

*Leave of Absence*

*Friday, September 29, 2000*

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

*Friday, September 29, 2000*

The House met at 1.30 p.m.

**PRAYERS**

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

**LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Members, Mr. Martin Joseph, Member of Parliament for St. Ann's East, has requested leave from September 29, 2000 to October 4, 2000. Such leave is granted in accordance with Standing Order 84(1) and (2) and to the other Members who had requested previously, leave has been granted.

**TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO ASSOCIATION OF  
PROFESSIONAL PSYCHOLOGISTS (INC'N) BILL**

Bill for the incorporation of the Trinidad and Tobago Association of Professional Psychologists and for related matters, brought from the Senate [*The Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Works and Transport*]; read the first time.

**PAPERS LAID**

1. Eleventh, Twelfth, Thirteenth and Fourteenth Periodic Report of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. [*The Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs (Hon. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj)*]
2. The Caribbean Court of Justice—Draft Instruments. [*Hon. R. L. Maharaj*]
3. The Caribbean Court of Justice—The History and Analysis of the Debate. [*Hon. R. L. Maharaj*]

**INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION  
OF ALL FORMS OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION**

**(REPORTS)**

**The Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs (Hon. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have just laid on the table the Eleventh, Twelfth, Thirteenth and Fourteenth Periodic Report prepared by the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago concerning its compliance with the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial

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Discrimination in Trinidad and Tobago. These reports, Mr. Deputy Speaker, should have been submitted by the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago to the United Nations by November 3, 1994; November 3, 1996; November 3, 1998 and November 3, 2000 respectively.

The four outstanding reports have been combined into one report prepared in accordance with the reporting guidelines published by the United Nations Centre for Human Rights. This report has been approved by Cabinet and submitted to the Secretary General of the United Nations. The last report from Trinidad and Tobago under the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination was submitted in July of 1994. The next report is due on November 3, 2002.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination in December 1965. It entered into force on January 4, 1969. The Republic of Trinidad and Tobago ratified the Convention on October 3, 1973. The Convention has been defined as the international community's only tool for combating racial discrimination. The Convention is at one and the same time universal in reach, comprehensive in scope, legally binding in character and equipped with built-in measures of implementation, including international machinery for monitoring the actual implementation of the obligation of the contracting states.

In becoming parties to the Convention, Mr. Deputy Speaker, states declare their abhorrence of racial discrimination or of segregation. They are resolved to adopt all necessary measures to eliminate racial discrimination in all its forms and manifestations and to prevent and combat racist doctrines and practices in order to promote understanding between the races. By becoming party to the Convention, Mr. Deputy Speaker, states express their conviction that any doctrine of superiority based on racial differentiation is scientifically false, morally condemnable, socially unjust and dangerous, and they reaffirm that discrimination between human beings on the grounds of race, colour or ethnic origin is an obstacle to friendly and peaceful relations between nations and is capable of destroying peace and security amongst peoples.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the system of international accountability and international review built into the Convention is the reporting procedure, in which the committee on the elimination of racial discrimination plays a central role. State parties are required to submit these reports and the measures taken by them to implement the conventions. These reports must be submitted at two-year intervals and, upon request of the committee and the presentation of reports,

therefore constitute a treaty obligation specifically contained in the convention and as a consequence is binding for all state parties.

Trinidad and Tobago has neglected to comply with this reporting procedure in the past so therefore this submission of this combined report covering the past eight years will bring the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago up to date in its reporting obligations under the Convention. It will be the function of the human rights unit in the Ministry of the Attorney General to ensure that, in future, reporting obligations under the convention are met on a timely basis.

Turning to the specific rights mentioned under the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago forms the foundation for the state's policy on racial discrimination. The Constitution prohibits discrimination by reason of race, origin, colour, religion or sex. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago has also introduced a series of legislative and other measures over the past five years to further enhance the protection against racial discrimination. These are detailed in the report.

Examples include the Equal Opportunity Bill. This Bill seeks to prohibit discrimination in Trinidad and Tobago and to promote equality of opportunity for persons irrespective of their sex, colour, race, origin, including geographical origin, religion and marital status or ability. This Bill was passed in the Senate yesterday and, when enacted, would apply to discrimination in relation to employment, education, the provision of goods and services and the provision of accommodation. The Bill provides for the establishment of an Equal Opportunity Commission and would work towards the elimination of discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of different status generally and as far as possible to conciliate allegations of discrimination.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Government has also acted to counter specific instances of discrimination in Trinidad and Tobago. In 1999, in recognition of the growing numbers of persons of the Orisa faith, an Orisa Marriage Act was enacted giving effect to the right to enter into marriage, establish a family and the right to culture and of religion. The Cohabitation Relationships Act of 1998 was also implemented in recognition of the high incidence of common law unions and the rights of common law spouses. Common law spouses who have been living in a cohabitational relationship for not less than five years, or who have had a child arising out of the relationship, now have the right to make an application to the High Court for maintenance and for property adjustment. There is also the

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Maternity Protection Act of 1998, which was implemented to prevent discrimination against women by employers on the grounds of pregnancy.

In respect of the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, the Government has drafted a Charter of Patients Rights and Obligations. This includes impartial and equal access to treatment, the right to privacy with respect to medical information, freedom from abuse, the right not to be subjected to any procedure without voluntary and informed consent, the right to refuse treatment and the right to manifestation of one's cultural and religious expressions whilst admitted. These rights are guaranteed without reference to gender, religion, race, social, class or national origin.

In 1998 under the Minimum Wages Act, the National Minimum Wage Order was introduced. It provided for the establishment of a single, economy-wise minimum wage that now covers workers in Trinidad and Tobago irrespective of race, origin, colour, religion or sex. In 1996, in light of the growing problem of racial discrimination concerning nightclubs, the Government took action to introduce and implement three pieces of legislation: one, the Registration of Clubs (Amdt.) Act which empowered the licensing committee to strike off from the Register of Clubs any club to which the public has access if it is proved by an aggrieved person that the person was discriminated against on the ground of race, colour, religion or sex. The Liquor Licence Act was amended in 1997 to prohibit discrimination on licensed premises on the grounds of race, colour, religion or sex.

The Theatres and Dancehalls Act was amended in 1997 to prohibit discrimination on the ground of race, colour, religion or sex, including the refusal, admission, service or refusal of access to facilities on any licensed premises. The Licensing Authority is now empowered to suspend or cancel a licence if it is satisfied that discrimination has occurred. It would be apparent, therefore, Mr. Deputy Speaker, from reading this report, that much has been done in recent years to realize and to give full effect to the rights contained in the convention.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the combined Third and Fourth Periodic Report under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights has already been laid in Parliament and submitted to the United Nations. The combined Second and Third Periodic Report under the International Covenant on Social and Cultural Rights has also been laid in Parliament and submitted to the United Nations. The human rights unit is now proceeding with completion of two other outstanding reports. These are the initial, second and third periodic reports due under the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women which were

due on February 11, 1991; February 11, 1995; and February 11, 1999 respectively and the Second Periodic Report due under the Convention on the Rights of the Child which was due on January 3, 1999.

These reports are to be completed in due course and, when approved by Cabinet, the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago will then be completely up to date in respect of its reporting obligations under the five main international human rights instruments. The report under the International Covenant on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination will be circulated to NGOs and made available in public libraries and circulated to schools. Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

**OFFENCES AGAINST THE PERSON (AMDT.) BILL**

Bill to amend the Offences Against the Person Act, Chap. 11:08, [*The Attorney General*]; read the first time.

**THE MINISTER OF FINANCE, PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT  
(CONDEMNATORY BEHAVIOUR)**

**Mr. Kenneth Valley** (*Diego Martin Central*): [*Desk thumping*] Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have sought your leave and I have obtained it to raise the following Motion standing in my name:

*Whereas* the Minister of Finance, Planning and Development stated categorically in presenting the 2000/2001 Budget that he has set aside a sum of \$415 million in an Oil Stabilisation Fund; and

*Whereas* it was only on Friday September 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2000, that the Finance Supplementary (Appropriation) Bill, 2000 was approved by this House to establish an Interim Oil Revenue Stabilisation Fund; and

*Whereas* the Minister has failed to explain this discrepancy;

*And Whereas* in his response to issues raised during the Budget Debate the Minister of Finance, Planning and Development failed:

- (a) to explain the nature of his discussions with Birk Hillman with respect to the construction of the Piarco Airport Terminal Building during a private visit which he made to Miami in August 1996;
- (b) to provide specific requested information on the purpose for which the NIPDEC paid, through Birk Hillman, approximately TT \$10 million to a company called Overseas Communications Corporation in relation to the Airport Project;

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- (c) to explain why NIPDEC entered into sole selective tendering arrangements with a preferred contractor whose rates were substantially higher than the engineer's estimates in relation to Goods and Services for Construction Package No. 9 for the Airport Project;

*Be it resolved* that this honourable House condemn the actions of the Minister of Finance, Planning and Development.

**1.45 p.m.**

Mr. Deputy Speaker, first of all, we have to notice the contempt with which the Parliament is being treated and this is, in effect, a Motion on censure that is brought against the Minister of Finance, Planning and Development and he is not here to respond. The acting Minister is here, the substantive Minister is not here. The Motion is against the substantive Minister.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I must confess that it pains me to have to bring this Motion to the House. The Minister is a person I have known for quite some time. We have worked together for a number of years and worked well together. As a matter of fact, I am partly responsible for having the substantive minister in politics today. Mr. Deputy Speaker, for me, the issue is much higher than the Minister. The whole purpose of this Motion is to ask all parliamentarians, whether they accept the behaviour of the Minister and whether as a Parliament we are going to uphold some standard of behaviour to warrant being called "honourable men" and "honourable women". [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think, if you listen to what is happening out there in the society, you would note the feeling among the general populace of despair somewhat; a feeling that, in fact, all parliamentarians are corrupt; they are dishonest; they do not keep their promises; and all of these things.

**Miss Nicholson:** Leave me out of that.

**Mr. K. Valley:** I am talking here about the feeling that the general public has—I do not know where you live. I am saying that we have an opportunity today to start the rebuilding process and that is what this Motion is about. [*Desk thumping*]

In the home of Parliament, in Westminster, any person guilty of the conduct of the Minister would not wait for a Motion like this; they would have walked already. It is in that environment that the concept of honourable men and women was developed, so that there is no malice in this Motion. I am asking all Members of the House to consider, really, whether you want to be associated with the behaviour of the Minister.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the facts are well known. Let me just put them on the record quickly. Today, the case is, in fact, before the jury and the case is known. What are the facts? The Minister of Finance, Planning and Development came to this House, first of all, on August 28, 2000 and stated that he had set aside \$415 million in an Oil Stabilization Fund. That was a fact. First of all, we had a Cabinet Note, which indicated that Cabinet was now approving the establishment of such—not a fund—an interim fund.

On September 22, 2000, almost one month after the Minister's statement, only then the Parliament approved the Oil Stabilization Fund. The acting Minister of Finance, Planning and Development made the point quite clearly that in moving the Supplementary Appropriation, the expenditure for the year would have increased by \$415 million, so that the deficit—whatever it was—would have increased by \$415 million.

The Minister stated that what he was in fact doing—he got some \$669 million from excess oil revenues—was setting aside two-thirds of that sum. Mr. Speaker, obviously, when one looks at the budget information and you note that the public debt increased in that one year by \$5 billion, the Central Government part of it increased by \$3 billion. So if you are setting aside funds, obviously, the implication is that you are setting aside from a surplus. If you had no surplus, you cannot be setting aside funds unless you are borrowing money to set it aside and, obviously, no funds were set aside from oil stabilization. Any funds which were set aside were set aside from the increase in borrowing which occurred between 1999—2000. We have to ask: why would the Minister of Finance, Planning and Development come to the Parliament, knowing very well that the whole country would rely on what he says and, most importantly, the business community, would be guided by the signals sent by the Minister of Finance, Planning and Development.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, so that when you see the Stock Market on a decline since March—in spite of continued economic growth—you have to know that it has to do with the fact that they cannot trust what is coming out of the Government and, specifically, from the Minister of Finance, Planning and Development. [*Desk thumping*] It is extremely important that the Parliament takes account—and I am talking to my colleagues on the other side also, because if they fail to assist in the rebuilding on the norms of the parliamentary system, then they open a window for those on the fringes to say “if they want to kicks in Parliament we would have none of it.” We have examples and we cannot say that it is not going to happen around us.

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We simply have to look at Venezuela and what has happened in that country and understand the importance of any country operating on some standard of behaviour, and that this whole concept of “anything goes” must be discarded once and for all. To me, the case is clear. If you take the second instance, here we have a Minister of Finance, Planning and Development, visiting a firm in August 1996. The next thing you know is that the firm ends up being the project manager of the airport contract, selected by a committee that included, at that time, the Chairman of Tidco who had submitted one of the tenders for a contract at the Airports Authority. So here you have one individual selecting the project manager and lo and behold the project manager in turn selects this individual for the contract on a sole selective tendering basis.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we note that Nipdec was asked to pay this company some \$10 million which has gone to some Overseas Communications Corporation and when questioned about that here in the House, the Minister who is given the responsibility for Nipdec fails to answer. We have to ask for how much longer can we go on this way. I think history is replete with problems caused by failure to act on time. This afternoon, this Parliament has the opportunity to tell one of our peers that we do not appreciate that type of behaviour. [*Desk thumping*]

**1.55 p.m.**

We have the opportunity this afternoon to reprimand one of our brothers, not because we hate him, but because we are interested in preserving the integrity of the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago. That is what is important and that is what this Motion is about this afternoon, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Now, when we look at happenings in Trinidad and Tobago, for example, we look at the newspapers this morning and we notice that a judge has ruled—

**Miss Nicholson:** Pound it, man!

**Mr. K. Valley:**—that the Prime Minister acted with bias—

**Miss Nicholson:** Total bias!

**Mr. K. Valley:**—in the handling of an item under his portfolio. [*Desk thumping*]

**Miss Nicholson:** Shameless!

**Mr. K. Valley:** You see, a judge has ruled, and understand the significance of that. Understand that we had a similar situation—Justice Deyalsingh, with respect to the Airports Authority stated quite categorically that those contracts were null



and void. The Attorney General concurred with that opinion but, in spite of that, the individual, on appeal, got \$29 million and the point is, while the Government would say that they have had investigations with respect to the National Flour Mills Limited, the airport, the Soodhoo affair and so forth, we all know what has happened with all those events.

The National Flour Mills Limited—nothing has happened to date. Nobody knows what were the findings or whether, in fact, the commission ever sat. We know clearly what has happened with the Airports Authority, that the report was laid here and although it said that the contract should be set aside and so forth, matters continued as normal.

We know also, Mr. Speaker, that with respect to the InnCogen matter, although the Office of Prime Minister was implicated and although the debate on that matter lasted six months, the Prime Minister, when in this House, sat stone faced. No response whatsoever for a plant we do not need that is going to burden our country for the next 30 years. [*Desk thumping*]

All we are saying this afternoon is, we all have an opportunity in this Parliament to start the rebuilding process and it is not only the integrity of the Parliament that we need to ensure but we need to ensure the standards that we have for the Office of Prime Minister that are now in dispute. Headlines in this morning's newspapers, two newspapers at least.

