

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES***Friday, July 07, 2000*

The House met at 1.30 p.m.

**PRAYERS**[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]**LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, I wish to advise that I have received communication from the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West who has asked to be excused from today's sitting. The leave of absence he seeks is granted.

**CONDOLENCES****MRS. ELMINA CLARKE-ALLEN**

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, I wish to bring to the notice of this honourable House that I have recently been informed of the passing of a former member of this House and of the Senate of Trinidad and Tobago, Mrs. Elmina Clarke-Allen. I think both sides of the House may wish to express words of condolence.

**The Minister of Labour and Co-operatives (Hon. Harry Partap):** Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Government Bench, I would like through you, to extend to the members of the family of the late Elmina Clarke-Allen, our sincere and deepest sympathy on her passing from this life.

I cannot say that I knew Mrs. Clarke-Allen personally, but from what I have read and heard about her, leaves me to conclude that she belonged to a period in our nation's history when people were prepared to serve community and nation without concern for personal gain.

Mrs. Clarke-Allen was a teacher, having obtained her diploma at the Teacher's Training College Port of Spain; she underwent training in home economics, youth and women's development and food and nutrition. She used this experience to assist the people of Sangre Grande and its environs. Mrs. Clarke-Allen had a hand in many community groups in the North/Eastern region, and has left a lasting contribution in that region.

*Condolences*  
[HON. H. PARTAP]

*Friday, July 07, 2000*

Mrs. Clarke-Allen was also the Chief Commissioner of the Girl Guides Association, Chairman of the Child Welfare League, the Day Nursery Association and the Federation of Women's Institute in the St. Andrew/St. David area. She served in the Upper House and later became the representative for Toco/Manzanilla in 1981. She served as Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministries of Education and Culture, Industry and Commerce and the Ministry of Labour. She was named a Minister in the Ministry of Housing and Resettlement, and Minister in the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Co-operatives as that ministry was known at that time.

Mr. Speaker, we on this side express our deepest condolences to her family.

Thank you.

**Mr. Patrick Manning** (*San Fernando East*): Mr. Speaker, I too would like to join the hon. Minister of Labour and Co-operatives in expressing the condolences of the Members of the Opposition to the family of Mrs. Elmina Clarke-Allen who passed away and whose remains were interred yesterday.

Mr. Speaker, unlike the hon. Minister, I can say that I knew Mrs. Clarke-Allen personally. Indeed, we served in two Cabinets together, one under Dr. Eric Williams and the other under Mr. George Michael Chambers.

Mrs. Clarke-Allen began her parliamentary career as a Senator and it was a fact that she was so committed to community that she believed in service before self. She had a definite service orientation that she was selected in 1981 to be the PNM's candidate for the constituency of Toco/Manzanilla and eventually, the representative for that period of time. Even though she left office in 1986, her popularity in Toco/Manzanilla was something that waned only temporarily.

Many people recalled her—and there are one or two persons in the country like that who in due course we can recall—as a stalwart, as somebody who spent much time looking after those whom she was elected to serve and, therefore, even though she had left office officially by 1986, her house remained a virtual constituency office where people came to see her all the time asking for advice and assistance, which were always forthcoming.

Speaking in a personal sense, Mrs. Elmina Clarke-Allen was not only a friend of mine, but a very strong and loyal supporter and whenever I found myself in

difficulties, which, as you know, happens from time to time having regard to the exigencies of this political existence, Mrs. Clarke-Allen was someone to whom I could have spoken and on whose experience and wisdom I was able to draw, and so, we mourn her passing, not just as Members of Parliament. May I also say that I speak in my capacity as political leader of the People's National Movement that we mourn her passing as members of a political party and as a former member of the Parliament herself and as a dedicated community worker who is very difficult to replace, not just in Toco/Manzanilla, but in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, may the Almighty God have mercy on her soul.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, I wish to join both sides of the House in expressing condolences on the passing of Mrs. Elmina Clarke-Allen. It was my privilege to serve in this House in the period when Mrs. Clarke-Allen first served in Parliament, albeit at the time in the other Chamber and it is correct to say that she was always a very approachable person who seemed very concerned about getting the job done and it is hardly surprising that the people of Sangre Grande and the environs held her in such high esteem.

Apart from serving in both Houses of Parliament, Mrs. Clarke-Allen distinguished herself in rising to the very highest levels of the Girl Guides Association of Trinidad and Tobago which is an organization that is still committed to assisting young ladies and giving them a sense of commitment to service. I am advised that she became the President of the Girl Guides Association in 1979, she was the Chief Commissioner of the Girl Guides Association in 1977, the Deputy Commissioner in 1975 starting with Captain and District Commissioner and the like. I am sure that most would agree that Mrs. Clarke-Allen's life was a most useful life and one that Trinidad and Tobago could be proud of. I therefore ask the House to stand for one minute's silence.

*The House stood.*

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Members.

On your behalf hon. Members, I shall direct the Clerk of the House to send a suitable note of condolence to the next of kin of Mrs. Elmina Clarke-Allen.

#### TWENTY-SECOND ANNUAL REPORT OF THE OMBUDSMAN

##### Presentation

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, I wish to advise that by correspondence dated June 30, 2000, I received from the Ombudsman of Trinidad and Tobago this letter which reads as follows:

*Twenty-Second Report of the Ombudsman*  
[MR. SPEAKER]

Friday, July 07, 2000

“30<sup>th</sup> June, 2000.  
The Honourable Speaker  
House of Representatives  
Red House  
**Port of Spain**

Dear Mr. Speaker,

I forward herewith a copy of my report for the period 1<sup>st</sup> January, 1999 to 31<sup>st</sup> December, 1999 which has been sent to the printers.

On receipt of the printed copies in due course, the necessary copies will be sent to you.

Yours faithfully,

G. A. Edoe  
Ombudsman.”

That is accompanied by a report of the Ombudsman which would be in the library and can be seen by hon. Members until such time as the copies of the reports from the printers arrive.

In accordance with subsection 5 of section 96 of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, this report is hereby laid on the Table of the House.

#### **PAPERS LAID**

1. Annual audited financial statements of Taurus Services Limited for the year ended September 30, 1998. [*The Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs (Hon. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj)*]
  2. Annual audited financial statements of Taurus Services Limited for the year ended September 30, 1999. [*Hon. R. L. Maharaj*]
  3. Annual audited financial statements of the Tourism and Industrial Development Company of Trinidad and Tobago Limited for the year ended September 30, 1998. [*Hon. R. L. Maharaj*]
- Papers 1 to 3 to be referred to the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee.*
4. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Arima Corporation for the year ended December 31, 1987. [*Hon. R. L. Maharaj*]

5. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Arima Corporation for the year ended December 31, 1988. [*Hon. R. L. Maharaj*]

*Papers 4 and 5 to be referred to the Public Accounts Committee.*

**1.45 p.m.**

**ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS**

**The Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs (Hon. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj):** Mr. Speaker, may I announce to this honourable House that the Government will be able to answer all the questions on the Order Paper with the exception of questions Nos. 74 and 76, today, and ask that the answers to these two questions be deferred for one week.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, the question is that questions Nos. 74 and 76 be deferred for one week. [*Interruption*] The Member for Diego Martin East, I have not yet put it. As many as may be of that opinion, say “Aye”.

*[Government Members respond]*

As many as may be of a contrary opinion say “No.”

*[Opposition Members respond]*

Well, the “Noes” sound louder than the “Ayes”, but I believe that the “Ayes” have it. Division.

*The House divided:* Ayes 19 Noes 11

**AYES**

Maharaj, Hon. R.L.

Persad-Bissessar, Hon. K.

Lasse, Dr. The Hon. V.

Griffith, Dr. The Hon. R.

Humphrey, Hon. J.

Sudama, Hon. T.

Maraj, Hon. R.

Rafeeq, Hon. Dr. H.

Assam, Hon. M.

Job, Dr. The Hon. M.

Khan, Dr. F.

Singh, Hon. G.

Nanan, Dr. The Hon. A.

Partap, Hon. H.

Mohammed, Dr. The Hon. R.

Singh, Hon. D.

Ramsaran, Hon. M.

Sharma, C.

Ali, R.

**NOES**

Valley, K.

Manning, P.

Rowley, Dr. K.

Imbert, C.

Robinson-Regis, Mrs. C.

Hart, E.

James, Mrs. E.

Bereaux, H.

Joseph, M.

Sinanan, B.

Nicholson, Miss P.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, the result of the division is 19 for and 11 against. So, accordingly, questions Nos. 74 and 76 are adjourned for one week.

*The following questions stood on the Order Paper:*

**Road Improvement Fund  
(Repairs)**

- 74.** (a) Would the Minister of Works and Transport state the expenditure in Trinidad on road repairs under the Road Improvement Fund (RIF) in the years 1996, 1997, 1998 and 1999?

- (b) Would the Minister list the following:
- (i) the names and locations of the roads repaired in Trinidad under the RIF;
  - (ii) the expenditure under the RIF on each road? *[Mr. Colm Imbert]*

### Government Bonds

76. (a) Could the Minister of Finance, Planning and Development state the terms and conditions of the following Government Bonds which are scheduled for early redemption:

<u>Sub-Item</u>	<u>Amount</u>
	\$
(i) \$285,245,000 Fixed and Floating Rate Interim Bonds Government Project Financing Floating (inc. to \$300Mn.)	245,857,063
(ii) FINCOR \$200,000 Floating Rate Notes	129,004,560
(iii) \$402,630,000 (inc. to \$500Mn.) Floating Rate Bonds	414,990,000
(iv) \$500,000 Floating Rate Bonds (2014)	24,750,000
(v) \$91,597,932 Unit Trust Corporation Fixed Rate Bond due 2010	4,579,896
(vi) \$206,740,000 Fincor Fixed and Floating Rate (1990-1999, 2004, 2009, 2014)	35,620,000
(vii) \$755,000 Fixed and Floating Rate Bonds (1992-2001, 2006, 2011, 2016, 2021)	72,850,000
	927,651,519

- (b) Could the Minister also state the terms and conditions on which the new funds were raised?
- (c) Further, could the Minister state the Lead Manager and underwriting team for the new issue and the process used for selection? *[Mr. K. Valley]*

*Questions, by leave, deferred.*

**National Gas Company  
(Indebted to)**

**70. Mr. Barendra Sinanan** (*San Fernando West*) asked the Hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Industries:

Would the Minister state:

- (a) the number of companies that are indebted to the National Gas Company for gas supplied to them?
- (b) the names of the companies and the respective outstanding amounts owed?

**The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries (Hon. Finbar Gangar):**  
Mr. Speaker, the number of companies that are indebted to the National Gas Company of Trinidad and Tobago Limited (NGC) as of June 30, 2000 is sixteen.

The total amount owed by these companies as of June 30, 2000 is TT\$325,043,780.43 of which TT\$4,601,401.48 is a disputed amount. This debt is broken down as follows:

Outstanding amounts to customers

Re: Gas Sales as of June 30

COMPANIES	OUTSTANDING AMOUNTS (a) TT\$	DISPUTED AMOUNTS (b) Not included in (a)
1. Caribbean Methanol Co.	38,560,338.45	0.00
2. T&T Methanol Co. Ltd.	19,494,064.77	0.00
3. T&T Methanol Co. Ltd. II	25,447,206.34	0.00
4. Methanol Company Ltd. IV	18,840,291.18	0.00
5. Hydro Agri	202,035.29	151,794.96
6. PCS Nitrogen T'dad Ltd. (ammonia3)		1,203.41

*Oral Answers to Questions**Friday, July 07, 2000*

COMPANIES	OUTSTANDING AMOUNTS (a) TT\$	DISPUTED AMOUNTS (b) Not included in (a)
7. Tringen II	134,389.92	1,530,355.45
8. Petrotrin		2,847,517.55
9. T&T Electricity Commission	188,765,719.09	
10. Awardy & Company Ltd.		11,000.00
11. Carib Glassworks Ltd.		59,530.11
12. Caroni (1975) Ltd. (Brechin Castle)	6,172,492.10	
13. Caroni (1975) Ltd. (Usine Ste. Madeleine)	20,695,125.39	
14. Eric Williams Medical Complex	1,072,293.36	
15. Maximum Security Prison	2,962.73	
16. T&T Forest Products Co. Ltd. (Tanteak)	55,460.33	
TOTAL	TT\$319,442,378.33	TT\$4,601,401.48

**Mr. Sinanan:** Supplemental, Mr. Speaker. Firstly, could the hon. Minister indicate what steps are being taken by the NGC to recover these sums?

Secondly, whether there is an interest charge due on these outstanding balances?

**Hon. F. Gangar:** Mr. Speaker, over the past eight months the price of methanol had dropped to a very depressed value. In April 1999, methanol prices averaged \$90.00 per ton with a net back price of \$60.00 per ton. The prices experienced during that period had been the lowest experienced since 1987, and they have been sustained at these low levels for nearly two years, unlike previous occurrences of low price dip.

While the National Gas Company does not condone the failure to pay for the natural gas supplied, NGC as a responsible gas supplier recognized and had to understand the financial difficulties being experienced by one of its customers. The situation at this point in time is that the present outstanding debt of the methanol group of companies is \$102.34 million representing 2 ½ months of the gas supplied.

The forced closure of these plants which has taken place all over the world would have severely impacted upon the economy of Trinidad and Tobago, seeing that 95 per cent of the cost of production is local input and closure of these four plants would have had a negative impact on staffing and suppliers of local goods and services.

**1.55 p.m.**

At this point in time, the price of methanol has risen to \$200 per metric ton and, assuming that these prices remain at these levels, it is the intention of the methanol group of companies to liquidate this debt within the next four to six weeks.

**Mr. Manning:** A supplemental question, Mr. Speaker. Was this debt incurred with the methanol companies as a consequence of an agreement with the National Gas Company, or was it incurred unilaterally as a result of the methanol companies not paying their liabilities to the National Gas Company?

**Sen. The Hon. F. Gangar:** There were discussions between the methanol group of companies and the National Gas Company but no agreement was reached with respect to what gas price.

