

Leave of Absence

Friday, August 25, 2000

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, August 25, 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 two Members of this honourable House who have asked to be excused from today's sitting, they are the Member for Arouca South and the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West, who has asked to be excused from today until September 29, 2000. The leave of absence which these two Members seek has been granted.

**WORKING PAPER ON THE REFORM OF
THE MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE OF THE PARLIAMENT
OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO**

Joint Select Committee Report

(Presentation)

The Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs (Hon. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the following report:

Report of the Joint Select Committee on the Working Paper on the Reform of the Management Structure of the Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

**Belmont Local Road, Tobago
(Expenses)**

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

- (a) Would the Minister for Tobago Affairs please tell this House what is the estimated cost of the upgrade and extension of the Belmont Local Road, Tobago project?
- (b) Would the Minister state how much money was appropriated by Parliament for the financing of this project?

- (c) Could the Minister for Tobago Affairs and Minister in the Ministry of Finance state how much money has been released to the Tobago House of Assembly to pay the contractors (Trinidad Contractors Limited) in 1998/1999 and 1999/2000? Could the Minister state how much money remains unreleased?

The Minister for Tobago Affairs and Minister in the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Development (Dr. The Hon. Morgan Job): Mr. Speaker, with respect to the question relating to the financing of a local road called Belmont Local Road, Tobago, an award was made to Trinidad Contractors Limited in the sum of \$31.4 million, VAT inclusive, in October 1998, for the upgrading and extension of the Belmont Local Road, Tobago.

The sum of \$8.6 million was appropriated by Parliament for financing of this project as follows: in 1998/1999, the sum of \$1 million was allocated; 1999/2000, the sum of \$7.6 million was allocated—a total of \$8.6 million.

In response to part (c), the following sums have, indeed, been released: 1998/1999, the allocation was \$1 million, and \$1 million was, in fact, released; 1999/2000, \$7.6 million was allocated and \$7.6 million was, in fact, released. The total allocation has, indeed, been released. That is the complete answer to parts (a), (b), and (c) of the question.

Miss Nicholson: Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. I did not hear an answer. Could the Minister state how much money remains unreleased? I am waiting on that.

Dr. The Hon. M. Job: Mr. Speaker, I do not have, here, any information to say if sums in excess of the \$8.6 million were released. I would not want to hazard. It is plausible that some more money would have been released, or none at all. I want to apologize for not giving that specification as was requested here. As I read part (c) of the question, it says: “how much has been released”. I did answer that. If the Member wants to know how much remains to be released, I think I can subsequently supply that information.

Miss Nicholson: Mr. Speaker, this is important because I want to ask the Minister if he is aware that the company is under financial stress because it has not received the funding that it should have received at this time and, also, that the project was supposed to be completed by July? This is why I am posing my questions.

Dr. The Hon. M. Job: Mr. Speaker, I am aware that when contractors do work for which they are not paid, they would be under financial stress. I did—to

the extent that I am capable at this time—answer parts (a), (b), and (c) of the question. The information that the Member for Tobago West is enquiring of me, I humbly apologize again that I cannot say what balance is there to be released. If a subsequent question is asked I will surely do that.

Miss Nicholson: Mr. Speaker, another supplementary question; could the Minister state, give us the time, when he will answer the second part of (c):

“Could the Minister state how much money remains unreleased?”

Please give us a time frame when that part would be answered?

Dr. The Hon. M. Job: Mr. Speaker, I do not see that as a problem that should require too much investigation. At the next available opportunity—when questions can be answered—I should be prepared to answer that.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, I am just wondering if the Minister could assist me by telling me whether he is familiar with the Belmont Local Road and, if so, if he can give us an idea as to the length of that road?

Dr. The Hon. M. Job: Mr. Speaker, the details concerning infrastructure works done in Tobago are the responsibility of the Tobago House of Assembly. I would not want to, on my feet, take the responsibility to give that kind of detail without enquiring of them what the answer to that question is.

Commission of Inquiry (Advertisement Expenses)

86. Mr. Fitzgerald Hinds (*Laventille East/Morvant*) asked the hon. Prime Minister:

With respect to the advertisements in the media pertaining to the Commission of Inquiry into the Administration of Justice, would the Attorney General state:

- (i) The cost of the services of the manager or firm which handled the advertisement programme;
- (ii) The cost of the advertisements in the newspapers;
- (iii) The cost of the advertisements which were broadcast on the various radio stations; and
- (iv) The cost of the advertisements which were televised.

The Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs (Hon. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj): Mr. Speaker, the answer to the first part of the question is the amount of \$62,129.64 was paid to Valdez and Torry Advertising Limited for

services rendered. The total cost of advertisement in the newspapers was \$150,815.74.

With respect to the third part of the question, the cost of advertisements on the various radio stations amounted to \$99,303.65. The cost of advertisements on television amounted to \$1,978.

**Regional Corporations
(Members' Involvement)**

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

- (a) Could the Minister please indicate whether elected members of the councils of the various Regional Corporations are involved in administration and implementation of the Unemployment Relief Programme?
- (b) If the answer is in the negative, could the Minister state who are the persons so involved?

The Minister of Local Government (Hon. Dhanraj Singh): Mr. Speaker, all elected members of councils of the various regional corporations are indirectly involved in the administration and implementation of the Unemployment Relief Programme (URP).

Cabinet, by Minute No.1765 of July 1998, decided their involvement would be as follows:

- (i) Councillors/local government representatives are responsible for ensuring that policies and regulatory guidelines governing the operation of the URP are observed and, for formulating operational policies, consistent with such policies and regulatory guidelines for improving the efficiency and effectiveness thereof.
- (ii) Councillors/local government representatives are responsible for general overseeing of URP projects/programmes within their districts, through site visits and general observations, to ensure that projects are in conformity with approved programmes.
- (iii) Councillors/local government representatives shall engage in the identification, selection and approval of URP projects within their districts, in the municipality, after due consultation with the Member of Parliament for their constituency in which their respective district falls, as well as with community groups and organizations.

1.40 p.m.

- (iv) Councillors shall ensure that Unemployment Relief Programme projects selected are approved by the council's URP advisory committee and ratified by the council before submission to the Ministry for review and final approval. The Ministry, however, reserves the right to select special projects within the municipal region based on the needs of the area and national policy priorities.
- (v) Councillors/local government representatives shall submit or channel complaints pertaining to URP operations, to the chief executive officer of the Unemployment Relief Programme advisory committee, the council and the mayor of the council.
- (vi) Councillors can access the services of the URP manager to answer questions and provide information at URP advisory committee meetings or other meetings of the council, and may request the presence of other URP management officials through the URP manager or the chief executive officer.
- (vii) Councillors can recommend registered unemployed persons within their districts to the recruitment officer who is solely responsible for selecting and rostering registered unemployed persons for temporary employment in accordance with the laid-down recruitment procedures and guidelines. Councillors must be reminded that recruitment falls under the purview of the recruitment bureau.
- (viii) Councillors are not authorized to issue instructions to URP employees on project sites or in office, but shall direct their observations and concerns pertaining to such employees to the chief executive officer.
- (ix) Councillors shall have the right to scrutinize the list of employees rostered for temporary employment on approved projects within their district. Any discrepancy detected can be reported to the chief executive officer and the URP advisory committee, and it shall be the responsibility of the CEO to correct such discrepancy in conjunction with the recruitment officer.
- (x) Councillors shall not be entitled to any fortnightly or monthly stipend from the URP fund, but can claim reasonable expenses arising from the activities incidental to the work of the council's URP advisory committee approved by the council, and in accordance with the provisions of

section 74 of the Municipal Corporation Act 1990, but limited to a ceiling of \$400 per month. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Narine: All that for sanitation.

Hon. D. Singh: Part (b) of the question is not applicable.

Mr. Hinds: A supplemental question, Mr. Speaker. In light of the long-winded theory read by the Minister, which we all know, is the Minister willing to indicate what he means by “indirectly” and why are they not directly involved?

Hon. D. Singh: These are policies that have been laid down. The councillors manage the corporations and the policies and guidelines of the councils are carried out by the administration.

Mr. Hinds: A further supplemental, Mr. Speaker. Is the Minister aware that notwithstanding all that theory, none of that is actually taking place in any of the regional corporations or councils, as it were?

Hon. D. Singh: Mr. Speaker, that is not true; it is happening in those corporations which have adhered to the guidelines. [*Laughter*]

Unemployment Relief Programme (Labour Costs)

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

Would the Minister indicate the amount of money spent since January 1966 to date, by the San Juan/Laventille Regional Corporation on labour costs in relation to the Unemployment Relief Programme?

The Minister of Local Government (Hon. Dhanraj Singh): Mr. Speaker, in 1996 the San Juan/Laventille Regional Corporation did not have jurisdiction over the Unemployment Relief Programme which at that time was under the Ministry of Works and Transport. However, in March 1998 the administration and management of the URP was transferred to the Ministry of Local Government and decentralized to all municipal corporations, including the San Juan/Laventille Regional Corporation.

The allocation for the management and administration of the URP for the period 1998—2000 are as follows: fiscal year 1998, \$130 million; as we all know that fiscal year was shortened; fiscal year 1998/1999, \$90 million; fiscal year 1999/2000, \$130 million. The San Juan/Laventille Regional Corporation received the largest share of funds allocated to the various corporations for URP projects for

each fiscal year in question. In 1998 it received the revised figure of \$11 million, again because of the shortened financial year. In 1998/1999 it received \$12.5 million, and in the year 2000, so far, it has received \$11.43 million.

This corporation received an average of 17 per cent of the allocation among the municipal corporations. The size of the allocation to this corporation is consistent with the main criteria used for allocation of URP funds, which include the level of unemployment, the level of poverty, social and infrastructural needs and requirements and the number of youths.

During the life of the URP under the Ministry of Local Government, more than 40,000 persons gained employment in the San Juan/Laventille region, and about \$40 million were expended, of which labour costs accounted for the bulk of that money.

Thank you.

Mr. Hinds: Supplemental question, Mr. Speaker. Is the Minister aware that, in fact, the council in the San Juan/Laventille region exercises little or no control over this programme and that, in fact, the administrative arm of the corporation simply signs releases as dictated by the Minister and the Ministry of Local Government?

Hon. D. Singh: Mr. Speaker, the URP programme has been decentralized to all the corporations, and on a monthly basis the allocation from the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Development to the Ministry of Local Government is passed on to the corporation and they manage their affairs.

**DEFINITE URGENT MATTER
(LEAVE)**

**Inter-island Ferry Service
(Absence of)**

Miss Pamela Nicholson (*Tobago West*): Mr. Speaker, in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order 12(1) and (2), I hereby request leave to move the adjournment of the House today in order to discuss a definite matter of urgent public business, to wit, the plight of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, particularly Tobago, who are presently without a sea ferry service between the two islands.

The matter is definite because it refers to a specific and identifiable failure on the part of the authorities to purchase a new boat, to lease two new boats or two

Definite Urgent Matter (Leave)
[MISS NICHOLSON]

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boats to complement the *mf Panorama* in providing an efficient and reliable ferry service between Trinidad and Tobago.

The matter is urgent because the sea ferry service—which is the only commercial access for the transportation of foodstuff, including fruits and vegetables, bulk cargo, for example, hardware and building materials, low income passengers and local tourists, to and from Trinidad—was brought to a total collapse with the breakdown of the *mf Panorama*.

The matter is public as it affects the whole nation, especially low income families, businessmen, tourists, and citizens of Trinidad and Tobago in general, and Tobago in particular. It also creates unnecessary stress and great uncertainty on the population.

Mr. Speaker, this is the third time between July 30, 1999—2000. I raised it on July 30, 1999, November 26, 1999 on the adjournment of the House, and today I am raising it as a matter of urgent public business.

Mr. Speaker, the cutting of the umbilical cord from a sea transportation perspective is very critical, and history has been created; 50,000 people in Tobago are left unattended by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago; no governance at all. This is why I am raising this matter, because I believe that it should be debated here today.

Thank you Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I have considered the terms of the request of the Member for Tobago West. Our Standing Orders provide different mechanisms whereby things could be aired in this House: one of these is by seeking leave to raise a matter on the Motion for the Adjournment, which requires three days' notice; another is to file a Private Member's Motion which would come up no sooner than 12 clear days afterwards; and yet another is to seek to have an emergency debate which sets out very clear guidelines for acceptance.

It does not mean that the matter is not important, but importance in this parliamentary sense goes beyond the normal meaning of importance. So to qualify under this particular Standing Order, it is absolutely necessary that the Member must show that there was no opportunity whatever to give notice before the calamity. I am not satisfied that it qualifies under this Standing Order, and in the circumstances leave is denied.