Then, we have the charade, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not know whether people understand that they can undermine an institution by some little things. When, for example, the other night at around 2.00 o'clock, I took up the newspaper and I noticed that my good friend, my neighbour—he lives close to me—is Acting Prime Minister once more. What was I supposed to do at 2.00 o'clock in the morning? Is this a joke?

We have the Member for St. Augustine acting as Prime Minister. Suddenly, we had Gillette, then my good friend from Siparia got a 10-days. Is this is joke? Is this what the Office of Prime Minister is about in Trinidad and Tobago? [*Desk thumping*] I mean, are we going to make sense in Trinidad and Tobago? We have to ask. Are we going to really try to rebuild our institutions?

What about the Judiciary? We see another fight brewing in the Judiciary in the selection of a judge to move to the Appeal Court. What is happening in Trinidad and Tobago? Last year, it was the Office of the Attorney General and the Chief Justice. Now, we have a public squabble concerning who is going to the Appeal Court and the public must sit back and look at this, perhaps, with glee.

**Mr. Bereaux:** Unholy spectacle.

**Mr. K. Valley:** There is nothing. There no longer seems to be any system in place to deal with state institutions and to protect state institutions.

Who was it who said if the centre breaks—what is the quote? I do not know the quote. Something about if the centre cannot hold. This is what is happening. All our institutions; the things we used to know; the things we used to take for granted; no longer are they so. We are saying that this afternoon gives us an opportunity to start the rebuilding process. This is not about Brian Kuei Tung; it is about a principle. It is about the institution of the Parliament. It is what we stand for. It is what we want the public to expect of us, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I ask the Leader of the House to allow his Members a free vote on this issue because we have to say, once and for all, whether we are going to have standards in the Parliament.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the budget debate, I made the point that as a student of the British Constitution, I had been taught that one cannot, in a Parliament, use the word “lie”, that one had to talk about “strangers to the truth”, “logical inexactitudes” and all those fancy things. But, over the last five years, given the performance of some Members on the other side, it has now become, perhaps, accepted in the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago.

I would rest my case at this point and I would simply ask the House, really, to consider the bigger issue, the message that it wants to send to the man-in-the-street who, as a fact, as you talk with him, he is, not slowly any longer, but fast becoming turned off with politics in Trinidad and Tobago. We have a duty in this Parliament to help with that rebuilding process.

I thank you and I beg to move, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

**Dr. Keith Rowley** (*Diego Martin West*): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to second the Motion as presented by my colleague from Diego Martin Central and reserve my right to speak at a later date with your concurrence.

*Question proposed.*

**The Minister of Tobago Affairs and the Acting Minister of Finance, Planning and Development (Dr. The Hon. Morgan Job):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Motion is what I would call a minefield. It is a set of traps. The very structure of the Motion, Mr. Deputy Speaker, covers a range of issues which the public of Trinidad and Tobago have a right, I think, to be engaged with: the \$415 million, the Revenue Stabilization Fund, the airport terminal building and the contracts.

I have no problem with people wanting transparency and wanting good governance. Who are the people managing the airport? But I do not see a consistent focus for the mind in terms of what this Motion seeks to do. I think it is a great opportunity. If I were an Opposition politician going into an election campaign, a Motion like this would be a great opportunity for providing media coverage for allegations of corruption, for discussions of corruption, for focusing the mind on myth and developing those kinds of on-the-hustings opportunities that in societies like ours, are very useful to mobilizing a constituency.

I think I need to go over the question, or at least to take the opportunity to advise the public what this \$415 million is all about because even if when I came to the House for supplementary allocation, the Opposition did support me, they did take the opportunity, I think very ungraciously, to want to exploit certain little difficulties I had in a very petulant and peevish manner.

I remember admonishing the Member for the Diego Martin Central for that. Indeed, I almost want to feel that there was some kind of party consensus. When I went to the Senate, I recognized the same kind of attitude as if to question my *bona fides* for the position I hold.

### **2.10 p.m.**

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the public needs to appreciate that this Interim Revenue Stabilization Fund is a very revolutionary idea in the history of this country. I think it is good for me to state this quite clearly. I want to quote a document which I have often referred to—*The Imperatives of Adjustment*. I think it is paragraph 3.33, where, coming out of the oil boom in the 1970s, when the Government set up a number of recurrent levels of expenditure without the means to sustain them, the beginning of a great disaster unfolded in this country.

I think it is good for the public to refresh their memories of matters that were not discussed in this House and were not discussed in the media with regard to what was done with excess revenues that were earned adventitiously when the oil market, in its turbulent gyrations, provided windfalls for this country. I am quoting from page 31 of *The Imperatives for Adjustment* that was commissioned by the then Prime Minister, George Chambers. In paragraph 3.37, it says:

"There is no way by which a freeze in wages and salaries in the public sector can be avoided if the recurrent budget is to be financed; and unless the budget is financed, it will not be possible to borrow on the local or the international market, on any meaningful scale. Such borrowing is the sole source of funds for capital expenditure after 1983."

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Two paragraphs before that states:

"The financing of any significant levels of public sector investment requires two things. First, that every effort be made to maintain oil production at the more optimistic level assumed earlier. Unless this is done, no feasible set of measures will permit the gap to be covered."

They are talking here about the gap between recurrent revenues and recurrent spending.

"3.35 The second is that there must be a freeze on the public sector wage and salary bill in current prices. Such a freeze will mean a reduction in real incomes in the public sector, as prices will rise during the period by at least 25 per cent. But only a total freeze, will 'save' \$2,000 million over the Plan period, will permit the gap to be covered. It follows equally that State Enterprises and public utilities must also impose such a freeze.

3.36 The reduction in real income is the inevitable mirror effect of the experience in petroleum, the country's principal prime mover. The reality is that over the period 1973—1982 the country received and enjoyed an 'unearned' improvement in their living standards of almost 35 per cent because of favourable movements in the price of petroleum; it is inevitable therefore, that when real oil prices fall by 37 per cent and real oil output falls by 12 per cent (cumulating to a fall in real income from oil of 50 per cent), that real incomes must fall by at least a fraction of this."

It also talks about the impact of all this on foreign borrowing. The reason I am quoting this is to say that many people have not learned from the experience of the 1970s. This Government, in learning from that experience, had endeavoured to, not only talk about a revenue stabilization fund but, do something about it. In order to avoid the consequences that followed shortly after the Chambers government refused to heed the advice and warnings of these people with respect to compressing of expenditure consistent with the fall in real incomes in the country; which led us into the IMF programme in the 1980s—we on this side have decided to engage the public with this idea of the Interim Revenue Stabilization Fund and to tell them that it has, among its goals, to promote fiscal discipline in the event of windfall revenues from oil. We know this is the case as I speak to you now.

We also want to cushion the effect of unexpected falls in real income as a consequence of a fall in oil prices. We want to strengthen the public sector savings effort. It is important that I say this because, I remember in the budget

debate a Member from the opposite side, I think it is the Member from Diego Martin Central, made the point that he did not hear much talk this year about the reformulation or modernization of the pension system in Trinidad and Tobago.

What we are doing now is paying people's pension out of current revenue, which means that the people who are now working are paying the pensions of people who worked before. We know that, all over the world, that has put countries in great jeopardy. In fact, it has bankrupt some countries. That disaster has illuminated many other problems. The reform of the pension system to a determined benefit and the contribution system distinct from the one that we now have is one of the things we have to do.

When you are talking about strengthening the public sector savings effort you, obviously, are linking the Interim Revenue Stabilization Fund with all the ideas, which would mean that individuals would become more conscious of the need to have a futuristic or a time preference for consumption and investment that increases savings. This Interim Revenue Stabilization Fund has that purpose in it. It may be distinguished from earlier funds such as the funds that were set up in the 1970s that were so easily frittered away by some characteristics that are going to make it different, more manageable, more responsive to prudent fiscal management, and not a fund that could be as Dr. St. Cyr said in the Senate, easily raided.

“The resources should be invested in foreign currency, securities, which are issued by sovereign states which have investment status, as specified by at least 2 reputable rating agencies. The assets should not form part of the resource of the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago and should not be used for intervention in the local foreign exchange market.”

In other words you would not have the assets available for supporting the price of the TT dollar.

“However the assets will form part of the international reserves of the country. The operational and administrative structure ought to be outlined in governing legislation.”

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is the principal reason why we have the first part of this Motion. This Motion, as I said, is a kind of hodge-podge, mixing up: Birk Hillman and airport with revenue stabilization fund. I cannot see the reason for that.

In any event, what we are saying here is that we wanted legislation. The Attorney General's department has that responsibility, not the Ministry of

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Finance, Planning and Development. We could not bring legislation to the House, without the Attorney General's department making it available, of course, in collaboration with the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Development. This legislation is due to come before the end of this session, I hope.

"The assets should not form part of the Consolidated Fund, but will be subject to audit by the Auditor General. Overall responsibility for the fund should reside with the Minister responsible for Finance. However, the Minister may delegate this responsibility to a board of trustees which he would appoint. The board of trustees would be empowered..."

When I say he would appoint, that language does not say that he is going to pick his friends. He would appoint as Minister means Cabinet would approve a board.

"The board of trustees would be empowered to delegate part or all of its responsibilities to the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago or to external managers,

The Board of trustees would make arrangements for the revenue stabilization fund to be audited, and is also expected to prepare a report on its activities for laying in Parliament annually.

The petroleum taxation revenues anticipated in its annual budget should be the reference point from which deviations in petroleum taxation revenue and the quantum of deposits to and withdrawals from the revenue stabilization fund should be determined.

Deposits to the revenue stabilization fund should be mandatory when petroleum taxation revenue received for the quarter is 10 per cent or more than the petroleum taxation revenue anticipated in the budget quarter."

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when I was reading over the statements of the Member for Diego Martin Central, I found a curious departure that did not make much sense to me: where he is saying that last year we budgeted oil price at \$16 per barrel and this year, we budgeted at \$22 per barrel, and he does not understand how we got there. He suggested that, maybe, we should have some inflation projection. I do not see how inflation is connected to the oil market. I do not see what that has to do with it. The price of oil has to do with demand and supply of energy in the world market, it has to do with the weather.

**2.20 p.m.**

If you have a very bad winter in Northern Europe and North America, that increases demand for energy and if the supply situations do not permit, you have

an increase in the price of oil. It has nothing to do with inflation. Inflation, as Milton Friedman says, has everywhere and at all times been a monetary phenomenon. It has to do with how central banks manage, or do not manage, or fail to manage, the money supply in their countries. Indeed, if you aggregate mismanagement of money over the world, you have inflationary tendencies. But that does not have anything to do with oil price. I want to caution the Member for Diego Martin Central to get some lessons in economics before he puts these things on the *Hansard* record.

When I was in the other place, Sen. Dr. St. Cyr had some opinions on this. I am sure when the Bill is going through both Houses there will be occasion to concretize and to impose these ideas on the legislation. He was saying that instead of using 10 per cent, we should use some measure of standard deviation. Those of us who had to study statistics would know that you use the standard deviation or the deviation of a parameter from the mean as a measure of risk. So you are saying, why do we not use—if the price fell, let us say, “X” standard deviations from what the average Trent price is, then that will trigger intervention in the Fund. If the prices fall below the standard deviation, you go into the Fund, and if oil prices are so much standard deviations above the Trent’s price then you put money into the Fund. I go on, because I think it is good that we should enlighten people about this matter.

Where deposit to the Revenue Stabilization Fund is mandatory, the deposit should be at least 67 per cent of the total positive petroleum taxation deviation for the quarter. The positive petroleum taxation deviation for the quarter should be equal to the aggregate of the royalties and taxes received from petroleum during the quarter, less the aggregate of the royalties and taxes anticipated from petroleum for the quarter in the budget. Deposits to the Fund should also arise from interest dividends and other income earned by the assets of the Fund. All the earnings of the assets of the Fund should be deposited to the Revenue Stabilization Fund.

I cannot remember the particular case, but there is at least one country that had done something like this and their earnings from that source is greater than their gross domestic product. So that we are not acting here blindly. There is concrete evidence of the benefits of this for those people who have done it when the occasion arose. Of course, those who did not do it, suffered as we suffered and perhaps still are suffering the consequences.

In order to ensure that the investments of the Fund are undertaken in an expeditious manner, three working days before the end of each quarter, the

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Ministry of Finance, Planning and Development would be expected to liaise with the Board of Inland Revenue, the Treasury and the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries to determine the likelihood that a deposit would be mandatory for the quarter under reference. Where it is likely that a deposit would be necessary for the quarter, the Ministry should alert the Treasury, the trustees and the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago accordingly.

When the Central Bank has been alerted that a deposit may be mandatory for the quarter, the Central Bank should confirm with the Ministry and the Treasury, in writing, the amounts received in respect of petroleum taxation for the quarter on or before the second working day of the next quarter.

On receipt of the information regarding petroleum taxation revenues from the Central Bank, the Ministry should determine whether a deposit is mandatory for the quarter. If a deposit is mandatory, the Ministry should inform the Treasury on or before the third working day of the quarter of the amount to be transferred from the Consolidated Fund to the Revenue Stabilization Fund. The Treasury should, within 24 hours of being informed by the Ministry, instruct the Central Bank to make the appropriate transfer.

There are conditions also for withdrawals that are not willy-nilly and capricious, that would prevent the Fund from being a source of imprudent fiscal management. I think I should also put those on the record. And these, may I remind hon. Members, are what the Government puts forward as proposals. When the Bill comes to Parliament, the critical details would be ironed out when it is passing through.

Withdrawals from the Fund would be permitted where there has been a negative deviation of at least 10 per cent from the petroleum taxation revenue anticipated in the budget. In the event that a withdrawal from the Fund is permissible, the maximum amount that should be withdrawn with respect to the quarter would be determined by reference to two tests. First, the withdrawal in respect of any quarter should be no more than the lesser of (a), the negative petroleum taxation deviation for the quarter under reference, and (b), 25 per cent of the balance of the fund at the beginning of the quarter. Secondly, the maximum withdrawal from the Fund for any fiscal year would be limited to 25 per cent of the balance of the Fund at the beginning of the fiscal year.

Three working days before the end of every quarter, the Ministry should liaise with the Board of Inland Revenue, the Treasury and the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries to determine whether it is likely that a withdrawal is permissible for that quarter.



Where it is permissible, the Ministry should alert the Treasury, the Board of Trustees and the Central Bank accordingly. The Central Bank should confirm with the Ministry and the Treasury, in writing, the amounts received in respect of petroleum taxation for the quarter on or before the first working day of the next quarter. On receipt of the information regarding petroleum taxation revenues received by the Central Bank for the quarter, the Ministry should determine the amount of the withdrawal, if any, that is permissible for the quarter and advise the Minister responsible for Finance accordingly.

Where withdrawal from the Fund is permissible in respect of a quarter, the Minister may, during the first month of the immediately succeeding quarter, authorize a withdrawal from the Fund. Should the Minister responsible for Finance authorize a withdrawal from the Fund, the Ministry should inform the Treasury, the trustees of the Fund and the Central Bank of the amount to be so transferred to the Consolidated Fund from the Fund.