**Mr. Manning:** So it was unilateral. Supplemental question, Mr. Speaker. Since we have gone to a market-related gas pricing structure, over and above the reduction in gas price that will accrue as a consequence of low methanol prices, have companies still chosen not to pay the price of gas?

**Sen. The Hon. F. Gangar:** Mr. Speaker, as the hon. Member for San Fernando East would know, the various gas pricing formula for each of these four plants has a floor gas price. Even at the floor gas price the audited accounts of each of the four methanol companies show that they were incurring significant losses.

**Mr. Manning:** Mr. Speaker, supplemental question, please. On what basis did Caroni (1975) Limited incur a debt of \$20 million, especially as the company was named company of the year? How did that come about?

**Sen. The Hon. F. Gangar:** Mr. Speaker, I do not have the exact figures for that particular question but it was accumulated over a period of time ever since the inception of the company.

**Mr. Valley:** Mr. Speaker, one supplemental, please. [*Interruption*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Order please!

**Mr. Valley:** Now that the methanol prices have risen, is the National Gas Company taking any steps to structure a repayment of those obligations? If so, are they including also an interest charge on the outstanding amounts?

**Sen. The Hon. F. Gangar:** It is the intention of the National Gas Company to have this debt paid off within the next four to six months and interest charges will, in fact, be included in those tiers.

**Mr. Manning:** Mr. Speaker, supplemental question. Did the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries, or any other authorized government official, make a commitment to the methanol companies that there would be a reduction in the gas price below the floor price that is applicable in circumstances where methanol prices are low?

**Sen. The Hon. F. Gangar:** I can assure the hon. Member for San Fernando East that no such commitment was ever made by any member of the Government.

**Mr. Valley:** Just one more supplemental please, Mr. Speaker. The Member has indicated that the repayment suggested is over four to six months. Does the Minister consider that short time period realistic, given the amounts owed and the whole situation with the methanol industry?

**Sen. The Hon. F. Gangar:** It is my information, Mr. Speaker, that the methanol group of companies has already started liquidating the outstanding debt and about three weeks ago they have paid up, to reach this value, approximately US \$8 million, so the process of debt liquidation is already in progress.

**Mr. Manning:** Mr. Speaker, a supplemental question, please. Has any similar arrangement been entered into between the National Gas Company and T&TEC for the outstanding liability of \$188 million?

**Sen. The Hon. F. Gangar:** Yes. This debt with T&TEC, Mr. Speaker, occurred since 1993 where T&TEC was not in a position to liquidate its debt to the National Gas Company. The Government has provided a letter of comfort for T&TEC with which they will be able to raise the required money partly to offset the NGC debt and their capital work programme. This is now being finalized and the entire debt will be liquidated as soon as the loan facility is in place.

**Mr. Manning:** Mr. Speaker, since the debt is to be liquidated by borrowings from the bank, could we look forward to an increase in electricity rates so that T&TEC could be kept whole in terms of its financial position?

**Sen. The Hon. F. Gangar:** No, Mr. Speaker. My colleague, the Member for Caroni East has assured me that there will be no increase in the electricity rates.

**Road Repair—Tobago**

**71. Miss Pamela Nicholson** (*Tobago West*) asked the Minister of Tobago Affairs and Minister in the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Development:

- (a) Would the Minister indicate to this House whether he is aware that the 1999 rainy season resulted in numerous, dangerous landslides throughout Tobago particularly at the Castara Hill, “Big Hole”—Goodwood, the Windward Road between Kings Bay and Speyside, and also threatened to destroy the Bloody Bay Bridge?
- (b) Could the Minister indicate whether he received a request for \$50M in 1999 from the Tobago House of Assembly to remove landslides and repair roads and bridges in Tobago damaged by the rains?
- (c) Would the Minister state whether the sum of \$5M which he promised to make available for repairs to roads in Tobago damaged by the 1999 rains was released, and if so when?
- (d) Would the Minister also indicate whether he received the relevant estimates from the Tobago House of Assembly for road repairs after the 1999 rainy season?

**The Minister of Tobago Affairs and Minister in the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Development (Dr. The Hon. Morgan Job):** Mr. Speaker, Members of this honourable House may recall that over the period November to December 1999, the road infrastructure of Tobago suffered serious damage as a result of rainstorms. These occurred during those months. The Chief Secretary of the Tobago House of Assembly subsequently requested from the Minister of Finance, Planning and Development sums amounting to \$11.5 million to address storm damage to Tobago’s road infrastructure which occurred during the period November 4 to November 8. Subsequently, the Chief Secretary reported that rainstorms occurring in early December again did further damage to the road infrastructure in Tobago.

Responding to requests and reports from members of the Tobago community and my constituents, the Minister of Tobago Affairs and Minister in the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Development, requested that the Minister of Works and Transport accompany him, together with the Chief Secretary of the Tobago House of Assembly and senior staff of the ministries, to conduct an extensive tour of several areas in Tobago that were damaged by the 1999 rainy season in December of that year. All those areas identified by the hon. Member for Tobago West were visited by the group, which included the Member of Parliament for Tobago East.

Immediately following the tour of the areas damaged by the rains, the Minister of Tobago Affairs and Minister in the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Development advised the Chief Secretary of the Tobago House of Assembly to prepare a report detailing the affected areas and an estimated cost for undertaking the necessary repair and clean-up works. The Chief Secretary subsequently submitted a report on the storm damage and indicated to the Minister of Finance, Planning and Development that his estimated cost for the remedial works to the Tobago road infrastructure was \$50,065,000.

With regard to the \$5 million, I wish to advise Members that, while awaiting the report of the Chief Secretary, in my capacity as Minister of Tobago Affairs and Minister in the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Development and my concern that a similar occurrence of rain would cause the already damaged roads to fall into the sea, I advised the Minister of Finance, Planning and Development that he should recommend to Cabinet that \$5 million be made available to the Tobago House of Assembly to meet critical works arising from the storm damage. The Cabinet accepted this recommendation. However, Cabinet further directed the Ministry of Works and Transport to undertake an evaluation of the cost of remedial work and that the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Development release the \$5 million to the THA on the basis of certification by the former, meaning the Ministry of Works and Transport.

Following this decision to make \$5 million available to the THA on the conditions stipulated by Cabinet, on March 6, 2000 the THA submitted a request for funds totalling \$6,410,055 as representing the cost of the entire clean-up of landslides, drains, general debris and deposits. Hon. Members of the House are informed that, of the \$5 million Cabinet agreed to release on the conditions stipulated to the THA for remedial works to road infrastructure damaged by the rain, only \$772,600 was released to the THA in May. As was mentioned earlier, before these funds could be released to the THA, the Ministry of Works and Transport was required to certify the integrity of the remedial work. The Ministry of Works and Transport subsequently advised that in the absence of supporting documents it could only issue a partial certificate to the value of \$772,000. It is on this basis that only \$772,000 was released to the Tobago House of Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, the Tobago House of Assembly submitted a request totalling \$50 million for road repairs after the 1999 rainy season to the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Development. No details or designs of scope of works or quantities related to structural designs accompanied this request for \$50 million. The Minister of Tobago Affairs and Minister in the Ministry of Finance, Planning and

Development has since written to the Minister of Works and Transport requesting that this data be developed with the help of the Tobago House of Assembly for the Northside and Windward Roads. The matter was considered as soon as the information was received.

That concludes the answer to the various parts of the question as asked by the Member for Tobago West, Mr. Speaker.

**Miss Nicholson:** Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Could the representative for Tobago East tell this honourable House whether he made a statement—  
[*Interruption*]

[*Dr. M. Job rose*]

**Miss Nicholson:** You are not finished? Sorry. Should I go ahead? Could the representative for Tobago East inform this honourable House whether he made a statement on the community radio station, Radio Tambrin, to the people of Tobago that he would have seen to it that \$5 million would have been released immediately to the Tobago House of Assembly to address the road problems that arose out of the rainy season? Two, could the Minister tell us whether it is a Government policy to see to it that in emergency situations arising after the rainy season, such as problems like dangerous landslides and so forth, whether it is the policy of Government to release funds to address those problems immediately? Thank you, Sir.

**Dr. The Hon. M. Job:** Mr. Speaker, with respect to the first part, I plead guilty to wanting to help the people who voted for me. Therefore, immediately after I came back, the following day I did write to the Minister of Finance and advised him that he should endeavour to secure at least \$5 million. Those were my words. The Minister of Finance did, in fact, take a Cabinet Note with my request and Cabinet did, in fact agree to release \$5 million, but on certain conditions. Mr. Speaker, I am not the Cabinet of Trinidad and Tobago. I am just one individual in the Cabinet. Therefore, the Cabinet in its wisdom decided that in the particular case they wanted the moneys released under certain conditions.

With respect to “Big Hole”, they wanted designs to be drawn up, they wanted estimates of quantities to be based on those designs and they wanted them certified, and, as a consequence of those, moneys would be released. Similarly, with respect to the clean-up work, they wanted certification in terms of bills or claims for work done and things like that. I cannot do more than address my

concerns to the Cabinet and, in the nature of the way things are done, the Cabinet decides. That is all I can say, Mr. Speaker.

With respect to the second question that she asked, I cannot recall. Could you remind me of what you asked?

**Miss Nicholson:** I asked whether that is a governmental policy. Is the Minister aware whether it is a governmental policy, not necessarily from his term, that when there are emergencies, like the “Big Hole” situation, where, if it rains for the whole night, the Windward end, from Goodwood up, would be cut off from the rest of Tobago, therefore certain questions need to be addressed immediately and then work is done on—what is it you said I have to send for you—the estimates and so on?

**2.10 p.m.**

**Dr. The Hon. M. Job:** Mr. Speaker, I cannot speak about the policy; I do not know as a matter of certainty; and I do not like to be guessing. But what I could say, for the benefit of the Member for Tobago West, for the House and for the nation at large is that the “Big Hole” situation would have been fixed if the Cabinet directives had been adhered to.

My own judgment is that there are other considerations that allowed some dithering and delay. If the Cabinet directives were adhered to—I have no doubt in my own mind—that that situation would not be what it is now. So that my answer is, I do not know. I cannot speak for the policy, but I can say that in the particular case the Cabinet directive was quite clear that designs should be drawn up; estimates should be made; those designs should be confirmed by reputable authorities and, thereafter, the Minister of Finance, Planning and Development would allocate moneys as the work is progressing.

Mr. Speaker, I suspect that process is in place now and I hope that situation would be addressed presently.

Mr. Speaker, thank you.

**Miss Nicholson:** Mr. Speaker, last supplementary question. Does the Cabinet make the same demands for emergency questions like the Tobago question that obtains in Trinidad? Do they make the same demands for designs and so forth before the emergency is addressed? The Minister has to answer that.

**Dr. The Hon. M. Job:** Mr. Speaker, I cannot speak for the Ministry of Works and Transport. From my three years in the Cabinet, I am not too sure in my own mind that I should take the liberty to pronounce on a matter like that but, as I said

before, I am sure in my own mind that the Cabinet always wanted to—and still does want to—make sure that the Tobago situation is addressed. I hope that all the parties concerned like the Tobago House of Assembly and the Ministry of Works and Transport do what they need to do in order to accommodate the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Development to carry out Cabinet's directive.

Mr. Speaker, thank you.

**UNC Discount Cards**  
**(NP Quick Shoppe D'Abadie)**

**72. Mr. Colm Imbert** (*Diego Martin East*) asked the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries:

- (a) Could the Minister confirm whether discounts are being given by the NP Quick Shoppe at D'Abadie to holders of UNC Discount Cards?
- (b) If the answer to part (a) is in the affirmative, would the Minister explain why NP, a State Enterprise is offering its goods and services to citizens of Trinidad and Tobago on different terms and conditions based on political affiliations?
- (c) If the answer to part (b) is in the negative, would the Minister state why NP has not issued a disclaimer regarding publication of its name as one of the companies that issue discounts to holders of UNC Discount Cards?

**The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries (Sen. The Hon. Finbar Gangar):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to confirm that discounts are not being given to holders of the UNC Discount Card by the National Petroleum Marketing Company at the convenience store referred to as "Quick Shoppe" at D'Abadie, but discounts are being given by the operator of the Quick Shoppe located on the National Petroleum Marketing Company premises at D'Abadie. *[Interruption]*

**Mr. Speaker:** Order please.

**Sen. The Hon. F. Gangar:** While the premises and the registered trademark "Quick Shoppe" are owned by the National Petroleum Marketing Company, the business associated with the Quick Shoppe is not owned and/or managed by the National Petroleum Marketing Company. This is the first convenience store which came into operation under the National Petroleum Marketing Company-owned registered trademark "Quick Shoppe". Since September, 1995, the National Petroleum Marketing Company, under the previous PNM administration

granted the operator a licence to use the name “Quick Shoppe” and to operate the convenience store independently of the National Petroleum Marketing Company.  
[Desk thumping]

The terms and conditions of this licence are contained in two agreements: a Lease Agreement dated June 23, 1993 under the PNM administration; and a Letter Agreement dated September 26, 1995 also under the PNM administration. While the operator is not allowed to sell or permit the sale of products competitive to products manufactured and/or marketed by the National Petroleum Marketing Company, neither agreement gives the National Petroleum Marketing Company the right to prohibit the operator from employing any marketing strategy which is geared towards enhancing sales at the operator’s convenience store.

In light of the answer given above, it is incorrect to state that the National Petroleum Marketing Company, a state-owned enterprise, is offering these discounts. Indeed, it would be correct to say that the independent operator of the Quick Shoppe is offering these discounts and, further, that the operator is allowed to do so under the terms and conditions of the agreements between the operator and the National Petroleum Marketing Company entered into under the previous PNM administration, and which agreements are referred to above.

The National Petroleum Marketing Company has conducted an exhaustive search and the only publication found by the National Petroleum Marketing Company that refers to a Quick Shoppe is the one published on the front page of the *Trinidad Guardian* on May 25, 2000. Reference was made to D’Abadie Quick Shoppe, D’Abadie. While no specific reference was made to the National Petroleum Marketing Company, as explained above, the independent operator of the Quick Shoppe at the D’Abadie location is operating under a licence since September, 1995 from the National Petroleum Marketing Company to use the trademark “Quick Shoppe” and, therefore, the use of the name Quick Shoppe is a legitimate one. Accordingly, the question of issuing a disclaimer does not arise.