Hon. Members: Umh, aah!

Mr. Speaker: To those who are "umhing" and "aahing" and behaving like they should not behave in a Parliament, I say to you that leave is not granted in the circumstances.

Dr. Rowley: Poor Tobago!

Mr. Speaker: I believe that the Member for Diego Martin West knows perfectly well that it is completely, completely—[*Interruption*—I said Diego Martin West—that in all Parliaments, regardless of who the Speaker is, he keeps his peace and does not make comments while the Speaker is on his legs and trying to explain a position to the House; it is in bad taste.

Hon. Members, I am simply advising that this is not a matter which qualifies in the circumstances, that there are other methods whereby such a matter could be raised, in addition to which, I am advised that a statement is to be made today under the heading, "Statement by Ministers/Parliamentary Secretaries".

Miss Nicholson: Mr. Speaker, I will like to know, after the matter has been raised twice on the adjournment of the House—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: With the greatest deference, I have not recognized the Member for Tobago West to enter into debate on this, and the Standing Orders will tell you that once I have ruled on it there is no debate or question. You were in my Chambers earlier and I explained the position to you. We do not have to "gallery" on this.

1.55 p.m.

**PARLIAMENTARY PRIVILEGES AND CONTEMPT
(BREACH OF)**

The Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs (Hon. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj): Mr. Speaker, may I first thank you for acceding to my request to raise in accordance with Standing Order 27, the issue of a Breach of Parliamentary Privileges and Contempt.

Mr. Speaker, may I start by quoting the hon. Member for San Fernando East in a similar motion he made to this honourable House on June 23, 1989.

“It is with great regret that I stand here to raise this issue. Regret, because it is not a pleasant task to accuse any Member of this honourable House of a breach of that cherished principle of parliamentary privilege afforded to Members of Parliament under section 55 of the Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago.”

Mr. Speaker: May I advise the hon. Attorney General that the practice in this Parliament of raising issues is that where I give leave, one simply sticks to that

which was sent to me for the purpose of the entire House, and it is not really permissible to go outside of that which was sent. So in fact, one could say everything that was contained in the communication that came to me.

Hon. R. L. Maharaj: I am much obliged, I was merely quoting a few lines, I do not know whether that would be all right.

Miss Nicholson: The Speaker has ruled.

Hon. R. L. Maharaj: Mr. Speaker, in the letter which I sent to you, I referred to statements made by the hon. Member for Diego Martin West to the effect that Members of the Cabinet were corrupt and I specified the passages of the *Hansard* and in particular, I would like to read just one of the passages with your leave which is in the letter, attached to the letter. And I read the one that is attached (b).

It says:

“The basis for this port is some Tobago to Toco Ferry. Nobody in Tobago wants it; nobody in Toco wants it; nobody in Tobago or Toco appreciates it; but that is the grease to have the product created. Do you know who is doing this? The Cabinet. By saying that it is a Tobago to Toco Ferry, the Government is giving the impression that it is a public purpose and, under that category, the Government is now going to proceed to take away people's homes to create this port...the Government is seeking to find a mechanism to acquire their land, then give the land to other private citizens to make money...The chairman of Caroni and the Chairman of the Maintenance, Training and Security Company Limited (MTS) with the Cabinet's support, are prepared to break the law to acquire people's private land for private purpose under the guise of it being for a public purpose, with a Government guarantee. That is supposed to make us all happy, then he tells me I must not talk about corruption and accuse the Government of corruption; we must only talk about mechanisms. We have mechanisms; we have laws and you all are breaking the laws to carry out your corrupt act.” *[Desk thumping]*

Mr. Speaker, it continued:

“...in fact it is an industrial complex they are talking about; the people of Tobago do not want it but that the Government is going to guarantee US \$60 million for it whether they want it or not so as to make two of their friends rich.” *[Desk thumping]*

There was also clapping on that occasion too, Mr. Speaker. It continues:

“What we are talking about is Government taking responsibility for responding and I am saying that not only is the Government not taking

responsibility, the Government itself is breaking the law. That might be hard to swallow, but it is a fact.” *[Desk thumping]*

Mr. Speaker, the accusation of corruption of a Member of Parliament is a serious matter. It is a crime under the Prevention of Corruption Act; persons in public office can lose office and can be disqualified from holding office.

Mr. Speaker, Erskine May in the 22nd Edition on parliamentary privilege defined it as the sum of the peculiar rights enjoyed by each House collectively and by Members of each House individually without which they could not discharge their functions.

On page 65, it goes on to say:

“When any of these rights and immunities is disregarded or attacked, the offence is called a breach of privilege and is punishable under the law of Parliament. Each House also claims the right to punish as contempts actions which, while not breaches of any specific privilege, obstruct or impede it in the performance of its functions, and are offences against its authority or dignity, such as disobedience to its legitimate commands or libels upon itself, its Members or its officers.”

Mr. Speaker, I submit that libel upon a Member would raise the issue of whether there is a contempt of the Parliament to falsely accuse a Member of being corrupt or being involved in criminal activity; obstructs or impedes a Member of Parliament in the performance of his functions; obstructs the House in the performance of its work and can diminish the respect by the public for the Member and for the House and raises the question as to whether a breach of privilege or contempt occurred.

Mr. Speaker, in May’s 22nd Edition on page 112, it recognizes that corruption can amount to a contempt of the Parliament. If a Member of Parliament is corrupt, it amounts to contempt of the Parliament.

Mr. Speaker, the question of this matter is that the Parliament has set up an institution, the Committee of Privileges where there can be investigations to see whether where allegations of corruption are made, they are substantiated. It is in the interest of the House and the public that where corruption allegations are made against Members of Parliament, the Parliament and the public must know if Members are corrupt. If Members of Parliament and Members of Cabinet are corrupt, they are unfit to be in Parliament, they are unfit to hold public office and, therefore, it is essential and it strikes to the root of the Parliament for the Parliament to know if these allegations can be substantiated.

Mr. Speaker, with your leave, I would like to read from a case—
[*Interruption*] Mr. Speaker, can I read from a case?

Hon. Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: Order please!

If it is a case to which you have referred in this letter, you can do it.

Hon. R. L. Maharaj: Mr. Speaker, it is a case which shows unsubstantiated allegations made by a Member against a Minister. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker, I am entitled to 15 minutes to make my presentation. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Order please! The Standing Order does in fact provide that anybody seeking my leave does have 15 minutes in which to make a presentation. Please proceed.

Hon. R. L. Maharaj: Mr. Speaker, it is an Indian case which recorded in 1970 unsubstantiated allegations made by a Member against a Minister. I would not quote the facts of the case, but it is an instance in which there was an allegation made against a Minister that he was corrupt and I would like to read from parts of the case at page 130.

“Speech and action in Parliament are no doubt...”

Mr. Speaker: Is it the Trinidad Parliament?

Hon. R. L. Maharaj: No, in the Indian Parliament. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Order please!

I would simply say that I am put at a disadvantage when there is thrown on me something coming from India without my having the benefit of looking at the relevant laws to see how far things differ there from here because they do in different jurisdictions.

Hon. R. L. Maharaj: Mr. Speaker, I will submit the prints. It says:

Speech and action in Parliament are no doubt unquestioned and free, but freedom cannot be understood to imply an unstrained licence of speech within the walls of the House. Reflections of a libellous character upon Members in the Parliamentary capacity have been held by the House of Commons to be breaches of privileges and contempt amounting to reflections on the House itself.

It is the duty of parliamentarians to make statements which they can support and I submit that in order to maintain the dignity of the House, where on the face of it allegations like these are made, it is important for the House to know and the country to know whether they are true and if a Member says that he has these allegations and the evidence, it is the duty of the Parliament to ensure that the Member produces the evidence in order to show that it is true. If the machinery of Parliament cannot be used for that, then in my respectful submission, the Parliament would be in effect authorizing the making of statements which are libellous and which cannot be supported...[Desk thumping]

Mr. Speaker: Order please!

Hon. R. L. Maharaj: Mr. Speaker, may I in closing say that under Standing Order 27—I know it has been the practice in this Parliament, it has been the practice from the matters I have looked at, that the Speaker under clause 27 would decide whether there is a *prima facie* case. I want to put on record, 27(3):

- “(3) If permission is given by the Speaker under paragraph (2) of this Order, the Member so permitted may raise it any time after question time and move that the matter be referred to the Committee of Privileges.
- (4) No debate shall ensue on a Motion under this Order but if the Speaker decides that a *prima facie* case has been made out he shall so state and refer the matter to the Committee of Privileges.”

Mr. Speaker, under Standing Order 28, it deals with moving the Motion.

I wish to submit that although it is the ruling, if the Speaker finds there is a *prima facie* case, I agree with that, the matter is referred to the Committee of Privileges, but I wish to submit that if a Speaker does not find that the matter is a *prima facie* case made out under the Standing Orders, a Motion has to be moved because the Parliament is not deciding the issue, but it is going to the Committee of Privileges for the issue to be determined.

I thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, on Friday of last week, at 11.20 a.m. I received communication from the hon. Attorney General in which he sought leave under Standing Orders 27(2) and 27(3) to move at the next sitting of the House of Representatives, today, which was that day and I quote:

Parliamentary Privileges and Contempt
[MR. SPEAKER]

Friday, August 25, 2000

“The Honourable Mr. Hector McClean,
Speaker of the House of Representatives,
The Red House,
St. Vincent Street, Port of Spain.

Honourable Speaker,

I seek your leave under Standing Orders 27(2) and 27(3) to move at the next sitting of the House of Representatives today, Friday 18th August 2000, a Motion in terms of the draft attached which, in my view, contain matters directly concerning the privileges of the House of Representatives.”

It went on:

“Members of Parliament who deliberately attempt to mislead the House of Representatives and who make untrue and unjustified imputations of corruption against Members of the House in execution of their duties commit a serious breach of privilege and contempt of Parliament.”

2.10 p.m.

“The contents of the attached motion in my respectful view...”

The letter continued:

“...clearly show that the question as to whether the Member of Diego Martin West committed breaches of privilege and contempt of the House by making unfounded and/or untrue and/or misleading statements and false allegations arises.

It is clear...”

The letter continued:

“...from Erskine May’s Parliamentary Practice, 22nd Edition that, in respect of misleading statements and false allegations these are regarded as a most serious breach of privilege punishable as a contempt of Parliament. (See page 111 May states:

‘The Commons may treat the making of a misleading statement as a contempt. In 1963 the House resolved that in making a statement which contained words which he later admitted not to be true, a former Member had been guilty of a grave contempt.’

The footnote reference is to C.J. (1962—1963) at page 246 which indicates that within a few years such conduct has been held to be a breach of privilege and a contempt of the Parliament.

Yours faithfully,

Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj, M.P., S.C.”

The proposed motion read as follows:

“PROPOSED MOTION BY MEMBER OF COUVA SOUTH TO STATEMENT MADE BY THE MEMBER OF DIEGO MARTIN WEST IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ON THE 28TH JULY 2000.

WHEREAS the Member for Diego Martin West on July 28th 2000 in his contribution in this Honourable House in support of the Private Member’s Motion by the Member for Diego Martin East which Motion stated:

‘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.’

said inter alia that:

(a) ‘Let us take the Toco Ferry Project and look at the Government’s action in that and tell me if one does not see some semblance of criminal activity in there.....Mr. Speaker, there is a law in this country which says that Government can acquire land for a public purpose. Government is not provided with the authority to acquire people’s land for private purposes but you know, this government has provided a guarantee to a handful of people who see great profits to be made by having a port located and built in Toco. Whilst we are not against this kind of development, and we are more so against what, in fact, could be deemed to be naked wrongdoing’.

At page 6 of the 3.35—3.50 p.m. segment of *Hansard* for July 28th.”

It continues:

“(b) ‘The basis for this port is some Tobago to Toco Ferry. Nobody in Tobago wants it; nobody in Toco wants it; nobody in Tobago or Toco appreciates it; but that is the grease to have the product created. Do you know who is doing this? The Cabinet. By saying that it is a Tobago to Toco Ferry, the Government is giving the impression that it is a public purpose and, under that category, the Government is now going to proceed to take away people’s homes and create this port.....the Government is seeking to find a

mechanism to acquire their land, then give the land to other private citizens to make money.....The chairman of Caroni and the Chairman of the Maintenance, Training and Security Company Limited (MTS) with the Cabinet's support, are prepared to break the law to acquire people's private land for private purpose under the guise of it being for a public purpose, with a Government guarantee.

That is supposed to make us all happy, then he tells me I must not talk about corruption and accuse the Government of corruption; we must only talk about mechanisms. We have mechanisms; we have laws and you all are breaking the laws to carry out your corrupt act. (*Desk thumping*)'

At the beginning of the 3.50 p.m. segment of *Hansard* on July 28th 2000."

