it is WASA; whether it is T&TEC; and now we see expectations of TSTT—the profit-making centres. The Government sees the expansion of services, whether it is water or electricity, as an opportunity. I want to be charitable to them. Maybe, they believe they are going to provide some water, yes, but that is not their primary objective. Their primary objective is to use the opportunity to provide gold mines for their friends, and that is why we are stuck with the InnCogen plant. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Assam: You are providing gold mines but no water.

Dr. K. Rowley: They are prepared to provide gold mines for their friends and that is why—[*Interruption*] He could say what he wants, Mr. Speaker. I could take any amount of picong. I only hope the public is looking on at what is happening, and when they speak, it is only relevant if they can identify that what we have said is not true. They must tell us that contractors are not being asked to pay 2 ½ per cent of \$400 million. They must tell us that is not true and we will withdraw our statements. They must tell us that T&TEC is using all the power it is contracted to take or pay for at InnCogen and PowerGen. If they can tell us that, we will withdraw our concerns. They must tell us that WASA is not producing

water at under a dollar per cubic metre but has chosen to buy water from the desal plant at \$4.00 per cubic metre. They must tell us that is not so. They must tell us whether, in fact, this desal plant will have a capacity of 12 million or 29 million because, depending on what they tell us, we will know if any of that water is earmarked for the public distribution system because that water is going to come from the polluted Gulf of Paria.

3.35 p.m.

Do not let them try to fool you; reverse osmosis will not remove the cations that are dissolved in that water, which are detrimental to human health. So when they tell you the reason they are paying more in Trinidad as against Barbados is because they are producing a higher quality of water, that is rubbish if that water has to go into our domestic supply. If it is not going to go there, what is WASA going to be saddled with? WASA has only recently raised a significant amount of money for development programmes. How is that money to be repaid? From what revenues? Is WASA currently in a position to generate the revenues to service those loans? Or, are we to expect that in the near future, when the call comes to pay those debts they will have to be paid for from the Treasury and moneys that otherwise should have gone to the health system, the education system or the infrastructural system, be it roads and whatever else, will have to service the WASA debt because WASA, under this Government, has foregone substantial revenues?

In fact, Mr. Speaker, to use the water from the very same plant that WASA is opening tomorrow, if one calculates its value at the \$7.00 per cubic metre, we will find that the water produced by that plant is worth approximately \$170 million. If WASA had chosen to continue supplying Point Lisas from its own sources, it would have had a revenue of \$138 million every year and that money could have been used to upgrade and expand the system. Instead, they chose to tie themselves to a contract to buy water, the same product they are producing. WASA is the best producer of water in this country, yet they choose to buy their product from an inserted private sector friend at a cost—I mean, the thing is ludicrous! WASA's total earnings from water for a year is about \$225 million, yet this same company has contracted to buy a product for about \$200 million a year. Does that sound like sense to you? What businessman will put his business in that position? How come?

What tomorrow should prove is that, with a little effort, it is possible to upgrade the existing system and provide additional water. Tomorrow at Piarcó will show that, with a little effort, we have added 15 million gallons to what was

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met there. I know the Minister will go there and say they built the plant and built the Arena Dam, but he cannot help it. What you have done, add 15 million more, there were similar kinds of expenditure on the Navet and Hillsborough Dams. I mean, if we look in the budget speeches for the last four years we would see the Richmond water project being funded there, but not a single action has been taken in Tobago on that. Even the alternative of attempting to desilt the Hillsborough Dam is possible.

It is possible to desilt the Hillsborough Dam and allow it to become a retainer of many millions of cubic feet of water. No action has been taken on that. We are hearing now about ground water supplies in Tobago—very restricted supplies. Surface water supplies are not touched. The Richmond project has been mentioned in the 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999 and 2000 budgets, yet, not a stroke of action but “Water for all by the year 2000”.

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

I notice when he spoke this afternoon he dropped off, “by the year 2000”. He only spoke of water for all. He did not say “by the year 2000” because 2000 is here and halfway done. Any person who receives a supply now, who was not getting one before, thank God, because I know it is virtually impossible for any Government, bad as you are, to spend \$70 billion and not give at least one person some water. Impossible! This Government has spent an average of \$12 billion per year and so must have done some good to somebody; but that is not the issue. Our issue here is how this Government is impacting on the quality and life of the people.

What this Government has done is set up this country where, in the not too distant future, the single most disturbing issue in Trinidad and Tobago will be the behaviour, the cost and availability of utilities. Soon after the next election the issues are going to be: water rates, telephone rates and electricity. So, they can talk all they want now to get past the elections with public relations. I am putting the people of this country on alert that, based on what this Government has done, this country has been set up to meet significant increases in power rates—T&TEC; water rates—WASA, and we wait to see what comes out of the telephone situation. While that has been done, the beneficiaries have not been the people of Trinidad and Tobago because this Government has never put that as its primary concern. The Government’s concern has been, “How can I use this opportunity to make some money? How can I use this opportunity to generate preferences?”