Mr. Speaker, further, in addition to the convenience store at D’Abadie, there is only one other independently operated convenience store operating under the National Petroleum Marketing Company trademark “Quick Shoppe”. This is the convenience store at the Barataria Roundabout Service Station.

The National Petroleum Marketing Company is in the process of reviewing the use of this trademark at these two convenience store locations with a view to eliminating the erroneous perception, which may arise in the eyes of the public that these operations are owned and operated by the National Petroleum Marketing Company.

Mr. Speaker, it is worth noting that in the case of the National Petroleum Marketing Company there are nine new flagship filling stations operating throughout Trinidad and Tobago, where the Quick Shoppes are operating, under another trademark "Quik Shoppe" and not "Quick Shoppe." These are owned, operated and managed by the National Petroleum Marketing Company. These Quik Shoppes are not offering discounts to holders of the UNC Discount Card.

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

**Dr. K. Rowley:** Mr. Speaker, another supplemental. The operator at D'Abadie that is providing facilities with the UNC Discount Card, could the Minister tell this House if that operator benefited from the recent multi-million dollar National Petroleum Marketing Company upgrade?

**Sen. The Hon. F. Gangar:** That service station was not upgraded under the new programme.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, according to the Standing Orders, at 2.15 p.m. one would pass on from the question of this topic, and under normal circumstances, I should direct that the answers to any unanswered questions should be circulated, except I am asked by Members asking the questions to defer them to be answered at another sitting.

I have, in fact, received communication from the Opposition Chief Whip. I am asking that any questions, which are not answered by 2.15 p.m, be deferred for the next sitting of the House, and I would accede to this request. So that any other questions on the Order Paper which have not been answered will be deferred to the next sitting of the House.

*Agreed to.*

*The following questions stood on the Order Paper:*

**Le Platte Booster Pump  
(Activation of)**

- 73.** (a) Would the Minister state the year in which the booster pump in Le Platte Village on Morne Coco Road was activated and put into service?
- (b) Could the Minister indicate whether the activation of the Le Platte booster pump adversely affected the water supply in Paramin? [*Mr. C. Imbert*]

**TANTEAK  
(Purchase of)**

75. (a) Would the Minister inform the House whether the Government has accepted any offers for the purchase of TANTEAK?
- (b) If the answer is in the affirmative, would the Minister state the date and the medium used to inform the public that TANTEAK was for sale? [*Mr. K. Valley*]

*Questions, by leave, deferred.*

**CRIME  
(HIGH INCIDENCE)**

**Mr. Colm Imbert** (*Diego Martin East*): Mr. Speaker, I rise to move a Motion standing in my name as follows:

*Be it resolved* that this honourable House condemn the Government for its failure to deal effectively with the high incidence of criminal activity and crime, especially violent crime, in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, the UNC administration came into office on a crime platform. You will remember the pious platitudes of the Member for Couva North that those who do the crime will do the time.

**2.20 p.m.**

Mr. Speaker, we have noticed that the crime platform of the UNC is no longer on the national agenda. It has receded. Having failed miserably to deal with crime, they no longer speak about it. In fact, their latest buzzword is Common Entrance. Every child will get a place, whether it is in a rum shop, a cowshed, [*Laughter*] or a primary school, as the case may be. That is the latest buzz on the national agenda. It is no longer crime. [*Interruption*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, may I appeal to Members on both sides to observe the rules which are set out in the Standing Orders in terms of holding their peace while a Member is on his legs.

**Mr. C. Imbert:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know they get upset by these things, but it is all right. It is very easy—and I see the Minister of National Security here—for the Government to claim that crime has gone down since the UNC has come into office, but statistics are dangerous things, Mr. Speaker; very dangerous. They do not deal with the real issues.

*Crime (High Incidence)*  
[MR. IMBERT]

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When the UNC gets up and says that crime has diminished under its watch and all sorts of meaningless statistics are quoted—I wish to refer to the *Newsday* of February 19, 1997:

"Decrease in serious crimes from 1993-1995

Serious crimes in the country rose by 71.5 per cent from the period 1983 to 1993, according to a report from the Central Statistical Office. It reflected an average annual growth rate of 6.5 per cent.

However, from 1993 to 1995, there was a decline, with the figure falling to 18,618 in 1994 and to 16,784.

According to the report, serious crimes in 1995 were calculated at 16,784 and reflected a decrease of 9.8 per cent, when compared to 18,618 in 1984. A review of the data in 1995 revealed that the crimes classified as break-ins, robbery, white collar and woundings and shootings decreased by 14.3, 14.1, 11.2, and 6.0 per cent respectively. Notable exceptions are sexual offences which rose from 254 in 1994 to 309 in 1995, an increase of 21.6 per cent.

The report also pointed out that the total number of minor crimes reported to police in 1995 stood at 20,314, a decrease of 4.1 per cent from the 1994 figure which was 21,176."

Those are the official CSO figures, but you see, when one tries to deal with statistics like this, one does not deal with the issues, Mr. Speaker. The issues are what is taking place in Trinidad and Tobago every day.

I opened my newspaper today, the *Daily Express* of Friday, July 7, 2000:

"Judge advises: Lock your doors at all times"

This is a High Court judge. It continues:

"Justice Melville Baird has advised all householders to lock their doors while at home...

'We must all be alive to the fact that banditry has entered the home and that criminals rely on the element of surprise'...He said bandits count on throwing their victims into a state of confusion by invading their homes.

A nine-member jury in the Port of Spain First Criminal Court on Wednesday found 29-year-old Harry Estrada, of Morvant, guilty of two charges of robbery with aggravation and one count of robbery with violence. Estrada received a total of 36 years in jail, but will serve 12 years.

The evidence against him was that on the night of June 19, 1993, Frederick Young was at his Fourth Street, Barataria home watching television. His wife and daughter were in his bedroom when three men entered the house through the front door, which was open. Each of the men had a gun, which they pointed at Young.

One of the men hit Young on his right side and ordered him to lie on the floor, while the other two went into the bedroom and ordered Young's wife and daughter to lie on the bed. They demanded money, and Young's daughter was relieved of her jewelry. Five hundred dollars was handed over and \$10,000 worth of appliances was stolen."

This is typical of the type of criminal behaviour that occurs in Trinidad and Tobago every year, and even members on that side, members of the UNC, have admitted that crime is on a rampage in Trinidad and Tobago.

I go to the *Daily Express* of Friday, August 21, 1998. This is a statement made by Acting President, Ganace Ramdial, addressing the 36th anniversary parade of the Defence Force. It reads:

"Ramdial recalled the recent attack on Regiment Commander Colonel Andrew Dalip, who was shot by bandits at his wife's supermarket.

'Lest we become complacent, we need to regard the fact that we are in a war of sorts; and it is necessary to be vigilant at all times. Every day we see, hear or read of the onslaught on the peace of this land in ways that one could hardly have thought possible...we would do well to consider that as long as some of us live in such threatening situations, we are all under siege,' Ramdial said.

'...the common objective must motivate you to be unrelenting in your effort and your determination to close ranks against the forces that seek to destroy the very foundations of our society.'"

That is Ganace Ramdial in 1998. I turn now to Kamla Persad-Bissessar, the Member for Siparia, on December 4, 1997:

"Kamla: TT has entered dark cave of horror."

Listen to the words: Trinidad and Tobago has entered—what she left out was, under the UNC—dark cave of horror. Of course it is implied. One cannot enter unless one was not there in the first place. It reads:

"The skeletal remains of two children dug out from a cesspit and a shallow grave, have reminded Legal Affairs Minister, Kamla Persad-Bissessar, of Mano 'the Beast of Biche' Benjamin.

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Addressing a Domestic Violence consultation yesterday, the Minister stated 'Such bizarre examples of domestic violence are only in the developed world...like the Mason brothers.' Persad-Bissessar added: 'Such things are not part of the culture and values of the society of Trinidad and Tobago.'

So, she said. Two years after the UNC came into office, the Minister of Legal Affairs is telling us that this horrible act is not part of the culture and value of the society of Trinidad and Tobago. How did it happen? The article continues:

"If the reports are to be believed,' Persad-Bissessar said, 'it is the saddest and most bizarre example of domestic violence I have ever heard of in our beloved Trinidad and Tobago. 'It revealed such travesty of the trust and love, and nurturing of the ideal family, that I find myself wondering what terrible thing has happened to those values,' the minister said. She told the consultation that the incident involved the putting to death of tiny babies and a one-year-old child in circumstances where the parents, 'now living away from the burial, yesterday unerringly led the police to their graves where the remains were dug up in bundles of cloth.' Persad-Bissessar wondered how many people in this country have lost their way from the path of love and light, 'to enter into these dark caves of horror.'"

That is December 4, 1997. However, one month before that, November 1997, Prime Minister Panday summoned a special meeting of the National Security Council to discuss measures to deal with the escalation of crime. Escalation of crime under the UNC! The article reads:

"Speaking at yesterday's celebrations marking the second anniversary in office of the ruling United National Congress Panday told a large audience at Mid Centre Mall that the 'predators' must be stopped, and declared:

'If it turns out that we have to take harsh measures to deal with the scourge of crime, I trust that you will give us your support.'

Panday said that security in the nation's schools was 'a very urgent concern' for him and his government."

This is in November 1997. One month later, two little babies were killed and his Legal Affairs Minister says, "We have entered a dark cave of horror".

We have Dr. Ramesh Deosaran saying:

*"Crime a big joke in T&T."*

This is on Thursday, May 2, 1996:

"Crime has become a laughing matter in Trinidad and Tobago according to the chairman of the UWI-based Working Group in Caribbean Criminology, Dr. Ramesh Deosaran.

Referring to a front-page photograph on the March 19 issue of the *Express*, which showed two 18-year-old girls, laughing as they were escorted to court by a policewoman, who was also smiling, Deosaran said:

'For all its seriousness and its severe impact upon society crime has almost become a big joke.'

I would totally agree with that. Under this UNC, after coming into office on a crime platform, they definitely treated this entire thing as a big joke. [*Desk thumping*] That is the UNC's legacy. The crimes committed by young people persist because we have not yet streamlined the judicial system to deal with young offenders as a special group. All the old talk we hear from the Member for Couva South, this is in 1996, four years ago, and we have Dr. Deosaran saying we have not yet streamlined the judicial system to deal with young offenders as a special group, not only with punitive responses, but also with rehabilitative and preventative mechanisms.

See what they have been doing? They spent the last four years terrorizing the Judiciary, harassing everybody in this country, but we have this statement made in 1996. What have they done to deal with the cause of crime, prevention and rehabilitation? What have they done? They have done nothing except engage in old talk, old talk and questionable contracts.

Their response, Mr. Speaker, to crime, was to give one of their friends a contract for 100 Cherokee jeeps for \$16 million. That was their response to crime; indicate that only Cherokee jeeps could carry Motorola radios. They could not work in Nissan, Toyota, Ford, and Mazda; could only work in Cherokee jeeps, and gave away \$16 million to one of their friends without tender, without competition, nothing. Buy 100 gas-guzzlers, four-litre gasoline engine Cherokee jeeps, how many of them are working now?

**Dr. Rowley:** Fourteen!

**Mr. C. Imbert:** About 20 of these jeeps are working now. The usual "ad hococracy" and incompetence of the UNC. They bought 100 jeeps, no fleet management, no maintenance programme, no training programmes for the officers who will drive these jeeps which are larger and faster than vehicles they

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were accustomed to. Nothing! So, what happens? The vehicles are systematically destroyed.

We have not heard a word from the Minister of National Security about it. Maybe he will tell us today what he is doing about all those jeeps that are now laid up; derelict vehicles for repair. Maybe he will tell us what is going on. That is all they have done, Mr. Speaker. That is all they have done in almost five years. Bought 100 jeeps from their partners for \$16 million and all of them parked up.

I learned recently that they just bought another 100 vehicles. About 50 Ford Tauruses, or something. One has to wonder, is there a plan? Do they have a plan? Does this Government have a plan? Have they ever heard of the consolidation of fleet and fleet management? Are they going to have every different brand and known make of vehicle to man in the police force? Toyota Corolla, Cressida, Super Saloon, every range in Mazda, Nissan and Ford, and foreign-used vehicles too? I have seen police officers driving foreign-used vehicles out of the Bamboo.

It appears to me that this has to be one of the biggest scams in this country; the acquisition of police vehicles. It is a crime! [*Desk thumping*] I am sure that if we ask a question here—let them tell us about the vehicles they have purchased for the police over the last four and a half years! I wonder if anybody could see any discernible pattern, if there is any logic in what they are doing, other than opportunity for their partners. That is all that is going on.

We keep hearing them talk all the nonsense about crime has gone down. Yesterday's *Express* states:

"US preacher shot in the mouth

Wesley Van Johnson came here as a prophet.

But Tuesday night, minutes after arriving from the United States, he was shot in the mouth as he tried to save his wife from robbers.

Johnson, 40, and wife Elaine were taken by surprise at 8.45 p.m. after stopping at Rib House along the Eastern Main Road in Tunapuna to buy food. While the couple was standing at the counter, one man burst into the outlet and announced a hold-up.

The unarmed man ordered terrified customers and employees not to move."

**2.35 p.m.**

Before anyone could react, the man snatched Johnson's wife's necklace and dashed out the door. Johnson's wife was standing closest to the robber.

Police say Johnson ran out in front of the building, in an apparent attempt to get back his wife's necklace.

But the fleeing robber had his armed accomplice waiting outside.

There was a confrontation, a struggle, and Johnson was shot in the mouth by the gunman."

He had just landed in Trinidad and Tobago, went to buy some food at a fast food place and they shot him in the mouth, after these pious Members on the other side would tell us that crime has gone down in Trinidad and Tobago.