It continues:

“(c) ‘When the country sees and hears that the people of Toco do not want a Ferry Port in the way that it is being put across to them because, in fact it is an industrial complex they are talking about; the people of Tobago do not want it but that the Government is going to guarantee US \$60 million for it whether they want it or not so as to make two of their friends rich.’

At page 6 of the 3.50 to 4.05 p.m. segment of *Hansard* on July 28th, he stated:

(d) ‘I am at the point of my presentation where I am saying that we are in a position to point to this administration instances of contracts, persons, times and sums where, unlike in his case we have heard about other people being involved in crime. I do not know if there is any law here according to him which would have excluded any Prime Minister from being prosecuted. It does not exist.

What we are talking about is Government taking responsibility for responding and I am saying that not only is the Government not taking responsibility, the Government itself is breaking the law. That might be hard to swallow, but it is a fact.’

At page 1 of the 4.20 p.m.—4.30 p.m. segment of the *Hansard* of July 28th — the Member for Diego Martin West.

(e) ‘You are all prepared to bury their wishes and ambitions to allow three persons to become rich, one of them is well known to us.’

[Page 4 of the 4.20 p.m.—4.30 p.m. segment of the *Hansard* of July 28th — the Member of Diego Martin West]

AND WHEREAS the Member for Couva South in his response in this Honourable House requested the Member for Diego Martin West to produce evidence in support of his allegations of corruption against the Cabinet and the Government.

AND WHEREAS the Member for Diego Martin West has not produced any such evidence in support of his allegations.

AND WHEREAS the Member for Diego Martin West has a duty to produce to the Parliament evidence of corruption of members of this House, if he alleges on the floor of the House that members of the House are corrupt.

AND WHEREAS the question as to whether the Member of Diego Martin West deliberately attempted to mislead the House and whether he made untrue and unjustified imputations of corruption against members in the exercise of their duties, constitute a serious breach of privilege and contempt of the House.

The Member for Couva South requests this Honourable House to agree to refer this matter to the Committee of Privileges as constituted and pursuant to Standing Orders 75(2) and 75(3); such Committee to consider the matters referred to above and to Report to this Honourable House.

BE IT RESOLVED therefore that the question whether the conduct of the Member for Diego Martin West in Parliament on July 28th 2000 in making the statements referred to above constitute contempt and a breach of the powers and privileges of this Honourable House be referred to the Committee of Privileges.”

Hon. Members, I have taken the precaution of reading and rereading not just segments of the contributions of July 28, I have read the entire contribution of the Member for Tobago East which obviously provoked the question of mechanisms—he spoke about mechanisms—and I have read in detail the entire contribution of the Member for Diego Martin West and I have read in detail the entire contribution of the hon. Attorney General, which incidentally is not complete in that he still has eight minutes and he is still on his legs.

I have weighed all that I have read against section 55 of the Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago which reads as follows and which gives to every single Member of Parliament one of the greatest powers that any Member of Parliament would ever possess and it is this:

“Subject to the provisions of this Constitution and to the rules and standing orders regulating the procedure of the Senate and House of

Representatives, there shall be freedom of speech in the Senate and the House of Representatives.”

[*Desk thumping*] Section 55(2) states:

“No civil or criminal proceedings may be instituted against any member of either House for words spoken before, or written in a report to, the House of which he is a member or in which he has a right of audience under section 62 or a committee thereof or any joint committee or meeting of the Senate and House of Representatives or by reason of any matter or thing brought by him therein by petition, bill, resolution, motion or otherwise; or for the publication by or under the authority of either House of any report, paper, votes or proceedings.”

I have, as I said, read and reread the entire contributions made on July 28 and I am satisfied that no *prima facie* case, in the circumstances, exists for referring this matter to the Committee of Privileges. [*Desk thumping*] [*Interruption*] Order please.

In the circumstances, I rule that I will refuse to give my leave which the Standing Orders give me. I have heard the interpretation which was given by the hon. Attorney General to the rights which I think I enjoy. I disagree with him. I think that all Speakers in the past would have disagreed with him in that if one looks at the record one would see that the Standing Orders have always been interpreted in the way in which I am interpreting them.

Indeed, when I see in the Standing Orders under “Privilege Motions”, which this is, that:

“A motion directly concerning the privileges of the House shall take precedence of all other public business.”

One would understand the urgency with which this matter was brought here when I got it at 11.20 on Friday last and I reported to the House that I had it and that it was impossible to deal with it then. On Monday when this House met again, again I pointed out to the House that I was in the process of reading things and that hopefully by the end of the week we would have been able to deal with it. That is 27(1). Under 27(2) it states very clearly:

“Any member desiring to raise a matter under this Standing Order...”

Privilege Motions:

“...shall first obtain leave of the Speaker who shall determine whether the Member is entitled to raise the matter as a question of privilege.”

Indeed he is. The Attorney General is a Member of this House; he feels aggrieved by something and he is entitled to raise it, so indeed he has got leave to raise it. Subsection (3) says:

“If permission is given by the Speaker under paragraph (2) of this Order, the Member so permitted may raise it any time after question time and move that the matter be referred to the Committee of Privileges.”

What the Attorney General has just done is actually to move that it be referred to the Committee of Privileges, as indeed is set out in the letter which I received on Friday of last week which ends up:

“BE IT RESOLVED therefore that the question whether the conduct of the Member for Diego Martin West in Parliament on July 28th 2000 in making the statements referred to above constitute contempt and a breach of the powers and privileges of this Honourable House be referred to the Committee of Privileges.”

The very last paragraph of his letter does, in fact, do exactly that. Then (4) goes on:

“No debate shall ensue on a Motion under this Order but if the Speaker decides that a *prima facie* case has been made out he shall so state and refer the matter to the Committee of Privileges.

(5) If during a sitting of the House a matter suddenly arises...”

This does not apply, and:

“(6) No member moving a Motion under this Standing Order may speak for more than fifteen minutes.”

On the other question to which the hon. Attorney General has referred, which is 28, it is my submission, it is my view, that 28 has nothing to do, absolutely nothing, with Privilege Motions. Privilege motions, those stand by themselves; other motions stand by themselves. So in the circumstances I—[*Interruption*] Order please. In the circumstances, hon. Members, it is my interpretation and view that a *prima facie* case has not been made out and accordingly the matter will not be referred to the Standing Committee. [*Desk thumping*] [*Interruption*]

Order please. [*Interruption*] Order please.

2.25 p.m.

**FERRY SERVICE
(PROBLEMS EXPERIENCED)**

The Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Works and Transport (Mr. Chandresh Sharma): Mr. Speaker, in the other place a few days ago, a statement was made about the efforts of the Port Authority of Trinidad and Tobago to quickly relieve the problems being experienced by travellers using the ferry service between Trinidad and Tobago.

Attempts by this Government to improve communications between Trinidad and Tobago are a matter of public record. On August 15, 2000, Cabinet agreed to a proposal from the Ministry of Works and Transport for the acquisition through a short-term charter of a suitable alternative ferry to the Panorama. We were guided by time constraints and safety needs, the fact that there are no available options locally or regionally, and that we may be able to source an ocean-going ferry from Canada or Europe.

We have already initiated discussions with the Canadian and other governments for assistance in identifying and securing an appropriate vessel. We have established a timetable for expediting this process including the engagement of a broker to identify and shortlist possible choices. By September 10, we hope to have the shortlist completed and by October 9, to identify, examine and charter a vessel. By October 23, we expect to have the ferry boat here in Trinidad.

Mr. Speaker, regarding the *mf Panorama*, I wish to advise hon. Members of the following:

1. An engineering specialist from the company that manufactured the propeller of the Panorama inspected the damage and supervised repairs to the vessel. The repairs were completed only yesterday, August 24—in fact, the Panorama has gone to Tobago and has returned as well, so it is already in service, servicing both islands—a full day in advance of the projected period. The vessel was then subject to a rigid test of seaworthiness. No problems were detected. On that basis, the Panorama resumed regular operations and sailed to Tobago.
2. Yesterday, August 24, 2000, a barge transported cargo between the ports of Port of Spain and Scarborough. All necessary parties were advised and the barge arrived and was off-loaded.

3. A representative of the Port Authority has proceeded to Venezuela to investigate the possibility of a short-term passenger/cargo ferry charter. While there is some optimism, no commitment will be made until careful investigations are conducted.

Mr. Speaker, we have gone to great lengths to ensure that we find a replacement for the Panorama and to deal with the unexpected problem of the propeller. I want to commend the crew of the Panorama and the management of the Port Authority for continuing to provide a service in spite of the problems. They recognize, as we do, the vital role of the Panorama, and the ferry service in general, in maintain the link between Trinidad and Tobago.

The matter of another vessel is one that continues to occupy our attention. We are resolved to proceed with this and with the establishment of another port as priorities. I thank this honourable House and will continue to provide further information concerning the ferry service between Trinidad and Tobago.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**CRIME
(HIGH INCIDENCE)**

[Third Day]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question [July 7, 2000]:

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.

Question again proposed.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the hon. Attorney General was, in fact, speaking when this matter was adjourned and he has some 8 minutes left of speaking time. I call upon the Attorney General.

Hon. R. L. Maharaj: Mr. Speaker, on the last occasion when we were debating this issue, I was making the point that the Opposition had filed this Motion, “Be It Resolved that this honourable House condemn the Government for the failure to deal effectively with the high incidence of criminal activity and crime, especially violent crime in Trinidad and Tobago”, but the Opposition did not produce any evidence to show that the Government has not dealt with this problem.

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One will recall that when the adjournment was taken, I had shown the state of the police service prior to November 1995 in respect of the vehicular fleet, radio communications, community policing, accommodation and that the action taken by the Government with respect to the vehicle fleet showed that the vehicle fleet of the police service was increased; there was the E999 system which was introduced by this administration; there was, in effect, greatly enhanced community policing; the accommodations in respect of the police service had improved.

I had also, Mr. Speaker, shown that the manpower of the police service had also increased, although the Member for Diego Martin West, as usual, had made the false statement that the manpower had not increased. I had shown under training that there was, in effect, a very aggressive training programme and that within the police service, there was not only enhanced local training, but also foreign training, and I had indicated that an estimated 200 police officers received training abroad over the past four years in areas such as collection and preservation of crime scene evidence, information technology, law enforcement, money laundering, illicit traffic in firearms, narcotics investigations, and so forth.

Mr. Speaker, I had made the point that instead of dealing with the issue, the hon. Member for Diego Martin West had made allegations of corruption against the Government and I had called on the hon. Member for Diego Martin West to produce any evidence that he has to this House. He had not taken any steps at that time to produce it.

I subsequently wrote him a letter dated July 29, 2000 which was delivered by hand to him. The letter was to the following effect:

“Re: Action taken by the Attorney General to deal with allegations of corruption against members of the Government by Opposition Member of Parliament, Dr. Keith Rowley.

This is an open letter to you.

You said in the House of Representatives yesterday afternoon, that you have in your possession evidence to prove that some members of the Government are corrupt. In my response to you in the House of Representatives, I stated that if you have such evidence you have a duty to supply that evidence to the police or to the Director of Public Prosecutions.

In my response, I also said that you have the option to file a private indictable information and even get the High Court to grant an order of Mandamus

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(Command) directing the police or Director of Public Prosecutions to consider your evidence, if you believe that no action is being taken by either the police or the Director of Public Prosecutions on the evidence which you allege to have.”

I also indicated to him in the letter, Mr. Speaker, because I want to show that he has not produced any such evidence! [*Desk thumping*]

What he did was use a serious issue of a crime motion, when he knows he does not have any evidence of corruption, because if he had evidence of corruption, he had a duty to produce it, give it to the police, get somebody locked up, if they committed acts of corruption, but he has not done it. What he has done is come here with “mauvais langue”, with the muckracking campaign that they intend to institute in Trinidad and Tobago to divert people's attention from the issues, and the issue in this motion was crime.

Did Government do anything to redress the crime problem? The evidence so far showed, from what I gave of the steps that were being taken—and I will give more this afternoon. The Opposition is barren. They came here and they got up, and he is supposed to be one of the leading members of the Opposition. He is aspiring to be the leader. As a matter of fact, I would have thought that he would have come to this honourable House and instead of making all these allegations of corruption which—he is a coward—he cannot produce, he is hiding behind parliamentary privilege and he cannot produce. [*Interruption*]

Dr. Rowley: The Speaker has ruled!

Miss Nicholson: The Speaker has ruled!

Hon. R. L. Maharaj: Not on that!