It goes on to talk about the governance of the fund and its management. So there is no question in my mind that this matter of the Revenue Stabilization Fund that has elicited so much unnecessary controversy, is something that we should all be shouting and cheering about.

I go back to the question of corruption, because, as I said in my opening remarks, the only purpose that the hon. Member for Diego Martin Central had in raising this issue had to do with providing a great opportunity in this season of election, which I sometimes like to call, the season of unreason, to focus the feelings and the emotions of certain constituencies on the issue of corruption which seems to be what they plan to go to the country with.

I am saying this in all sincerity. We are going into a general election which is going to decide which government we will have for the next five years and some people are seeing it—I heard them say this would be the mother of all elections; the mother of all battles; the mother of this and the mother of that. *[Interruption]* I did not say, mother this and mother that. I said mother of this and mother of that. *[Laughter]* You are becoming profane.

I would advise the people on the other side out of sincerity for the democratic process and concern for the way this country is going, I honestly believe that I cannot impugn the dignity of the Leader of the Opposition, or I should say the Leaders of the Opposition, because there are contending parties over there who are ambitious to become leader, hopefully Leader of the Opposition—I would like to admonish them to understand that in multi-ethnic societies like ours, it is

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indeed useful to us to be guided by the experience of other people, in other societies like ours. People like Guyana, India, Sri Lanka, and particularly Nigeria, Somalia, Congo, Rwanda, Burundi. All these places are multi-ethnic societies just like Croatia, Slovenia, or what was formerly Yugoslavia, and the entire Soviet empire.

The lesson we need to learn from that is that when you mobilize people on the basis of ethnic feelings rather than on universalistic criteria that can have, what I would call, a crossover effect in the sense that when you did sets—those of us who did that earlier on in our lives, you talk about the intersection between sets; you talk about disjointed sets. If you have a group of people who call themselves ethnic group “A” and a group that calls themselves ethnic group “B”—and in terms of political mobilization there are no ideas that can cause an intersection of the interest of those two sets—what you have really are two competing monolithic, ethnic hegemonists that are in confrontation.

### **2.30 p.m.**

What we really have are two competing monolithic, ethnic hegemonists that are in confrontation and that will lead to the situations that existed in Nigeria, or I should say still exist in Nigeria, because Nigeria is not a certainty to persist at a state in the foreseeable future. It is anybody’s guess whether it will fall apart or stay together. I say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we need to have issues that go beyond mobilizing feelings and ethnic anxiety. We need to deal with issues that join everybody and, indeed, the issue of corruption is an issue that can join everybody; but that is if it is done in the way in which I think we could do it.

I have here in my hand, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a document that has many speeches by the late Dr. Eric Williams and he is talking about corruption—between page 158 and page 160-something; I cannot remember. He is dealing with this question of his role in Cabinet and dealing with corruption. I am trying to get across to the honourable House the idea that coming into this Parliament with a particular partisan idea that the issue of corruption in Trinidad and Tobago is an issue of the UNC Government is fatally flawed.

Not only is it fatally flawed, it is supremely dangerous because it can lead the mind of innocent people—who, through no fault of their own, and because of their background, their acculturation and their education, not in a, should I say, reflective and dispassionate mode—in terms of interpreting what they are hearing from the Member for Diego Martin Central. So in their own minds what it does is agitate the idea that corruption in Trinidad and Tobago in the year 2000 in

October, in September, in November, going into an election, is UNC issue. Or rather, I should say, is an issue of “we against dem corrupt people in the UNC”. That idea is fatally flawed and I want to put it on the record.

I want to read from Dr. Williams here. He said on page 159:

“Whether people like it or not, this is the nature of the world today.”

To deal with corruption. One has to deal with integrity:

“Everybody all over the world is watching these things. There are all sorts of investigations sometimes using ordinary established procedures—police, sometimes special commissions as in Hong Kong, Thailand, Indonesia—to deal with particular problems that have emerged over the last few years.

After all, you do not cherish these things in the midst of all the allegations circling all over the world today about this company going into this country and involving itself in some little arrangement to sell its products. It is there the world over and we might as well face it and seek to put some obstacles in its way to stop it and to get some improved practices in the light of the present-day conditions. Then we have had some experience—illegal tenders; propositions that do not meet the case; attempts to superimpose inferior authority on the decision of the Cabinet...”

Now, what that means in simple English is that Dr. Williams is saying inferior authority has attempted to impose itself on Cabinet decisions. The only inferior authority he could be referring to here is bureaucrats. He is accusing the public servants and bureaucrats of being corrupt and, in fact, with respect to the King George V Park we did know that he did accuse the late Eugenio Moore of being corrupt and sidelined him for a long time. Or usurping:

“...the financial authority in respect of the proper procedure for tenders; interference by foreign governments and persons representing foreign governments.”

These persons representing foreign governments are not foreigners. He is talking about citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

“This is part of the experience in the last few years. It gets worse. It gets very much worse. It is not so long ago—if I may interject a fairly personal note which I hate to do in the circumstances—that when I had expressed the view that I thought I could take my leave and find other things to do, I had a private message from one of them. I do not know from whom. I did not ask. The message was to the effect that would it be possible for you to hold your hand

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for a little while and to go back and see what has happened in your absence? This is what I did. I do not want to say any more. I just merely want to say that I made up my mind that some of the things that developed in that particular period—the disease was obviously deep seated in some cases—...”

The disease was obviously deep seated in some cases. Now, this is Dr. Williams talking about Trinidad and Tobago under his stewardship. He is talking about the disease of corruption that was deep seated in some cases.

“I just simply could not associate with. I cannot now.”

Now, when one looks at history in retrospect, and one remembers, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we are hearing from the Member for Diego Martin Central the idea that corruption in this season of election is a question of the purity, the lily-white integrity of the PNM, and the fact that in Trinidad and Tobago the only reason we need to talk about corruption has to do with this present Government over the last five years, one wonders whether these people [*Interruption*] are really serious. What is [*Interruption*] their idea? [*Interruption*] The Member is not going to distract me, you know. If he knows what is good for him, he will keep quiet.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Member for Diego Martin Central came here this afternoon to engage the national community in a debate that has been devoted and dedicated to the proposition that corruption in Trinidad and Tobago is something very recent, it is an adventitious root and limb that has just emerged in the national community solely and unambiguously having to do with the presence of the UNC Government. I want to quote here from Gordon Rohlehr’s *Shape of That Hurt* and this is what he said. He is saying that the poet laureate of the PNM, Lord Kitchener:

Supporting the six-time victorious PNM went hand in hand with turning away from the burgeoning corruption and atrocity.

I did not write this book. Gordon Rohlehr is a respectable man. He is talking about the burgeoning corruption and atrocity of the PNM.

When the Sam P Wallace scandal broke in 1982 and the extent of O’Halloran’s fraud in that business alone, a matter of some \$250 million, registered on the nation’s consciousness, Kitchener composed *Soca Corruption* in 1983 in which he simultaneously dealt with and evaded the dreadful implications of corruption.

I want to quote the calypso because I am making the point, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that in order to deal with corruption one cannot make it a partisan issue.

If one makes it a partisan issue one is wasting one's time. Dr. Williams himself was saying that he had to deal with it and I am talking about O'Halloran because O'Halloran died in his bed and died a close associate of Dr. Williams.

When I came into this Cabinet in 1997, a couple of months after I came in they wrote off \$120 million for expenditure on a racecourse in Caroni where no horse ever ran. No racecourse was ever built. That is only one case and if we want to list all the cases, under those people, of corruption or allegations of corruption, it will run into volumes. We will need to have a whole library to see about it.

I have in my hand here a journal called *Revista del CLAD Reforma Y Democracia* and there is a whole essay here having to do with the question—it is by Nora Gorrochategui. “Medidas preventivas de la corrupción en el funcionamiento del aparato público. (Ways to prevent corruption in the operation of the public service and state sector).” It is talking about measures to prevent corruption in the functioning of the apparatus of the state. When we look at that essay—I had underlined some of the things she said. [Interruption] This is an international journal published somewhere in Latin America and the copyright is Centro Latinoamericano de Administración para el Desarrollo—the Latin American Centre for Development. Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am looking at page 152 in that journal to page 156 and on page 155 there is a paragraph here that starts:

“Factores privilegiados para la corrupción” (Factors which encourage corruption)

It says here that:

“La ecuación de Klitgaard...sobre corrupción en sí misma contiene ‘los ingredientes básicos de la corrupción’, que pueden servir de guía para determinar el potencial de corrupción de una organización: Corrupción = Monopolio + Arbitrio - Responsabilidad.”

I am putting this in the record because I want to make the point that corruption is not a Trinidad thing and it is not a UNC thing. It is not something that one can identify solely and unambiguously as a Trinidad problem that began when the UNC came to power in 1995. That is not the case at all. There is another paper I have here—

**Mr. Assam:** Are you saying the UNC is corrupt?

**Dr. The Hon. M. Job:** No, no, no, I am not saying the UNC is corrupt. I am just making the point—[Interruption]

**Mr. Assam:** So “how yuh say it is not a UNC thing”?

**Dr. The Hon. Mr. Job:** No, the Member for Diego Martin Central—if you were here—you were not here—is making an allegation that there is corruption in Trinidad because of the UNC and I am trying to demolish that argument by stating and quoting documents, all of the works—I was just quoting Dr. Williams here saying that—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Member for Tobago East, just for the record, Standing Order 7(1) says:

“(1) The proceedings and debates of the House shall be in the English language.

(2) Every petition shall be in the English language.”

**Dr. The Hon. M. Job:** What does that mean, that I cannot quote it?

**Mr. Assam:** “Well, translate it, nah.” Are you not a linguist?

**Dr. The Hon. M. Job:** Okay, I will translate it. “Just now.” I have this to read. I will translate it for Members.

This other statement here, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is *The Other Face of Business In Latin America*. It deals with the whole question of corruption in Latin America and mentions cases like in the case of Carlos Andres Perez who went to jail. There was another President of Brazil, President Fernando Collor de Mello—okay, let me read the paragraph:

“The change in attitude throughout the region started largely with the 1992 corruption scandal that brought down Brazil’s President Fernando Collor de Mello and was followed a year later with the impeachment of Venezuela’s President Carlos Andres Perez, also on corruption charges.

At the December 1994 Summit of the Americas, 34 heads of state from the Western Hemisphere agreed that the signing governments would establish conflict-of-interest standards for public employees, and stiff penalties for officials who use their public position to benefit private interests.”

It goes on to talk about how:

“ ‘Corruption undermines the legitimacy of public institutions and strikes at society, moral order and justice’ ...”

Indeed, it mentions some of the reasons why there is corruption: that people are not paid as much as they should be paid—and a particularly important one that

people on the other side should understand where they say one is likely to find corruption—where governments have a veto, policies where governments have a too easy veto on who must get what, when there are too many prohibitions and when too much power is put into the hands of politicians and bureaucrats.

**2.45 p.m.**

They asked me to translate and this is what is meant by saying “Corrupción = Monopolio + Arbitrio – Responsabilidad.” Corruption is function of conditions when there is monopoly and arbitrary decision making minus accountability and responsibility. That is what she is saying. She is saying when the opportunity to decide is on the part of the Government without any reason for transparency being there, you are going to find corruption. This is one of the reasons for it. The implication of that, is that privatizing the economy will make it less likely that you will have corruption in a society.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to go back to the Dr. Williams matter because the thrust of my argument at this point, is that the people on the other side that are moving this Motion need to understand that we have never done all those things that we needed to do in this country since the days of Dr. Eric Williams, to create the kind of institutional framework; to create the kind of culture that would allow people to feel that justice will be done when political leaders, bureaucrats, politicians, and permanent secretaries—that is what Dr. Eric Williams was complaining about—when they were trying to usurp the executive process in order to do themselves favours.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Government has passed legislation to deal with all that. There is the Freedom of Information Act that was passed which provided an enforceable right of citizens to get information concerning corruption, or any other matter. There is the Constitutional (Amdt.) Bill that allows for the setting up of parliamentary committees to investigate allegations of corruption. There is the Integrity Bill which is now before the Senate and all these laws had not been there. If Dr. Williams had had those instruments at his disposal, perhaps, we would not be here today discussing this issue. Dr. Williams went on to state that what he wanted to do with respect to corruption he could not do, because he was advised that if he did it the country would have become depopulated! There were people in his Cabinet that might have wanted to migrate. It is all here in the essay. Since that time until now, we have not really done anything positive except and until this Government came on the scene to deal with the issue.

So that when the Member for Diego Martin Central is enjoining us with his mantra on corruption and talking about InnCogen; the National Flour Mills; the

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airport; and the Prime Minister being implicated and that there were no responses to questions about all these kinds of matters, I am saying that these allegations—because that is what they are—ought to be taken into the proper context and that you cannot deal with corruption by making it an election issue where the mischievous, has the dedication to saying anything that comes to the mind. When I say “to say anything comes to the mind”, this is what goes on in this Parliament. If I may give you an instance, on this same matter, the Member for Diego Martin East—he reminds me of one of Grimm’s fairytales—“a gnome”, a little imp—a little small fellow that is there doing work like Rumpelstilskin. Do you remember the story of Rumpelstilskin in one of those Cutteridge books—a little imp.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am not imputing any improper motives, but I am saying in this season of unreason that we call an “election season” we have to be careful about what we do to lead the mind of the population on the issues, and corruption is an issue, but not a partisan issue. It is not a UNC issue. You will never deal with it in Trinidad, Brazil, Colombia or anywhere by making it a partisan issue, a UNC issue.

I have here collections of essays by all the people over there. They are saying how this Government is claiming credit for the smooth functioning of the economy and, for the fact that all the fundamentals are right and the Government is claiming credit when credit is really due to its antecedent governments starting with the NAR in 1986. This is on the *Hansard* record. The Member for Diego Martin Central said it; the Member for San Fernando East in his budget presentation said it; and the Member for Diego Martin West said it. This Government is claiming the benefits of things that were done under the IMF programme.

Mr. Speaker, when I say that, I want to make it abundantly clear that there is where the deviousness comes in. All of them got into power in 1995 by telling people that what the NAR was doing was so destructive, disastrous and fraudulent. They even coined a set of words that Robinson was wicked, vindictive, callous; he was heartless; he hated poor people; he hated black people; he want to bring back Massa; he was the quintessence of Massa; and he was the symbol of Massa—a flood of emotion and hatred was canalized, was led against the Government at that time behind that cacophony of what I like to call “discordant nonsense”. It is in this book, *In Defence of the People’s Interest*. It is written by a Kenneth Valley. I do not know if it is the same Kenneth Valley that we see opposite us. It is written by a Morris Marshall and there are whole essays here—just a flood of denunciations of everything. They did not want VAT. They were



denouncing VAT. Mr. Manning did promise that when he came into power that he was going to get rid of VAT.

**Mr. Valley:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, would the hon. Member quote the section of that book that says we did not want VAT, please.

**Dr. The Hon. M. Job:** A whole essay—a flood of racist nonsense—all this is doing is canalizing the mind by linguistic symbolism to hate Mr. Robinson, because he is going to bring back the era before Albert Gomes; he is going to bring back colonialism; he is going to bring back a time when black people cannot go into white people's kitchen, except if they pass through the back door—you could not go through the front door and all these things. You cannot get into the police service except if you were a corporal or a constable; you could not become a sergeant. It is all here—racial, black skin, white mask.