There is no wonder that there are advisories from so many of the developed countries to be careful when you come to Trinidad and Tobago. It can be seen all over the Internet—US Travel Service and so forth. Be very careful—the latest one was just a couple months ago—when you go to Trinidad and Tobago. Do not travel out at night. Avoid lonely places. Do not wear jewellery. These are the advisories being given to visitors to Trinidad and Tobago under this magnificent UNC administration and, of course, under them, crime has gone down.

They do not care what anybody has to say; crime has gone down under them. What absolute and utter nonsense. Every day you open the newspaper, you are seeing crime. In the *Newsday* of June 29, 2000, there is an article headlined "Fireman killers still at large", part of which says:

"Killers of Fire Officer, Ellis Clarke, remained at large up to yesterday despite widespread searches carried out by Northern Division police.

Clarke, 43, who worked at Piarco Fire Station, was murdered by thieves who drove off in the car he was driving.

Checks with investigating officers revealed that no arrests had been made, despite round-the-clock searches...

The 43-year old man...was shot three times at close range in his chest sometime on Saturday night."

That is their legacy to Trinidad and Tobago. Talk a set of rubbish about crime going down in Trinidad and Tobago. Well, tell that to the family of fireman Ellis Clarke. Tell them that. Tell that to the visitors from the United States, that crime has gone down in Trinidad and Tobago.

**Dr. Rowley:** He was not really shot.

**Mr. C. Imbert:** No. He was not really shot. It is a set-up, the media are printing a set of lies. That is all they can say, a set of nonsense.

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In the *Newsday* of Thursday, June 29, 2000—"Rapist jailed for 20 years".

"BANDITS EAT DINNER THEN—

Steal gun and cash

Three bandits, one a woman, sat down at an El Socorro food place, ate a hearty dinner, then whipped out guns and robbed a security guard of his firearm and robbed money from the cashier...

According to the police reports, around 9.50 p.m. the trio entered Grill Man's eatery at the corner of Sealy Street and El Socorro Road and ordered plates of food. After having a good meal, they pulled out guns and announced a hold-up.

They then robbed the 68-year-old Reforce Ltd security guard of his Daisy .177 calibre air pistol.

The bandits then took \$2,000 from the cashier...

They warned the victims not to report the incident to the police, or else they would return, then ran away."

Lawmen were unsuccessful in apprehending the bandits. Do you think it is easy, Mr. Speaker?

One of the problems with statistics—and this is why one has to be very careful—is that many crimes, especially violent crimes, are not reported. They are undetected and unreported and that is why when you come to talk statistics, you are playing with foolishness.

I have a report here from an *Encarta Encyclopedia* article titled "Juvenile Crime" and there is a particular extract from it that I found interesting. I will go into it in a while. The article says in part:

"Comparisons of the juvenile crime rates in various countries are severely limited by wide variations in national legal systems, categories of criminal behavior, and methods of reporting crimes; certain similarities are apparent, however. For example, Canadian, Australian and European victimization studies show the actual number of crimes to be several times those known to the authorities. According to one study in Finland, the larcenies known to the police were only 5 percent of the total that occurred."

This is what is well known in other countries, Mr. Speaker. It is only in Trinidad and Tobago they come to tell you that crime has gone down while

people are raping, robbing and murdering all over Trinidad and Tobago—shooting preachers in their mouth.

There is a particular headline in the *Newsday* of Friday, July 16, 1999 which I found so sad while there are these political criminals on the other side talking about crime gone down—“4 MURDERS IN THREE DAYS”. That is what is going on in this country and that is what they want the media to hide. That is why the Prime Minister is always attacking the media. He does not want to deal with the truth. He does not want this on the front page—“4 MURDERS IN THREE DAYS”. That was just one year ago.

As you go through some of the reports, Mr. Speaker, look at this, in the *Newsday* of Sunday, September 19, 1999—“DOMESTIC VIOLENCE STALKS THE LAND”.

"While you read this article, somewhere in Trinidad and Tobago a woman, man or child is being beaten, chopped, raped or in some other way, becoming a victim of domestic violence."

That is why they do not like the media because the media report the truth.

"While men and women are both victims of domestic violence, more women end up in hospital or the morgue.

It seems that domestic violence is increasing daily with the end result being broken families, broken bodies, broken spirits and sometimes even death.

Gone are the days when a serious case of domestic violence would occur once or twice for the year."

It is not the PNM saying this and we do not have any share in this newspaper, either.

"Gone are the days when a serious case of domestic violence would occur once or twice for the year. Now, almost every day, policemen have to respond to reports of domestic violence.

In fact, for the month of September (which is not completed as yet)..."

It was only the 19th.

"...five persons are known to have died as a result of domestic violence, while many others (mostly women) are now in various health institutions recovering from injuries caused by a spouse or other loved one."

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And what is the Government telling us? Crime is on the decline. While all of this is going on, while men are gouging out women's eyes.

Look at this in the *Newsday* of Tuesday, April 20, 1999. They do not want this in the newspaper either. They do not want the press to report this: "KILLINGS AT PM'S HOUSE". Right in his house. First time anything like this has ever happened in independent Trinidad and Tobago, probably in the entire world. First time that anything like this ever happened in any Prime Minister's house—"KILLINGS AT PM'S HOUSE—CORPORAL KILLS OFFICER, SHOOTS PM'S ASST SECRETARY".

"The information available is that Lance Corporal Anthony Caesar a soldier of the Regiment fatally shot Commander Noel Penco of the Coast Guard. He was controller of the Prime Minister's residence. It occurred at his office on the compound.

Miss Heather Wiltshire, assistant to the Prime Minister's Secretary...was also shot in the incident.

Lance Corporal Caesar then turned the revolver on himself and was shot fatally.

Both service personnel were members of the Prime Minister's household staff."

Look at the top of that front page—"TOBAGO MAN TO HANG FOR MURDER".

In the *Trinidad Guardian* of Monday, April 12, 1999—"Murder by mistake".

"A cricket match in Laventille...ended in murder when one of the players who got into a fight with two other men, was shot dead by a friend who was seeking to protect him from the attackers.

Police said yesterday that Rommel 'Hero' Francis, 23, of Picton Road in Trou Macaque, was playing cricket...when he was accosted by two men, one armed with a cutlass and the other with a knife.

A fight started, a loud explosion was heard and Francis slumped to the ground."

That is the UNC. That is the crime situation under the United National Congress. Those who do the crime will do the time. It appears that they are doing it more and more. They are getting more and more time to commit crime. That seems to be what is going on in Trinidad and Tobago.

Again, in April 1999—"Mom, daughters on murder charge".

In the *Newsday* of Thursday, December 10, 1998—"SOUTH BUSINESSMAN KIDNAPPED & KILLED". The page 3 headline read "Kidnapped, battered to death":

"In what police have described as a seething family feud turned murderous, the battered body of Penal businessman, Cristy Nakhid, was found in a peas plantation...his hands, feet and mouth bound with cloth, and apparently strangled to death. Hours before, he had been kidnapped by four men outside his restaurant."

I am using these examples, Mr. Speaker, not just to demonstrate that under the UNC there has been an explosion in violent crime, but that crime is widespread throughout Trinidad and Tobago. I have pointed out to you murders, robberies and rapes in El Socorro, in Port of Spain, in San Fernando, in Penal, in Tobago and here we have in Arima: "Murder at the bank" in the *Trinidad Guardian* of Saturday, December 12, 1998.

"Less than two days after an employee was murdered during an armed robbery at a Tunapuna supermarket, a businessman on his way to deposit money was shot outside an Arima bank yesterday by bandits. He died on his way to hospital."

Why are the bandits in this country so bold? Why are they so brazen? Why do they feel they can do what they want? I recall just a couple weeks ago, a report of men in Laventille dressed in army fatigues walking around with sub-machine guns and when police were called, they blocked the road and opened fire on the police jeep. I wonder if the Minister of National Security can tell us what has happened with that? We have not heard anything. We have not heard if the men were captured, if the crime was detected. Could anybody tell us what has happened? Are these men still walking around Laventille in army fatigues with machine guns? Or, is it that they do not want the press to report these things?

Look at this one. This is the one that really struck me. *Daily Express* of Thursday, April 22, 1999—"Innocent 16-year-old murdered FOR ONE DOLLAR MORE". Do you remember that story, Mr. Speaker? A 16-year-old was murdered for \$1.00. Murdered for \$1.00. Life is not even worth a dollar in Trinidad and Tobago under the UNC.

"An argument between a 45-year-old maxi-taxi driver and a 16-year-old D'Abadie electrician on Tuesday night, ended in violent death, when the enraged driver accused the teenaged passenger of under-paying him by \$1, and after a brief argument stabbed him in the chest."

That is Trinidad and Tobago.

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**2.50 p.m.**

Let me go now to juvenile crime, and let us look at some of the literature on the causes of delinquency. This is from *Encarta Encyclopedia*.

“Many theories concerning the causes of juvenile crime focus either on the individual or on society as the major contributing influence. Theories centering on the individual suggest that children engage in criminal behavior because they were not sufficiently penalized for previous delinquent acts or that they have learned criminal behavior through interaction with others. A person who becomes socially alienated may be more inclined to commit a criminal act. Theories focusing on the role of society in juvenile delinquency suggest that children commit crimes in response to their failure to rise above their socio-economic status, or as repudiation of middle-class values.”

**Dr. Nanan:** Mr. Speaker, on a point of order.

**Mr. Speaker:** No, with point of order it is the practice to indicate which point of order one is getting up on. Which is the Standing Order?

**Dr. Nanan:** My apologies. *[Laughter]*

**Mr. C. Imbert:** Mr. Speaker, they are going crazy. Thank you. They are going crazy.

**Mr. Narine:** Dr. Hinds will deal with you.

**Mr. C. Imbert:** “Most theories of juvenile delinquency have focused on children from disadvantaged families, ignoring the fact that children from affluent families also commit crimes. The latter may commit crimes because of inadequate parental control...”

**Dr. Nanan:** Would the Member give way please? On a point of clarification, Mr. Speaker, would the Member say what page he is quoting from in the encyclopedia?

**Mr. Speaker:** If it is clarification, one would be asking the Member to give way. He may or may not. If it is a point of order, I deal with it. It is not a point of order? You are asking him to give way? *[Interruption]* If he gave way, thinking it was a point of order you are raising, it is not a genuine giving way. *[Interruption]* No, they are two separate things. If you were trying to indicate that you now have the Standing Order which you wanted to give me and he sat, that is different. No, if you want to ask him whether he would give way on the point of clarification you may.

**Mr. C. Imbert:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That is why Dr. Deosaran had to say that crime is a big joke in Trinidad and Tobago. Because everything is a joke to them. I am trying to educate them, but they are not interested. But anyhow, let us move on.

“Changes in the...social structure may indirectly affect juvenile crime rates. For example, changes in the economy that lead to fewer job opportunities...and rising unemployment in general make gainful employment increasingly difficult for young people to obtain. The resulting discontent may in turn lead more youths into criminal behavior.”

I subscribe to these views: that there are many factors that influence crime. But I subscribe to the view that the lack of values in the society, the breakdown in the family structure, and the lack of a support system are strongly responsible for criminal activity in the society, Mr. Speaker.

**Miss Nicholson:** Children cannot pass Common Entrance.

**Mr. Imbert:** “Families have also experienced changes within the last 25 years. More families consist of one-parent households or two working parents; consequently, children are likely to have less supervision at home than was common in the traditional family structure. This lack of parental supervision is thought to be an influence on juvenile crime rates. Other identifiable causes of delinquent acts include frustration or failure in school, the increased availability of drugs and alcohol, and the growing incidence of child abuse and child neglect. All these conditions tend to increase the probability of a child committing a criminal act, although a direct causal relationship has not yet been established.”

From other literature, Mr. Speaker, from a newspaper called *Crime Times*—there is a lot of research regarding genetic predisposition to criminal behaviour and environmental factors. I quote excerpts from *Quotes from ‘A Mind to Crime’*:

“Genetic theory has advanced in sophistication, and we now know that environmental factors can interact with the genes, as it were switching their messages on or off. So you can inherit a predisposition to crime—but you will not necessarily be a criminal. Without that predisposition, you are less likely to take up a criminal career, whatever the environmental temptations. There is no ‘gene for crime’...but a whole array of genetic influences. What’s more, there seem to be genes that predispose some to non-violent property crime, and genes that predispose others to violent behavior.’

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‘What has become startlingly clear is that there are explanations for ‘bad’ or ‘immoral’ behavior which may stem from abnormalities in the brain’s structure or chemistry.’

‘The latest research suggests that in the brains of aggressive psychopaths the area that creates feelings, and hence our ability intellectually to comprehend guilt, shame, and remorse, is disconnected from the more ‘thoughtful’ frontal lobes. The thinking part of the brain is not being informed by the emotional part, so it lacks the necessary moral education.’

‘Criminals may know—intellectually—the difference between right and wrong, but if that knowledge is not accompanied by the necessary feelings and experience, they do not, and in a sense cannot, care.’”

You see, Mr. Speaker, this United National Congress (UNC) Government feels that the way to deal with crime is just to buy jeeps for the police. There is no holistic approach by the Government. There is no rehabilitative approach by the Government.

Look at the situation in our prisons, Mr. Speaker. For example, it is a known fact that most of the crimes in Trinidad and Tobago are committed by repeat offenders, because of the conditions that they face within our penal system: 10 men in a cell, violence in the prison. There are first-time offenders being put together with hardened criminals. What do you expect? What has this United National Congress Government done to deal with penal reform in Trinidad and Tobago over the last four and a half years? What have they done? They have failed to complete and commission a prison; which was substantially completed in 1995; the completion date which was 1995. We are now in the year 2000 and that prison has gone from \$200 million to \$300 million and it is still dysfunctional—that maximum-security prison. In fact, it appears to be a house of refuge now for deportees. That appears to be the only use that maximum-security prison can be put to. But you see, they are not serious, Mr. Speaker. They are not serious.