Mr. Speaker: May I appeal to the Member for Tobago West and the Member for Diego Martin West that this is not the way to conduct the proceedings of this House. The hon. Attorney General is entitled to make his presentation, and whether or not you agree with what he is saying, your business is to sit down and listen to it. There are some people who cannot take it and they go out the Chamber, but it is your business, the business of Members of the House, whether or not they agree with what he is saying, whether or not they like what he is saying, to keep their peace.

Please continue.

Hon. R. L. Maharaj: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The point I was making is that the honourable Member for Diego Martin West, in his contribution to this

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debate, made this a very important issue, and I am saying that he lacks credibility because he did not have any evidence, he does not have any evidence, and he cannot produce any evidence.

In my letter to him, I told him:

“I am sure you would also agree that a Member of Parliament would be failing in his/her parliamentary duty to his constituents, to the Parliament and to the country if he/she does not disclose this evidence. If a member of the House of Representatives does not have such evidence but makes serious allegations...without any basis...”

There are serious consequences. Mr. Speaker, I called upon him to do his duty. I told him:

“If you have evidence that a Member of Parliament, whether Minister or not, has been corrupt, you should make that evidence available to:

[1] the Commissioner of Police and /or;”

Which I understand he has not done.

“[2] the Director of Public Prosecutions and/or;”

Which I understand he has not done.

“[3] the holder of the Office of Attorney General.”

Which he has not done, and he has not produced it in Parliament. He should come here and he should say that he has no alternative plan for crime.

Mr. Speaker, what is the function of an opposition? The function of the Opposition, Mr. Speaker, is to be like an alternative government, and if they come in respect of a Motion for crime, they should come and say what alternative programme they have in order to deal with the crime problem. *[Member asks to give way]* Mr. Speaker, they had their time. The hon. Member for San Fernando East spoke, the hon. Member for Diego Martin West spoke, and I would like to use my time. I have a lot of matters to cover and I would like to use my time.

Mr. Speaker: Order! It is quite obvious that the hon. Attorney General was not giving way. From the time it becomes obvious that that is so, you must take your seat.

Mr. Manning: I was just about to do so, Mr. Speaker. *[Laughter]*

Hon. R. L. Maharaj: Mr. Speaker, let me continue to show that they do not know what is happening in Trinidad and Tobago. They do not have an idea. On an important issue like crime, they do not have the facts. I said I was going to deal with other anti-crime measures taken by the Government.

Mr. Speaker, I will now speak about the police youth club programme. These youth clubs existed prior to 1995, and the administration now has put this under the community policing. It provides an avenue for young people to spend their spare time in constructive endeavours rather than becoming engaged in drug-related activities, gangs and other criminal and delinquent behaviour.

One sees that the Government has a holistic approach. Here it is that these youth clubs are being used to serve as a medium for interaction between the police and the young people of our nation. The main objective is to inculcate among the youth, discipline and moral values in an attempt to ensure that they become law-abiding citizens in the future. There are now 73 such clubs throughout Trinidad and Tobago in areas which include Arima, Chaguanas, Caroni, Iere Village and in Moriah in Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, there was also the Crime Stoppers Programme. I am not going to talk about allegations against the Opposition. I am not going to do that. I am going to talk about what the Government is doing about crime. [*Desk thumping*] That is what this Motion is about.

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Hon. R. L. Maharaj: Mr. Speaker, may I thank hon. Members who voted for and against. [*Laughter*] The Crime Stoppers Programme is yet another initiative to which the Government committed its wholehearted support. It was funded by the private sector. The Crime Stoppers Programme was also supported by the police service, and this programme was launched in May 1999. It involves a partnership between the community and the police, and allows citizens with information on crime to interact anonymously with the police.

This has been very successful. It is something that is new in Trinidad and Tobago, and this is something which the Opposition did not talk about. Obviously they do not know about it. If they came here with a Motion on crime, I would

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have thought that they would have been able to show how these programmes are not working, if they are not working, but they come here and say we do not have a holistic approach and give no facts to support it.

2.40 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, the law enforcement initiative. There was, under this administration, the establishment of a Multi-Agency Counter Crime Drug Task Force in 1998, to focus on the prosecution of major drug traffickers and the implementation of provisions relating to money laundering, asset forfeiture and confiscation. This initiative has been held to be a model for the Caribbean and for the world. [*Desk thumping*]

As a matter of fact, a few months ago, there was a conference in Trinidad and Tobago which was attended by Ministers of Justice and law enforcement officers from throughout the region and even from Europe, America and Canada and this initiative was hailed. As a matter of fact, it has been decided that Caribbean countries should follow this model in the fight against money laundering and drug trafficking.

Hon. Members would recall that the Attorney General of the United States said that Trinidad and Tobago was taking the leadership role in the region and in the world in the fight against money laundering and drug trafficking. Yet, they come here: On what basis? They come to talk about ferry in Tobago.

Miss Nicholson: That is very important.

Dr. Rowley: Is that not important?

Hon. R. L. Maharaj: On a Motion on crime, talking about the Tobago/Toco ferry and all sorts of things. I am not saying that the Tobago/Toco ferry is not important, but on a Motion on crime filed by the Opposition, to say that the Government is not dealing with the issue of crime, they come to talk about all other matters and they offered no alternative.

Establishment of a Joint Operations Command Centre in 1997 to manage and co-ordinate marine and aerial assets used in counter drug operations supported by a countrywide radar system. As a matter of fact, this is the only country in the region which has been able to do this where there is a radar system which can monitor the entire coastline of Trinidad and Tobago. Yet, they come here to say the Government is not doing anything about crime.

If you have to do things about crime, you have to fight drug trafficking because drugs are responsible for the majority of crime and these are initiatives

which are recognized and which have been done under this administration, yet they come and are boldfaced to say we are not doing anything about crime.

Reform of the Customs and Excise Division. With a view to strengthening enforcement capabilities, a marine interdiction unit and a fully equipped canine unit have both led to successes from 1998 onwards. Mr. Speaker, how we are doing it is not how the PNM did it, *ad hoc*, with no plan and no structure, *vaille que vaille*. Here it is we are looking at all areas and we have taken steps with the Customs and Excise Division, which is an important area that one has to restructure and put structures in place in order to deal with the drug situation and international organized crime. We have done it. They did not do it. They slept and did not do it, yet they say we are not doing anything about crime.

Also, inclusion of a Law Enforcement Action Plan, operation LEAP, as a campaign against street distribution outlets of drugs. Implementation of the second phase of the European Union sponsored demand reduction programme comprising community-based projects aimed at reducing levels of substance abuse. Development of the National Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention Programme (NADAPP) to undertake the following:

- Improving public education and information to increase participation in community prevention activity and reduce involvement in drug use and related activities;
- Promoting school prevention education to develop a sustainable drug prevention module integrated into the primary and secondary curriculum;
- Train teachers;
- Develop healthy lifestyle activities; and
- Adopt drug policy guidelines.

All the infrastructure being developed in order to put the mechanisms in place in order to deal with the problem, yet the Opposition is saying we are not doing anything.

Promoting and enhancing treatment and rehabilitation services, including programmes for addicts identified through the criminal justice system.

We are taking steps to implement a programme which has been very successful in other parts of the world in which we are going to use a drug court concept where persons who are in possession of drugs, not traffickers, would have the option of being able to elect to be rehabilitated and the rehabilitation

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programme would be monitored by the courts and experts. The rehabilitation programme would be over a period of time and when the experts say that the persons can be released, the persons who are charged would not have to face trial but would be able to be released and be integrated into our society.

That is the concept on which we are working and which other countries have used in order to try to make a distinction between people who are users and people who are traffickers. Therefore, people who are users who have medical and other problems, ways and means must be found in order to help them get rid of those problems.

The Ministry of National Security and the Ministry of Social and Community Development have been involved in facilitating the development of community prevention programmes to provide healthy alternatives for the population and to reduce those factors that lead to drug abuse. As a matter of fact, the programme at Piparo on the lands of Dole Chadee which he occupied under the last administration—state lands where he built a house and everything; he occupied it—that has now come to the people of Trinidad and Tobago and is being used by the Ministry of Social and Community Development in order to rehabilitate people. But, here it is they are saying we did nothing about violent crime.

Mr. Speaker, encouraging and facilitating the development of employee assistance programmes geared toward health promotion, early intervention and treatment and rehabilitation of individuals, in both the public and private sectors; strengthening research to provide reliable information for policy and administrative decision-making; to ensure the efficient and effective development and the conduct of programmes and projects. Fostering and promoting regional and international co-operation in order to avoid duplication, share valuable information and intelligence and tap all available expertise and resources.

Mr. Speaker, some of the other matters I would not go into details about. I would go into some other matters, including the marijuana eradication exercises; the joint Trinidad and Tobago Police Service/Regiment foot patrols; intensified highway patrols; establishment of a standing committee on crime, *inter alia*, to formulate proposals for the reduction of crime and to allocate responsibility for the implementation of those proposals; launch of a drug abuse resistance education programme for young adults—this programme establishes the mutual commitment of police and the school personnel to provide children with the knowledge, attitude and skills necessary to resist pressures to experiment with drugs and alcohol or to participate in violent gang activity. Yet, the Opposition is saying, the Government is not doing anything about crime.

Mr. Speaker, one just has to look at this evidence and show that they do not know the difference between what is happening and what is not happening. They do not know whether something is happening or something is not happening and the reason for that is that they are so consumed with their own political problems that they are not concerned with what is happening in the outer society. How could you explain that all these things are happening around them and they are saying nothing is happening. It is either they are blind, they are deaf, they are so consumed with their problems, or they are not concerned with the people's problems. How could they say?

Mr. Speaker, I want to deal with prison welfare and rehabilitation. Stemming the incidents of criminal activity in Trinidad and Tobago is not only a matter for the police service but it also involves the prison service. The Government's attention was, therefore, also focussed and, in particular, the attention of the Ministry of National Security, on the rehabilitation of inmates in order to see whether they can be reformed and be reintegrated into society. To redirect the lives and the purpose of inmates, they were exposed, at Golden Grove, to vocational, technical and academic training.

Inmates have been taught tailoring, pottery, tyre repairs, electrical, art and craft, carpentry, plumbing, welding, fabricating, upholstery, automechanics, food preparation, agriculture and construction. They were also offered literacy programmes and were able to access CXC, O'levels, school leaving, library, Servol and the Youth Training Employment Partnership Programme (YTEPP). Every effort has been made during their incarceration to involve them in social and cultural activities, including calypso, carnival, parang, chutney—

Mr. Hinds: First time.

Hon. R. L. Maharaj:—as well as in religious and spiritual counselling and services. Welfare and education needs were also addressed through lectures, films, workshops, family visits and life skills.

Here it is that the plan to deal with crime was not only directed to interdiction, to prosecution, to imprisonment, but it is also being directed to the welfare and rehabilitation of the inmates. Inmates were also assisted in the day-to-day operation of the prison through their participation in food, laundry, sanitation and tuck shop services.

Finally, medical, dental, psychological and psychiatric services, including evaluation, assessment and counselling were also made available to them through the prison system.

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How can it be reasonable for the Opposition to say, in a serious Motion like this and, instead of talking about crime, they talked about all kinds of things which they cannot support, that the Government is not doing anything about the crime problem. They have not been able to offer any alternative plan.

I promised on the last occasion to deal with some of the matters which occurred in Tobago. In dealing with the matter in Tobago, I do not think that anybody here can, in effect, say they do not sympathize with the people of Tobago in their recent difficulties, but from the hon. Member for Fyzabad, the Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Works and Transport, one heard him make a statement to this House and one sees that action has been taken to redress the problem. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, in respect of Tobago, the Government supported the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service in addressing the crime situation in Tobago.

Miss Nicholson: You all are shameless and dishonest.

Hon. R. L. Maharaj: Some of the things that the Government did through the Ministry of National Security are as follows:

A divisional task force was established to complement the divisional CID to launch a major offensive against the spate of serious and minor crimes in Tobago.

Initially, this task force was situated at Old Grange Police Station where the positive effect of the offensive against crime was felt, this area being in a prime tourist resort location. The task force has since been relocated to the Scarborough Divisional Headquarters so that the success achieved at the old location could be extended to the Scarborough district as well.

An increase in both foot and mobile patrols throughout the island is another strategy which has been used in addressing the crime situation. Joint army/police mobile patrols were introduced to operate mainly in the Roxborough Police Station district in the area of Argyle Waterfall and the rain forest at Bloody Bay where tourists are often the victims of robbery. These have been extended to include Castara, Englishman's Bay and other areas frequently visited by tourists. The patrols operate from 8.00 a.m. to 6.00 p.m. daily and have been quite successful in reducing the number of attacks against tourists.