“Massa, in my view, has returned, this time in the form of the National Alliance for Reconstruction. Black skins, white masks; the same recalcitrant forces that vigorously opposed the PNM in 1956. They have not changed. They are still opposed to any progressive movement forward that meant the upliftment of the descendants...

Our new MASSA can not apply the whip in the literal sense but they have surely whipped our people into submission, by reducing their income, as is the case with the now infamous and allegedly unilateral suspension of Cost of Living Allowance and merit increases, the escalating price of food and drugs, VAT (to come on JANUARY 1, 1990) among other THINGS.

Our new MASSA, as the MASSA of old, remains insensitive to the plight of the ordinary people, showing an unnatural concern about dollars and cents...”

And it goes on like that. Just a litany of purposeful, racist propaganda to mobilize an ethnic community. It is nothing to do with economic analysis; nothing to do with sense.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The speaking time of the hon. Member has expired.

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

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Dr. The Hon. M. Job:** Thanks to all the Members including those opposite. Mr. Deputy Speaker, what I am trying to say is that we have to be very careful. This Member for Diego Martin East, Mr. Imbert, that reminded me so much of

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Goebbels. Goebbels was the Minister of Propaganda of the Nazi Government.  
[*Interruption*]:

“What about these concerns Minister Wilson? How are public servants going to survive in 1990? What must they do? When will this heartlessness come to an end, especially with the Value Added Tax (VAT) taking effect from January 1, 1990?”

That was their work. They knew when they were saying that, they were not going to remove VAT and they promised people that they were going to remove VAT. That is their kind of politics. Their kind of politics is just evil; just wickedness.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have here a statement from the *Hansard* of the Member for Diego Martin East, that little “gnome”. As I said, he reminds me of Rumpelstiltskin; he reminds me of Grimm’s fairytales and of “little imps and gnomes” and hear what the man said. They were talking about this debt and how we owe \$20 billion and when they came there the debt was so much and the Government put on \$11 billion and now the debt is \$30 billion or something like that. I was trying to point out to them, based on the analysis that I was able to do, that, in fact, the reason we can afford more debt is that the gross domestic product of Trinidad and Tobago has gone up phenomenally. When in 1995 it was \$31 billion it is now \$50.232 billion so that you cannot have the same level of debt.

There are two tables in the Central Bank report. There is a table that lists prices of gross domestic product at constant prices and also at current prices. So that the gross domestic product of Trinidad and Tobago in 1995 at constant prices—this is where you take the current prices and you deflate them with an index they call the Gross Domestic Product Deflator. I do not want to go into how to construct that, but it is an index which is developed just like the consumer price index where you take certain base quantities and multiply them by current prices and divide them by the same set of quantities by a base year set of prices.

**2.55 p.m.**

You do the same thing for the whole gross domestic product and you develop an index called the GDP deflator and you use that deflator in order to take the current prices series to make it a constant prices series. So, GDP in 1995 was \$17 billion in constant prices. GDP in 1995 in current prices was \$31.697 million.

But hear what the Member for Diego Martin Central does. He takes the debt in current prices, takes the GDP in constant prices and takes out his desk calculator and determines to fool the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Central Bank document is here. It says that the GDP at constant prices is \$17 billion and when you look at the current prices GDP, it is \$31.6 billion. Appendix 1 gives you GDP at constant prices; Appendix 3 gives you GDP at current prices. The Member for Diego Martin East uses the constant prices with the current prices series for debt and does the most mischievous idiocy that you can think.

I quote *Hansard* because I want this thing in the record so that people understand what these people are about:

“I did a simple calculation while he was rattling off his foolishness and I have worked out the ratio of total debt to gross domestic product in 1995 and 2000 and for the Minister’s edification, in 1995 according to his own book, the gross domestic product of Trinidad and Tobago at constant prices was \$17.3 billion in Appendix I in the *Review of the Economy*. In Appendix 16, we look at the total public debt in 1995 which is \$18.8 billion...”

That, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is \$18.8 billions in current prices.

“...In Appendix 16, we look at the total public debt in 1995 which was \$18.8 billion...”

—in current prices—

“...GDP, \$17.3 billion, total debt \$18.8 billion.”

He takes the current prices debt series and mixes it up with the constant prices series and he is a genius. I cannot believe he did not know what he was doing, Mr. Deputy Speaker. He went on:

“So the ratio of total debt to GDP in 1995 was 1.09 per cent.”

That is not true. It cannot be true, because you cannot even do that kind of thing. He went on:

“Let us move on to the year 2000 using the Minister’s own document. Gross Domestic Product in 2000, \$22.7 billion in Appendix I, debt, \$30 billion so the debt is \$30 billion, the GDP is 22. The ratio of debt to GDP is 1.33 per cent, sorry 1.09 per cent...”

He went on like that. That is pure mischief. The true figure of debt to GDP is \$30 billion divided by \$50.231 billion, or approximately 0.6, not the 1.33 wrongly calculated.

When I explained to the national community that the ratio of external debt to GDP in 1995 was 30.7 per cent and in the year 2000, it is 21.4 per cent, that is the

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fact. You use the same current prices series to do these kinds of things, not that kind of Mephistophelean danger to which we are exposed in this election season where people do not know better. The same thing happened when I gave a lecture here.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to get something from my bag. This is another demonstration. I am going to get this into every nook and cranny of Trinidad and Tobago. This is the *Hansard* record of what I said on the Motion moved by Member for Diego Martin East on crime—

**Mr. Manning:** Oh no!

**Dr. The Hon. M. Job:**—where I stood here for my entire contribution and made several references to the fact that crime is not about African people and not about black people.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am in the Bahamas reading in a newspaper that the Member for Diego Martin West attacked me. When he said it in Parliament, I did not bother because I understood they were about that. He attacked me for saying that only black people committed crime in Trinidad and Tobago. I never said that. He sat there and heard me talk about Samuel Jacob, Boysie Singh and Bombay. It is in here.

The *Hansard* record has it but he gets up like a little gnome, like a little imp and puts on the record that Morgan Job said that the only people in the country of Trinidad and Tobago who are committing crimes are black people. It is in the Bahamas newspaper and all about. The same thing the Member for Diego Martin East is doing about this debt business. Because they have kept people ignorant for so long, they know that they would not refer to anything and this sort of “he say”, “she say”, “they say”, *mauvais langue*, “commesse” country, anything they say over there will get in the newspaper and people believe it.

That is their election campaign. Their election campaign about corruption is about saying anything that you can say about the airport. Do not talk about the modern airport that we are going to have. Do not talk about the truth. Talk about anything that is mischievous. It reminds me about Herman Melville's characterization about the man called Jimmy Claggert. Claggert was on this British man-o-war and there was an issue that happened where a man got killed and in the writing up, he talked about the character of some people, that they are

so mischievous, it is not that they are lacking in intellectual fortitude, it is not that they are lacking in sincerity, it is just that, and he quotes Plato:

“In a list of definitions including the authentic translation of Plato, a list attributed to him, occurs this: ‘Natural depravity’...”

What is natural depravity?

“A depravity according to nature, a definition which, though savouring of Calvinism, by no means involves Calvin’s dogma as to total mankind. Evidently, its intent makes it applicable but to individuals. Not many are the examples of this depravity which the gallows and jail supply. At any rate, for notable instances, since these have no vulgar alloy of the brute in them, but invariably are dominated by intellectuality, one must go elsewhere. Civilization, especially if of the austerer sort, is auspicious to it. It folds itself in the mantle of respectability.”

This kind of depravity folds itself in the mantle of respectability.

“It has its certain negative virtues serving as silent auxiliaries. It never allows wine to get within its guard. It is not going too far to say that it is without vices or small sins.”

He goes on:

“It is never mercenary nor avaricious. In short, the depravity here meant partakes nothing of the sordid or the sensual...”

But the thing which in eminent instances signalizes so exceptional a nature is this: Though the man's even temper and discreet bearing would seem to intimate a mind peculiarly subject to the law of reason, not the less in heart he would seem to riot in complete exemption from that law, having apparently little to do with reason further than to employ it as an ambidexter implement for effecting the rationale. That is to say: Toward the accomplishment of an aim which in wantonness of atrocity would seem to partake of the insane, he will direct a cool judgment sagacious and sound. These men are madmen, and are of the utmost dangerous sort for their lunacy is not continuous, but occasional, evoked by some special object; it is protectively secretive, which is as much as to say it is self-contained, so that when, moreover, most active it is to the average mind not distinguishable from sanity, and for the reason above suggested: that whatever its aims may be—and the aim is never declared—the method and the outward proceeding are always perfectly rational.”

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There is a rationality about saying these crazy things. To reasonable people, it sounds like, “Well, why are these ‘fellas’? They have to be insane.” No. No. There is a cool rationality about it, because they know what they have done to their constituencies. They understand that their constituencies are constituencies driven by emotional and tribal feelings. They understand that. So, their cool rationality is to spend the next two months talking and saying those things that are going to mobilize people in that direction.

I give another example of what I mean. They come here and say all kinds of things. The Member for La Brea—I have his *Hansard* record here. He said that there is a conspiracy in this country to prevent certain people from doing well in A-levels. There is a conspiracy in this country to prevent certain people from doing physics and mathematics, and one of his relatives, his son or daughter, was able to do physics and mathematics. This is Mr. Bereaux’s contribution on the Appropriation Bill:

“Mr. Speaker, there is a sinister plot going on in this country. I repeat it slowly for emphasis: there is a sinister plot going on in this country to keep down the people from certain areas, especially the young people in subjects like mathematics.

A certain teacher told my son, ‘If you study 24 hours a day from now till exams, the best you could make is an E’. Why? His name is Hedwige Bereaux too. He made four As.”

Everybody thumped the desk. What is this sinister conspiracy in this country to prevent Bereaux’s son and people who look like Bereaux’s son from doing mathematics?

**Mr. Bereaux:** My son is just bright like his father.

**Dr. The Hon. M. Job:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me explain to you. I have in my hand, again—

**Mr. Bereaux:** Why do you not shut your mouth? My son is brighter than you are. I have your record from QRC.

**Dr. The Hon. M. Job:** Well, go and get it. So, what?

**Mr. Bereaux:** It is not very good.

**Dr. The Hon. M. Job:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have in my hand a document that says: Trinidad and Tobago Youth Social Development—An integrated Approach for Social Inclusion. They are talking about education. I just quoted

from the Member for La Brea. On page 12, I want to read what it says. I want that paragraph to go into the record because we have to deal with the real issues in the world. When Dr. Williams was here talking about the events after 1970—I do not have time to go into all that. Dr. Williams tried to commiserate with the public and explain that the events of 1970 had to do with the sense or the feeling of social deprivation on the part of certain people in the country. All of us would agree with that, but what Dr. Williams failed to do and what these people over there could never even think to do is to deal with the real causes.

Instead of coming into Parliament and inciting racial feelings, they should deal with the real facts of the matter and change the culture in the communities which puts certain children at a disadvantage. The document says at page 12 that:

“Inequity in the primary and secondary school is evident, both in the scores resulting from Common Entrance.”

It goes on to say:

“Considerable variation is evident on student performance on the exam based on a number of variables including the management of primary schools, the education district, student, sex, socio-economic status and self-declared race group. Students of self-declared African origin have been significantly more likely to score lower than those of mixed Indian origin. The Africans score an average of 59; the Indians, an average of 64 on Common Entrance. The latter, in turn, have normally performed more poorly than Syrian, Lebanese, Caucasian and Chinese students.”

It goes on like that. The important point I want to focus the mind on there is, that is the problem we have to deal with. If we take off from where the Member for La Brea is talking, we will never solve that problem. We will never get on top of it.

**Mr. Bereaux:** Would the Minister give way, please?

**Mr. G. Singh:** Sit down.

**Mr. Bereaux:** I am not talking to you. Would the Minister give way?

**Dr. The Hon. M. Job:** I am not giving way. I do not have enough time.

**Mr. Bereaux:** Okay. Fine. You do not like to face the truth.

**Dr. The Hon. M. Job:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am saying this because it is important that we deal with the issues, whether we are dealing with corruption or whatever we are dealing with, we have to deal with the fundamental facts of the issue. They keep talking about corruption and making allusions.

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I quoted from *In Defence of the People's Interest*. They have not disavowed it, which means they are in sync with it. Mr. Valley is one of the authors of this so they really believe, as Claggert did, that whatever serves your purpose, you must say it.

**3.10 p.m.**

In this document: *Perspectives for The New Society*, I have on record, Dr. Williams saying quite unambiguously that he and his government had, in fact, done more than was fairly necessary for certain people here. I want to quote what Dr. Williams said:

"Perhaps the PNM Government has sometimes in the past gone too far in being paternalistic in the face of severe lack of social amenities... But the new society must now place greater emphasis on self-reliance and personal group initiative. The urban dispossessed must still be assisted by the State in many ways, but they must learn to create employment for themselves, particularly through the cooperative. Hard work, thrift and perseverance must from now on become a way of life for most of us. Economic independence and popular participation have to be earned by the people, not handed down by the Government."

This is what Dr. Williams was saying in 1970.

"Economic independence and popular participation have to be earned by the people, not handed down by the Government. What is more, only a bigot would deny that the people in this country of African descent need to develop greater pride in themselves and a greater degree of constructive consciousness in order to secure much of the necessary motivation."

In 1970, while all this was going on—in the document I mentioned: *Forged from the Love of Liberty*—Dr. Williams said that he set up a committee headed by Lloyd Braithwaite, to look at racial discrimination in Trinidad and Tobago. He gave them strict orders that if people do not shape up they had to ship out. When the document came in, there was an alarming statement in it. The Members should read all these documents by Lloyd Braithwaite, Esmé Ottley, Boyd Reed, Martin Sampath and Aldwin Poon Tip. None of them can be claimed to be people who did not serve this country well. None of them can claim that those people are not people who were interested in fair play.

The document states that one of the most racist institutions in terms of employment was the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago and that, in fact, it



should be a prime target for experimenting with the recommendations of the committee. It is in the document: *Interim Report of the Commission of Enquiry into Racial and Colour Discrimination in Private Sector* October 1970. Braithwaite, Esmey, Ottley and the rest of them said that the Central Bank is one of the most racist. Until recently, the Unit Trust was the same thing in Trinidad and Tobago.

When the Member for San Fernando East was Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, he gave Selwyn Ryan a whole set of money in order that Selwyn Ryan must tell him about racism in business. The same thing that Braithwaite and they did, he came in—it has to be some time after 1991, I do not see a date here, but he was Prime Minister then. In 1991 they had the Centre for Ethnic Studies. I am not seeing a date on it.

I am quoting from page 163, which talks about recruitment in the police service.

"Police Service Training College officials stressed that their records are open and available to all applicants. If there was a failure in the examination, the examination papers can be seen upon request. If failure was due to the medical exam, with the doctor's consent, the medical report is made available to the applicant. All things being equal, and given the fact that Indo-Trinidadian candidates are generally better qualified (academically), it should follow that the numbers of Indo-Trinidadians selected for training should be higher. It seems that they tend to do less well in the interview than their Afro-Trinidadian counterparts."

He goes on to say that the reason that is so, is because the members of the panels are all Afro-Trinidadian. These things are there and nobody reads them. Nobody knows that they are there.