When you look at a headline like this:

“Deaf mute raped”

What are they doing about that? What kind of person would rape a deaf mute? What is the Minister of Social and Community Development doing about rehabilitation of young offenders? What is he doing to improve the conditions in the youth training centre? What is he doing to provide opportunities for persons who come out of prison and have to enter society? What about the probation

system in Trinidad and Tobago, does it exist? I do not think so. If it exists, it exists in name only. Mr. Speaker, when I read a story like this:

“A deaf mute who was allegedly raped by a relative...

According to police, the 20-year-old woman...explained in a note...a relative allegedly attacked and raped her.”

What kind of man would rape a deaf mute? This is happening under the United National Congress. *[Interruption]* You see he is laughing, everything is a big joke for him. Look at this one UNC style laugh *[Member makes laughing sound]* everything is a joke. At least the Minister of National Security has the good grace to put on a serious face but not the gesture from the Member for St. Joseph.

“Friday, April 16, 1999

13-year-old girl gang-raped for three days by three men

Having submitted for three days...to the repeated gang-rapes by three men, a 13-year-old Junior Secondary school girl finally summoned the courage...to make a report to the police despite threats against her.”

**3.00 p.m.**

The article continued:

“The girl reported...that she was at home at Victoria Village...a man whom she knew demanded sex from her.

When the teenager refused, the man...forced her into a bedroom and raped her. Another man joined in minutes later.

The following day...another man visited her home...and raped her again.”

This is what is going on in Trinidad and Tobago under this brilliant UNC administration.

Again, Friday, April 16, 1999:

“Woman, 70 raped by cop

A policeman attached to the Santa Cruz Police Station was charged yesterday with rape, serious indecency and attempted buggery of a 70-year-old woman. He was arrested at his home yesterday by Inspector Anchoor Ali and taken to the Santa Cruz Police Station where he was charged with the offences.

According to reports, the 70-year-old woman who walks with the aid of a stick because of arthritis in her left knee, went to the Santa Cruz Police Station...and lodged a report....

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As she was leaving the police station...”

“De woman coming out the police station yuh know.”

“...the woman saw a man known to her who offered her a lift to her home.

However, instead of taking her home, the man reportedly drove to a quarry in Santa Cruz, where he ordered the elderly woman to the back seat of his car. He then had sex with her even as she pleaded with him to consider her age and frail condition.”

A policeman!

“After raping the woman, the man engaged in other acts of indecency...and then raped her a second time.

The woman told the police that she tried to fight the man but he disregarded her pleas and her crying. He later drove her home.”

He drove her home. He picked up this lady outside the police station, carried her in a quarry, raped her twice and drove her home.

Monday April 19, 1999:

“Rapist slits girl with cutlass

In what has been described by police as a most brutal and heinous crime, similar to the crimes of the notorious Mano Benjamin, a 15-year-old girl was slit open between her legs with a cutlass by a man who then proceeded to repeatedly rape her... She was left bleeding profusely.

While this was going on her sister was locked in the car trunk.

The girl is now warded at the Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex in a serious condition.” [Interruption]

But you have to know. You want to hide this from people in Trinidad and Tobago. Perverse; what would you have to say if your mother or sister or your daughter was treated like this, crime gone down? [Desk thumping] That is what you would say? This is why Deosaran said that it is a big joke.

**Mr. Assam:** Sick!

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** What make him sick? It is in the newspapers.

**Mr. Hart:** He is sick because he is saying what is happening?

**Mr. C. Imbert:** Look at this; Thursday May 6, 1999:

“Student killed

—shot in the head

An 18-year-old student of Malick Senior Comprehensive became the country’s latest murder victim—No 36—shortly after 3 p.m. yesterday after he was shot in the head in an abandoned house at Dibe, Long Circular.”

You see their attitude, Mr. Speaker, they cannot take it, because they want to go and say that crime has gone down. They do not want to hear this. Yes, Carville tell them crime gone down; go and say that! People being raped; people being robbed; little children being buried in shallow graves behind people’s homes; preachers coming into the country being shot in the mouth within a couple hours; 70-year-old women being raped by police officers; that is what is going on in Trinidad and Tobago today. That is what is going on, and what are they doing about it? They want to ask me what page this is from, because they have never heard anything like this before.

**Mr. Hart:** They are only reading the *Rising Sun*.

**Mr. C. Imbert:** Because you do not know, yes, you have been told do not read the newspapers, I understand; “de Prime Minister tell yuh doh read the papers.” But in order to deal with juvenile delinquency you have to have a variety of systems.

Some of the methods, for your information, are community treatment, residential treatment, non-residential community treatment and institutionalization. It appears that in Trinidad and Tobago all we know about is institutionalization; that is all we know; throw them in a cell and “throw’way” the key. This is what we need in this country, community treatment, where the child would be placed on probation, where it is believed that the child is not harmful to others and is placed under supervision.

**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. [*Dr. K. Rowley*]

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Mr. C. Imbert:** The reason I am talking about juvenile delinquency is because they have not got a clue. If you look at the statistics, the patterns of behaviour and the history of repeat offenders, you will discover that they were

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involved in juvenile crime. This is where you have to deal with the situation; you have to deal with it in the formative years of the child. That is where you have to deal with the situation, because all these older people that are raping, killing, robbing and so forth, most of them were involved in juvenile crime.

This is what takes place in other countries, “residential treatment”. It takes place in a group home where the juvenile is provided with psychological and vocational training. To quote from the *Encarta Encyclopedia*:

“Other forms of residential treatment include rural programs such as forestry camps and work farms. Youngsters placed in non-residential community-based treatment programs do not reside at the facility. Instead they live at home and receive treatment from mental health clinics or similar services.

Institutionalization is the most severe form of treatment for juvenile offenders.”

And that is what is taking place in Trinidad and Tobago; that is what we have to deal with.

Can anybody on that side tell me that they are able to deal with more than 10 per cent or 15 per cent of juvenile delinquents in these kinds of programmes? Did you cross 10 per cent? I doubt it, because on that side they are only interested in filling the pockets of their supporters, and this has a direct bearing on crime as well.

You see, Mr. Speaker, when people in Trinidad and Tobago are struggling to survive, when a person is engaged in subsistence living, when every day is a struggle to find food for their family, and they look on and see members of this administration engaged in the most scandalous white collar crimes, and we have the situation that we see at the airport—I thought that was supposed to open on August 31? “What yuh opening, back door?” That is a construction site. When people look on and see this kind of thing; when we hear, as my colleague has pointed out, that you have a secondary school programme which has escalated from \$100 million to \$180 million to \$240 million, Mr. Speaker, when people look on—

When they see \$100 million being spent on Miss Universe for no tangible returns, and when they see what is going on in terms of the awarding of contracts in Trinidad and Tobago, what do you expect the little man in Morvant, Penal, Barrackpore or San Juan to do? Every day he has five or six children to feed, what do you expect him to do, Mr. Speaker?

I have no doubt that the escalation in criminal activity in Trinidad and Tobago has been influenced by the behaviour of the members of the United National Congress. [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. Hart:** Definitely!

**Mr. C. Imbert:** The little man would say, “Well, if they could do it, I could do it too.” It is a complete breakdown in family values in this country, and it is spearheaded by Members of that side. [*Words expunged*]

**Mr. Speaker:** I need not indicate to the hon. Member that to say that is quite wrong. I am sure you do not have to think about it to realize how wrong that is. If even that is something you believe, to say that in this House is quite wrong; it offends. [*Interruption*] Would the Member for Arouca North allow me to speak and not shout anything while I am speaking and addressing the Member for Diego Martin East on a serious issue!

It is not right. I order it expunged from the record and ask you please, keep the standard up.

**Mr. C. Imbert:** Thank you for your guidance, Mr. Speaker. When little people in this country see people get appointed to public office and say that they are doing it for the nation and they are doing it for the good of the people of Trinidad and Tobago, and next thing you see big bacchanal in the newspaper over cellular contract, what are the little people supposed to think? What are they supposed to think?

When people are appointed in the Ministry of Works and Transport and the first thing that they do is to huff—what is it PBG 1—and buy a brand new Mercedes Benz within weeks, what do you think the people of this country are supposed to think? It is no wonder that they feel that they could just walk around brazenly in Laventille and Penal or wherever it is and open fire on the police, because the Government is supposed to provide moral leadership. And I come back to this whole thing about family values; the Government should be providing leadership in terms of family values because it is the breakdown in family life in Trinidad and Tobago that has caused many of the problems.

When children do not have supervision, as I have pointed out; when they do not have the proper relationship of a mother and a father and get proper guidance when they are growing up, these are the people who are most likely to engage in crime; these are the people. It is only some of the people who come out of broken homes or homes where there are problems, who are able to rise above the

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situation; but they do not care about that. They are providing no moral leadership to this country, none whatsoever. They are not dealing with the causative effects of crime.

I cannot imagine what the Minister of National Security is going to tell us. Is he going to tell me that in 1995 there were 20,000 crimes and in 1996 there were 19,000 crimes? I do not want to hear that nonsense! I would listen to you—I always listen to you, but I do not want to hear that nonsense. Because when you tell somebody, the mother of the child that was killed for \$1.00, that crime is going down in Trinidad and Tobago, that is no comfort to her.

When I look in this newspaper, the *Newsday* of April 22, 1999, and I see:

“Car thief stabbed to death on eve of 21<sup>st</sup> birthday

A 20-year-old car thief was stabbed to death on the eve of his 21<sup>st</sup> birthday, following an argument with another car thief on Tuesday night at Chanka Trace, in El Socorro.”

Typical, this happens in Trinidad and Tobago every single day.

Mr. Speaker, I have even been the victim of robbery under this UNC administration.

**Mr. Sudama:** Who robbed you, Elias?

**Mr. C. Imbert:** What struck me about the crime is not that my home was burglarized, but the brazenness of the criminals. It is symptomatic of the culture that this UNC has brought to this country; brazenness. In November last year two bandits broke into my home, but what was interesting is that it took place at 11 o'clock in the day. They walked up my street, stopped at a neighbour's house in broad daylight without their face covered and asked for me by name. It is not a joke.

**Mr. Sudama:** Who sent them, Elias?

**Mr. C. Imbert:** When you have that level of criminal activity taking place in Trinidad and Tobago where criminals can walk into a neighbourhood and show themselves and then break into someone's house through the front door in the middle of the day, you have to ask yourself what is going on. I am sure you have heard many stories of car thefts, where persons hear a car alarm or hear somebody tampering with their vehicle—hundreds of these thefts take place every year, Mr. Speaker, under this UNC—and when they look outside they see bandits breaking into their car and the bandits tell them “Doh come outside; if you come outside

we will shoot you; and doh look at us!” That is what is taking place in Trinidad and Tobago today and that is why I must condemn this administration. They are trying to fool people in this country and I must condemn them. Everything is a big joke.

### **3.15 p.m.**

You make the point to them and point out the heinous and atrocious crimes that are taking place in Trinidad and Tobago, the raping of old women, the killing of little children, criminals walking around with guns in their waist. I heard a story by my friend, the Member for Laventille East/Morvant about some fella walking around in his area with two guns and saying that the guns are hungry. They get this from the gangster movies. It is a badge of honour to walk around in Trinidad and Tobago today with a gun in one’s waist. You are a “big shot” in the neighbourhood and they take their pattern from the UNC.

When a Cabinet Minister can be accused of slapping a policeman on the highway, when a Cabinet Minister can be accused of slapping a security guard at the Queen’s Park Savannah; when you hear alleged rumours of the Prime Minister engaging in offensive language. Even Members of this House on that side engage in offensive language right here in the Parliament in the corridor outside. I remember the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries, because he was upset about a statement made in this Parliament about the Chairman of National Petroleum, came to me outside and pushed his hand in my face saying: “You, I am going to deal with you.” He used the foulest and most obscene language I have ever heard. Now he has problems with the same individual. A Government Minister! He said he does not care about anybody. Those were his words. “I don’t care ‘bout’ you, I don’t care ‘bout’ nobody. I go deal with you.” Then he proceeds to speak in the most vile language in the corridor in front of other Members of Parliament.

When the criminals see that kind of behaviour—what is the little person in society supposed to think when they hear of Members of Cabinet beating their wives? An article in the *Newsday* of Friday October 23, 1998 says:

“Kuei Tung: I am no wife beater.

Minister of Finance Brian Kuei Tung yesterday made it clear in the Senate that he was not a wife beater.

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‘Not me!’ he was heard to say as other senators began to murmur as Energy Minister Senator Finbar Gangar responded yesterday to charges levelled at the Government on Wednesday by Sen. Diana Mahabir-Wyatt.

In a contribution to the budget debate, Senator Mahabir-Wyatt, pleaded for the battered women of the country and said that wife-beating Government Ministers should be fired.” [*Desk thumping*]

Yes they should be. Kuei Tung jumped up “one time” and said: “Not me!” He must know who on that side are beating their wives.

Mr. Speaker, that is why Dr. Deosaran said that crime is a big joke in Trinidad and Tobago, and that is why they have gone silent on crime, because they know that they are unable to deal with it. They cannot deal with it. They cannot deal with the rapes, robberies, murders, and domestic violence because they have done nothing to deal with the support systems in the society. They feel that buying jeeps could stop crime, that is what they feel. Where is the family court? All the “ole” talk we hear from the Member for Couva South, where is the drug court? Where is the gun court? Where are all these things? Nearly five years he has been bringing all kinds of trivial and foolish legislation into this Parliament. All kinds of distractions, commission of inquiry and so forth, to confuse people in this country, but where is the family court? Where are the support systems to deal with juvenile offenders? Where is the penal reform? Where are the probation programmes? Where are the counsellors? They have closed the youth camps, and the Civilian Conservation Corps. That is their response to dealing with crime in this country, making youths idle. That is their response. Making youths idle so that they would engage in crime, Mr. Speaker, and this is why I condemn the Government. [*Desk thumping*] They do not have a clue. They have not done any serious analysis of the causes of crime in this country and they have made no serious effort to deal with it. In fact, they have buried their heads in the sand like the proverbial ostrich and they hope that we would do so also, but I will not, Mr. Speaker, because I have to live in this country and I could be walking down the road tomorrow and somebody just walks up with a machine gun, or some other psychopath or sociopath, or some juvenile delinquent and I just happen to be in the way.