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to point out something to the Government. The fact that this Government might have improved the water supply to Poole or Moruga, or anywhere, does not justify or give them the right to put the Water and Sewerage Authority in a situation where its medium and long-term future is one which is worse than it is today. It does not justify that, because a handful of pipes were laid elsewhere, the Government could take its friends and insert them into the system without proper tendering procedures. We know what happened with the InnCogen plant. They tell us there was tendering. They tell us the tendering was done by the Alumina Company of Trinidad and Tobago. At the time when that project was under consideration and when the action was taken, there was no such company in Trinidad and Tobago. It was not even registered and does not exist now.

They told us that there were competitive bids for this desal plant. PowerGen has made it public in the newspapers around this country that they were not invited to bid. The bidding process was flawed. So do not come and tell us about anybody in Poole or in San Pedro who got water. We are glad for them. Do not tell us that because you want to have another 15 million gallons of water—*[Interruption]* Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am not going to stand here and waste any time to debate 34 years. The people of this country know what development happened in 34 years. What they do not know now is how this Government is managing their funds because there is a total absence of transparency and accountability. *[Desk thumping]*

When the Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs gets up here after 21 days and says he does not know to whom the contract has been awarded for the sports stadia and he will check, find out and tell me, that is an admission of how badly—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Ramsaran: Will the Member give way? What the Member asked me was who was CONCACAF and I told him I would check to see if the CONCACAF he was talking about and the one across—that is the question he asked me—and there is one CONCACAF.

Dr. K. Rowley: You know that now?

Mr. Ramsaran: Always knew.

Dr. K. Rowley: Mr. Deputy Speaker, since he has chosen to do that, I will ask the question again. This CONCACAF that is seeking to extort two and a half per cent of the contract of the Government, is this the CONCACAF of FIFA, that company of Switzerland? Is that the same company that is registered here in Port of Spain? In which case, I want to ask you a question. I see you are nodding positively, yes. Does FIFA and its sub-agencies have the Government's clearance and blessing to extort two and a half per cent of the contractors' contract sum in Trinidad and Tobago?

Mr. Ramsaran: What happened—and I was there at this function—is that the Trinidad and Tobago Football Federation invited the media of the country. They invited the entire football fraternity and they had a function with Team 2001. What Mr. Warner asked is that at the end of the day he would like the contractors to give 2.5 per cent of their profits from the contract. It was a voluntary thing, and his speech was carried live on radio and television.

Dr. K. Rowley: Mr. Deputy Speaker, if it is voluntary, why did Mr. Warner have to say, “Let the contractors refuse and it will be the most difficult time that they will ever experience in their construction lives”? If it was voluntary, why was there the need for that threat? Since you are—*[Interruption]* Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am not going to have any running debate with those opposite. I am talking to you on this matter because the Government is seeking to justify wrongdoing.

When I say to you that the corruption that has washed this country in the last four and a half years has been sanctioned by the Cabinet, you can see that defense there now. It has been sanctioned by the Cabinet because if the Minister can get up here and try to defend this improper action, and if the Government can get up here and try to defend this, what is that telling me? How can a Government sanction that? It must be improper. It is the same issue we raised the other day with respect to the contribution from the energy sector and we asked, “Are companies free to contribute or not contribute?” Up to now the Government has not answered clearly. The business sector needs to know because if a business says, “No, I am not inclined to contribute”, that business must know that there will be no retribution.

In this case, it has been made clear that there will be retribution because the person making the demand on behalf of the Government has said so. He said so in English. The Government told us here that this same company, CONCACAF, is co-manager with RGM, so how could you tell me no? It is very clear. But we do not have to—*[Interruption]* It is not a question of killing Jack. Jack is not a public servant. It is a question that the Government is accountable to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. I am not dealing with Jack for Jack’s sake. I am dealing with the fact that the Government is facilitating this kind of behaviour.

I want to close on the point that the desalination problem does not stand in isolation. It is merely one of many instances where this Government has not protected the public purse. What we do know—you saw the confusion here this afternoon with the Minister trying to argue that I am wrong. I am quoting from T&TEC’s document to show how much Ispat has to pay for a kilowatt-hour of power. The Minister jumped up telling me no, contradicting himself. He told us what T&TEC is paying for the power. T&TEC is telling us what they are charging for the power. He is telling me no, so something appears to be wrong.

What is wrong is the Prime Minister of this country, as Prime Minister, leaving here in December 1998, alone, with no security or protocol officer and going to London where there are many people and many houses in Kensington. He came back here and accounted to no one, and we have to find out that the largest user of power in this country is paying less than what T&TEC is paying for power. Do you understand?

3.50 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wind up on a score that we know the Government did not cancel the contract; the Government has not dealt with issues of facts; but we want to put on record that the PNM opposed this and when the chickens come home to roost, the PNM will say to this country, we have done our duty; we have put the facts before you.

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

The Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources (Hon. Trevor Sudama): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise to make a brief intervention in this debate because when I look at the Motion before us, it says:

“Whereas serious concerns have been expressed by some members of the public as regards to transparency and equity in the award of the contract for the construction of a Desalination Plant;

And whereas serious concerns exist that such a plant is not necessary and will have adverse effects on the environment;

Be it resolved that this House condemn the manner in which the contract has been awarded for the Desalination Plant and also call upon the Government to cancel this controversial contract.”

Mr. Deputy Speaker, now I sat here and listened, not about desalination plant in the main, but about CONCACAF and a fellow called Jack Warner. I listened about the Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission, what it was charging for its electricity, and I heard very little about desalination in this whole debate. So that we heard the Member for Diego Martin West, go around the world and the Member hardly ever spoke on the subject of this Motion before us.