2.55 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, the introduction of the E999 Rapid Response Unit in the Tobago Division has resulted in the police being able to respond more quickly to reports

of crime. In addition, the presence of these patrols in the area also acts as a deterrent to crime. The E999 patrols now service Crown Point, Scarborough and Moriah police station districts. However, efforts are being made to extend this service throughout the entire island. The initiatives to address the crimes in Tobago are particularly important in light of the development plans for Tobago; which place a great deal of emphasis on Tobago as a tourist resort.

During the period October 1996 to September 1998 there were 22 reported cases of robberies against tourists in the Argyle Waterfalls, Bloody Bay and rain forest areas, with investigations resulting in two detentions. However, with the introduction of the joint army patrol in October 1998, the total number of reported cases of robbery against tourists in those areas was reduced to six. Mr. Speaker, one sees that the plans are working.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to manpower for the years 2000 and beyond—you would recall, in my contribution, I dealt with these headings when I said what happened before 1995 and I showed what has happened between 1995 to now. To cater for the expanded services to the community, through the construction of seven new police posts—enhancing the E999 Rapid Response capability, expanded community policing and re-establishing, on a firm footing, the highway patrol and the Praedial Larceny Squad—the strength of the police service would be further increased to 6,716 in 2000, and 7,266 at the end of May 2002.

The increased strength includes the absorption of 969 Special Reserve Police (SRP) as regular policemen: a decision which reflects this Government's concern about the unfair employment practices and the great injustice which was being done to SRPs as well as Government's concern and resolve in dealing with and reducing the crime situation.

Training will continue to be a critical area in view of the important organizational changes which are being engendered by technology. Priority areas will include bound disposal techniques, information technology, project management, narcotics investigation and intelligence gathering and analysis, money laundering, drug enforcement, firearms training, computer training and forensic training. Emphasis will also be placed on local training of officers through the establishment of officers' training schools.

With respect to accommodation beyond 2000, police accommodation will be improved through the construction, reconstruction and upgrading of facilities. New police stations are earmarked for construction at Gasparillo, Mayaro, Roxborough, Matura, Brasso, Besson Street, Matelot, Manzanilla, Piarco,

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Oropouche and Old Grange, Tobago. Major refurbishment works will also be carried out on 17 police stations by the National Maintenance, Training and Security Company Limited. These stations are Couva, Morvant, Point Fortin, St. Margaret, Moriah, Biche, West End, Belmont, Tableland, Santa Flora, Caroni, Charlotteville, Fyzabad, Crown Point, Penal, Chaguaramas and Arima. Mr. Speaker, plans.

Mr. Speaker, restoration of the San Fernando Police Station Phase II and the re-construction of the Police Headquarters at St. Vincent Street would also be completed during the years 2001—2003.

With respect to maintenance management, recognizing that the present arrangement for the maintenance of buildings and equipment is outmoded and needs to be revamped and a more appropriate system put in place if we are to preserve our capital stock, the Ministry of National Security has recruited a facilities manager to ensure that buildings and equipment are continually maintained at an acceptable level. This unit, it is to be noted, must be headed by a professionally-trained facilities manager with a degree in either mechanical, electrical or civil engineering, or any other combination of training and experience.

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

The facilities manager will play a vital role, not only in preventative maintenance but in transforming many of the dilapidated structures in the police service into safe working units. His/her employment will serve to replace the former *ad hoc* piecemeal, maintenance arrangement, with programmes that are planned, co-ordinated and cost-effective—technology, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Implementation of Phase III of the E999 Rapid Response System and communication platform will commence shortly. This project will bring tremendous value to the Ministry of National Security and to the people of Trinidad and Tobago; not only in the fight against crime and drugs but also in the many technological opportunities that would be afforded other government ministries, departments and agencies through the point-to-multi-point-system.

Some of the elements required for completion of the project are:

- (i) point-to-multi-point broad-band, wireless network for voice, data, and full motion video services;
- (ii) computer-aided dispatching for police service; and

- (iii) automatic vehicle location.

Two features of the Phase III System have important implications for the transformation of the police service into an effective law enforcement agency. These are: the computer-aided dispatch system, and the automatic vehicle location known as "AVL". The AVL system is part of a global positioning system used to identify the position, location and direction of selected vehicles. It is a very effective managerial tool for vehicle fleet co-ordination and will be used to monitor and ensure police patrol vehicles comply with patrol instructors and remain in their designated positions. This real-time management system, once properly implemented with dedicated and responsible personnel, will provide, among other things, the following:

- (i) improved operational efficiency;
- (ii) reduced response time;
- (iii) reduced operational cost;
- (iv) enhanced officers' and vehicle safety; and
- (v) improved vehicle co-ordination.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the computer-aided dispatch system is an information database; containing important data relevant to policing, emergencies and reports and other statistics. It may also be configured for information interchange with other databases; such as the criminal investigation department, criminal records office, licensing office and other databases that are useful to the police in their effort to fight crime and drugs. When interconnected to the AVL System, information is provided with respect to the location of response vehicles and their availability status; thereby allowing the dispatcher to route a police fighter vehicle nearest to the location of the caller. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the use of technology in the fight against crime. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this monitoring mechanism, with its capability to bring to bear all available resources and information on the emergency on hand, will exemplify the highest use of technology in bringing efficiencies to the many areas in the police fleet management operation. There it is, they sat down, and did nothing, and their argument is that the Government is responsible for every murder that takes place. If that is the case, they are responsible for the murder of the Commissioner of Prisons and all the murders that Dole Chadee committed. They are responsible if that is the logic.

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The point-to-multi-point network greatly enhances the application of the system to provide voice, telephone, fax, data communications, full motion video and even teleconferencing. This communication platform provides information interchange between any intended points or addresses. Its implementation will bring about reduced operational and usage costs for telephones, computers and fax machines. Its special applications include: distance learning, telemedicine; school security, monitoring and hookup with E999; Ministry of Health network to link hospitals, health centres, medical supplies; video monitoring of major highway intersection; networking computers of the Ministry of National Security and the public service—but they say we are not doing anything; Ministry of Information, daily updates; secure drug interdiction communication. They are sleeping, they do not prepare any work to come here. They are sleeping, they do not know what is going on.

It is to be noted that Phase III will bring the Defence Force and all the protective services into a single network; with the capability to work independently or in collaboration with each other in a secure environment.

3.05 p.m.

The system capability will also allow for other government agencies such as the Immigration Division, the Customs and Excise Division, the National Emergency Management Agency, the Strategic Services Division, Joint Operation Command Centre, the Office of the Prime Minister, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health, to utilize the system during emergencies, routine daily activities and functions.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the crime management capability of the police service will be enhanced through the installation of an automatic fingerprinting identification system, including mugshots. This new technology which combines fingerprints, image management with automatic fingerprint recognition will permit the fast processing of matching fingerprints within minutes, in comparison to the current manual systems which might take from one day to two years.

Police computer systems: the computer system of the police service will be further developed through acquisition of human resource geographic information systems, software applications and linkage to the E999 systems, which is in the process of being done.

Through lease and maintenance arrangements in respect of transport with selected financial agencies, the Ministry of National Security will acquire over the

next few weeks over 200 vehicles and 25 motorcycles. [*Desk thumping*] Some of these vehicles will be allocated to stations, but most of them will be dedicated for use in particular divisions of the police service, namely the E999 Highway Patrol and the Praedial Larceny Squad. Acquisition of these vehicles and motorcycles will include bumper to bumper warranties.

The Ministry of National Security will also, during the period 2000—2003, implement the recommendations of the Jearlean John report on the investigation into the system of vehicle maintenance in the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the following recommendations will be implemented as a matter of urgency: the siting of full-service garages in Port of Spain, San Fernando and Tobago, with satellite garages in Sangre Grande, Couva, Siparia and Tunapuna. The full-service garages will be responsible for all major components and systems repair, service and overhaul, major body works, upholstery, machine shop work, plant maintenance service and fuel injection services.

The satellite garages will be charged with minor activities, that is, first-line operations, fuelling, cleaning, checks, battery, lights, belt, water, *et cetera*, minor repairs and adjustments, change bulbs, tyres, pressure and so forth. Secondly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the relocation of the St. James police garage to the now non-functioning Public Transport Service Corporation. This garage is an excellent facility, well sited with access from the Priority Bus Route. The San Fernando and Tobago garages will be extended and upgraded to function as full-service garages.

It is quite clear from what I have stated that under this Government the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service has been modernized through institutional strengthening, and that process is continuing. Every effort has been made over the past four years to provide the police service with its manpower requirements, training, technology, suitable accommodation and a mobile fleet of vehicles. Effort is being made through programmes such as community policing to transform the police service and make it more relevant and dynamic in its operation. So, Mr. Speaker, I would say that there is really no basis for this Motion. The Opposition's Motion is frivolous, is vexatious and is an abuse of the parliamentary process.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Fitzgerald Hinds (*Laventille East/Morvant*): Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I rise to make my contribution to this very important issue, this important debate, I felt rather sad when I listened to the contribution of the Attorney General. I came

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to the conclusion that he must be living somewhere else; he must be in “Cloud-cuckoo-land”, because one only must speak to the average citizen in this country and one would understand that notwithstanding all his boasts about what his Government has done—he did not tell us about what it has failed to do— notwithstanding that long and watery presentation with statistics and all of that, the reality is if you went to the Barataria Police Station now, they have one or no vehicle. [*Desk thumping*]

The reality is, if rain falls now the charge room and the cells at the Barataria Police Station are flooded. The reality is that I have a client who suffered a serious injury because a light fitting in the police station collapsed on the poor man while he was on duty. The reality is that if you call any station in this country you are unlikely to get quick police response right now. Police officers complained to me about vehicles up to yesterday.

I regret saying this because I am aware that the statements we make in this Parliament, particularly those coming from the Government, can influence in one way or another those who have criminal intentions in our society, but I am obliged to say that the very Port of Spain CID, a stone's throw away from here, at the corner of Duke and St. Vincent Streets, is struggling for vehicles to this day. When Assistant Commissioner Mathews, only a month or so ago, told us that the police need several vehicles—I do not want to call figures, I do not remember off the top of my head, but the police service is under pressure for vehicles.

I know the reality on the ground. I know that this Government bought Cherokee jeeps only because they bought mobile systems, telecommunication systems that could only work in those jeeps. The jeeps were peripheral to the Government's main intention, which was a window of opportunity for its friends; that is the reality. I had the displeasure of having a young woman come to my office and tell me that she was raped and was afraid to report it because she had to go back to live in the very environment and see the bandits and criminals still at large.

I know of the fact that Clint Huggins, a man who we took trouble to protect in the interest of the state, walked out of his safe care and died while the UNC was in office. I know to this day that we still do not have an explanation as to who killed Selwyn Richardson and why. I know to this day—with all the vehicles the Attorney General talks about, all the mobile systems, the radar and all that—we still have not been able to get answers about the death of Hansraj Sumairsingh. Maybe it is too close; maybe it is under our noses. I felt ashamed today in this Parliament, and I feel sick.

Then I heard the Attorney General crying crocodile tears and he talked about sympathizing with the people of Tobago. You could fool Tobago?

Miss Nicholson: Not at all, they are totally angry!

Mr. F. Hinds: When this Government led by the chairman of the Cabinet, the Prime Minister of this country, struck down a deal that cost this country, the managers at the port negotiated a ferry and they reneged from the Contract—a Cabinet decision; it cost us \$24 million, and still no boat; and you come to cry crocodile tears in this Parliament today! Get thee hence—[*Desk thumping*—in the words of the Scriptures! What are you saying?

I know as a fact, and I said so here, it saddens me that on every street corner in this country you could get cocaine \$2.00 and \$3.00, all over this place. We have maxi-taxi touts, now there are cocaine touts; anywhere in this country fellows stopping you in the road, I am told, and asking if you want cocaine; and you are talking foolishness about what you are doing for crime!

Mr. Sudama: Were you stopped?

Mr. F. Hinds: I have always said and I maintain even at this late stage, that you cannot blame the Government for crime. In some ways crime is a personal and individual thing, a decision taken by an individual to act in a certain manner, and we have trouble with crime because what we may call crime, the law does not call a crime. There are some—well, we will come to that. I want to say that the Attorney General has done himself, his profession, the law, the Constitution, the Standing Orders and his private practice, when he returns to that very shortly, a great disservice. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Bereaux: You will have to take on a different name, Spencer Morgan.

Mr. F. Hinds: I was really amazed that he would subject himself to the scrutiny of a well-read Speaker today, who pounded him on his fingers, tapped him on his head and dispatched him from before his face, just as he was treated time and time again in our courts, when he boasted and assumed the mantle of some human rights and constitutional expert! Expert what!