Mr. Speaker, I condemn the Government, they are abject failures, they could say what they want, but crime is at an all-time high in Trinidad and Tobago.

Thank you.

**Dr. K. Rowley:** Mr. Speaker, I rise to second the Motion as presented by my colleague, the Member for Diego Martin East, and with your kind indulgence, reserve my right to speak at a later point in the debate.

*Seconded by Dr. Keith Rowley.*

*Question proposed.*

**The Minister of Trade & Industry and Consumer Affairs (Hon. Mervyn Assam):** Mr. Speaker, thank you for permitting me the opportunity to join in this debate on the Motion moved by the Member for Diego Martin East:

*“Be it Resolved that this honourable House condemn the Government for its failure to deal effectively with the high incidence of criminal activity and crime, especially violent crime, in Trinidad and Tobago.”*

Mr. Speaker, I was very saddened listening to the presentation of the Member for Diego Martin East, because it seems to me that instead of really empathizing and commiserating with the victims of crime, he was reading out from the various newspaper clippings the very lurid descriptions about men slicing women between their legs and so forth—*[Interruption]*

**Hon. Member:** Why are you repeating them?

**Mr. Speaker:** May I indicate once more, that this debate will not be conducted in a form in which, while the Member is speaking, he is being answered by other people on the other side who are sitting, and particularly by the Member who has just spoken. It is not right.

Please proceed.

**Hon. M. Assam:** It gives one the impression, Mr. Speaker, that he was engaging in some kind of vicarious pleasure, enjoying some form of eroticism as he gave us a litany of all these horrendous crimes that were perpetrated particularly—

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Speaker, the Member is accusing me of improper motives.

**Mr. Speaker:** Which Standing Order?

**Mr. Imbert:** Standing Order 36(5), improper motives.

**Mr. Speaker:** What the Member has said is not an improper motive, he is saying that you have said certain things which could have been the effect of it. Overruled. Please proceed.

**Hon. M. Assam:** As I was saying, Mr. Speaker, that one got the distinct impression that the Member for Diego Martin East was enjoying it. Not so much that he felt pain and suffering for women in this country who have been over the last many years—including the 34 years of the PNM administration—brutalized physically, mentally, spiritually and economically in this country. He comes today to give a display of that kind of eroticism which I despise, because of the position he holds in this honourable House.

Mr. Speaker, it should be also mentioned in this Motion, white-collar crime. I do not know why he omitted white-collar crime, he should have included it and maybe we should amend the Motion when it comes to our turn to include white-collar crime, but in a certain way. Not that we agree with the Motion, but we will include white-collar crime in the Motion too for the 34 years that his party spent in office. And not only should we include white-collar crime, we should also include as a crime, misleading Parliament. That should be a crime too, where a Member could stand in this honourable House and mislead the Parliament, and by extension, the national community. That also should be a crime, under the Standing Orders.

Mr. Speaker, I do not want to bore this honourable House with statistics, but just to give you an idea of what the trend has been in terms of the most violent crime in this country—murder—the statistics are as follows:

Murders committed in 1991 to 1999, and this is the most violent of crimes against a human being, depriving a person of his or her life. In 1991 when the People's National Movement was in office, there were 97 murders; in 1992 this rose to 109 murders; in 1993, there was a minimal decrease of one, it went to 108 and in 1994, with that administration in office, it took a quantum leap from 108 to 141.

Do you know what happened when this administration came into office? In 1996, it was 107; in 1997, 99—

**Mr. Bereaux:** Could the Member give way please?

**Hon. M. Assam:** In 1998, 95; in 1999, 92; so with every successive year that this administration has been in office, murder has decreased.

**Miss Nicholson:** That cannot be true.

**Hon. M. Assam:** But I do not want anyone in this august Chamber or in the national community to misunderstand what I am saying because I am not going to tolerate even one murder in this society. [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. Bereaux:** Could the Member point out the number of murders in 1995? He did not say.

**Hon. M. Assam:** There were 118 murders. The PNM demitted office on November 06, 1995, and it was 118. So that you see the trend, and even though there is a decline in trend, I am not satisfied, and this Government is not satisfied and will not be satisfied until murder is eliminated from this land.

Mr. Speaker, between 1991 and 1995 the PNM administration was in office and the Attorney General was Mr. Keith Sobion. Do you know what he had to say on May 15, 1992 in this honourable House? He said:

“For too long now we have talked. For too long now we have discussed. For too long now we have held symposia and conferences. For too long now we have had letters to the editor and editorials by the editor.”

**Hon. Member:** Not “naw”, “now”. I am sure he never said “naw”.

**Hon. M. Assam:** I am not going to worry with them, Mr. Speaker, do you think I am going to worry with the Member for Diego Martin East and the Member for Laventille East/Morvant? If they cannot speak the English language, that is their business. I do not care what you say, that is your business. You can deride as much as you want, it does not deter me from speaking how I know best to speak.

**3.30 p.m.**

He continues the debate on May 15, 1992:

“Madam Speaker, what I propose to do is to alert the national community, through this House, to a state of affairs which demands the highest priority on the national agenda.

The fact is that despite the best efforts of the members of our judiciary, our magistracy, our lawyers and the administrators and others involved in the legal process, our system of justice is continuing on a downward spiral which must be arrested—”

That is the Attorney General in the PNM administration you know.

“The fact is we can no longer continue to pay mere lip service to the problem. We must act and we must act swiftly.”

The debate continues on May 15, 1992, and he says:

“I may have painted a dismal picture, but that is not even the whole canvas. The fact is that the situation is truly bad.”

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May 15, 1992, PNM in power!

“My investigations have shown that there is no area of the delivery aspect of the system of justice which is free from the horror of delay...

Cabinet has agreed as an immediate and urgent action plan to activate a team charged with the responsibility to provide solutions for immediate implementation to deal with the problem of delays.

Madam Speaker, the team has been mandated to report within four weeks and the implementation process will begin immediately thereafter.”

That was the implementation process in May 1992.

“Finally, I have alerted Cabinet of the need to have an ongoing exercise in this regard, as the situation will require continuous monitoring with input from concerned individuals and organizations over the next few years, once this initial exercise is completed.”

On June 26, 1992 in this honourable House the following Private Motion was moved by Mr. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj, MP for Couva South and it states:

“*Whereas* there has been continued increase in the incidence of crimes and in particular violent crimes in recent times in Trinidad and Tobago;”

June 26, 1992—PNM in power.

“*And whereas* a great proportion of these crimes involve violent attacks on law-abiding citizens on the nation’s roads, in the privacy of their homes and to their businesses;

*And whereas* these attacks have generated a deep sense of fear; anxiety and insecurity throughout the population;

*And whereas* it is not apparent that Government is responding to this critical situation in any effective way:

*Be it resolved* that this House express its lack of confidence in the Government’s handling of this continuous increase in the incidence of crime.”

And you know, Mr. Speaker, when the Member for Couva South moved this Motion the Members opposite, who were then the Government, unleashed a blistering attack upon him. I would not go into the details. Totally divorcing themselves from the problem and the responsibilities for resolving the problem. This is exactly what the Member for Diego Martin East just said; he said the

problem was with the Member for Couva South, not with the Government. That is what he said. Boy, I tell you, Mr. Speaker, God is not sleeping and will not sleep.

**Mr. Bereaux:** That is true.

**Hon. M. Assam:** The following Private Motion was proposed by Sen. Diana Mahabir-Wyatt on April 26, 1994. In 1994 the PNM was in power. This was done in the next place and the Senator moved this Motion.

“*Whereas* the law-abiding citizens of Trinidad and Tobago are suffering from the escalation in general lawlessness, criminal activity of all kinds, in particular, crimes involving violence to the person; and

*Whereas* despite repeated promises—”

Have you all heard the word hon. Members?

“Whereas despite repeated promises by government that this rise in crime, violence and lawlessness will be dealt with, there has been a steady deterioration in the situation;”

Not that the promises were attempted to be honoured. There has been a steady deterioration in the situation.

“*Be It Resolved* that this Senate urge the Government to implement immediate and effective measures for the reform of the police service, the improvement of the administration of justice, the control of criminal activity and the protection of all citizens.”

Then she went on to quote from the PNM Manifesto of 1991. They always talked about they who do the crime will do the time. 1991! *[Interruption]* I said they always talk about what we have in our Manifesto. That is what I am saying. But hear what they said in their 1991 Manifesto.

“The PNM recognizes that the crime situation in Trinidad and Tobago is fast getting out of control.”

It is the PNM saying so you know.

“The number of serious crimes continue to increase on a daily basis—”

not weekly, not monthly, not yearly; on a daily basis.

“Accordingly, the PNM will commit all necessary resources of money and skills at its disposal to ensure:

- institutional reform, and in particular, police service reform that will aid in reducing the incidence of crime;

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- the introduction of higher levels of management and more efficient...acquisition of required technology to improve the level of crime detection...adequate transportation; training; construction of new police stations; provision of equipment and technology.”

Mr. Speaker, I like to debate rather than read but I am forced to read these extracts, to point out, unequivocally, what has transpired during the administration and the watch of the People’s National Movement between 1991 to 1995. But I could have gone to the 30 years while they were in office from 1956 to 1986.

Mr. Speaker, on September 08, 1994, immediately before the imprudent Member for San Fernando East called an election on October 06—just less than a month. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Manning: It is the 6<sup>th</sup> of November.

**Hon. M. Assam:** It is the 6<sup>th</sup> of October you called the election. He does not even know what he did. *[Laughter]* He called the elections on the 6<sup>th</sup> of October for the 6<sup>th</sup> of November and he does not even know what he did. That was your Prime Minister! He did not even know where he held the last Convention of the party. He said, the Red Cross. He did not even know! *[Interruption]*

**Mr. Manning:** Your constituency does not even want you. On whose behalf are you speaking?

**Hon. M. Assam:** I only hope that all the walk that the Member for San Fernando East is doing now is in preparation for what he said on television one morning; that if he loses the election he will walk. *[Desk thumping]* I think he is engaging in his preparation now. *[Desk thumping]* That if he loses he will walk. He is preparing to walk all now. I am very happy about that. So do not worry about me; do not study your head over me. *[Laughter]* Do you remember that? Do not study your head over me, I am all right. *[Interruption]*

**Mr. Speaker:** May I suggest to the hon. Member for St. Joseph and to the hon. Member for San Fernando East that walking or not we return to the business at hand. *[Laughter]*

**3.40 p.m.**

**Hon M. Assam:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So on September 8, 1994, again the People’s National Movement was in power under the Member for San

Fernando East who was the Prime Minister. This is a clipping, from the *Trinidad Guardian*, of an article written by David Nanton:

“The Cabinet-appointed crime commission...”

The PNM got into office in 1991, at least. They promised all kinds of things in their Manifesto, but listen to what happened. They got into office in 1991 but in 1994, when they were about to expire, Mr. Speaker—it almost reminds me of when Jesus Christ went into Jerusalem and he gave the eschatological discourse. This was almost eschatological in nature, when the Member called this crime commission together, knowing full well that within weeks he would have been out of office, actually forecasting the death of his administration. That is what the eschatology is all about.

“The Cabinet-appointed Crime Commission would be turning its attention...”

That is more than three years after being elected, you know.

“The Cabinet-appointed Crime Commission would be turning its attention to the administration of justice in Trinidad and Tobago when it meets Monday, Prime Minister Patrick Manning announced on Tuesday.

Speaking to reporters shortly after he met with Commission Chairman, Sir Ellis Clarke, Manning said the team would look into the establishment of the office of a Chancellor...”

It is a position from which he has since resiled because it is convenient to resile from that position. When he was Prime Minister it was okay to talk about “the Office of Chancellor”. Now that he is in the wilderness, it is very convenient to resile from such a position. So he said he wanted to look into the establishment of a Chancellor of the Judiciary to handle the administrative and managerial functions of the Judicial Service. He had an idea of how it would work, you know, not only about administrative and managerial functions. He went on:

“The relationship between such a person and the Chief Justice varies from country to country, and the Committee will examine how best to work this out’, he said. ‘The current Chief Justice would be retiring next year...’”

He had an idea also what he had in mind, although he speaks about, “It is the deliberate judgment of the President to appoint a Chief Justice”. He had something in mind, hon. Members. Mr. Speaker, he had something in mind, “something under his sleeve”, as we say in local parlance.

“The current Chief Justice will be retiring next year and as we change personalities at the top...”

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He knew exactly which personality he had in mind, ha, ha, ha, ha.

“...then we will also be taking the opportunity to make administration changes’. The PM pointed out that the Commission would look into the implementation of several short-term measures aimed at reducing the delays in the administration of justice and make recommendations to that effect.”

More than three years after being elected to office he was beginning, in some kind of half-hearted way, to fulfil the pledges of his 1991 Manifesto. [*Interruption*] Yes, the Member must speak and defend the indefensible and the nonsensicalities that have been preached over time in his walkings and peregrinations in those places where he has absolutely no support.

Now, Mr. Speaker, for anyone to stand in this Parliament or, indeed, for any citizen in this country to accuse the Government of the day, because all of these horrendous crimes that have been committed, must be a shameless act of cowardice; but I know why. It is because we are in an election season and obviously the Member for Diego Martin East believes it is correct to parade in this Parliament and play to the national gallery because he knows that what he says will get into print the next day. I wonder, Mr. Speaker, when Dole Chadee was murdering people throughout the length and breadth of this land under the PNM administration, if the PNM was guilty of those crimes.

I wonder, when Dr. Narinesingh was shot down in cold blood on High Street at 11.00 a.m., three bullets to different parts of her body as she slumped to the ground—like dear old Caesar when the knives were pushed into his body on the Lupercal—whether the PNM administration was guilty then. I wonder, when the Commissioner of Prisons was shot down in Barataria, allegedly by some youth or two youths, whether the PNM administration was guilty. I wonder, when Mano Benjamin rampaged through the society, destroyed women and deflowered all those virgins in the most brutal way, whether the PNM was guilty of all these desecrations to the female human body wreaked upon them by Mano Benjamin when they were in office. [*Interruption*] I wonder whether Malik’s crime, when he buried so many people in shallow graves—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Speaker:** I once more appeal to the Member for Diego Martin West, please, allow him. You may not like what he says but you are quite capable of responding in time, please.