We are placed in a very invidious position as a Government. This is a Government that has performed like no other government in the history of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] Having performed over the last four years, now we are told that we should not have performed in that way. We improved the water supply. The Member conceded that the electricity situation

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today is much better than it was in 1995 when the Opposition was in power. The Member ought to concede that the employment situation has improved considerably from the end of 1995 to today. We have moved from 19.5 per cent unemployment in this country to 11.5 per cent in just four years. That is performance. *[Desk thumping]*.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, our foreign reserves are at a situation now where we are over \$1 billion and we have been able to provide import cover for four months of our imports. This economy has seen growth like it has never seen before—except possibly for a very short period in the oil boom years. In the past year, the Government has achieved a growth rate of over 6 per cent in this country—6.9 per cent growth rate in this country and everybody is benefiting. *[Desk thumping]*

Our credit rating has improved; we are now in investor grade as a small country; we have made the investment climate in this country such, that investors are coming here in order to set up plants and not only in the energy sector. I guess that is one of the reasons we have gone into desalination to provide one of the critical utility services, so that we would be able to be in a better position to attract investors to this country. This is why we have gone into this and the time factor was important in putting down this desalination plant.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what was the water situation at the end of 1995? If one looks at the newspaper—and I can talk about water because over the years when I was in opposition there, almost on a weekly basis, came to this House to complain about the critical water situation in this country. There were people taking buckets and buckets of water from contaminated ponds—they are talking about contaminated sea—without treatment under a PNM government in order merely to survive and to get the basic necessity of life. These people should be ashamed to come here and talk about water. We have provided water.

Mr. Assam: They mashed up everything.

Hon. T. Sudama: Today, so many areas in Trinidad and Tobago—every nook and cranny—have an improved water supply and the Member comes here to complain about water. *[Desk thumping]* Do you understand what we are facing? *[Desk thumping]* The Member comes here to talk about water and the mechanisms that we have utilized. I mean, the Member for Tobago West could bear me out. When we were complaining about water, the Member at that time was on the same side that I was, and the Member complained bitterly against the PNM—

Miss Nicholson: The situation remains the same. *[Interruption]*

Hon. T. Sudama:—and their insensitivity to the provision of basic water supply. Every week there were protests and people marching with buckets and pans all over—in the urban as well as in the rural areas. Who are marching today? In the year 2000 who are marching? Nobody is marching because the water supply in this country has improved by leaps and bounds. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when little children had to get up in the night to go and fill water and lost their sleep, they could not study. Today, they could get their sleep and they have time to go and read their books and prepare their lessons. This is what this Government has done. When housewives had to spend hours and hours trying to fetch water from some distance away, that is no longer the case.

When the Opposition brings a Motion like this—hear what it says, that a desalination plant is not necessary. Is the mover of this Motion saying that increasing the water supply in this country is not necessary? Is a desalination plant not necessary to increase the water supply? The Member does not want water for people! The Member does not want an increased water supply to be available for industry, domestic, commercial users and others! The Member does not want that! The Member's solution is the Beetham Sewer Lagoon—that is where the Member solution comes from. No wonder there is where they look for solutions, in the sewer plants. [*Laughter*] That is relevant to their mentality where they look for solutions. If not in the Beetham Sewer Plant down it is down in the San Fernando Sewer Plant—to solve the water problems of Trinidad and Tobago.

4.00 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what was the water situation at the end of 1995? How much were they supplying and to whom? Let me tell you what the water situation was and where we have brought it today. At the end of 1995, 43 per cent of this population, almost half the consumers of Trinidad and Tobago had less than 48 hours supply per week. That hides a lot; in this statistic there are people who never got water for two and three weeks under the PNM government. They should be ashamed to come here, when more than half the population and, particularly the domestic users, could not get water for the ordinary activities of living.

When you look at the areas which got a 24-hour water supply and 168 or 120 hours per week water supply, you will see a certain pattern. You will see that pattern of dedicated discrimination, targeted discrimination—[*Desk thumping*]—against certain areas of Trinidad and Tobago, by this PNM regime. We are providing water for all. I have here Zomara Heywood of Point Fortin; Molly Ali of Mayaro—in those days those were PNM constituencies; Ulric Williams of Guapo Road; Lydia Joseph and Mr. Lutchman Mahabir of Irois Forest in Chatham; way down in the south, behind, as they say, God back. We have

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provided water for them today; Don Austin of Granville Estate, his diner and bar is getting water today. Sahidan Ali from my own constituency in Penal where we never had water for weeks and weeks, upon weeks, we are getting water today. [*Desk thumping*] All over the country people are getting water, because this is a people-oriented Government; for us it is people who come first. People matter and if they do not have water, our duty is to give them water.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, after having that record of non-performance, that situation of critical water shortages in this country at the end of 1995, they are coming here to complain about what this Government has done; whether we should not improve and build a desalination plant. I came here today and I did not hear the Member talk too much about the award process for the desalination plant. He talked about Jack Warner, CONCACAF and whoever, InnCogen and so forth, but he did not talk about the award process, because that is a preamble to the Motion.