That is a crime! [*Interruption*]

Mr. Maharaj: You did not prepare nothing!

Mr. Bereaux: You do not have a double negative. Where did you learn your English?

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Mr. F. Hinds: The Attorney General in the course of his contribution called on the Member for Diego Martin West, the Member for Diego Martin East and others—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Bereaux: You cannot speak the language.

Mr. F. Hinds: He called on the PNM to provide proof of corruption. For the last 15 years he has been accusing the PNM of corruption every morning, every day. Has he ever gone to the police about it? [*Crosstalk*] The Attorney General, the very man who was talking hard and fast a while ago, told his Cabinet, as legal advisor, that the airport contract was illegal. [*Desk thumping*] Mr. Panday, his Chairman, his Prime Minister, his guru, dismissed him and his legal opinion, and they went ahead with the contract as illegal as he told them it was—[*Desk thumping*—spent over \$1 billion, \$1.2 billion—

Miss Nicholson: "And cyar buy Tobago a boat!"

Mr. Hinds: —wanting to open it prematurely like an abortion, just for immediate gratification, to get some political mileage for a new terminal, as it were.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when the Member for Diego Martin East, as I recalled, asked the very Attorney General to reveal the contents of the advice he gave to the Cabinet that the airport contract was illegal, he got up in this House and said that it was privileged information and he would not tell us. He would not give it.

When I said he is a disservice to his office, a disservice to his profession and a disservice to law, I know what I am saying, because the question of privilege applies in a relationship between attorney and client. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: You are not responding to the debate.

Mr. F. Hinds: I am obliged. I am grateful. That is white-collar crime. [*Crosstalk*] Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Attorney General spoke at length about the police canine unit, Operation LEAP, radar systems, boats and planes. He has embraced wholeheartedly the approach of trying to interdict drugs as they come into this country, interdiction, without stopping for a moment to contemplate the failings of that approach in its exclusivity. Every Monday he comes here, when he is not trying to arrange or rearrange the Constitution of this country, it is more and more legislation. He is legalistic; that is all he does, and "is guns ever more" on the streets of this country.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if the Attorney General does not know, I want to tell him two things. I told him here before and I want to repeat: I was taken on a walk, as a Member of Parliament, through his own constituency, Couva South, a few months ago, and the persons therein pointed out to me, it was very close, under his nose, a house well fenced, barbed wire and everything, where drugs are being sold on a daily basis right under his nose; he pretends.

3.20 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I also want to tell the Attorney General and every person who has been the victim of a robbery over the last five years—and there are many. Some of these bandits walk into people's houses, assume control for as long as four hours and rape, bugger and steal. That is happening today in our society; sadly but truly it is happening and they will tell you there are guns aplenty in the society. We do not manufacture guns in this country, but yet anywhere you turn in this country, there are many young “fellas” who walk around with guns and that is real.

I was at Police Headquarters doing my legal business just recently and I saw the arms the police had seized some months ago. It ran chills up my spine because I am a man who had exposure to firearms, being a police instructor myself. I have had expert training in that, but when I saw the hardware, when I saw the equipment and I know that we do not produce guns in this country—*[Interruption]* You are talking about planes and boats, you must be living in “Cloud-cuckoo-land.” *[Crosstalk]* We will come to that. I am not going to get into any shouting match you know, because I am deadly serious about what we are speaking of here today. I know people are suffering in this country and I know there is one crime that was committed in this country, and that was to allow the UNC to assume government in 1995. That is a crime. *[Desk thumping]* It is a curse. It is the worse thing that has ever happened to this country.

The Attorney General spoke about the prisons, and the Maximum Security Prison is still not operational today. Recently, for the first time in this country we saw men casually walk out of death row. They jumped the wall, went to some place in Laventille and made their way somewhere to the south west of this country. *[Interruption]* The Attorney General is looking the wrong place, because I am told by members of his staff that every Monday morning electronic devices are passed through the office searching for bugs. I do not know what he is afraid of. He walks around and sleeps, I am advised, in his bullet-proof vest. What is he afraid of? I am told that in the new building that has been constructed—and soon we will be in there to see for ourselves—he has introduced sophisticated

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technology, retina scanning. As he approaches the door, he has to look into a hole and the computer will detect the Attorney General's retina and it is only so his office door will open.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member for Laventille East/Morvant—

Mr. F. Hinds: I am dealing with crime.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I know, I just want to make a little statement. It is not the retina, it is the iris. *[Laughter]*

Mr. F. Hinds: I am most grateful, not being a medical doctor, I am most grateful. I had only learnt about the technology when the informant told me about it, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Bereaux: Mr. Deputy Speaker, it appears as though you are getting into the debate. If you want to get into the debate, you can go outside and do so. Do not do that!

Mr. F. Hinds: Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Government, as the Motion suggests, has failed palpably to deal effectively with the incidence of crime and criminal activities in this country. I know most of the speakers before, including the hon. Attorney General dealt with violent crime because it is a fact that violent crime is the thing that really threatens us most. Violent crime is the aspect of crime which really causes us to become fearful and we react as a society when we meet a headless corpse, when somebody slashes or poisons someone else in a most violent way, I understand that. I want to spend a little time dealing with non-violent crime if you will permit me.

Take for example, I was reading what some of the theorists had to say on this matter of crime and one of the learned theorists describes crime simply as acts or omissions specifically forbidden or enjoined by law.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, behaviour becomes crime when the state enacts sanctions against it. The state, through the Government in that case identifies and deals with the perpetrators. Crimes are further defined as behaviour that is deemed serious enough to warrant the intervention of the state. For example, murder is a crime in all countries, and singing out of tune is not, although some people may find it offensive. The scope of criminal law changes in rough accordance with public sentiments or concern.

For example, recently, there was some outrage in the society about the activity of handlers with dangerous dogs, and the Government and the Parliament

responded by putting laws in place to deal with that. If we feel that sentences are too lenient, there are mechanisms, including increasing the sentences as far as Parliament is concerned. There are some other things that we do not intervene in, that are nonetheless antisocial behaviour, and, therefore, crime.

I was looking at today's *Daily Express* Friday, August 25, 2000 and I saw an advertisement by the United National Congress. "A Meeting in San Fernando" and there are three photographs: One I recognize as the Minister of Works and Transport—if he still is—the hon. Sadiq Baksh; the other, with a sly grin as usual, the Prime Minister and another picture that is barely recognizable but the name Muriel Donawa-Mc Davidson is under it. It looks like a photograph taken 30 or 35 years ago and I consider this to be an attempt to mislead. It is never what it seems with the UNC and when we take a look, as I have no doubt that you would, you would appreciate what I am saying. Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is a crime.

The Attorney General got up in this House today in this crime debate and made reference to his failed Motion before the Speaker earlier, on the privilege question. I want to remind the Attorney General—because we are dealing with crime—in another debate this Attorney General in talking about crime, drug trafficking and dealing with drugs, a serious crime, said in the debate on the Commission of Inquiry into the Judiciary on February 25, 2000 at 4.00 – 4.10 after a long, untruthful tirade about the Chief Justice and his handling of a cheque. This is what the Attorney General had to say and I quote:

“—and the Ministers who are accountable to the people do not know what the police have, and the Government could not have taken any steps to investigate, in order to find out what was the root of the allegation that drug people control certain—*[Interruption]* That is an allegation: drug people control certain judicial officers.”

He went on to say:

“Mr. Speaker, if the Opposition wants to live underneath the carpet, they can live... *[Interruption]*”

Again he was interrupted by this side because we recognized that he made history with those words. He is the first Attorney General who got up in this Parliament and accused the Chief Justice of being involved in crime and he comes today to talk about privilege. The point I want to make about crime, is that while the Government is not responsible because no criminal will ask a Minister of Government if he should go and rape, or if he should run racket with guns or drugs or some such thing because obviously one would expect—I can talk about

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this side, I am not sure about that side—that he would be told no, that is not the way forward. The climate that is created by the Government has much power and influence and the words of Government Ministers—they still have not understood that—are very critical and important and children and people listen carefully and the country perceives this Government to be doing things in an unorthodox manner.

The country has seen this Government froth and get around established legal procedures in order to have its way. This country has heard the Prime Minister in this Parliament—although they are talking about privilege today and saying we accused them of being corrupt—accuse the Opposition Leader and the PNM of committing the crime of treason or sedition saying that we wanted to overthrow this Government violently and by force. [*Desk thumping*] [*Crosstalk*] Police! The Member for St. Augustine reported a crime to the media recently; he did not go to the police, he certainly did not go to his Prime Minister because he knows when Ken Gordon, the former head of the *Express*, the CCN group and a former Cabinet Minister learned there was a contract on his life, I think it was \$75,000, he told this nation that he did not get the information in Woodford Square or anywhere, he got it from the then Police Commissioner.

It was the Police Commissioner who summoned him to his office and told him in the presence of a deputy commissioner of police that they were aware from their intelligence that a contract on his life had been put out. Of course, he made contact with the Prime Minister who was on his way to Jamaica and I could see him on my television now. Wry, sly, tricky smile as usual. He told the press that he had the letter on him, in his pocket but he had not read it as yet and he was on his way to Jamaica. It was important enough to carry it to Jamaica, but by then he did not read it.

The very Member for St. Augustine began a tirade telling people that Mr. Gordon was imagining this, it was not true and it was unfounded. Recently he called the media and reported that the home of the Chairman for St. Augustine UNC constituency was threatened to be firebombed. He did not go to his Prime Minister and he knows why. He would get no satisfaction or action. He knows that.

Sumairsingh wrote the Prime Minister and reported the crime of threats to his life. That is a crime. The Prime Minister said he did not get it, he gets thousands and thousands of letters—like my friend from St. Joseph was expecting tourists, thousands—and he did not read it. At the end of the day, Hans Sumairsingh is no

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more. I did not know him, but he died with his political boots on and the reports are that he died in the context of political exchanges and it frightens me as a politician. The Prime Minister went, not the Government, not the Attorney General of Trinidad and Tobago through the agency the police put out a reward, but the United National Congress deceitfully, shamelessly offered a \$100,000 reward.

In preparing for this debate, I had a look at some clippings that I have kept and will keep for the rest of my life, a story by Afiya Butler on July 07, 2000. She contacted the hotline regarding the same Sumairsingh matter: The officer who answered said, and I quote:

“ ‘Ma’am, this line is only to receive information, not to give out,’ the male officer said with a laugh.”

It continued:

“After the hotline was established, a reward of \$100,000 was offered by the United National Congress (UNC)...Several men were held, questioned and later released and a red car was seized. The shooting remains a mystery.”

3.35 p.m.

The officer told her she could contact Mr. Grant. When she did, that is Assistant Commissioner (Crime):

“Grant did not give any information on the status of the investigation, but said it was continuing, and that the ‘hotline was still open’.”

It appears as though no sensible or decent person in this country wants to take the risk of giving information. With all that the Attorney General is saying about crime, what they have done and have not done and how many votes—nobody wants to give information. Those who may have information are probably sensible enough—they do not want any dirty UNC money. I say that without repentance.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am not in this business for play. This is a serious thing, and our country is at risk. I have pledged to stand up bravely and fight for Trinidad and Tobago to my last breath; and I mean that. We do not fight physically, unless we have to. We fight politically, as we always have. We of the People’s National Movement are engaged in a serious fight now to take this country back from a disorganized gang [*Desk thumping*] and take it further to good governance. Violent crime troubles us, of course.

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I am a lawyer, a criminal lawyer, and that describes my practice. That does not describe me, like some.

Mr. Manning: It is not an adjective.

Mr. F. Hinds: It is not an adjective at all, you are quite right. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I heard the Prime Minister—and when talking about crime I did not bother with the theory, but according to the theorists there are different causes of crime. I have already said that some part of it has to do with the frailty, the weakness and the imperfection of man. Some of us are not strong enough to resist temptation and that is a sure cause of crime. I have seen people, in my practice and otherwise, who just cannot resist temptation. If a deal comes up, they cannot resist it. Another reason, the theorists say, is the social environment. When we bring up children in a society where they are, as described, morally handicapped, where we have not set the right examples for them—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Bereaux: It appears that there is something wrong with the Member for Tobago East, like he is sick.

Mr. F. Hinds: He is resting. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Bereaux: I say it appears. That is why I asked the doctor.

Mr. F. Hinds: One of the other reasons is economic stress or poverty. Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we are talking about crime we must look at the question of poverty.