"It appears that the ascriptive factor is sometimes dominant over achievement considerations in the selection of recruits to the Police Service. The ascriptive factor is race."

I am quoting from the document. I can give you piles of documents.

Then we come here and we want to deal with Trinidad and Tobago as a multi-ethnic society. This is an election season, stop particularizing, deal with the issues in their necessary generality, because, as I said, if you are dealing with corruption, you have to deal with corruption in a global sense. You do not deal with corruption as if it is something to do with the UNC in particular. You do not deal

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with ethnic particularism as if it has to do with the UNC in particular. Lloyd Braithwaite and the others told you that the Central Bank was a racist institution. Under Mr. Manning, who was doing research, you were told that this exists not only in the police service, but in all the public sector. If you read this document you would be amazed. The document talks about the public service and what goes on in it. I did not write it. Ryan was not my friend, so I could not advise him to write it. It is all here. You could get a copy from wherever it was published.

As long as I am here, I am going to insist that people stop making these wild, nasty, stupid, crazy, obnoxious allegations like Claggert on that ship in the 19th Century, a miserable, mean person. This is just out of pure wickedness, malice and spite. It has nothing to do with what the facts are. You take a current prices series, you mix it up with a constant prices series and lo and behold you have the evidence that the debt to GDP ratio is 1.9 or 109 per cent. That is totally false, but deliberately so. There is no accident in that. That is what they planned to do. They planned to say any wildness and get it in the newspaper.

The Member sat there for one and one half hours and listened to me saying throughout a whole lecture that the problem in Trinidad and Tobago has nothing to do with kinky hair and black skin, it has to do with culture, deprivation and the kind of parenting one has. Let us deal with all those factors. Let us do what I have done in Tobago: go and start to teach poor people's children music just like the rich people's children.

If one is from Bay Shore or the John John Towers one should get lessons early. Let us find a way to intervene with the people in Pinto Road, Trou Macaque and Success Village in a similar kind of way, maybe not an identical kind of way. There are interventions that we must make in order that those cultural deprivations would be compensated for. They are not interested in doing that. They are not interested in saying that, because the more you leave these people there, the more they are amenable to being lassoed and batted down in the wombs and tombs of deprivation and oppression, so they are hysterical about their ethnic situation.

When they see the Prime Minister looking a certain way, they get paranoid. They do not see Sen. Brig. The Hon. Theodore, Sen. The Hon. Kuei-Tung, Sen. Dr. The Hon. Phillips, Sen. The Hon. Mark or me, they do not see anything. All they can see is an Indian Government. In a society like this, one has to look at how one reaches across borders. You cannot mobilize one ethnic group otherwise we would end up with an Ibo situation such as the one in Africa and Nigeria. We would end up with a civil war as in Sri Lanka. This is what you have to try not to

do. Both sides should be trying not to do that. You cannot mobilize on merely ethnic frenzy. This is what happens when you are particularizing corruption and all these things. You have to start to talk about corruption, not in terms of Kuei Tung, a particular individual or a particular government. You have to look at the whole chronology and history. What are the institutional and cultural preconditions and provenances? How do you make those things more amenable to the kind of society and government that you want? What are we to do, not only in terms of constructing law, but in terms of changing attitudes, perceptions, ambitions and all those givens?

Sir Vidya Naipaul wrote a book dealing with the background to Trinidad and Tobago. I cannot remember the name of that book. The whole motive of the work is to say that Trinidad is a real picaroon society, and that Trinidad and Tobago is a society of conmen. It is not just mimic men: it is real smart men. Everybody wants to be a smart man which, probably, explains why O'Halloran and Prevatt survived for so long. Why is it, in the history of this country, we have never been able to make sure that we reduce the waste and inefficiency that sometimes is called corruption?

A lot of what we call corruption in Trinidad and Tobago has nothing to do with some kind of Machiavellian or evil impulse. It has to do with the nature of our society where we have not focussed on productivity and efficiency. Something takes 10 days when it should have taken one day. For 10 days you have to pay people and material is lost. The whole system of management is part of the issue. They have raised all these issues in that document from Latin America—*Revista del Reforma y Democracia*—The Review of Reforms and Democracy. It says all of that. We cannot just look at corruption as a matter of law, good people, honest people and bad people. We have to look at the kind of incentives. If you have a security guard who cannot feed his family and he is working for such a low wage that he could barely keep himself sustained alive, he is likely to turn a blind eye and let somebody come and "tief" the thing and give him a little cut back on it. You have to pay people a little better. If you are in the public service, a customs officer or a policeman for example and your circumstances are such that by looking the other way, it might help you out in terms of your deprived situation, you do that.

### **3.20 p.m.**

So that one has to look at corruption not only as a legal problem or a problem of moral blindness, one has to look at corruption as a problem of culture, as a

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problem of how the economy works, as a problem of how one sets up layers of decision-making because, as this review shows, the essay by Señora Nora Gorrochategui, she goes through all these things and says that in the Latin American reforms one of the important ways to stop corruption is to privatize the economy, to remove those bureaucratic opportunities for saying no, for veto. When one is dealing with this issue of corruption, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we need to do more thinking on it.

I hope that the people in the Opposition will desist and refrain for the next couple of months and get serious about politics, get serious about educating the people and let us deal with issues in a global sense, in a broad sense and not just try to focus the people's minds on "the evil people in this Government", as they allege. This is not fair; it is not right; it is not good for democracy. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if you will permit me before I sit down, there is one thing I want to do. I have the opportunity to amend the Motion and I wish to do that. The Motion says:

*"Be it resolved* that the conduct of the hon. Member for Diego Martin Central be referred to the Committee of Privileges for misleading the House."

I think this is what I am saying and I want to also add, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I should say in the end:

*"Be it resolved* that this honourable House, recognizing that the Preamble of this Motion is false, condemn the mover of the motion."

I want to do that amendment, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

*Seconded by Hon. R. L. Maharaj.*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Members, the Motion is to be amended by adding:

*"Be it resolved* that this honourable House condemn the mover of the motion."

Is that it?

**Dr. The Hon. M. Job:** By adding:

*"Be it resolved* that this honourable House, recognizing that the preamble is false, condemn the mover of the motion, the hon. Member for Diego Martin Central and that it be referred to the Committee of Privileges—and the conduct of the Member be referred to the Committee of Privileges."

*Question on amendment put.*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The “Noes” appear to have it but we will have a division. [*Interruption*] [*Mr. Bereaux rose*] Would you sit down, please, Member for La Brea. Let me just conduct the division.

**Mr. Bereaux:** You want to put me out?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** I will never put you out, Member for La Brea.

**Mr. Bereaux:** I can go, you know. I will go and campaign. But you are abusing your position.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** I am?

**Mr. Fitzgerald Hinds** (*Laventille East/Morvant*): [*Desk thumping*] Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is no wonder the people of this country say, and say far too often for my liking, that, “We kicksin’ in the Parliament”. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I just witnessed the Member for Tobago East, having spoken for all of some 75 minutes, saying virtually nothing and, at the end of that, insulting the intelligence of the Members of this House and the country to mutter and stutter through some document somebody gave him to read like a parrot. Without understanding what was written, he was simply given a note to read and I gather, through the mutterings and stutterings and splutterings, that he was trying to suggest an amendment to the Motion that is before the House put by the Member for Diego Martin Central—an important Motion.

I gather further, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that he was suggesting to us that we amend the Motion to include taking the Member for Diego Martin Central before the Privileges Committee, something that the Member for Couva South tried only very recently when the Member for Diego Martin West indicated clearly that the Government was corrupt and the Attorney General filed such a motion to take the Member for Diego Martin West before the very Privileges Committee. I sat here as a Member and I saw the Speaker deal with the issue, slap the Attorney General on his hand and then on his head and dismiss him summarily, [*Desk thumping*] and now the Member for Tobago East, in light of a serious Motion, comes with the same kind of thing to take the Member for Diego Martin Central before the Privileges Committee yet again. They have to say “we kicksin”.

I have understood a few things, however, and one of the things I promise from henceforth, when they are laughing I will be serious and when they are serious I will be laughing. I do not want to associate with anything that they do on that side [*Desk thumping*] because I am very hurt and I am very pained at the direction Trinidad and Tobago is taking at the hands of the UNC, [*Desk thumping*] and for me this is no kicks. This is no fun.

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Mr. Deputy Speaker, we debated the budget in this honourable Chamber recently and, during the course of that debate, every Member on this side—and I was absent for a large part of it. While I say this, let me say, I understand in my absence the unthinking Member for Chaguanas got on a radio programme and indicated to the nation that I was absent for five sittings on the run. What that dishonest and deceitful Member did not tell the nation is that this parliamentarian has as good as a 93 per cent attendance record [*Desk thumping*] and that the period for which he spoke was the period while I was in the United States dealing with the business of the PNM and the country, to some extent, [*Desk thumping*] on the invitation of the United States government, to whom I am very grateful for exposure in respect of elections 2000 in the United States and the United States foreign policy as it applies to the Caribbean and, in particular, Trinidad and Tobago [*Desk thumping*] looking at other political systems.

While I was doing that with the best and the most honourable and most noble intentions, he was here trying to slander and corrupt my name saying I was absent, when they had a number of sittings in one week and I got leave, like other Members, of the Speaker. [*Desk thumping*] But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, every Member on this side made his due and thought-out contribution to the budget debate during which serious questions were posed by this side to that side in the spirit of accountability and in the interest of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. We asked some serious and some searching questions. I was not here, I was abroad as I indicated, when the Minister of Finance replied. I understand that he spent no more than about 10 to 15 minutes and the high point of his contribution was to delve into people's personal affairs and did not answer one of the serious and searching questions we put to them.

It is as a consequence of that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the Member for Diego Martin Central, in his capacity as Member and Chief Whip, filed the Motion that is debated before the House today because we found that the answers were not coming and those that came were not truthful. So we filed the Motion calling on the Government to answer certain specific questions and any first-standard student reading the Order Paper would understand we want to know a few very simple things and yet again, no answer. On the contrary, the Member for Tobago East dribbled and dribbled, spoke about everything in Latin America, in Africa as usual, and he himself as junior Minister of Finance did not answer a single one of the specific questions that we have asked them. The saga, therefore, continues. Mr. Deputy Speaker, he spoke in Spanish, I think he spoke a bit in Latin, he even spoke in nonsense, as usual, but at the end of the day we did not get one answer.

The reason for this Motion is as simple as it is necessary. The Minister of Finance came to the Parliament in his budget presentation and sought yet again to mislead the Parliament and to mislead the country with the untruths—I was about to say lies, but untruths, that is more parliamentary—kept a host of very dark secrets and killed us with misinformation. We wanted to know about, and the Member for San Fernando East in his response highlighted a list of 10 issues or projects, scandals, in which TT \$4,000 million have been squandered by that Government for the last five years, a minimum, and we asked specific questions about those—not a single answer, yet they talk about transparency.

For my own part, I spoke before I travelled and I had reason to say, in dealing with a particular issue, that maybe there are still some sober-minded people in this country who refuse to touch one dollar of dirty UNC money. I said so [*Desk thumping*] and I want to repeat that. There are some sober and sane and decent people in this country who will not want to touch one dirty UNC dollar [*Desk thumping*] because they believe they could bribe their way and do all kinds of things—fool people.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we learnt in this country, and it was investigated and reported—because we are talking here about public moneys, expenditure of public moneys, as a consequence of which it is our duty to highlight inadequacies, inefficiencies, misspending and mismanagement. It is our duty to do that on behalf of our constituents and the people of the country. [*Desk thumping*] We read, we learnt, it has not been denied, that a strategist from the United States, one James Carvelle, walked into Trinidad, had a couple meetings, earned himself \$10 million and left. Some of them would not know but what we know, what was reported in the newspaper—[*Interruption*] I was in Washington and in New York recently and they spoke scathingly of him. They laugh at them. They say he is not worth \$10 million. In fact they say—anyway, I will reserve that.

At any rate, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the question must arise, where would the Government and its friends find that kind of money to pay? Where? [*Desk thumping*] We also learnt a long time ago and we made reference to that man in the dark shades and the short white pants who received \$30 million—10 per cent of \$300 million—for a handshake as he introduced one Paladeno to the Prime Minister of this country and it landed us with the InnCogen project. We would like to know about that. We understand that in respect of the Carvelle payment, and if I am wrong I am wrong after what I read in the newspaper, and it is open to any of them to deny it, they, the Government Members or their friends, that one

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Lawrence Duprey was one of the contributors or movers and shakers in that deal. A fella called Jack Warner—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Member for Laventille East, just to clear the records, Standing Order No. 28(3) says:

“If a Member desires to vary the terms of a motion standing in his name...”

And if the:

“...amendment does not, in the opinion of the Speaker, materially alter any principle embodied in the original motion or scope thereof. Such amended motion...”

Now, the amendment just proposed to us has significantly altered the Motion under question so what I would like to rule now is that the amendment proposed by the Member for Tobago East is not in order and should not be debated. [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. F. Hinds:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are most grateful, but as a lawyer I understand that an attempt to commit a crime is as evil and wicked as the crime itself.

**3.35 p.m.**

He is not a lawyer and he was seconded by the Member for Couva South, and one must wonder now if that is the kind of legal advice he would have gotten from the Member for Couva South. No wonder the Speaker had to deal with him summarily as he did.

It is the very Member for Couva South who advised his own Government—you see, the people of this country do not know this, but I want to remind them that when we were talking about the Birk Hillmans, and the Ishwar Galbaransinghs and the airport terminal building—not an airport, the tower and everything remains the same—the airport terminal which Trinidad and Tobago deserves because it is not good; it is not proper to come off an aircraft and walk towards a building getting wet in the rain. So Trinidad and Tobago deserves a beautiful airport terminal; there is no trouble with that. But what we have a problem with is a budget of \$400 million and an expenditure of \$1,300 million. [*Desk thumping*] And when some firm called Overseas Communication Investment Company and a fellow called Birk Hillman, receives TT \$10 million and we ask questions about it and the Government remains absolutely mum, what the people of this country do not know is that the Attorney General had advised



his Cabinet that the contract to Ishwar Galbaransingh was absolutely illegal. He advised them.

What the country must know further is that the Prime Minister, just like the Speaker recently, slapped his Attorney General on the head and disregarded his legal opinion. When we raised the question in this Parliament at question time, the Attorney General, to save his two faces and to save his Government, stood in this Parliament and told us that the information was privileged information, a concept well known to lawyers like myself. I know he was misleading us as well, because privilege exists where you have a relationship between a lawyer and his client.

When I converse or conference with a client, the information garnered in that discussion is privileged information. I am obliged ethically not to share it with anyone else. But the relationship between the Attorney General and his Government is not a lawyer/client relationship. He is a part of the Government. He, too, is accountable to the Parliament. So he hid behind the concept of privilege and he felt that he fooled the country. At the end of the day we still do not know what the position is.

I was saying, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it was Lawrence Duprey, Warner and a fellow called Edoe, who were the movers and shakers in paying Carvelle the money—Ameer Edoe. Where would they get that kind of money to just give?

Then the Member for San Fernando West filed a question in this Parliament asking about the companies in this country that were indebted to the National Gas Company, and lo and behold, the answer came. And there we saw that companies owned by Clico owes the National Gas Company, that is, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, upwards of \$100 million.