**Hon. M. Assam:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, I wonder when Malik committed all these murders in Arima, Christina Gardens, a very high-priced residential area, whether the PNM administration that was in office at the time was guilty of all

those murders and the notoriety that man pursued while he lived. I wonder. These are important questions to ask. If the Member for Diego Martin East is saying that under our watch all of these things have happened and, therefore, we are guilty of all these things; I wonder.

Mr. Speaker, I do not mention these matters with any degree of happiness, you know. It is with a heavy heart and with great sadness that I recall all these horrid, historical moments in the life of Trinidad and Tobago. However, I must mention them only to show the folly of the arguments that have been adduced by the Member for Diego Martin East.

You know, Mr. Speaker, his debate on this matter degenerated even further. We were talking about violent crime in the society. He was the one who moved the Motion and proceeded to vilify the Prime Minister by talking about alleged rumour of obscenities spewed out by the Prime Minister, alleged corruption, alleged wife beating, alleged brutality by Ministers of Government. All these things, Mr. Speaker, he introduced into a debate dealing with violent crime in this society and I wonder whether it is permissible to say that—Members on that side, there have been allegations against them also, allegations of a very serious nature. There are very, very serious allegations that have been printed and aired in so many different places against Members on that side.

**Mr. Valley:** Name them.

**Hon. M. Assam:** Mr. Speaker, you know, the Member for Diego Martin East—[*Interruption*] I am clean, boy. My hands are clean, boy. Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha—lily white and clean, these hands. I dare any one of the Members opposite, or any of the 1.3 million residents in Trinidad and Tobago to point fingers and to sully these hands. [*Interruption*] Clean, clean, clean, after God. Thank God! Praise be to God!

**Hon. Member:** Wife beating?

**Hon. M. Assam:** Never, never. Wife what?

**Hon. Member:** Wife beating.

**Hon. M. Assam:** What is wife beating? Did the hon. Member tell me he used to beat his wife? [*Laughter*] So, Mr. Speaker—do not tackle me, you know. Do not tamper with me. Mr. Speaker, as I said, it should be a crime for people to stand in this House and speak falsehoods to this Parliament. In the last debate the Member for Diego Martin East said, “Not a red cent”, that is how he said it, “was spent on the PRIDE Project”—It is in *Hansard*—when I challenged him about the

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waste. To date, do you know how much was spent on the Piarco Rainbow International Development Project (PRIDE)? \$92,748,000. *[Interruption]* On that contract there were five persons who “bided”. *[Interruption]*

**Dr. Rowley:** Bid.

**Mr. Valley:** Bid, bid, bid.

**Hon. M. Assam:** There were five persons who bid. *[Interruption]* This is just as when the Member said “forecasted”, which is forecast, forecast, forecast. *[Laughter]* I heard him say “forecasted” many times and I did not correct him; but it is okay, because it is forecast, forecast, forecast; it is bid, bid, bid. I am not like him, haughty. I am prepared to say it is bid, bid, bid but he would not admit it is forecast, forecast, forecast. There is no such word as “forecasted”. *[Interruption]*

*[The Speaker rose]*

So there were five firms that bid for the PRIDE Project, the Piarco Rainbow International Development Project (PRIDE). Unilaterally the Minister of Works and Transport then eliminated one of the bidders, although all five companies responded by the deadline, but only four were considered. Do you know what happened? The company that was awarded the contract eventually, Mr. Speaker, came last in the bidding process, because the evaluation report on Pegasus was the poorest of them all. Pegasus was given the contract and Maritime was placed second as a little sop.

I know I made a mistake. That is why I was rising, to correct my mistake, because I did not want the records to be wrong. I said the Ombudsman when I was speaking and I was wrong. I should have said the Chairman of the Integrity Commission, and that is why I was rising. They, however, are so uncouth and ungracious that they would not let me rise to correct my mistake. I was going to say, “I am sorry, it was not the Ombudsman, it was the Chairman of the Integrity Commission who the then Prime Minister mandated to do a report”. So I hope the records are corrected now because it was not the Ombudsman.

Do you know how a paragraph written by the Chairman of the Integrity Commission went? It says:

“What I find remarkable about this decision is that Pegasus, which was ranked behind Maritime and AMBRO in every respect except the financial package offered, crucial to which was the reversion to the Government of the entire Pegasus shareholding, should be given the award to develop this thing.”

That is the Chairman of the Integrity Commission saying so, yet he wants to attack Members opposite about changing rank, and changing rank for a person who is employed, you know. This is changing rank on a US \$80 million contract. The person who came last is now first. Perhaps he was doing accounting. Was he doing LIFO or FIFO—first in first out or last in first out? What was he doing at the time, some accounting? Was he juggling things? They talk about crime, they talk about probity and they talk about all kinds of things.

In the Daily *Express* of November 28, 1994 at page 19, Mr. Speaker, his very good friend said, writing about the then Minister of Works:

“The Airport project is steeped in secrecy about missed deadlines and, of late, there is outright refusal by government and airport officials to respond to almost any aspect of the now controversial negotiations”

That is the *Express* writing about the Minister of Works and Transport and the PNM government, November 28, 1994; they have the effrontery to come here, in this House, and to excoriate Members of this Government at every twist and turn.

### **3.55 p.m.**

Mr. Speaker, what is even more interesting, intriguing and revealing is the tendering procedures in the Ministry of Works and Transport, when the Member for Diego Martin East was the Minister. There was a Private Member’s sitting which, clearly, attacked the tendering procedures, nepotism and favouritism that existed in that ministry when the Member was there, shown to relatives, friends and people in power. There were some names called of certain companies that got contracts without even having to bid for them. But I will not call the names of the firms because I will not use my parliamentary immunity and privilege to call them.

**Mr. Imbert:** Call the names.

**Hon. M. Assam:** I will not. I am not like the Member. I will not call the names but I have the names. Maybe one day if the Member angers me enough, I will call them but I will not call them. I want to deal with the Member for Diego Martin East and not the beneficiaries of his largesse when he was in office.

**Mr. Imbert:** Call them.

**Hon. M. Assam:** Yes, I know. You want me to lose my dignity but I will not because my hands are clean and I am dignified. Not like the Member when he is calling people all kinds of nasty names in this House.

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Mr. Speaker, in fact, there was a letter in the *TNT Mirror* dated June 2, 1995—the PNM were still in office. In that letter, the *TNT Mirror* stated that five senior officials of the ministry, under the then Minister of Works and Transport, Colm Imbert, were creaming off millions of dollars in contracts from the 60-million-dollar road improvement fund programme. You know, the Member never responded. If it were incorrect the Member should have responded. This, the Member did through private companies which they had set up. The companies were registered in names of their wives and other family members to short-circuit a legal restriction that can only hand out contracts worth \$25,000 or less.

Mr. Speaker, I also have the names but I will not call them. My role is to deal with the Member for Diego Martin East, not other citizens whom he tended to contaminate when he was the Member for Diego Martin East. *[Laughter]* In all this, the Opposition did nothing or precious little to the extent that the police service revolted against them. Approximately 200 policemen marched around this Red House. I was on Knox Street there as an ordinary citizen, and I saw them marching against the Opposition because they wanted to remove the Commissioner of Police; they wanted to get rid of service commissions; they wanted to do all kinds of things in violation of the constitutional rights of people; and they even locked up a Speaker and suspended the Constitution and declared a state of emergency. That is the record of that side. They are the ones who instigated disorder and lawlessness, and they want to talk about this Government.

Mr. Speaker, but what did this Government do? This Government did say in its Manifesto and all around the country when it campaigned in 1995 that if you do the crime you will do the time. The Government did say so and we maintain that. When the Government came into office, we put our money where our mouth was, and we have a very proud, outstanding, unbeatable, and enviable record of crime fighting, administration and putting things in place during a mere four years in office. The criminal justice system was comprehensively overhauled through a series of legislative measures and the Opposition used to be angry.

Mr. Speaker, when we came here with this package of legislation the Opposition used to be angry and say, all the Government was doing is just Bill and law, not realizing that the Government was fulfilling its Manifesto pledges but, at the same time, trying to create a society that is safe for all. That is what this Government was trying to do. Rome was not built in a day and the Government will not eliminate crime in four years but we are on the way. As one would see, the trend line is declining in murders, in the case of the most violent of crimes.

The Government introduced a Bill to use DNA as a means of crime detection; it introduced Plea Bargaining; it increased the number of judges at the Supreme Court; it increased the number of magistrates; and introduced a Bill for alternate jurors, which did not occur before in this country. If something happened to a jury—whether it is nine or 12—one had to start the trial all over. Now, there are alternate jurors. There is civil injury compensation; confiscation of assets derived from crime; the Sexual Offences Bill; and the Domestic Violence Bill was also amended and the Opposition prevented us. The Government had to compromise on that because the Opposition prevented us from introducing a certain section—I think it was clause 4, where a policeman could enter a house without a warrant. The Opposition demanded that the Government withdraw that from the Bill. The Government wanted to give the Bill more teeth and credibility, in terms of protecting the women of this country but, no, the Opposition was not interested in that. They are interested in coming to this Parliament and preaching a lot of heresy and falsehoods, giving the impression that they care about this population.

Mr. Speaker, there were also amendments to the Legal Aid Bill, which is very important for the system of the administration of justice. The Government also regularized the Special Reserve Police Officers in this country who have been languishing for how many years? Some of them 30 years with no benefits, security or anything; this Government has regularized that and they were about to be opposed to it. *[Interruption]* Exactly. There is a Mediation Bill and a Community Service Bill.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of drug rehabilitation, the Government has transformed the Chadee estate into a rehabilitation centre. There is a programme called the National Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention Programme (NADAPP); there is also a programme dealing with the vagrancy in the country; and the Government is establishing halfway houses, in order to ensure that these people are humanely treated when they are put there.

Mr. Speaker, the buildings housing the Magistrates' Courts have been refurbished in so many various regions in the country—not to speak of the police service. In terms of the numbers, the Government has increased the numbers; in terms of training, the Government has enhanced the training in so many different ways, in terms of forensic crime detection and so forth; in terms of transportation that, in fact, has been immensely improved over the last four years. The Government has introduced the 999 Rapid Response system, which is a revolutionary way of dealing in a most timely manner with the commission of crime, where you can pick up your telephone and dial E999, and within minutes

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the police is at your door to assist in the apprehension of a criminal. There is also community policing. This E999 system is linked to all the police stations in Trinidad and Tobago. Nobody is left out and the Government is going even further now, because it will be establishing a separate backbone with its own bandwidth so that crime detection and the apprehension of criminals will be more easily facilitated in this country.

**4.05 p.m.**

The Member for Diego Martin East comes to this Parliament totally unprepared in his massive ignorance—or pretended massive ignorance—of what this Government has been doing, and tries to say to the Parliament that this country is not being properly governed, that the rate of crime has not been reduced, and that we are merely tinkering with statistics. That is his basic argument.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of the other areas with respect to dealing with crime, the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs has been involved in a tremendous programme of addressing the needs of youth and sports in this country. We are building four stadia—started by the illustrious Member for Tobago West.

**Dr. Rowley:** You are begging now.

**Hon. M. Assam:** He said I am begging. Why do you not go and beg your leader for forgiveness for challenging him in the most despicable way? The illustrious Member for Tobago West started the programme, and before the end of this year and early 2001, we will see the kind of facilities that the young people of this country will be enjoying in all the strategic locations of Trinidad and Tobago.  
*[Desk thumping]*

We are proud to host the 2001 Games, Mr. Speaker. We hosted the International Hockey Tournament in 1996, I believe it was, in that complex in Tacarigua and we are doing very well in sport. You can see that the West Indies team, with a setback here and there, has high morale, and our football team is doing exceptionally well. Our athletes are doing even better. It is all of us. They all belong to Trinidad and Tobago. We must all be proud.

It is not like those on the other side. Because we are getting cruise ships coming here as we have never seen them before—the only reason they are coming here is because of hurricanes up north. Hurricane in April, May and June! He does not even know climate. I thought he might have done climatology in his engineering courses. He does not even understand climatology. That is why cruise ships are coming here. He so hates this country and despises the achievements of

this country. Do you know why? Because this Government has been able to do so and his government could not do it. That is the reason.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of culture and gender affairs, never before has so much emphasis been placed in these two areas. Rape crisis centres and hotlines; so many different institutions and organizations involved in dealing with this particular problem which none of us could sit here and be happy about. Because the violation of the human person, particularly the person of a woman, is one of those damnable things in which anybody could engage, but he wants to come and say that ministers here engage in violence. I wonder if he was looking into a mirror or looking on his side and perhaps trying to equate what happens on his side—or when he looks into the mirror—with this side.

This country owes a great debt of gratitude to the distinguished Attorney General. *[Desk thumping]* I do not say so because I like the Member for Couva South; I do not say so because he is present and I am in no way flattering him. If one is honest and objective, he is one of the most distinguished, hardworking and productive Attorneys General that this country has seen since Independence. *[Desk thumping]* And for all the legislation that he has brought to this honourable House and had debated and passed, even if from time to time we have had to withdraw something here and amend something there, the commendation is not enough for the kind of work he has produced, not for this side, but for the entire country.

Mr. Speaker, look at the number of community centres and sporting complexes that have been built. All these things have an impact on crime and the development of the society. All these things have an impact on what kind of civilization we are going to be forging in the next 10, 15, 20 or 100 years.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Member for St. Joseph has expired.

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

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Hon. M. Assam:** Mr. Speaker, you know, it is said that the devil always has work for idle hands. Therefore, no amount of courts, no amount of laws, no amount of policemen, no amount of judges and magistrates would be sufficient to arrest crime in the country or to solve criminal activity, and we recognize that, but the point is, one has got to put an infrastructure, a legal and judicial infrastructure,

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in place to ensure that the administration of justice is well served. One has to do it.