This Government boasted that for the last three years it has taken so many people above the poverty line. What is the reality? I heard the Prime Minister a few nights ago talking about the new-found prosperity in this country. They are prosperous. Members of the Government are prosperous because they all can afford fancy cars and big houses. They can break down a house that was worth \$1 million and build another for \$2 million—a glass house—buy a Mercedes Benz and do all sorts of things. They are prosperous. I heard one senior Government official's wife is going around the place boasting that at any one time she walks around with over \$450,000 worth of jewellery. So they all are prosperous and they do not even sweat. They are only making deals in air-conditioned offices.

Talking about air-conditioned offices, a few nights ago I went to a part of my constituency on the Beetham Estate and I was so elated and impressed. They held a pageant, the Beetham and Sea Lots beauty pageant. I assisted them beforehand and was there early the day, and they prepared the place. When I went to that

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basketball court where that function was held, I was so elated and proud when I saw what the poor people had done with their bare hands. [*Mr. Sudama rose*] I am not giving way. We are on serious business. They decorated this court. I mean, it was beyond my expectations and I could see the balloons. The Master of Ceremonies was a young man, living on the Beetham, who last year was awarded a Humming Bird Silver Medal for his meritorious service in the community. [*Interruption*] Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want your protection.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Order, Member for Oropouche.

Mr. F. Hinds: Singing Sandra performed that evening, to our entertainment and the entertainment of the beauties who took part. She sang her song, “Voices in the Ghetto” and that is a song that touched me, as I am sure some of us, very, very deeply because it is an experience that we know. [*Interruption*] Yes. When she delivered the song with the usual power and acumen, for which she is well known, I saw the people react to that song and I understood why, because the song connects with their experience. When she sang the final verse which had to do with, “When you pass on the highway in your fancy air-condition, just lower the window, you might hear a voice from the ghetto”, the crowd went wild because they felt it and they demanded that she repeat the verse.

I know from that experience, and from my interface with my constituents and many people all over this country, Trinidad and Tobago, that only the Government could boast of new-found prosperity. The people are not seeing it. They are not feeling it. I remember right after the last election—we are talking about crime and it relates to poverty because as I explained, Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of the theorists says that a cause of crime is poverty. Some of us may not want to agree but it is part of the reason for it. I remember a housewife, or so she appeared—she may very well have been a man looking like a woman because nothing is what it seems with the UNC, but I remember the advertisement. A woman was coming down the aisle, if I could call it that, of a supermarket, pushing a trolley and she was gleefully telling the nation that prices had fallen under the UNC.

Ask any housewife anywhere in this country about prices today. [*Interruption*] Yes, *Chicken Licken*. Chicken is cheaper—trying to fool the children of the nation. *Chicken Licken*. Anyway, that is a separate matter. As for the Member for St. Joseph, he should say nothing. The fact that the UNC has treated him as it has represents two things to me: one, he is a man I regard as being decent and the UNC does not want decency, [*Desk thumping*] so he is going to be rejected. Two, it is obvious that he has failed as a Minister of Trade and Industry and Consumer

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Affairs, and for that reason too his dismissal is justified. [*Interruption*] He is a decent failure. [*Laughter*] However, all things work together for those who love the Lord and I know he loves the Lord. His absence from that band will serve him in good stead. Have no fear. I hope the Member for Naparima takes example from him and gets out before it is too late.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I saw in Russia on television a couple nights ago where a woman was complaining about her husband, I think it was, a relative at minimum, who lost his life on that submarine that went under, as it were, literally and metaphorically. She was protesting and they featured on the television some of the KGB officers or whatever as they embraced the lady. Suddenly the lady's body went limp and they took her outside. The news reported that it appeared as though they injected her. They sedated the woman and hushed her up and that is the way they responded. I fear that we could come to that under the UNC in this country. In the former Soviet Union they did not even record crime, you know.

Mr. Assam: We never thought of it. We could sedate you. [*Laughter*]

Mr. F. Hinds: You could try. You could try, but remember the words of Stalin's calypso, "More come, More come, More come".

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we need to take a serious look at what is happening. It clearly is not enough to come to Parliament and spout statistics. We need to take stock. We need to recognize truthfully that crime is not under control. We need to understand that it is morality, it is good example, it is godliness and it is prayerfulness that will cause people to desist from crime. After all, crime is sin. We can never have a crime-free world if we do not have a sinless world. Some of the sins we as a society and in the Parliament call crime, but crime is about sin. Crime is about individuals making decisions to do good or to do bad; to do wrong or to do right.

One of the things that generates crime—and we can hear it in some of the music. Dub music is very popular in our society. Dub music, a derivative of reggae music, music that I love very much, the traditional music—[*Interruption*] You see, the mind of the Member for Princes Town, I am so sorry to say—I was about to say twisted but that may be unparliamentary, so I would say warped. A moment ago he said all the criminals were from Laventille and Beetham [*Interruption*] and all the dub music is only listened to in Laventille. That demonstrates his absolute ignorance and I would leave him in his ignorance. I will tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that dub music represents—and not only African youth but Indian youth and Caucasian youth, if you like, all of the young people

in this country are listening to dub music. It is happening not only in Trinidad, you know, but around the world from what I have been observing.

When one listens to some of the music one has to ask, what about it is capturing the psyche and the minds of the young people like that? I think it has to do, one, with the beat, that very incisive drumbeat which stimulates the youth, I would say, but it also has to do with a reflection of an antisocial conflict that is ever present in this and many other societies. Some of those songs actually speak, much like Sandra's "Voices in the Ghetto", about the "we and them" syndrome. There are people who feel it is we on this side and them on the other. One of those songs, I heard it up to yesterday from the radio, speaks about—and this is a line from a Buju Banton song—"All you eating chicken and we don't have none, we can't even get the bone". That is something that the Government needs to take note of.

One is not encouraging young people to look jealously at others. One is not encouraging young people, by what I have said, to look on and say, "Them have and we do not have", and sit and sulk and complain and do nothing about it. One is educating the children. When I speak to groups, when I speak to individuals—and I hope when we all do—we need to encourage and motivate them. We need to educate them properly and education, at least the education function in this country, has been a disaster since 1995. Efforts were being made in 1992 to deal with the education system and the UNC, led by the Prime Minister and the Minister of Education, the Member for Siparia, has actually derailed it. The Member for Tobago East knows that. He has said so. He disagrees with the approach of Mr. Panday and the Minister to education. We need to take some account of what is happening. We need to understand that some of the young people, and far too many of them, believe that there is social injustice. They believe they are not given a fair chance.

3.50 p.m.

In the book, the *Oxford Handbook of Criminology*, at page 237—I was looking at it again, because I had done it when I studied law years ago—the so-called anomie theories described by our writer, a thinker called Robert Merton. I want to quote what he is saying on the question of the anomie theory. Before I do that, my understanding of the theory is that it is a state of affairs. It was well established by Émile Durkheim.

It is a state of affairs, a state of lawlessness where order breaks down. I remember it well. It is not the cause of crime, I recall, but in the state of anomie or

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abnormalcy—I think it is French for abnormalcy—it is a state in which crime prevails, and I am saying that we are in a state of affairs in this country where lawlessness seems to be taking full hold. We see it in respect of traffic violations and we see it right across the spectrum; not only violent crime.

When, for example, we do things, we have to be mindful of the example we are setting. Merton is saying:

“...*anomie* became a socially-fostered state of discontent and deregulation that generated crime and deviance as part of the routine functioning of a society which promised much to everyone but actually denied them equal access to its attainment...”

I think the writer is trying to say, like in the United States—it talks about the United States philosophy which is that one could move from rags to riches, and whilst that exists in theory, there are certain institutional or structural circumstances that prevent people from making that transition. It is not as real or easy as the theory states it. It is a state of affairs where one tells people and people understand from the education that they receive that one can become what one wants to become, but there are some circumstances, including their own psychological inhibitions that debar them.

I continue:

“People might have been motivated to achieve in the United States, but they confronted class, race, and other social differences that manifestly contradicted the myth of openness. It was not easy for a poor, inner-city adolescent to receive sponsorship for jobs, achieve academic success, or acquire capital. In a society where failure was interpreted as a sign of personal rather than social weakness, where failure led to guilt rather than to political anger, the pressure to succeed could be so powerful that it impelled people thus disadvantaged to bypass legitimate careers and take to illegitimate careers instead: ‘the culture makes incompatible demands...In this setting, a cardinal American virtue—‘ambition’—promotes a cardinal American vice—‘deviant behavior’.”

I think that quotation really says and brings our minds to what we need to be looking at. We need to ensure, via the education system, both formal and informal, what we as adults teach our children, the examples that are set by the leaders, the political leaders, the Government of the country.

We saw recently, the Prime Minister of this country found himself in a private meeting, according to the other side of the story, for a job interview. Whom can

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they fool? We found the Prime Minister in that. We had the experience, Mr. Deputy Speaker—and we are talking about crime—in 1990, a group of insurgents walked into this honourable House, armed, they shot up the place, they held people captive and they did so for six days. That was an attack on the democracy of the country!

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, the speaking time of the Member for Laventille East/Morvant has expired.

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

Question put and agreed to.

ARRANGEMENT OF BUSINESS

The Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs (Hon. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know the Member would continue on the next occasion. I propose to move the adjournment of the House, but there are two Bills and one Motion on the Adjournment. I propose to move the adjournment of the House to Monday, August 28 at 10.30 a.m. which is budget day. There are two Private Members' Bills and a Motion on the Adjournment which we can take at once.

Agreed to.

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO ASSOCIATION IN AID OF THE DEAF (INCORPORATION OF TRUSTEES) BILL

Mr. Barendra Sinanan (*San Fernando West*): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move,

That the Bill to repeal and replace the Trinidad and Tobago Association in Aid of the Deaf (Incorporation of Trustees) Act, 1962 be now read a second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Bill before us is as the title says, a Bill to replace and repeal the former Act that governs this. As briefly on the Bill before us, in particular, clause 4 of the Bill sets out the purpose of the association, and if I may quickly highlight it, the purpose of the association is to improve the quality of life for the hearing impaired of Trinidad and Tobago.

For this purpose, the association may establish schools and other institutions for the education and training of the hearing impaired; facilitate and encourage the employment of the hearing impaired; operate services for the diagnosis of and programmes for the research into hearing impairment; monitor the incidents and investigate the causes of the hearing impaired in Trinidad and Tobago; provide

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counselling and psychological support for the family of the hearing impaired; organize courses of instruction for hearing persons to facilitate their communication with the hearing impaired; and do all other things necessary or expedient for the attainment of the purposes set out therein.

Clause 5, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is very important. That sets out the powers of the association and, Mr. Speaker, if I may again briefly run through those for you: to accept subscription and donations whether of real or personal estate and devises or requests for all or any of the above services; to sell and dispose of, lease and accept surrenders of leases and manage all real estate including leaseholds so received and not required to be or capable of being occupied for the purposes of the association.

Generally to manage, invest and expend all moneys belonging to the Association; to obtain, collect and receive money and funds by way of contribution, donations, legacies, grants and any other lawful method; accept and receive gifts of property of any description; to support, contribute to or work in association with any other body which may have or be working towards the achievement of similar purposes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, clause 6 of the Bill deals with vesting of property in the association. Clause 7 deals with the mode of execution of documents. Clause 8 deals with service of documents of the association. Clause 9 deals with powers to make rules, and there is a saving provision in clause 10 which says that nothing in this Act shall affect or be deemed to affect the rights of the state or any bodies, politic or corporate, or of any other persons except such as are mentioned or referred to in this Act, and those claiming by or through or from them.

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Mr. Speaker, the Bill before us is an attempt to improve the lot of the hearing impaired and in this regard, I commend this Bill to Members.

I beg to move.

Question proposed.

Mr. Barendra Sinanan: Mr. Speaker, by their silence, I hope they would have heard and read what I said, and I beg to move.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a second time.

Bill committed to a committee of the whole House.

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House in committee.

Clauses 1 to 11 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Preamble ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Question put and agreed to, That the Bill be reported to the House.

House resumed.

Bill reported, without amendment, read the third time and passed.

FRIENDS OF MR. BISWAS (INC'N) BILL

The Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Works and Transport (Mr. Chandresh Sharma): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move,

That a Bill for the Incorporation of the Friends of Mr. Biswas, and matters incidental thereto, be now read a second time.

Mr. Speaker, it is well-known that this part of the world has been blessed with writers and, of course, Mr. Biswas who was able to communicate the story of immigrants going from here to the United Kingdom. Of course, his pen name was Biswas but his correct name was VS Naipaul, and it was a book read in the global literature community. It is in this context we are lending our support to this.

I beg to move.

4.05 p.m.

Question proposed.

The Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Works and Transport (Mr. Chandresh Sharma): Mr. Speaker, it appears that some of the great writers have taught us to communicate by silence.

I beg to move.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a second time.

Bill committed to a committee of the whole House.

House in committee.