So now whenever you see the Prime Minister anywhere and you see the gentlemen whose names I called earlier running along like sheep behind him, you will understand why. And you will understand why Carlos John is a Senator and now the candidate for St. Joseph. This is the reality.

Concern about this wanton squandermania does not only come from this side on the PNM. I read a couple days ago, comments made in the Senate by an Independent Senator of similar tone. We must remember that Archbishop Pantin before he died—and may his soul rest in perfect peace—he, too, called on the Government to have an investigation into the scandal that surrounds the airport. They rejected him. Clive Abdullah, the Bishop of the Anglican church, same thing. The Attorney General is aware of all of this, so he can say what he wants. The President of our Republic, also told the Government—and we on this side

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have interpreted it as an instruction almost—that they should have an inquiry. No such thing.

I grew up around a few East Indian families, and I remember my deceased father—may his soul also rest in perfect peace—pointing them out to me many times and saying in admiration how their parents worked hard and struggled with them. Though we were in Belmont they kept a few goats and they would tie the goats on mornings and the children would have the responsibility for cutting a little grass. My father took pains to point out how they worked hard and they were thrifty and they sacrificed and they saved, and their children did well. My father held them up to me as an example.

So I did not grow up thinking badly of Indian people; I was in admiration of them, and I thought, foolishly it turns out, that this Government coming to power comprised of many Indian persons would have brought that kind of ethic to Government. I thought they would have been thrifty; I thought they would have sacrificed and managed the economy the way my father showed me those families did. Not a thing like that.

It is airport; it is rice; it is Innocogen; and no answers to serious questions. I was in Miami recently and, I was embarrassed, because the Prime Minister spends a lot of Trinidad and Tobago dollars travelling up and down the globe, we are talking about public money and some folks in Miami told me that they are embarrassed to be associated with Trinidad and Tobago oftentimes when he arrives there. And I say this frankly, without apology.

We would like to know—and when you get up to speak, do not talk about Latin America and all of that; we want to know what was OCIC paid \$10 million for. [*Desk thumping*] That is what we want to know. We want to know to whom; We want to know why—as we heard during the budget presentations on this side—did the Minister of Finance seek the Prime Minister's permission to go on an unofficial visit to Miami to meet with Birk Hillman? Dark secrets!

These are the things we want to know. And we are confident that there are sufficient decent people in this society who will rise above the things that the Member for Tobago East spoke in part about, and they will look at the Government's behaviour and they will vote accordingly.

**3.45 p.m.**

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I told another platform recently, 2,000 years ago mankind was called upon to choose between Christ, a pure and a good man and

Barabbas who was a murderer and a thief and they chose Barabbas. So mankind has made serious mistakes, and for the last 2,000 years we had to live with murdering and thievery. *[Interruption]* In this year 2,000, the people of this country would be asked to decide between the PNM and, in my view, a “Barabbas government” and the question is: which one will they choose?

**Mr. Sudama:** They will choose Barabbas.

**Mr. F. Hinds:** The Member for Oropouche said they will choose Barabbas, but that does not surprise me. He claims the title and he deserves it. I remember it was the Member’s Prime Minister who said that he would sleep with the devil. *[Interruption]* Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Minister of Finance, Planning and Development is the Minister responsible for the affairs at Nipdec and the National Insurance Board is the parent company.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I spoke to a constituent up to yesterday. This Government came in the last budget presentation and promised a further increase in old people’s pension—no doubt trying to win favour with our senior citizens. But only yesterday—and this is no fun—I had to dispatch a letter to the Member for Chaguanas in his capacity as Minister of Social and Community Development and Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs. The constituent came to my office yesterday, and today in September of the year 2000, he is still receiving \$520 old age pension per month. He has not benefited from the increase that the Government promised even last year. The Minister of Finance, Planning and Development is responsible for that function. The gentleman pointed out that of his \$520, he spends \$200 a month on rent; approximately \$40 on electricity; and \$100 to keep his clothing clean—somebody comes in and cleans his clothing for \$100—and, thereupon, he is left with a meager \$160. *[Interruption]* When he receives this \$160, he has to pinch his way through for the rest of the month to get food, and the Minister comes here to talk about poverty line and who is above poverty line, and then to make matters worse, they mock and scorn people who may have trouble meeting their own expenses. This is obscene.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, while I speak about obscene, I read in today’s *Guardian* newspaper, a Minister of Government on a public platform before this country—to show you how obscene and indecent they could be—the Minister was talking about providing water for all, and he makes a comment that he is all over the

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country laying down pipes and the Member for Siparia, the Minister of Education, Madam Kamla Persad-Bissessar was the first beneficiary of his deposits of pipe around the country. Then the Minister of Education got up—the nation’s children are listening. The Government is talking about a revolution in education, and the Minister gets up, indecent and obscene as it could be and says “she eh know he pipe, she only know the pipe of Mr. Bissessar”. Could you imagine that! On this side, that Minister would have been dismissed. I have no doubt about that. [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Member for Laventille/East Morvant, do me one small favour. Once you are referring to Members of either House, keep it according to what they represent and do not call names.

**Mr. F. Hinds:** I am indeed grateful. Let me repeat that. I am sure based on my knowledge of the Member for San Fernando East, as political leader and former Prime Minister that conduct would have been intolerable. [*Desk thumping*] While I am at that, I heard about who is not paying mortgage and who is paying mortgage. We will come to that shortly.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, while I was in Miami, I stopped and listened to a group of people—interestingly enough not as the Member for Tobago East says—but Indian brothers of ours in Miami who told me, in no uncertain manner, that people could say what they want about Mr. Patrick Manning, he is a decent, dignified and honourable human being. [*Desk thumping*] One of them went further to say—Indian or no Indian—I will have Mr. Manning as my leader in Trinidad and Tobago 100 times before the Member for Couva North. My pores raised and I felt so proud. [*Desk thumping*]

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** To be a PNM.

**Mr. F. Hinds:** Of course, to be PNM—PNM power. There was a time when we used to say “manners maketh man” but for the UNC is “money maketh man”. It is only money, money, money. [*Desk thumping*] When we are trying to reach the people of this country through their hearts and minds, this Government is only reaching them through their pockets. This is the reason the Prime Minister found himself in an air-conditioned room at the Centre of Excellence—“the centre of wickedness”—trying to bribe an elected Member from this side—the Member for Tunapuna—to cross the floor for money. [*Desk thumping*] That is the greatest threat to this democracy that this country—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Member for Laventille East Morvant, you are in full flight, but you are in full flight breaking a lot of the Standing Orders. Try not to impute improper motives like what you just said with respect to bribery. Your political leader, the Member for San Fernando East is trying to caution you, as your political leader. Kindly listen to him.

**Mr. F. Hinds:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was talking about poverty line and then the Government is telling us—I see our senior citizens every day—a growing army of our senior citizens—struggling like the one I spoke about a while ago to make ends meet, and then the Government is trying to fool us about poverty line and who is above the poverty line. Only they are above the poverty line and they mock and scorn people who may not be and who might not be as well off as they have become in five short years. Mr. Deputy Speaker, when they talk about transparency it is really about covering up and dark secrets. There is nothing transparent about them. Everybody in the country is seeing their ways.

I read sometime ago that in Singapore, Ministers received the kinds of salaries that top executives in private industry receive. That is first of all to attract the best brains in the country and, secondly, to keep them. So in that sense, government in Singapore is a kind of a business because they want that kind of expertise. This Government is also a business, but it is about creating opportunities for their friends. That is what they have been doing, and then they treat the country with impunity and disrespect. They had an opportunity—and they did not take it during the budget—in this Motion to come and answer questions—and not an answer or a sound was heard. The Government for them is, indeed, a business.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, instead of answering the hard questions—in some cases the searching questions that we asked—the Minister of Finance, Planning and Development approaches the very disgraceful course of getting into people's private and personal business like bank accounts, mortgage and savings and tries to scorn, laugh, and scandalize people. The Government could not answer the questions that we asked because if they did, they could not do it without implicating themselves—including the Minister of Finance, Planning and Development and his entire government. So that is why the Minister sought to obfuscate; that is why he sought to hide and run from the questions and go into people's private and personal business, including mine, talking about I never paid mortgage. The Minister seeks to dredge up my private activities in this Parliament. That is the indecency of the UNC.

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Mr. Deputy Speaker, I remember the Agricultural Development Bank matter some time ago, when they alleged that two former PNM Members of Parliament and one a Minister, did not pay some bill or some debt at the ADB. I remember the Member for Diego Martin West getting up and saying—yes, they said the Member for Diego Martin West wrote it off—that he wants an assurance from the Minister responsible for that and other such institutions that they will not pry into people's private accounts, and he got no such assurance. He took the bold step to withdraw his account from the particular bank—the First Citizens Bank.

In 1984, 16 years ago, as a young man, I had just left the police service and ambitious as I was, I tried to purchase a property and I went to a bank institution and I did what had to be done—the First Citizens Bank. I was a young man—I was not a lawyer then—and I had just left the police service and I was trying to make my way in the world. *[Interruption]* I entered into that transaction and during the course of that transaction, the bank's lawyers absconded from this country—they ran away. There was a scandal at the time in the country and they ran out of the country and the transaction remained incomplete.

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

They ran out of the country and nothing came. The transaction remained incomplete—never transferred to my name; no mortgage in my name. They never transferred any house to my name. They ran away. The bank's lawyers—I paid my instalments for at least a year to two years, so when the Minister of Finance, Planning and Development comes here and says I never paid one cent, he is misleading people. I wish I could say "lying". Misinformation.

For 16 years, I heard nothing from them, up until recently about six or so months ago. They wrote to me. No doubt the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance, Planning and Development must have been behind it in this political season. Nasty! Looking, no doubt. Then, they come here to try to scandal my name. You all are indecent and obscene. I have no property. I do not live in that and I have no title to anything. Even if I did and owed, that is a matter between me, my bank and the court; not the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. *[Desk thumping]* But rather than come and answer questions, that is how they seek to run. But let them go ahead.

The questions that we asked them remained unanswered and the conduct of the Member for Siparia is still before the children of this country. She, on the radio and on the TV, talking about who pipe she got and want. Indecent! Thank God my children were in bed when it was broadcast. I am sure I would not let

them see page 3 of today's *Trinidad Guardian* where it was reported because, if they did, they would lose faith in the education system if it is led by that kind of person.

We will come to that because you see, we borrowed US \$51 million to do certain things which she has not been able to do. We still want to know how, building 10 schools could have moved from an original budget of \$138 million to \$245 million at the hands of the UNC in less than six months. We want to know that. We want to know further, how that \$245 million became \$343 million in less than one year. That is what we want to know. We are aware that the Prime Minister told someone, or he told his Cabinet, that it was because the architects increased the size of the schools. That does not wash.

**Dr. Nanan:** Is that the Motion?

**Mr. F. Hinds:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I listened this morning to my radio and I heard a report of a judge of the courts of Trinidad and Tobago describe the Prime Minister's behaviour. Oh, how I love CCN! I heard the judge—and I am getting a copy of the 56-page report—use words like bias, discriminatory and others, speaking about the Prime Minister, and banned him from interfering further; instructed him to stay out. But anything goes with the UNC. They think they can buy their way through everything and everybody but there are plenty decent people in this country. You all are barking up the wrong tree.

I have faith in the people of Trinidad and Tobago and if they want to choose the PNM, they will choose the PNM. If they want to choose a Barabbas government, let them choose a Barabbas government. Then, I will sing again, "All yuh look for that". Yes. A Barabbas government. Barabbas was a thief and he was also a murderer. I hope mankind does not make that mistake in Trinidad and Tobago in the year 2000, because another five years of this is worries and trouble. Pressure!

*[Mr. Ramsaran rose]*

Would you sit down? Imagine, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is how public moneys are expended in this country. Imagine!

The candidate for Diego Martin West, a beautiful and dignified lady finds herself—and she may not be as wise as she is beautiful and dignified but she is the candidate for Diego Martin West, the hon. Senator from the other place. She is running an agricultural project in the Chaguaramas area, supposedly to train women in agricultural skills and all that, with public moneys. But, one woman

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called me this morning and almost tearfully, she is being forced to conduct UNC party work every evening in her district.

**Miss Nicholson:** Not at all!

**Mr. F. Hinds:** She is handed a bunch of documents—brochures and whatever—and she is instructed. She has to go and carry them out.

**Miss Nicholson:** Nah!

**Mr. F. Hinds:** She has, the next day, to file a report to show how many she handed out and to which numbers to make sure she does not throw them in the bin as she would really like to. In Carenage, too.

That is how they spend public moneys, taxpayers' money, to try to win support for the UNC, but I do not expect different. After all, the Member for Couva North was negotiating a job interview with the Member for Tunapuna in an air-conditioned office according to him. I can understand, as I said before, why any person you see in the UNC who is not being favoured for re-selection, including the Member for Princes Town, they are either too decent, too dignified or too dumb.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Member for Laventille East/Morvant, I do not think you should try to bring the Chair into your argument.

**Mr. F. Hinds:** Not at all, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Decency is not a necessary factor, quality, attribute or requirement for participation in the activities of the UNC. You either have to be very selfish or indecent.

**Mr. Partap:** Speak for yourself.

**Mr. F. Hinds:** You have to be able to turn a blind eye to everything. You have to be willing to sacrifice all principles, integrity and everything in order to stay there.

In talking about accounting for public moneys, a "fella" called Ken Soodhoo—you remember him, Mr. Deputy Speaker—a man who an investigation revealed was dismissed from the bank for good reason. Moneys went into a certain account, \$1.8 million, and those moneys were actually, after the investigation, returned to the Merchant Bank of the First Citizens Bank, so that the case for mishandling was quite clear. It was returned. It was that man that the Prime Minister held up, took to his bosom and caused to be responsible for managing over \$400 million of public moneys for the gas station upgrade. A sum of \$7 million per gas station package. I remember it well.



They made a big song and dance when Richmond Street was opened. I looked at it because I have had the benefit of seeing gas stations all around the world, better than those we had and worst than those we had. When I saw it, I said to myself, "That could not be worth \$7 million." But, that is the way the UNC runs its affairs.

They had a big club at the National Petroleum Marketing Company Limited. Now, I see the club has broken up a bit. They are fighting for power and money so things have gone awry. At any rate, \$7 million a piece and it was the same Ken Soodhoo who the very Minister of Finance, Planning and Development said was highly recommended, who was put in charge of that. We correctly described it as putting a cat to guard milk, but that is the style of the UNC.

When corruption broke at NP—and scandal has broken because now they are downgrading; they are not upgrading again. They have dropped it from \$7 million to \$3 million, but now that oil prices have gone up, it would not surprise me if they send it to \$10 million. That is how they behave.

**Mr. Bereaux:** The Minister says the price of gas is going up.

**Mr. F. Hinds:** They are downgrading now but when scandal broke at NP, Ken Soodhoo had to pack up and run again, and when Trinidad and Tobago thought for a moment that would be the end of Ken Soodhoo, "Eh eh!" The Prime Minister took him like a baby to his bosom yet, again, and put him in the Prime Minister's Office to seek out and collect moneys that were owing to the Government. Now, they put the cat in charge of the cheese. But that is typically the behaviour of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, the UNC. The list is long, but we will save the balance for later.