I come to the award process. It is in their mentality. They come here week after week, nothing to speak about, but corruption and corruption and more corruption. It seems it is embedded in their psyche so that they cannot express themselves in any other way but to come here and talk about corruption, alleged corruption, speculative corruption, whatever it is they have to come here to speak about it. Nothing to say! [*Crosstalk*]

When you talk about their performance for 34 years, you would have seen—. Then the Member comes here, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and regales this House with inaccuracies, lies and falsehoods. He says, for example, that as a result of the PowerGen arrangement and InnCogen coming on the scene, the Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission is in difficulties. Well, T&TEC was in difficulties under the PNM regime. [*Desk thumping*] It was in difficulties. The 1998 audited statement for T&TEC shows that it has a surplus of \$51 million under the UNC Government. [*Desk thumping*] That government should be the last one to talk about T&TEC going into difficulties.

This is the government that went into a deal with PowerGen. These people formed the local company, our friends from the United States, Southern Electric, BP Amoco and so on and so on. They came here and had some kind of arrangement with the Member for San Fernando East. What that arrangement was, I am not saying here today; but there was some sort of arrangement. They said, “Look here, T&TEC is falling down, we cannot provide the electricity and so forth and if we do not get into this arrangement with Southern Electric and BP Amoco, all fall down for T&TEC, and they are coming here, they have to increase the generating capacity by so many and so many kilowatts, therefore, they are bringing in investment here.”

Do you know what was the outcome of all of this, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Not a single unit of generating capacity was installed by these people; not a single unit. [*Desk thumping*] They took existing generating capacity, rehabilitated it and made a pound and a crown as a result of that. That government guaranteed a 20 per cent rate of return on the investment that was made by these foreigners, as part of Powergen. Mr. Deputy Speaker, 20 per cent rate of investment, what does that imply? If I guaranteed you a rate of investment that means that if my costs are going up, obviously, my billing charges would have to go up in order for me to pay your rate of investment.

As a result of that Powergen deal, the Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission went into deficit to the tune of over \$100 million, under their regime. Yet we hear him talking about T&TEC, Powergen, what we did and what was not done. Ridiculous! He comes here to bamboozle; to give the impression that he knows all these facts and figures, but he provides no case. It is like building a structure without any posts; so he lays down certain foundations which are really not foundations, about T&TEC in difficulties. The Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission is not, today, in difficulties. [*Interruption*]

Let me quote again what the Member said about today's cost of production of the Water and Sewerage Authority. He built up a whole theory of how WASA was producing at \$1.00 per cubic metre. One cubic metre, \$1.00 per cubic metre, where he got that from, I do not know. On the basis of that he went into a long arithmetical calculation of how much who benefitted.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, do you know what is WASA's cost of production today? It is \$3.72 per cubic metre; \$3.72 per cubic metre is what their current cost of production is, so where he got \$1.00 from, I do not know. [*Interruption*] Where did he get \$1.00? It is their doing that over the 34 years they were in office they never sought to have a programme to bring the deficit of the Water and Sewerage Authority down, because they never gave the authority for WASA to increase their tariffs in line with the increasing cost of production. They never did that.

Today, we have a situation where for the metered water, which are mainly industrial users that are outside of Point Lisas, we are metering them at \$3.50 per cubic metre, but we are producing water at \$3.72; somebody has to pay. For the metered users which are non-industrial, WASA is selling them water at \$1.50. Selling at \$1.00, producing at \$3.72, and this is the kind of economics they are talking about. The Water and Sewerage Authority has been in deficit all the years when they were in power, we are now trying to bring its finances back on an even keel and he is concerned. He is concerned about \$7.50 being paid by the industrial users at Point Lisas.

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Mr. Deputy Speaker, I just want to put this in comparison. WASA's current cost of production is \$3.72 per cubic metre. When the desalination plant is completed the cost of water will be \$4.45 to us and then, of course, we will sell it at \$7.75 or \$7.70 to the industrial estates. So when you look at the differential in cost between \$3.72, current cost of production of WASA and \$4.45, what we are going to pay for the production of the industrial—[*Interruption*—What is the point that was made by the Member for Diego Martin West? I cannot understand what is that point at all.

He also spoke about the fact that the desalination plant will produce excess amount of water and that water would go into the domestic system. I will tell you how they did their business. [*Interruption*] I will come to that later, how they used to plan. I will talk about the St. Patrick water supply. But with the desalination plant the schedule is that in the first installment it is going to produce 8 million gallons of water. You have to put on the capacity to go up in stages up to 24 million, because you cannot add to a desalination plant; you have got to put down the infrastructure. Initially, it will produce 8 million gallons to satisfy, not fully, the demands of Point Lisas, and it is only that 8 million for which we are going to pay.

In its next tranche it will go up to 12 million as the capacity increases. As the industrial establishment increases, we have the in-built capacity to increase the supply of the desalination plant. From 12 million gallons it will go to 20 million and then to 24 million. So that when Point Lisas expands, whether it is in the north, south or wherever it expands, and if in the vicinity of Point Lisas we have expanded industrial estate size, then this supply is geared for the future. This is how this Government does things; it plans for the future. This is the United National Congress Government—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am very grateful to the Minister for giving way. With respect to the date at which the plant will reach 24 million cubic metres, is the Minister aware of any date or is it open-ended as to whenever that is required? I ask this question in the context of what was said by the Minister of Public Utilities, he gave a date when the Point Lisas plants would require 30 million gallons. As you are speaking now, is there a date as to when the contracted arrangements would require 24 million gallons?