Clauses 1 to 8 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Preamble ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Question put and agreed to, That the Bill be reported to the House.

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House resumed.

Bill reported, without amendment, read the third time and passed.

ADJOURNMENT

The Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs (Hon. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj): Mr. Speaker, as already indicated, I beg to move that the House do now stand adjourned to Monday, August 28, 2000, at 10.30 a.m. That day is Budget Day. I mentioned also that there was an issue on the adjournment.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, before I put the question on the Adjournment of the House, I had given leave to the Member for Port of Spain South to raise a matter. I now call upon him to proceed with his matter. [*Desk thumping*]

Removal of Police Post (Mango Rose)

Mr. Eric Williams (Port of Spain South): Mr. Speaker, I thank you for allowing me to raise a matter on the Motion for the Adjournment, the adverse effect on the population of East Port of Spain caused by the removal of the police post at Mango Rose—although I do not know if the Parliament should pause while the other side conducts the final part of its screening exercise. I see some Members on the other side are smiling and some are not.

Mr. Manning: Who is not smiling? Sudama? Do not say that.

Mr. E. Williams: I cannot say who, but some are not smiling. One can only look to see. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Order please.

Mr. Manning: Some are called and few are chosen.

Mr. E. Williams: Mr. Speaker, it is amazing what this particular party across there has brought this House to.

On November 10, 1998, I had the pleasure of accompanying the Minister of National Security, along with the Commissioner of Police and other senior members of the police service, to open a police post at Mango Road. You may recall, Mr. Speaker, that we raised the matter here as a Motion on the Adjournment prior to this and we received the assurance of the Minister that the post would be put in place.

For the record, I would like to read the response of one of the residents of the Mango Rose area. For those who do not know, Mango Rose is the National

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Housing Authority apartments at the corner of Duke Street and Piccadilly Street.
[*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Order please.

Mr. E. Williams: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It seems we may have one more smiling Member on the other side shortly.

The letter is handwritten to the Mayor, the Minister of National Security, the Commissioner of Police and myself. It reads:

"It gives me a sense of security when you open our police post today at Mango Rose, and neighbours as well. There is a feeling of relief in each and every mind here today. It would not be an easy task, however, every effort is needed for its success.

Once again I wish to welcome four distinguished men today and look forward to all that would be done."

The letter went on to talk about some other National Housing Authority issues, cleaning the nine-storey and other community activities which, by the way, they are doing now as a community. It is signed by one of the members, Michele Hypolite, and is handwritten.

We raised several issues about this police post. The community was very relieved to have the police post and its presence. Indeed, in addition to this response, several members of the community assisted the police by preparing some of their meals and allowing them bathroom facilities and so forth when these were not available.

The post, as it turned out, was facing west so that it was rather warm when the sun set and, indeed, some of the police officers began to look at it as a hardship duty, but the community was pleased to have the presence of the police in the courtyard, that is to say, those decent, law-abiding citizens who make up the majority of the residents in that area of East Port of Spain. Indeed, the people who were not happy about it were those who were given to the criminal element.

This Government so took notice of that, that in a Motion that actually is still before the House, the hon. Attorney General, in his contribution, in listing the Government's great contribution to the eradication of crime in the country, listed this police post at Mango Rose as one of the crowning achievements of this Government in its fight against crime. What they forgot to do was tell him that the police post at Mango Rose was removed earlier this year and taken, first of all, to

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the savannah for use during the carnival activities and then, subsequently, it has been taken to Tunapuna while that police station there is being renovated. We have no problem with the renovation of the police station at Tunapuna and, indeed, we were in support of our colleague from Tunapuna who also came to the Parliament to seek to get that station repaired.

Mr. Speaker, in all of this, I wrote the hon. Minister informing him of what we have been hearing on the ground which was that the police post was removed permanently and there was no intention to replace it with any facility in the Mango Rose area. Indeed, that was the word on the ground that was reported to me.

I have had several conversations with the then Acting Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of National Security who was not aware of that particular sentiment. Indeed, the hon. Minister replied to my letter indicating that the removal was, indeed, a temporary one, by letter dated February 24. I do not think I need to read it. The essence is that at the time we believed it was a temporary removal.

Some persons in the area are of the opinion that the Besson Street Police Station can adequately police the area, and we have shown and the residents have made a very clear case that this is, indeed, not so. In fact, we have been able, on several occasions, to indicate that crime in the area has been on the increase. Indeed, the Government's statistics continue to show that East Port of Spain has the highest rate of crime in the nation and, indeed, as recently as earlier this month and all through last month, if I am not mistaken—and I stand to be corrected—the Criminal Investigation Division officers and Port of Spain task force officers only had one police vehicle at their disposal to handle crime in the city of Port of Spain, the Port of Spain Division. Indeed, we saw recently in the newspaper, as reported by the press, that the motorcycle core was reduced to foot because all their vehicles are in the garage.

Mr. Speaker, we can go on to talk about the maintenance of these vehicles or the lack thereof and all the systems that should be in place, but I do not think that should detain us in this particular debate because we will be dealing with that adequately in the Private Member's Motion that is before the House. Suffice it to say that on August 2, this year, the Police Advisory Board for the Port of Spain area, along with several of the residents, were able to get several senior officers of the Port of Spain Division to visit the Mango Rose area and it became quite clear that several of the senior officers who have now been transferred to the area were not aware of the original reasons for the Mango Rose post but, beyond that, the

post was put there as a direct result of an action that was taken in this Parliament and a commitment that was given by the hon. Minister.

Here we are before the Parliament again. I am pleading the case of my constituents in the area of East Port of Spain which, as we are well aware, is our capital city, our jewel in the nation. The police post which, again, the Government has indicated as one of its crowning feats and achievements, has, in fact, been removed. The citizens are concerned. Indeed, when it was obvious that the post was going to be removed, the criminal element in the area, I heard some of them saying, "Tonight we will start to spree again." Indeed, they have been "spreeing" ever since.

Hon. Member: You heard them.

Mr. E. Williams: This Government, which continues to talk about what it is doing about crime—

Mr. Sudama: Did you consult Fitzgerald Hinds on that? Did you hear them?

Mr. E. Williams: The Member for Oropouche is now able to smile and we can now hear him. He has been screened.

Mr. Hinds: In the Parliament.

Mr. E. Williams: He has now had the political equivalent of the operation which has been displayed in our newspaper today.

We are here today, again, to ask that the police post be replaced, or certainly that adequate policing activities take place because the E999 patrolling and other foot patrolling are not having a positive effect on the reduction of crime in the area and, indeed, the residents continue to report to me that they are faced with some problems and I do not believe this ought to continue.

Mr. Speaker, with those few words, I thank you and ask the Minister to respond.

4.20 p.m.

The Minister of National Security (Sen. Brig. The Hon. Joseph Theodore): Mr. Speaker, I can quite appreciate that the Member for Port of Spain South would be making a bid for the attention of his constituents, albeit, his present constituents. If he wants to use this forum to do some campaigning I, certainly, would not be party to that. But he is quite correct; in November 1998 the post was opened at Mango Rose but we seem to be barking up the wrong tree

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here. I am not referring to a mango tree by any chance. The Member seems to believe that a mobile police post is a permanent structure. There was no intention to set the post in concrete, and leave it there forever. The design of a mobile post is to move to those areas where there may be some unrest or concern by the citizens—very much as was the case in Mango Rose at the time.

Mr. Panday: It is because there is a reduction in crime there.

Sen. Brig. The Hon. J. Theodore: Having put the post there, people became comfortable. I am not sure if it was psychological, but one of the comments made is: "Here we are, we can sit on our verandahs now with our doors open and feel comfortable because the police are here." [*Desk thumping*] How many communities could boast that they have their own police post in their courtyard? This is where the problem arises: that the nature of a police post is not truly appreciated. While the police post was in place, it was to arrest a situation until the district police could bring things under control. This was done! The very comfort they enjoyed, during the presence of the police post, is still there. I am sure they can sit on their verandahs. If the nervousness is caused, I feel the Member for Port of Spain South is contributing to that; by suggesting to them that there is a rise in crime in that district. I feel that the hon. Member, if he wishes to remain the constituency representative, should take more care to make his constituents feel at home and comfortable with the assistance of the police that are provided by this administration. The police post has definitely performed its function. It went to the savannah because of the large number of people, to ensure that people going to the savannah to enjoy our carnival festivities did so safely.

Mr. Panday: Our paving.

Sen. Brig. The Hon. J. Theodore: And, of course, to walk on the paved portion while they cross the savannah.

Mr. Speaker, I do not want the feeling to be left here that because of a police post, the Besson Street Police Station in any way relinquished its responsibilities. What it did at the time was to ensure that systems were put in place to deal with the situation which the police post sought to deal with as a short-term measure.

For instance, from the date of closure of the post, which was in February of this year to August 24, yesterday, there have been 489 patrols conducted by officers of the Besson Street Police Station. Between June 01 and August 24, 89 patrols have been carried out in the Mango Rose area. This is not because the hon. Member came here with a Motion; it was because of the responsible attitude of the police service: that they knew their job and they put these patrols in place.

Nobody can suggest, Mr. Speaker, I am saying this because the hon. Member has brought a Motion. We have done this because of our responsibility to ensure the safety and security of our citizens, albeit they are in Port of Spain East—all the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

To give some more details, Mr. Speaker, 36 patrols have been done by day and 53 by night, 22 have been mobile patrols. What the hon. Member is suggesting is that one day they called the Besson Street Police Station and there was no vehicle. This does not mean that at all times there is no vehicle. When it is found that a vehicle, for some reason, is at another place or in need of repair, steps are taken. The matter of the maintenance is being dealt with. I am sure that the Members on the other side would get a clear explanation of the systems that are being put in place to maintain—when we launch the highway patrol on Tuesday next, on the Beetham, it will be made known to the public the maintenance system that has been put in place.

The problem in the days of the PNM is that there were no systems: things were done by guess, vehicles were allowed to run down, and the only time they came to the garage is when the tow truck brought them in. What is happening is that preventative maintenance and regular inspections are being carried out to make sure these vehicles are in a serviceable condition on a 24-hour basis. [*Desk thumping*]

Besides these 22 mobile patrols, 67 were done on foot. People are complaining that they do not see policemen on the beat. Policemen do walk; there are policemen on the beat. The sum of 30 patrols have been conducted by plain-clothes personnel. This causes a problem because, at carnival time at the airport, when visitors are coming in, there are plain-clothes personnel but, of course, people feel when they do not see a police in uniform there is no police presence. The safety of the citizens of this country is certainly not being ignored. Besides the 30 patrols by plain-clothes personnel, 59 were done by uniformed officers.

The other issue at hand, Mr. Speaker, is the time it takes for a patrol to move from the Besson Street Police Station to the Mango Rose area. I discussed this with the Member for Port of Spain South, and we are aware that, because of the one-way traffic that starts from Prince Street down to St. Paul Street, there is a problem. We are looking at that but this is not for the Ministry of National Security to deal with. I have discussed it with the Ministry of Works and Transport because I acknowledge, when we opened the police post they have to make the rounds. The point is, what the police have been doing is launching regular patrols in the area.

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Again, thanks to our 999 initiative; where the police are equipped with high-tech communication systems; it is not difficult to contact a police vehicle that is on the move. In the past, the 999 system, which was lauded by the PNM administration, was really a sort of system that if you were lucky, and there was a line to a particular police station that responded to 999, you may get a response. Since then, Mr. Speaker, we have established a communications centre which can reach all vehicles, the 999 vehicles and, after Tuesday's launching, the highway patrol vehicles, anywhere in Trinidad and Tobago. *[Desk thumping]*

Mr. Maharaj: And they say we are not doing anything about crime.

Sen. Brig. The Hon. J. Theodore: While I appreciate that the citizens may have concerns: that they are no longer as closely protected as they were when this temporary police post was put in place, I can assure the hon. Member that the necessary systems are there, the patrols are taking place, and the police are paying attention to what goes on in Mango Rose.

As I say, what is important is that a temporary mobile police post, as the hon. Member himself admitted, is now in Tunapuna because that is where the concern rises. Because things have quietened down in Mango Rose, the Police Commissioner felt free to remove it. I, as a Minister of National Security, while I sympathize with the hon. Member, cannot direct the Police Commissioner how to deploy his resources, and it is his right to move the police post where his information tells him it is needed.

The very Member for Tunapuna came to this very House and made very heavy weather over the repairs being done to the police station. I am sure he is the very person who would complain, should we fail to repair that police station. *[Desk thumping]* The police post is properly located at Tunapuna where it is required, and we feel confident that removing it from Mango Rose in no way decreases the level of security needed for the citizens of Port of Spain East.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned 4.30 p.m.