**Mr. Sudama:** There might not be a later for you.

**Mr. F. Hinds:** As I approach my conclusion, I say that I support entirely the Motion as has been established and put by the Member for Diego Martin Central. I pray, in the spirit of seriousness, that the Members on that side, having failed to account to the people of Trinidad and Tobago for the economic management of this country, having mismanagement, having failed to tell the people why they told us time and time again they were running a surplus budget, when the figures revealed it was a deficit budget in each successive year of their Government, would take this opportunity, having missed it in the Budget Debate—do not be ashamed—to answer the question, not for us, but for the people of Trinidad and Tobago. The people of this country want to know a little more about InnCogen. We tell them every day.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Member for Laventille East/Morvant, your speaking time has expired.

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

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Mr. F. Hinds:** I am most grateful, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and to the Members of this House who supported the extension, those of us who treasure decency and transparency and do not like "mamaguy" and do not want to remain silent when the truth is there to see and to be spoken. It is very sad.

As the same brother told me in Miami, the fight you all are involved in, in Trinidad and Tobago, is not a fight against the flesh and blood, but it is a fight against principalities, powers, power seekers, money seekers and wicked men in the highest places in the land. I have put on my war paint and I am ready to do battle with you. I am not afraid.

The people of this country, Mr. Deputy Speaker, want to hear a little more about InnCogen. They want to hear because they recognized recently that T&TEC posted a loss. T&TEC now finds itself coming out of a profit-making situation before InnCogen, before the Prime Minister's pet project, and finds itself having to raise \$500 million in a bond issue to stay alive. When I say this Government is a Barabbas government and I talk about murder, I talk also, in addition to the other ones, about the murder of T&TEC.

#### **4.10 p.m.**

T&TEC was making profits, now it is making a loss. [*Interruption*] You keep quite. Suddenly the General Manager of T&TEC passes on, he dies. He sat here, only recently during the budget debate, I sat here and looked at him, and I found he looked rather depressed and somber. He had a heavy heart. It is reported that two days before he went to the hereafter—may his soul rest in perfect peace—While the UNC is in government it can never rest in peace because he died with a heavy heart. It was he who received a communication from the Member for Caroni East early in the InnCogen days, to dissect the four plants that InnCogen power plant was supposed to power from the power plant itself. Do you remember it was he who had to implement that and to delink the four plants?

When the Prime Minister was introduced to the one called Paladino by the man in the short pants, in New York, and he arranged the shake of hands, the man in the short pants, Narinesingh got \$30 million. [*Interruption*] If you do not know

come and say so. In business where one gets the contract, how is it called? A commission.

At any rate, they came here and told this country that they would establish and build four manufacturing plants: paper, glass, ethanol and bagasse. That was the project. When they came to our country they said: "We want up to four plants to manufacture items for local consumption and for export, and to create jobs, build a hotel", do all the nice things the UNC boasts about. A thousand-room hotel. They wanted this little plant with 25 megawatts of electricity to power four plants.  
[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Assam:** Tell us what they taught you in the United States.

**Mr. F. Hinds:** I would not be distracted by the Member for St. Joseph, he is already politically dead. [*Desk thumping*] He is of no consequence. "I-man doh deal with dead." I am a living man and I have work to do. [*Desk thumping*] I am a true-born rastaman, I do not mess with the dead.

They told us that they would build these four plants and create jobs for our people, improve our economic performance, export goods and earn foreign exchange. They needed this 25-megawatt little plant to generate electricity for these four plants. My friend from Caroni East sends a letter to the very Mr. Ottley who died, and told him to delink them and forget the four plants, just concentrate on the power plant that we now know as InnCogen. The next thing we know is that Trinidad and Tobago ended up with a power plant with real power, bigger than PowerGen, producing 225 megawatts of electricity on 82 acres of prime Caroni (1975) Limited lands given to them, which they have not paid for, which the Prime Minister and the Minister know about. He is now coming to tell me stupidity about mortgage. [*Desk thumping*] He gives a take-or-pay contract to InnCogen. Mr. Paladino and they laughed their way to the bank, not even a local bank, a bank in Washington or elsewhere. They are laughing at us while we are crying in the gettho. According to Panther: "Dey laughing, while we crying in de gettho." Thanks to the UNC.

Having benefited so lavishly from the stupidity of the Government of the UNC, they now want to sell the power plant and go. Do you know what is worse? Not one single one of the four plants has been established. There is no 1,000-room hotel. It is quite clear to us that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, led by the Member for Caroni East, pushed on by the Member for Couva North, supported by the whole host of them, knew well along in advance, that they never intended to put any plant. It was all a UNC trick upon the people of this country.  
[*Desk thumping*]

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To make matters worse, they used the honest and dignified Member for Oropouche who accounted for how he bought his Benz. I saw him on the television and on the newspapers with a little spade; he turned the sod about two years ago for one of the four plants. He is still turning the sod. *[Interruption]* Oh yes, that is right. Please let me correct the record. My apologies. He has made mistakes with teak before, you must forgive me. I will tell you. He came to this Parliament two years ago and promised us vociferously: "I will be turning the sod for those four plants on April 27." That was two years ago. Not one.

While I was in the United States, I had the benefit of visiting with some of the officials at the World Bank and the United Nations. I benefited greatly from it. I received a document which I have in my possession. A survey of the entire Caribbean region was done, demonstrating that Barbados is the most arid country—well known to us—dry without one single river—and Trinidad and Tobago stands tall; as the leader in terms of having the resource of fresh surface water, 3,364 cubic metres of fresh surface water. Do you know what that means, Mr. Deputy-Speaker? Not even brackish water or half-salt water, but fresh, surface water.

I remember, again, the Member for Diego Martin West—when we dealt with the unnecessary and mammoth scandal that is the desalination plant—came here with a big document. I saw him perspiring, trying to convince the Government right here, that we have more brackish and fresh water than we could use, it is about harnessing it, and that Government should not construct a desalination plant. Barbados needs one, they do not have water. We did not need it. But, government for the UNC is a business: an opportunity to create contracts and deals for its friends, and then be able to pay Carville \$10 million, so he could come and strategize and show the little people of this country how good the UNC is so that you would vote for the UNC again, and they will take more of your money again. *[Desk thumping]*

We are constructing a plant that will convert salt water to fresh water, when we have the highest resource of fresh water in the entire Caribbean. That is the way the UNC does it. We want answers to these questions. You cannot hide, we will find you. As long as God gives us strength and the ability to speak, we will go in every corner of this country and let them know that you are the worst thing that happened to Trinidad and Tobago for the last 30 years. *[Desk thumping]*

The Prime Minister, the Member for Couva North, left here at public expense and went on a trip to India. Hitherto, he purchased rice from the United States and

Guyana. Both those countries are much closer to us. We have a long-standing trading relationship with them, and it was obviously the way to go.

**4.20 p.m.**

But when he got there, he got one of his very “Pandayite” bright ideas, and you know these are inspired when he does what I am doing now. *[Interruption]* But of course, I am drinking pure, unadulterated water. But he was inspired while he was there and he instructed the National Flour Mills—the unit that imports rice in Trinidad and Tobago hitherto from America and from Guyana and dispatches it and disperses it throughout the country—he instructed them that suddenly American was not good enough, “You should buy rice from India.” So the National Flour Mills went ahead and purchased two shiploads of rice from India, at an expense of \$30 million. Before the contract was signed, the money was paid and the boats were on their way. So certain they were.

Do you know what? The first shipment came and I remember my honourable friend and sister from Arouca South, coming here with a handful of the rice and people in the country began to call it dog rice because it looked like rice they had never seen before. It almost looked like coal dust. So it did not stay long on the shelves. The Member for St. Augustine told us we should eat it; no problem. We should eat it. And he had a report which said that the rice was so good and healthy and we should eat it. Of course, we have not seen the report as yet, and \$30 million went.

As for the second shipload of rice, it has not yet come to Trinidad and Tobago. You know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, \$30 million will do so much for the people of Laventille/Morvant. Instead of rice, bicycles came. In fact, as a student of international law, I noted with consternation that the then High Commissioner of India to Trinidad and Tobago intervened in our domestic political affairs; he broke stride and said the rice was very good and we should eat it. The second shipment had bicycles and split peas, and the bicycles were for him, so the rice must be good; the bicycles too.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, \$30 million will go a very long way if we had that for the people of Laventille, many of whom, for many reasons, can do with some income. I hear them talking about Elias. The man was called Reynold Makhan, not Elias. Dr. Elias stood up to you. You do not want decency and you do not want what is right. You got the rid of him. Cussed him up and down Trinidad and Tobago. And do you know what? He has come now to the caring and loving hands of an integral PNM *[Desk thumping]* and like all of us, he too has put on his

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PNM war paint and he would be confronting you in the next few weeks with your corruption. [*Desk thumping*]

You are talking about public expenditure? Do you know what characterizes the UNC? Misinformation, untruths, deceit and dishonesty. I can see now in my mind's eye, of course, a copy of the *Independent*, the Hon. Sen. Sadiq Baksh, on the front page with a very tricky smile, and the headline in red: "Sadiq is no engineer". Caught redhanded, signing documents, seeking election as a candidate for the UNC. But you see, it is only in UNC that could happen. UNC is not the cause of crime, everybody knows that, but under the UNC crime proliferates. Dishonesty proliferates; unethical behaviour proliferates. The UNC creates the atmosphere in which crime and bad behaviour flourishes.

So he knew he had a comfortable place in the UNC if he pretended to be an engineer, until he was caught. To make matters worse, he is the Minister of Works. I showed you earlier in my short contribution why the candidate for St. Joseph, Sen. Carlos John, is now in the bosom of the UNC Government and Cabinet. I showed you the link between him and Clico and the fact that Clico Energy Companies owes the Government \$100 million and rising, and why they all have to be friends to protect each other. And Kuei Tung is not calling any of those names; he is calling mine.

The Minister, Sadiq Baksh, is nowhere to be seen in Port of Spain. God knows when last he went to his office in Port of Spain. For the last six months, he has been in San Fernando campaigning for his seat and campaigning for the UNC, and receiving a Minister's salary, and they are talking about the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West.

As I approach my conclusion, as I promised at the beginning of my presentation today, when you all are laughing I will be very serious, and when you are serious, I will be laughing. And the list is longer and longer as the days go by. You paint a very sorry and somber picture as the Government of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

I want to let the hon. Minister know that Education is not only formal; it is also informal. It is not only what you learn in the halls of the universities, colleges and schools, it is also what the children and the adults of this country see. As a practising attorney, I have had the displeasure of hearing young men say and imply that "if the Government could thief, I could do it too."

So this is all serious business. I support the Motion as put by the Member for Diego Martin Central, and I look forward to hearing serious answers in this debate from the hitherto very silent and shady Government Members.

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

**Dr. Keith Rowley** [*Diego Martin West*]: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I just entered this debate to find out from the Government if we should continue with this parliamentary session. From the Government's attitude since the presentation of the budget to today, I think we have reached the point now where the Government is wasting the people's time; wasting the parliamentarian's time. I think what the Government should do is to dissolve this Parliament, call elections and let the people decide who they want. [*Desk thumping*]

As Members of the country's Opposition, we have asked very specific questions on matters relating to public expenditure which fall properly under the portfolio responsibilities of persons on the other side, and it is clear to me now that they have absolutely no intention of accounting to the people of Trinidad and Tobago for any matter. [*Desk thumping*]

It is on that basis I am asking why are we wasting time here talking to the walls and the colonades in this Parliament. We need to be talking to the people who will decide who should manage their affairs.

I was in Tobago last Tuesday and I told my fellow Tobagonians that I am proud of being a Tobagonian and I am usually very proud of Tobago, but every time the Member for Tobago East gets up he makes me feel ashamed, and this afternoon, the conduct of the Member for Tobago East is something that should be noted by the entire population of Trinidad and Tobago.

My colleague from Diego Martin Central asked this country whether, in fact, it is acceptable for our Minister of Finance to come here and tell us that he has put aside \$415 million as savings, when, in fact, he has not done so. Further, there is no money to put aside. That is the issue before this House. When you look at the budget documents, the Minister of Finance spent every penny of the revenues that arose out of the higher oil price.

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

**4.30 p.m.:** *Sitting suspended.*

**5.02 p.m.:** *Sitting resumed.*

**Dr. K. Rowley:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, before we took the break I was making the point that the Government has made it abundantly clear that it does not intend to answer any of the pertinent questions that have been placed before them. It is very difficult for me to accept that in this House simple, straightforward questions can be placed to the Government and Members of the Government side have the opportunity to stand up and say yes, it is so, or no, it is not so, or, they figure it is this or they figure it is that, yet the Government has taken the position that the way to deal with any perceived difficulties that might arise from answering those questions is to simply not answer the questions.

What are these questions, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Why are they so difficult to answer? This Motion is directed at the Minister of Finance largely because he is the Minister of Finance, but, even more importantly, he is the Minister with the responsibility for the National Insurance Board. Nipdec is a subsidiary of the National Insurance Board and therefore the operations of Nipdec in all matters, especially with respect to the construction of the airport, fall under the portfolio of the Minister of Finance.

When I heard my colleague from Tobago East say that the Motion is disjointed and there are many elements in there for an election campaign and he cannot see a link, that tells me he is either being deliberately blind or he is not as bright as he likes to believe he is. The Minister of Finance is being asked to account for what is happening with the airport project because Nipdec falls under his portfolio, and when this Parliament was shown that the Minister of Finance had private, secret dealings with Birk Hillman, we asked what were those dealings about and the Minister of Finance spoke a naked untruth in this Parliament saying he did not know anything about Birk Hillman; the first time he heard about Birk Hillman was when Birk Hillman got that project, when the record will show, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that Birk Hillman had been around since the Minister of Finance was a member of the Cabinet of which I was a part.

#### ADJOURNMENT

**The Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs (Hon. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I must thank the hon. Member for Diego Martin East for giving way in order for us to move the adjournment of the House.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move that the House do not now adjourn to Monday, October 2, 2000 at 1.30 p.m.



*Adjournment*

*Friday, September 29, 2000*

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think that I owe a duty to say that the House will be prorogued on Saturday, October 7 and, according to the proclamation, the new session would begin on October 9.

**Mr. Valley:** A new session? How many sessions “all yuh” want, six?

**Hon. R. L. Maharaj:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, on Monday the Government will do the Motion on the Supplemental Order Paper, the Senate Amendments to the Proceeds of Crime Bill and the Senate Amendments to the Equal Opportunity Bill. There is on the Order Paper under “Public Business”, “Bills Second Reading”, the second reading of a Bill entitled, “An Act to reform the laws with respect to the tenure of occupation of small holdings” and then on the Order Paper we have Bills Nos. 5 to 11.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Members, before we put the Motion for the adjournment there is a Motion on the Adjournment.