Hon. T. Sudama: Yes, that is as we require the capacity. As we require the capacity, the capacity will be brought on stream. So there is no point, as you yourself rightly pointed out, to have an increased supply when you do not have the usage for it. We are gearing the increase in the supply from the Point Lisas

plant to the increased industrial demand for Point Lisas and the surrounding areas which are going to be industrialized. Today, the current demand in Point Lisas is 15.2 million gallons per day. In its first tranche the desalination plant will only produce eight million gallons, then it will go up to 12 million and so forth, to meet the potential for expanded industrial capacity. This is the way we plan to do the thing.

I will tell you how they did things in the past. Let me talk about the St. Patrick's water supply. They said that they were going to spend millions. In fact, that programme cost, I think, US \$25 million—the St. Patrick water supply. Mr. Deputy Speaker, do you know what they did? They went all over the place and put down big tanks. There was one at Siparia, one at Erin somewhere, and one going down to Point Fortin. Carefully they put them down in PNM areas. They put the Siparia tank in the PNM part of Siparia. They carefully put this string of tanks.

4.15 p.m.

Then they were not satisfied with that; they put down pipelines and connected all the tanks with pipelines. Do you know what they did not do? They could not find the water to put into the pipelines to go into the tanks. They had no water to put into the pipelines to go into the tanks. So what we had for years and years was a set of rusted tanks which could not have water in them because they did not plan for the increased water which had to be made available to go into this system in order to improve the supply in St. Patrick and, particularly, the hard hit areas.

I am sympathetic to all people who have water problems, including the Member for La Brea, because I was here for so long complaining about the lack of water in Oropouche. I am not against them putting down tanks and pipelines. What I am against is that they did not provide for the water. I do not know if they expect the people in the St. Patrick area to be happy with tanks, look at the tanks and pipelines and say, "Aha I am happy man, no water." Well that is not relevant. This is how they plan.

Then they said we could have avoided all this if we take grey water from the Beetham and San Fernando sewer plants and so forth—San Fernando has a very limited amount of water—and we send it down to Point Lisas. What they do not understand is that to treat that grey water is a costly thing. To put down the plant, the infrastructure and to build the pipeline to go from the Beetham Estate down to Point Lisas is an expensive proposition and would have cost a lot more than US \$20 million which we are expending to put down the desalination plant. This is their solution, which is a non-solution. *[Interruption]* I know it is not the Government but that is what we cost it and that cost would be recouped from the charges for water and so on.

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When one looks at the thing, one will see that whatever these people propose has no sense, absolutely no sense! When we do something and we take an initiative they come here and say: "No, no, that is a bad initiative." I want to ask them—the Member for Diego Martin West said he is a man who provides hydrology services. He provides hydrology services to everybody, except, possibly, to the People's National Movement (PNM). I do not know whether he made his hydrological expertise available to the PNM. I know he and the Member for San Fernando East was not on speaking terms and so on, but I mean he could have made it to the Government as such, rather than to the Member for San Fernando East. But the Member for Diego Martin West is an expert in hydrology and hydrological services and he allowed the suffering of the people under the PNM government for so long and he did not put his expertise at the service of his own government and party. I cannot understand that. This great expertise he has in hydrological services and he could not put it at the feet of the PNM government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me explain what is going to happen after the desalination plant comes on stream. The 8 million or 12 million, whatever we have been supplying from our general system, will then be relieved to go down and supply the long-suffering people of Central and South. They are not going to get desalinated water. They are going to get water from the system because Point Lisas is taking up so much less water for their own purposes. Where the Member gets this crazy idea from, it is going to be desalinated water that is going into our domestic supply system and so on? He is always creating hysteria. He comes here with sound and fury week after week saying absolutely nothing but sound and fury and hoping one day that this sound and fury will catapult him to the leadership of the PNM. I think that is the cause for this noise that he comes and makes here week after week. Desalinated water is not going into the system, that is for industrial uses. The water which Point Lisas would have used from our general system will then be put for domestic and other uses.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, here this alarmist says that the industrialists at Point Lisas would cut back on their production and there would be less investment because of the cost that they have to pay for water. In comparative terms, this cost of water at \$7.70 per cubic metre is less than what many industries throughout the world pay for water. This is one of the lowest water rates that we are charging. This nonsense about that having a negative effect on industrial expansion at Point Lisas has to be seen for what it is.

We have made the decision, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that when we made the comparison as to what it would cost us to construct a dam in order to collect the water, treat that water and make it available, the time factor was over seven years for us to gain the benefit from that and the cost involved would have been in excess of TT \$1 billion.

[MR. SPEAKER IN THE CHAIR]

If we had gone that route, Mr. Speaker, we would have suffered a loss. If we had built a dam and an associated treatment plant for a daily supply of 24 million gallons, we would have suffered a loss to the tune of \$952 million over a 20-year period, going that route of trying to meet the supply problem. But we could not put this country to that sacrifice of waiting for seven years. We needed the water in a certain time frame. This is why we have gone into that contract and we have arranged that contract for the building of the desalination plant.