Accompanying them and complementary to these things, we are also looking at the social and economic side of development. That is why we emphasize the building of community centres so that people in communities can go there and take advantage of all the courses that are offered; and the Minister for Training and Distance Learning has been very busy establishing distance learning centres in the community centres throughout Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

What this will do, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is revolutionize how education is delivered in this country, both in terms of cost, speed, and accessibility, and in terms of choice, because one does not have to go to a particular institution and do 12 subjects when one is only interested in seven, so that one does not do the other four or five too well. One can select one's own curriculum, on one's own speed, at one's own time and one can graduate from these through distance learning programmes. That is a revolutionary approach to education and training.

If one looks at the whole question of training and the development of the National Training Agency, and the development of the whole Skills Development Centres in collaboration with MIC and the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries, this has been a revolutionary way of skilling and reskilling, developing new trends and giving young men and women an opportunity to either get involved in self-employment or to be employed in the high-tech areas of this country, and also equally important, in the knowledge-based industries and the service industries of this country.

The hotel school is going to be an important area as the Minister of Tourism has said in this House so many times, and tourism education from the primary to the secondary to the tertiary levels will become increasingly important as we build more and more on the platform of tourism in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what is very important also is jobs; employment. One cannot have, as I said, this elaborate legal and judicial infrastructure, and only community centres and sporting centres. People must be fed. People must have jobs to feed their families, and this Government has been in the forefront of seeking foreign investment, regional investment and local investment to come to Trinidad and Tobago to invest in all areas of the economy.

We have been very successful in the energy sector. This is a continuation of what previous governments have done. We are not taking all the credit. It is a

continuation of what the previous governments did. We have built on the platform and the successes of previous administrations, but we have gone to further heights, because as you know, we are in the business now of developing a gas to liquids plant which will employ a lot of people. We are in the business of pursuing Trains 2 and 3, because they claimed Train 1. If they want to claim it, have it! The benefit is what is important to me and to this Government, to the people of Trinidad and Tobago and the improvement in their quality of life. If they want to claim it, claim it, but we have Trains 2 and 3 going.

We have an aluminium smelter plant on the drawing board. We are looking to develop a new industrial estate out of Point Lisas and we are also establishing a food park in Debe. We are establishing a science and technology and innovation park in Wallerfield. We are establishing a marine park in Chaguaramas and we are going to be developing—this Government, on behalf of the sovereign people of this country—all these things for them.

**Mr. Manning:** You better do it before the next month. Om Lalla is listening to you!

**Hon. M. Assam:** Whether it is Om Lalla or whoever it is, you are going to get such a beating that you will continue to walk as you have told the people in that television programme a few mornings ago. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, what I am trying to say this afternoon is this Government has taken a multifaceted approach to development and a multifaceted approach to dealing with crime and criminal activity in this society. That is what we are doing. We are not doing it only on one front and we are using all the disciplines to assist us in so doing. It is very important. So, you can see in the community policing model, we have everyone in the community involved, whether it is teacher, businessman, policeman, parent, sociologist, sports people, whatever it is. They are all involved in this effort in order to ensure that there is harmony and peace in a community, and people are not at war with themselves.

Really, people are at war with themselves simply because of fundamental ingredients that are missing from their lives, which we are trying to put in place. Therefore, gainful employment, permanent employment, well-paid employment is a critical ingredient in creating the social peace, harmony and the reduction in crime in the society. That is what this Government is doing. We are doing it through a programme of economic diversification, through a programme of ensuring that every sector of the society and of the economy is developed, so that no one sector will be skewed in such a way that if anything happens to it, the

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economy is going to go into a tailspin, as has happened in the pre-1980s when we depended so heavily on the petroleum and energy sector.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, education is the key to opening up all these things. [*Desk thumping*]

**Miss Nicholson:** Let me hear you!

**Hon. M. Assam:** When I hear or read of all these unfortunate criticisms of the valiant effort of the Member for Siparia, the distinguished Minister of Education, in attempting to place children who traditionally would not have been put into a secondary school after the Common Entrance Examination has been published—in most years, Mr. Speaker, between 10,000 and 12,000 children, when she is making a valiant effort, totally supported by the Cabinet of this country—one must question the motives of the critics. One has to question the motives. [*Interruption*]

**Miss Nicholson:** Deal with the primary schools!

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Except Morgan Job!

**Hon. M. Assam:** Whether the critics are inside or outside, I lament any criticism, because it is a monumental effort that this Government has undertaken to place all the children who took the Common Entrance Examination into Form One come September, 2000. Even if there are some initial problems, as there will be, any system—

**4.20 p.m.**

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Members, I really thought that the House could moderate itself.

**Miss Nicholson:** It can.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** I know, but it was not happening, Member for Tobago East—

**Miss Nicholson:** Tobago West.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Tobago West, sorry.

**Miss Nicholson:** I always behave well.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** You are behaving quite well and as the hon. Speaker always says, you will get your chance to speak. Member for St. Joseph. [*Interruption*]

**Hon. M. Assam:** But I hope it does not come to the stage where I would say to you: "Oh judgment, thou has fled to brutish beast and men have lost their reason." [*Laughter*]

As I was saying, Mr. Deputy Speaker, who could condemn an effort on the part of the Minister of Education and this Government to place every child into a secondary school come September, 2000?

**Dr. Rowley:** Job.

**Hon. M. Assam:** The hopelessness that hitherto engulfed 10,000—12,000 children of this land will be obliterated forever. [*Desk thumping*]

**Miss Nicholson:** More criminals will be produced.

**Hon. M. Assam:** And even if, as I was saying when I was interrupted by the distinguished Member for Tobago West, there are some teething problems come September, there is no system in the world, even in the most developed society, that does not have problems when you have a transition from one system to another. There is no country in the world. The most advanced country will have some teething problems as you move in a transitional period from one system to another. I expect there will be problems, but I also know the capacity of the Minister of Education and the greater capacity of the Cabinet of this country, to resolve some of these problems. [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. Manning:** Call the election before September.

**Hon. M. Assam:** The Member for San Fernando East wants the Member for St. Joseph to call the election before September. Apparently, he was never the Prime Minister or he has never read the Constitution and, secondly, even if I had the power to call an election, I would not do it. I would not exercise the imprudence that he exercised on October 6, 1995.

**Mr. Manning:** Talk your talk now. We will see.

**Hon. M. Assam:** So that: Be patient to the last; friends, Romans, countrymen, be patient to the last. Why are you so impatient for the election? Do you mean that you are looking for so much licks so quickly? I hope you have your alabaster to soothe your wounds when you get them whenever the time comes.

**Mr. Manning:** I will choose to walk. We will see.

**Hon. M. Assam:** But I was speaking of a more serious subject when I was interrupted, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I was talking about the noble pursuit of knowledge, learning and education, which this Government is giving every child

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in Trinidad and Tobago, an opportunity. They want to talk about putting criminals into the system and all kinds of other—

**Mrs. James:** You will live to regret it. Do not boast.

**Hon. M. Assam:**—statements of doom and gloom. I find it sad but I would tell you, as I said on the last occasion, the children of Sisyphus do not like what you are saying. They will be harsh with you, the children of Sisyphus.

**Mr. Imbert:** The children say they do not like you.

**Hon. M. Assam:** Because, when the children of Sisyphus hear that you are trying to deny them a secondary education; that you are against harsher clauses for domestic violence, of which they are victims, because when mother and father engage in domestic violence, whom do you think are the eventual victims? The children. When they hear that you are against certain amendments to the Constitution to deal with hanging people and you come here with forked tongue and say you want to reduce crime, but you do not want to use the means that you have at your disposal to legislate to reduce crime; then they know that you are a bunch of hypocrites.

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

That is what you are and you will be exposed, not only in this Parliament, but throughout the length and breadth of Trinidad and Tobago, whether it is Om Lalla or whoever it is, you will be exposed.

**Dr. Rowley:** What are you calling the man's name for?

**Hon. M. Assam:** Mr. Speaker, there is another element in terms of how you deal with the crime situation in this country.

**Mr. Hart:** What is the other element?

**Hon. M. Assam:** There is another one I am coming to, and that is leadership. Leadership is critical in terms of how this society will evolve and how you are going to deal with the criminal element.

If there are Members of the Opposition coming here week after week, Friday after Friday, tempting fate—and that is what they do. They tempt fate by standing and saying all these things against this Government, refusing to take the necessary measures to support this Government in its effort to deal with crime, then you are abdicating your leadership responsibility in a very fundamental way.

**Mr. Manning:** He is trying to get me into the debate.

**Hon. M. Assam:** You can get in if you want. You see I have met many young people in the course of my life but even more so now because I represent a constituency. You will be surprised to know the cynicism that young people have developed against people like you. They have become cynical against you politicians because they understand that you speak from both sides of your mouth. They begin to wonder whether, in fact, there is any value in the political system. They begin to wonder whether there is any value in going to the polls and staining their fingers. They begin to wonder whether, in fact, democracy is a reality or a sham. I am serious about that.

I meet many of them and they call your names and speak about your lack of performance in the Parliament. I am telling you. They cry shame and heap opprobrium on all of you, or most of you. I am telling you and you know what I am saying is true, because there is a breakdown in the leadership structure, but it is not only at the political level, the leadership structure has to deal with people who wear the cloth, people who are men of the cloth.

**Mr. Manning:** You are attacking the church there.

**Hon. M. Assam:** People who are managers in business. People who are in the protective services.

**Mr. Manning:** You are attacking the police.

**Hon. M. Assam:** People who are community leaders.

**Mr. Manning:** That is the old people.

**Hon. M. Assam:** People who are in the teaching profession, whether it is the primary, secondary or tertiary level. All of them are leaders and when they do not demonstrate that capacity to lead, when they do not show that exemplary behaviour, when they do not lead by example, Mr. Speaker, the young people of this country lose faith and confidence.

So that when you have male teachers interfering with female students and even impregnating them, you could imagine the crisis you have in leadership in this country. You could imagine the crisis that exists in society at the very fundamental level of education.

**Mr. Sudama:** Where did that happen, in Tobago?

**Hon. M. Assam:** They see people who are supposed to be at work going "liming", drinking in rum shops, or going by the beach with young girls and so forth. But, they only want to attack maxi-taxi drivers. That is the only people they

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said. Without looking at the mote in their eye, they want to pull out the beam in other people's eyes. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, what I am saying is very serious. I am very, very serious.

**Dr. Rowley:** Where is the Prime Minister?

**Hon. M. Assam:** He is entitled to a holiday. One of the terms and conditions of all of us is an annual holiday which we do not take, so he is entitled to take two or three days off.

**Dr. Rowley:** At public expense.

**Hon. M. Assam:** You are jealous. That is what you are. He is entitled to it.

I am very serious, Mr. Speaker. In fact, it is almost a *crie de coeur* this afternoon to you.

**Dr. Rowley:** *Crie de coeur*. The language here is English.

**Hon. M. Assam:** A cry from the heart. A *crie de coeur*, if you do not know French. You never went to school or what? All you did was a Ph.D. in rocks. Mr. Speaker, I speak very seriously here.

When they come with these frivolous motions as if the blame must be on this side, as if this Government is responsible for all the crime and criminal activity in this country, they must be looking at the beam in their eye when they were in office for 31 years and, more recently, for almost four years between 1991—1995, when, by their own condemnation of the Attorney General, by their own condemnation of their Prime Minister and their own condemnation of Senators, people from the other place, they were unable to handle, control and arrest the crime situation in the country.

They come today to lay the blame at our feet when we have an enviable record of putting, in the most holistic fashion, putting systems—judicial systems; economic systems; cultural; social; all the systems; educational, training systems—in place to deal with the fundamental malaise that we have existing in our country.

**Dr. Rowley:** Tea time, Mr. Speaker! Save us!

**Hon. M. Assam:** And you people should come to congratulate us and work together with us in a co-operative fashion on some of the most important issues facing the country. There should be no division. There should be no partisanship when it comes to the fighting of crime in this country. We should have a bi-

partisan approach to dealing with the fundamental issues. [*Desk thumping*] To come here to gallery about crime is a crime in itself. You have committed crime this afternoon by doing that and I want you to include white-collar crime because I want to debate white-collar crime, too. I want to deal with the 34 years that you were in office.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Do it.

**Hon. M. Assam:** So we have to amend this Motion, to include, not only violent crime, but white-collar crime.

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

#### ADJOURNMENT

**The Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs (Hon. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj):** Mr. Speaker, forgive me. I should have mentioned to you that I propose to move a Motion to adjourn the House.

**Mr. Speaker:** You want to do that before the break?

**Hon. R. L. Maharaj:** Before the break.

**Mr. Speaker:** Very well. We would hear the Motion that is being moved first.

**Hon. R. L. Maharaj:** Mr. Speaker, I do apologize. I should have informed you but it was just a short while ago that we spoke.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the House do now adjourn to next week Friday, July 14, 2000, at 1.30 p.m. Mr. Speaker, on the next day, the Government proposes to debate Motion No. 1 which deals with the Elections and Boundaries Commission Order, 2000; Motion No. 2 dealing with the Senate Amendments to the Financial (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill, 2000; Bill No. 9, a Bill entitled an Act to amend the Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago and going with that, Bill No. 10, a Bill entitled an Act to authorise Service Commissions to summarily dismiss or suspend officers who have been convicted of a criminal offence.

May I announce that the Opposition and the Government have agreed that the issue to be discussed on the Adjournment that we defer that—subject to your approval, obviously, Mr. Speaker—to next week Friday, the 14th.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, there was indeed a matter that I had given leave to the Member for La Brea to raise on the Motion for the Adjournment and where both sides of the House have agreed that this should be deferred for one

*Adjournment*  
[MR. SPEAKER]

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week. I am sure that the Member for La Brea himself, being part of that team, would not object.

**Mr. Breaux:** It may end up somewhere else.

**Mr. Speaker:** That, then, would be deferred for one week.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*House adjourned accordingly.*

*Adjourned at 4.34 p.m.*