**Tobago Secondary Education System  
(Ministry’s Inadequacy)**

**Miss Pamela Nicholson** (*Tobago West*): [*Desk thumping*] Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to discuss this Motion on the Adjournment of the House which deals with the inadequacy of the Ministry of Education as far as the secondary education system in Tobago is concerned. It deals particularly with 622 children within the Universal Secondary Education Programme.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Schedule 5 of the Tobago House of Assembly Act gives the THA responsibility for education in Tobago. However, the Central Government has the overall responsibility to ensure that the children of Trinidad and Tobago are provided with educational opportunities in keeping with education and, in this case, the so-called universal education programme. There is a scandalous situation in Tobago where 622 children, after Common Entrance, and after being promised by the Central Government places in secondary schools, the secondary school centre or whatever one might call them, are now unattended and are at home.

Right now, some are not registered and recently I heard the Minister saying that she was very pleased that all of the centres in Tobago are open and she was very happy that the children are addressed, and that was after just three weeks, and she is so pleased that they are in schools. I want to tell the Minister that the people of Tobago would like her, as the Minister of Education for Trinidad and Tobago, to intervene immediately in this situation in Tobago. There is a problem

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where—well she should have been aware of this by now—112 children were sent by the Ministry of Education to the Roxborough Composite School and when school was reopened these same 112 children were told that they are supposed to go to the Roxborough Secondary Centre because they are the weakest performers in the Common Entrance.

So these children bought uniforms, bought the secondary school books, like the children at the Roxborough Composite School should be using, when these are children who are slow learners and who should be in special classes to be attended to by remedial teachers, at least for one year, before getting them ready for the secondary schools. Those children are today not attended to. They were sent home. Then, after the people who were affected became very aggressive and angry with what was taking place, and on our local radio every morning they were protesting the situation, the treatment to their children, the Secretary for Education in the Tobago House of Assembly decided to open school the next week.

The children of Roxborough, when they went out, instead of being placed, they were told that they were going to be put at the tech/voc building in Roxborough. Those children are now in the hall of the Roxborough Composite School—no furniture. Well, I must not put it like that—sitting on chairs like what we have in the hall here. That is the furniture for the school—no office for the principal, no office for staff. As a matter of fact, there are only three members of staff with the principal in that building and these are children who should be addressed, who should be attended to, slow learners, with whom diagnostic work should be done first and then they should have remedial teachers in English, in maths, and in other subjects to address them. As a matter of fact, the Tobago House of Assembly is having difficulty in getting teachers in English and in maths to do the remedial work.

When the Ministry advertised in Trinidad for teachers, they did not take care of Tobago. Why? That question is being asked. When the advertisement was seen in the newspaper, the people are asking; why? There was the advertisement for teachers to do remedial work in mathematics and English—again Tobago was left out when it is a national programme. Even though the Tobago House of Assembly has certain things to do, when they are advertising for teachers, they must make sure that Tobago is attended to. So we have that problem. So there is a principal, three or four teachers, and the principal is to attend to 112 children in the hall, a hallway like this—no screened areas. Teachers are not there to address the children, there is no bathroom system for the children and that same principal has

to address another 90 children at the Roxborough Composite Centre, that is another school, next door to the Roxborough Anglican school—again, no teachers to address that programme.

**5.15 p.m.**

So, the parents are complaining day after day. They are seeing that the children are being treated with contempt and nobody cares and, therefore, it is important for this matter to be brought here.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the Trinidad case, the Minister knows whether it is 90 per cent of the children who have taken up their places in secondary schools in Trinidad. She knows that there are certain schools in Trinidad that might not be ready until November or December. The Minister knows that. She knows exactly what is taking place. She knows that there might be a secondary school where two sets of children are being taken care of, but Tobago does not know what is happening.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is the Scarborough Secondary Centre which is supposed to go at the tech/voc wing at Signal Hill Comprehensive School. What is the problem there? Some of the children of the Signal Hill Comprehensive School—the Sixth Formers—are housed in that tech/voc wing. There is the YTEP programme and some of the classrooms there and taken up by that division. There is also the Library. Right now, there is the Scarborough Library which was partially broken down by an earthquake in 1997, and the Prime Minister gave Tobago the impression that funding would have been given to Tobago to repair the library. There is the Labour College with classrooms but the problem there is communication. Nobody has communicated with the principal of Signal Hill Comprehensive School. Nobody has brought all these other institutions together and communicated with them. So what you have is that there are some children who have been registered and been sent home because nobody knows where to place them. In that area also, there is no furniture for the children.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, then there is the Bon Accord situation. In Bon Accord, people are painting and doing carpentry work on a half-day basis in the area while the children are present. Would you accept that situation for your child? Would you accept that? Therefore, the Minister should intervene. The Minister's business is to see that the Tobago problem is addressed properly just as it is addressed in Trinidad. [*Desk thumping*] When I questioned the Education Division in Tobago as to whether they got funding to do repair works and if they knew about this programme, they said they never got funding until September 1, 2000 and they said they only got about \$250,000.

**Hon. Member:** That is not true!

**Miss P. Nicholson:** That is not true? The Education Division of Tobago tells me—and the Minister has to answer that question today. The Minister has to tell the Tobago people how much funding did the Government give and when? Was preparatory work done? Was proper planning done? Did the Minister and her top management communicate with the Secretary for Education in the Tobago House of Assembly and their top management? Those are the questions being asked.

The Education Division in Tobago is saying that the Government does not communicate with them and whenever they communicate, it is with the Chief Secretary. All the communication in Tobago is sent to the Chief Secretary when the Government should diversify the information. The Secretary for Education who is in charge of the Education Division in Tobago should be sent information on education. If it is information on health it should be sent to the Secretary for Health. The Government does not do that. This is one of the fundamental questions that I have raised.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is a problem and we want answers. The first question is how is the Government addressing the 112 children in the Roxborough Secondary Centre? This centre is in the heart of Dr. Job's constituency. These parents have bought the Roxborough Secondary School uniform and schoolbooks and these are the weakest children in the area. These are the children who do not know their letter sounds and who cannot count. How are you going to address them? The Education Division in Tobago is saying it cannot get remedial teachers to do English and mathematics in the secondary schools that the Government has opened under this system in Tobago. There is no furniture and the Minister said they were given money. There is no furniture for the children to sit on. The children are treated with contempt. The Minister should think about the impact that something like this is having on the child. It is very important. The children are feeling that nobody cares.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, look at what is happening at Bishop's High School! The most important teachers in that school are now principals, and nobody has replaced these teachers in the No. 1 high school in Tobago. So the children who have chosen that school as their No. 1 school went out all excited to meet no English, French and mathematics teachers in the school. Madam Minister, you have to intervene because you are the Minister of Education in Trinidad and Tobago. The Attorney General of Trinidad and Tobago has advised that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago has the ultimate responsibility for all the areas in the country.

**Hon Member:** Wind up!

**Miss P. Nicholson:** You cannot tell me to wind up. I gave you a seat here so “shut up” and you are not getting any again. *[Desk thumping]*

**Mr. F. Hinds:** Well put!

**Miss P. Nicholson:** So, I am raising this question on behalf of the 622 parents. We want the children to be placed; we want them to get their furniture; we want them to get their teachers; and we want them to get the remedial teachers in special classes just as there are special classes in Trinidad, we want our special classes with our special teachers. We do not have that and we want that matter to be addressed urgently and now. *[Desk thumping]* So I call upon the Minister of Education to step in and intervene into Tobago’s educational affair and meet with the Secretary of Education in the Tobago House of Assembly with her top management and address the Tobago educational crisis.

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

**The Minister of Education (Hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, before I answer some of the Member’s concerns, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the student who won the President’s Gold Medal from Presentation College, Chaguanas, and at the same time to congratulate the student from Bishop’s High School in Tobago who also won one of the National Scholarships for the 2000 A’level Examinations. *[Desk thumping]* *[Laughter]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I share the concerns of the hon. Member and I recognize that there are serious problems with respect to the implementation of Government’s policy in Tobago. But I also understand that there are also students in Trinidad who are still not yet in school. So it is not fair to say that we have addressed the issue in Trinidad and we have not dealt with Tobago.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the matter raised about the inadequacy of the Ministry of Education to provide secondary school places for 630 children who wrote the Common Entrance Examination this year—I mean no disrespect to the hon. Member—but I do have to ask when the Member sat in the Ministry of Education—during her time under her Government—whether there was any inadequacy then. It was only in 1999 when only 673 children were placed in schools in Tobago. In 1995, there was a total of 653 children, and in 1994, a total of 483 children were placed. It is only in the year 2000 that an attempt was made to provide a place for every child. *[Desk thumping]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker, whilst I share the Member’s concerns—and I am sure every Member of this honourable House shares those concerns—it saddens us that

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the people in Tobago at the Tobago House of Assembly are not implementing the policy as laid down by Government and, therefore, the children in Tobago are suffering. We will do what we can to help those children. I am saying that it is rather late in the day to really come here with “crocodile tears” and talk about the inadequacy of the Ministry of Education. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, you would recall that in order to place the 638 children, which are the additional children who would not have had a chance, they would have been lost forever out of the system, were it not for the policy that we have devised. [*Desk thumping*] There was no question that they would repeat. There was no repetition for those children. They were out of the system.

**5.25 p.m.**

That is why I say I am happy if it is that it is one week, two weeks, three weeks or four weeks, that we take extra in order for them not to be lost from the system. That is the point we have to understand.

When we talk about the students there and about the moneys allocated to Tobago, you will recall, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that accommodation for all the students was found, that there were some students outstanding and the Tobago House of Assembly proposed the Pentecostal Light and Life Foundation School. The reports received in Trinidad were that this could not happen in time.

The hon. Prime Minister and I went to Tobago. We visited a site at Lowlands which could have taken all those additional children. We had all that in train. Thereafter, we met with the officials of the Tobago House of Assembly, Mr. Charles and the Secretary for Education. They said, "No. We do not want any Lowlands school. We do not want the school there." When we questioned them, well, if you cannot put them in the Pentecostal Light and Life Foundation School—I visited that school and it was clear it could not be ready. I offered them the site at Lowlands free of cost, they said no, they would find a place.

I went with my officials to Signal Hill, about which the hon. Member spoke, and we met the principal of that school. I am very surprised she said that no one discussed it with the principal because I was present with the principal, the Tobago House of Assembly officials and officials from Trinidad. We were all there and the matter was raised. The Tobago House of Assembly said they would place the children at Signal Hill, that they would put everything in place to have these children placed at Signal Hill. We came back to Trinidad and they proceeded in that manner.

I am also very surprised that she is saying they got approximately \$200,000 because at August 24, my Permanent Secretary has advised me that there was an acknowledgement of receipt of the sum of \$2.4 million from the Tobago House of Assembly. So, to say it was \$200,000—I do not know from where that came.

**Miss Nicholson:** Education.

**Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar:** Whilst it is the Member may be getting the concerns from persons, it may not be that they are giving her all the information. I am saying we are concerned, too. We will continue to deal with the situation in Tobago but all of us were in this Parliament. The Member was part of the committee set up to amend and to deal with the Tobago House of Assembly legislation. The Member sat there and gave jurisdiction to the Tobago House of Assembly to look after the implementation of policy in Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] The people of Tobago wanted that.

**Miss Nicholson:** Minister, when are you intervening?

**Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar:** They asked for implementation of policy. At Central Government level, we can make the policy, but in terms of going on the ground to implement the policy, I would have to seek the Attorney General's advice on that. Because if it is that we make the policy, we release the funding and they still cannot get the job done, maybe it is we have to get back to the Parliament and deal with the issue.

**Miss Nicholson:** So the Attorney General is dishonest.

**Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar:** But if it is that the Tobago House of Assembly Act is not serving its purpose, then that is a matter that this Parliament has to deal with, because it is this Parliament that made the legislation. If that legislation has to change, I cannot unilaterally, as Minister of Education, call in Hochoy Charles and say, "You see you, do this." I cannot. I have no jurisdiction so to do. All I can do and I share your concern; I am deeply saddened—all of us are—that those children are out of school.

**Miss Nicholson:** You said you were happy.

**Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar:** I was happy because I had been advised that they were placed in school. Up to this morning, I had been advised that they were in school, save and except for those at Signal Hill who will begin on Monday. That is the advice I have been given from the Administrator, Education in Tobago.

**Miss Nicholson:** Roxborough, too?

**Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar:** They have advised my Permanent Secretary that that is the situation.

If the people of Tobago are saying that they want us to intervene, well, then, give us the authority so to do. This is the place, through the Parliament. I cannot usurp the Act. I cannot do that. I will continue to have discussions. We will give them whatever assistance. I have always said, Member, all of us at the Ministry of Education are ready and willing to assist in whatever way we can. We are ready and willing to assist.

May I just take this opportunity to say, I visited the Port of Spain Model School today. It was originally scheduled to open on October 2. The contractors have indicated that they need two to three weeks. I went in there today. We saw what was happening. The work is well apace. What I have done—because it hurts us. Do not feel that we are happy they are not in school. That is why we made the effort for every child to get a place. That is why we did it. Not a child should have been left out.

**Miss Nicholson:** But you are doing it. Before putting them, you are fixing the building and then putting.

**Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, the answer was, wait till you build all these schools. Wait another year, two years and three years. Wait until you have trained every teacher. How long would we have waited? In this way, we are doing it. We are running a week or two late for the most. All children in Trinidad and Tobago would be in schools in October. We have lost one month of teaching time, but these children, please understand, would have lost their lifetime of teaching time. If it took us one month to place 30,000 children and give them a chance, it was well worth it.

In terms of the assistance to Tobago, I am ready and willing to assist Tobago, but I cannot force Tobago to do what I want it to do. The policy has been set. We will go with the policy. We will talk with them.

Finally, on the issue of remedial teachers, again, it is the Tobago House of Assembly. The Tobago House of Assembly will advertise on contract for the remedial teachers. We are interviewing teachers now in terms of the remediation for the Form I Specials, for the Model School and for the Valencia Secondary Centre. Those remedial teachers are now being trained for those special classes.

In addition, for the Model School, we will start as of Tuesday next week, all of next week and the following week, the diagnostic screening for the auditory



and the visual. Thereafter, the learning diagnostics will take place for the model school students during the next two weeks whilst we await the completion of the building. That screening will take place at the Aga Khan Building on Pembroke Street.

Hon. Member, I share your concerns. I will talk again with your colleagues at the Tobago House of Assembly, Mr. Charles and with Cecil Caruth. Contrary to your view, you are suggesting to me that we must send documents not just to the Tobago House of Assembly itself, but we must send to Mr. Cecil Caruth. I want to assure you that these documents have been sent and if it is that he has not received them, I cannot answer why that is so, but we have sent and we have liaised. I have personally spoken to Mr. Caruth on many occasions to deal with the matter. We stand by, as I say, Member, willing and ready to assist the children of Tobago as we stand by for the children of Trinidad. You want me to come to Tobago. We will come to Tobago if you promise you will join us for the meeting.

**Miss Nicholson:** You are the Minister of Education.

**Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar:** I am the Minister of Education. I can visit Tobago but I do not have the jurisdiction to implement the policy on the ground, on the floor and everybody in this Parliament agrees to that.

**Mr. Manning:** No. That is not true.

**Mr. Imbert:** That is not true.

**Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar:** The Tobago House of Assembly has the jurisdiction for matters under Schedule V in Tobago. I am saying we make policy.

I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Members, there is another matter on the Motion for the Adjournment by the Member for Toco/Manzanilla. It has been asked to be deferred until next week.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*House adjourned accordingly.*

*Adjourned at 5.32 p.m.*