Mr. Speaker, I think the Member for Diego Martin West also spoke about PowerGen not having been given a chance. Again, he sought to bring in falsehoods and inaccuracies into this debate. When the calculation and evaluation of the capital recovery factor were made on a build, own and operate basis, we were told that residual values were as follows:

Karamath Ionics	-	US \$120 million
US filters (Bhagwansingh joint venture)	-	US \$120 million

But for the PowerGen proposal the residual values amounted to US \$235 million. They had an opportunity to bid, they put in their proposals, when the economics were calculated, PowerGen was way out, at US \$235 million. Even though we own 51 per cent of PowerGen, we could not just go in there and see the financial out-turns of the order that we have noted, and give PowerGen a contract for almost twice the cost involved. No government with a conscience could have gone that route, Mr. Speaker.

We have long recognized that the utilities are critical elements for the economic, industrial and social development of this country. It is a critical element for the quality of life of our people. We have gone out, we have increased the Caroni/Arena Treatment Plant. We have made 15 million gallons more available to the population. We have increased our capacity in the other treatment plants.

4.25 p.m

We have increased and improved the pipelines, the boosters and so forth. It is not just a question of water, but one of an integrated approach that we provide water, the pipelines, improve the boosters and treatment capacity, and in the end, you get a much greater return than if you just provided the water.

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Mr. Speaker, under that regime, the leakages in the system—which is a cost we have to bear—amounted to 50 per cent. So if we produced 150,000,000 gallons of water per day, under the PNM regime, 75,000,000 went into leakages and, of course, this was of no benefit to the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, whether it is to the industry, consumer, commercial sector, or to services and that is something we are trying to correct. So from a situation of 50 per cent leakages under the PNM regime, we have improved that and today we are down to about 40 per cent leakage and there is a programme to reduce the leakage to 25 per cent. That is our estimate, and, of course, by the time we are finished in this term of government and the second term of government, we would have brought that deficiency rate to the international standards of the developed countries.

The Opposition Members do not like to acknowledge the fact that we have brought efficiencies in Trinidad and Tobago from very low levels of the under-developed countries into a situation where we are approaching efficiencies of the middle-level developing countries and, indeed, of the advanced countries. So Trinidad and Tobago is on the move. The other issue is that when they cannot fault you on your performance that you have provided the goods and services and the benefits to the population, they come on the issue of corruption.

They say that the manner in which the contract has been awarded for the desalination plant lacked transparency and equity. I could understand transparency, but what is it about equity in the award of a contract? Equity? We have given everybody the same chance to bid. We went out in public and when the Minister of Public Utilities was responding, he went through step by step to deal with the question of transparency. We chose competitive bidding, then we advertised for pre-qualification in the newspapers; public advertisement. With response to the public advertisement we did certain evaluations and then awarded relative rates. Experience in desalination technology, technical capability, environmental impact management, financial growth, methodology and so forth. All these were criteria which were used in evaluation. We opened the pre-qualification submissions publicly. The results of the pre-qualification exercise were evaluated. Of the 21 persons, seven companies were responsive and satisfied with pre-determined minimum criteria and standards.

Then there was a post-qualification and bidding procedure. The seven were subjected to that as a result of which three of the pre-qualified companies indicated by letter that they were unable to submit a bid, and one of the pre-qualified companies joined forces with another which continued to pursue the bid. As a result, three companies submitted a bid by the stipulated closing date.

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

4.30 p.m: *Sitting suspended.*

5.05 p.m: *Sitting resumed.*

Hon. T. Sudama: Mr. Speaker, I would not be very long again because, as I said, there is very little to answer of this Motion. All the irrelevant issues that were raised which comprised those of the Member for Diego Martin West and, indeed, the other Members on the other side—I am not here to talk about CONCACAF. The Motion did speak to the issue of transparency, implying that this contract was awarded to the joint venture of Karamath Ionics, in a manner which was underhand—that is what the implication is—in which some subterfuge was involved.

Of course, given the contribution of the Member for Diego Martin West, all he implied was this contract being awarded under corrupt practices. This is what I am trying to explain. In fact, it was answered by the Minister of Public Utilities. He went through the trouble of detailing and outlining the process—step by step—as to how this contract was finally awarded. If this is not transparency then I would like to know from Members on the other side, what exactly is transparency.

As I was saying when we took the adjournment for the tea, that we proceeded by way of public competitive bidding and we made advertisements for pre-qualification. This was about two years ago when the process started, and there were responses to the public invitations. This was during the period August to September 1998. The criteria and the relevant weights which would have been attached to the relevant proposals, and by which the proposals would have been evaluated, were outlined and made public.

The opening of the pre-qualification submissions was publicly done on September 14. Then the results of the pre-qualification exercise was carried out. This is all in a process of evaluation and reducing the numbers and merely dealing with those who had credible proposals before the evaluation committee. It all boiled down to seven companies who were responsive and satisfied the pre-determined minimum criteria and standards, which were advertised.

After that, it was the post-qualification and bidding where these seven companies were then reevaluated on a points system. Their offers were evaluated according to three basic criteria: first, that the contractors record and qualifications were taken into account. That accounted for 15 per cent of the marks. Their technical proposal was evaluated, which accounted for 40 per cent, and their economic proposal was evaluated for 45 per cent. On the basis of that,

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the exercise was reduced to three companies. Three companies submitted bids by the stipulated closing date of February 12, 1999. Those evaluation of the bids took place and perhaps—you see, they are always critical of people who carry out public service work.

I want to put on the record again, the nine-member Bids Evaluation Committee. Because, you know, they will run around and say, “it is the UNC people they put on the Bids Evaluation Committee and so forth.” If the PNM wants to attack the integrity of those people here, they are quite free to do so. On the committee were:

Mr. Daniel Hoffman	Desalination Expert from ADAN Technical and Economic Services Limited, Israel
Mr. Emmanuel George	Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Public Utilities

If you want to attack the integrity of Emmanuel George then go out in the public and do so.

Mr. Tewarie Tota-Maharaj	Engineer, Director—Capital Investment, WASA
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Another public employee.

Dennis Cumberbatch	Director, Legal Secretariat, WASA
Mr. Ian DeSouza	Banker/Accountant, Commissioner on the Board of WASA
Ms. Shobna Persaud	Attorney-at-law, Commissioner on the Board of WASA
Mr. Khansham Kanhai	Engineer, Commissioner on the Board of WASA
Mr. Elias Soogrim	Advisor to the Minister of the Environment, Ministry of Planning and Development
Mr. Allan Bachan	Director, Project Implementation Unit, Ministry of Public Utilities.

That was the nine-member team.

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

Motion made, That the hon. Member's speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [*Hon. R. L. Maharaj*]

Question put and agreed to.

Hon. T. Sudama: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is just that I want to put this whole transparency issue to rest. I do not think that they should raise it again.

The first thing I want to know—the Member for Diego Martin East said that these were a bunch of bandits. He said so. Just to give you an idea of their mentality, whoever it is, there is nobody who can escape from their accusations. Nobody—whenever you are—can escape. So these people who have served in the public sector—nobody here is a politician and so forth—are now being attacked by the Member for Diego Martin East, as being bandits. I want that to go on the record because it will get onto the platform eventually.

After this team did the evaluation, the marks were given here. How many marks each obtained? The final scores were: Ionics Inc/Hafeez Karamath Engineering Services obtained 85.7 points; the Bhagwansingh's Group of Companies/US Filters Joint Venture proposal got 72.1 points; and Power/Gen/Stone & Webster/Neal & Massy got 65 points. On the basis of this transparent exercise, Ionics Inc./Hafeez Karamath Engineering Services were awarded a contract, and then negotiations took place and so forth.

All this talk in the media as to why this project is behind schedule, why it is not starting. It is only after you get a contract, you could go and look for financing. Nobody goes and looks for financing in the hope that they will get a contract. [*Interruption*] That is the way you used to do things. That is why Elias dealt with him. That is the way you approach matters.

Therefore, after having got the contract, the process of looking for the financing for the project has to commence. I just wanted to say that. The final points—because, you see, the Motion deals with the adverse effects of the environment.

5.15 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, I do not know that any one of them there are experts on the environment. We have a body, the Environmental Management Authority, which is expert at evaluating and analyzing the effects on the environment by any industrial activity, or any kind of activity for that matter. They are the experts and

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this application for the construction has to go to the EMA and be given a certificate of environmental clearance. That application has already been made, there has been negotiation, some record of deficiency, and there is an ongoing exercise in clarifying the deficiency.

At the end of the system a certificate of environmental clearance would be issued. Once that certificate is issued, the question of adverse consequences for the environment would have been dealt with. An outline approval would be issued under certain conditions that, "Look here, you have to deal with A, B, C and D", and after those have been dealt with then, of course, one is clear with respect to environmental consequences. So that, where this issue of an adverse environmental impact has come into being, if this company cannot get a certificate of environmental clearance, it cannot construct the plant. It is as simple as that. But if they get it and if the EMA approves a certificate of environmental clearance for them, then it is obvious that they have satisfied all the conditions that are required for the protection and the preservation of the environment.

So, Mr. Speaker, I have looked at this Motion. The Motion is without merit. The Motion has been brought to this House merely to give the Member for Diego Martin West an opportunity to get up here and rant and rave about corruption. These are the only motives for this Motion. There is no substance in this. We have answered all the allegations. We have dealt with the economics. We have dealt with the transparency issue. We have dealt with the issue of water supply and we have dealt with their performance and what we have been able to do since we came into power at the end of 1995, our record of delivery, including water, to the people of Trinidad and Tobago, they know it in their hearts and in their consciences.

They will come and grudgingly accede to the fact that we have delivered but, you see, for the sake of the politics they have to say something, and when they come here they fabricate all sorts of irrelevancies. They fabricate all sorts of accusations and come here to malign the Government of Trinidad and Tobago that has performed the very best in the history of this country. Thank you very much. [Interruption] Water for all. [Desk thumping]

ADJOURNMENT

The Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs (Hon. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj): Mr. Speaker, I propose to move the adjournment of the House. Before I do that may I just mention that, as Members of this House are aware, the Dangerous Dogs Bill, 1999 was passed in this House in November 1999 and was sent to the Senate. The Bill has been returned to us from the Senate with approved amendments of a constitutional nature. As the Bill had already

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been passed in this House, in order to give effect to the Senate amendments, Mr. Speaker, the procedure to be adopted would be to introduce a new Bill which would include those amendments and the appropriate constitutional provisions for the special majority of this House.

Accordingly, Mr. Speaker, I seek leave of this House, having regard to Standing Order 62, to introduce at the next sitting this new Bill entitled, “The Dangerous Dogs Bill”. Once it has passed in this House it will be taken to the Senate for approval.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the question is that under Standing Order 90, Standing Order 62 be suspended to enable the reintroduction of a new Bill concerning dangerous dogs to be introduced in the same session of Parliament.

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: This, therefore, means that it will be possible for the Clerk to receive such a thing and for it to be put onto the Order Paper.

Hon. R. L. Maharaj: Mr. Speaker, I have not seen the Opposition so happy for the afternoon.

I beg to move that this House do now adjourn to Monday, May 1, 2000 at 10.30 a.m.

Mr. Speaker, may I indicate, I have spoken to the Opposition Chief Whip about the Bills which we will attempt to do on Monday. They are Bill No. 12—the Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic (Enforcement and Administration) Bill; Bill No. 13—the Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic Bill and Bill No. 14—the Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic Bill. May I mention, Mr. Speaker, if I may, in the other place these three Bills were done together. There will be an attempt to do that here depending on the views of Members.

The other measure we will attempt to do is Bill No. 1—“An Act to amend certain legislation of a fiscal nature and to provide for related matters”, and Bill No. 2, a Bill entitled, “An Act to make provisions for the removal of human tissue for the transplantation and blood for transfusion and for matters connected therewith”.

Mr. Speaker, if you will, permit me just to give Members an indication that we will also be sitting on Thursday—I mentioned that to the Opposition Chief Whip—from 1.30 p.m. On Thursday we propose, depending on if we have completed all that we have done in respect of what I have mentioned for Monday, we will be doing Bill No. 7, the Sexual Offences Bill and Bill No. 15 dealing with

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the distribution of estates. On Friday, May 5 at 10.30 a.m. we propose to do the Dangerous Dogs Bill and then we will attempt to do the Praedial Larceny Bill and the Summary Offences Bill. And, Mr. Speaker, the following—

Mr. Valley: Bill numbers, please?

Hon. R. L. Maharaj: I am sorry. The Dangerous Dogs Bill—well, there is no number for that as yet. The Praedial Larceny Bill is No. 16 on the Order Paper of today and the Summary Offences Act is No. 17 on the Order Paper of today. The Sexual Offences Bill is No. 7 on the Order Paper, and the Distribution of Estates Bill is No. 15.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to also put on the record—I have mentioned it to the hon. Member for Diego Martin Central—that we would also sit the next week, the week of the 8th, on Monday, Thursday and Friday. We will be sitting on the Mondays and Fridays at 10.30 a.m. and on the Thursdays at 1.30 p.m.

So, Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the House do now stand—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Bereaux: What about the Equal Opportunity Bill, are you not bringing it again?

Hon. R. L. Maharaj: No, we are going to debate that but I will announce the days next week.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, before we deal with the Motion for the adjournment, leave had been granted to two Members to raise matters. One is—[*Interruption*] Hon. Members, what I had before me, and for which leave had been granted, was a matter to be raised by the Member for Tunapuna, on the adverse effect of the non-intake of students at the El Dorado Youth Camp since its last graduation in 1999 and the non-functioning of other youth camps across the country.

The other matter that I had was the adverse effect on the community of Morvant by the failure of the Government, notwithstanding assurances from the relevant Minister, to allocate moneys for the establishment of the Mon Repos Community Centre at Mon Repos, Morvant. That was by the Member for Laventille East/Morvant.

So that, in any case—[*Interruption*] No. The one that had been raised by the Member for Tobago West was too late and that is, in fact, down for Monday.

Miss Nicholson: I just wanted to be clear, Sir.

Mr. Speaker: Crystal clear. So is it that one is not in a position to proceed with these?

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Hon. R. L. Maharaj: Mr. Speaker, it was brought to my attention about the Motion on the adjournment with respect to the adverse effect of the intake of students at El Dorado, but I pointed out that, by inadvertence I am sure, the Motion did not go to the right Ministry and that, having been dated April 26, 2000 the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs was not aware of it. I do not think that, in any event, there was any objection from the Opposition to defer that for Monday. The other Motion with respect to Morvant, I am not aware of.

Mr. Speaker: Indeed, the one with respect to El Dorado was addressed to the Minister of Education and—*[Interruption]*

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: It was really supposed to be the Ministry of Social and Community Development.

Mr. Speaker: Yes, it should have been. It should have gone there. The one with respect to Morvant was dated April 7, 2000 and was addressed to the Minister of Social and Community Development and the Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs. But in any case, the Member for Laventille East/Morvant was excused from attending today's sitting. So what we will do is just defer both of these matters. They will be deferred to Monday. All of them will come up on Monday or, if the Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs wants a little more time on this, learning about it only today—this is El Dorado—perhaps it could be dealt with on Thursday.

So that the one for Tunapuna will be dealt with on Thursday and the one with respect to Morvant will be dealt with on Monday. The other Motion from the Member for Tobago West would also be dealt with on Monday.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 5 28 p.m.