

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES***Friday, March 23, 2001*

The House met at 1.30 p.m.

**PRAYERS**[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]**WELCOME**

**Mr. Speaker:** First, let me say it is reassuring to see the hon. Prime Minister back after his short bout of illness. Welcome back, Mr. Prime Minister, and welcome to the Minister of Health, the hon. Hamza Rafeeq.

**LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

**Mr. Speaker:** I have received correspondence requesting leave of absence from the sitting of the House of Representatives from Mr. Eric Williams, the Member for Port of Spain South, for the period 20—25 March, 2001. Leave has been granted.

**JOINT SELECT COMMITTEES  
(APPOINTMENT OF)**

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, I received a letter from the President of Senate, the hon. Ganace Ramdial, dated March 22, 2001. It reads:

“Hon. Dr. Rupert T. Griffith, M.P.,  
Speaker of the House of Representatives,  
Parliament,  
Red House,  
Abercromby St.,  
Port of Spain.

Dear Mr. Speaker,

**Appointment of Joint Select Committees**

In accordance with Section 66A of the Constitution, the Senate at a sitting held on Tuesday March 20, 2001, agreed to the following resolution:

**BE IT RESOLVED** that the Senate appoint the following five Members to serve with an equal number from the House of Representatives to inquire into and report to the Senate on Municipal Corporations and Service Commissions with the exception of the Judicial and Legal Service Commission on their

*Joint Select Committees*  
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administration, manner of exercise of their powers, methods of functioning and on any criteria adopted by them in the exercise of their powers and functions:

Miss Gillian Lucky

Dr. Tim Gopeesingh,

Miss Jearlean John

Prof. Ramesh Deosaran

Opposition Member (to be named)

**AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Senate also appoint the following five Members to serve with an equal number from the House of Representatives to inquire into and report to the Senate on Government Ministries with responsibility areas listed in Part I of the Appendix and on the Statutory Authorities and State Enterprises which fall within the purview of such Ministries, or which received funding from the State of more than two thirds of its total income in any one year, on their administration, manner of exercise of their powers, methods of functioning and on any other criteria adopted by them in the exercise of their powers and functions:

Dr. Jennifer Jones-Kernahan

Dr. Roodal Moonilal

Dr. Daphne Phillips

Mrs. Mary King

Opposition Member (to be named)

**AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Senate also appoint the following five Members to serve with an equal number from the House of Representatives to inquire into and report to the Senate on Government Ministries with responsibility areas listed in Part II of the Appendix and on the Statutory Authorities and State Enterprises which fall within the purview of such Ministries, or which received funding from the State of more than two thirds of its total income in any one year, on their administration, manner of exercise of their powers, methods of functioning and on any other criteria adopted by them in the exercise of their powers and functions:

Mr. Wade Mark

Dr. Vincent Lasse

Mr. Roy Augustus

Mr. Christopher R. Thomas

Opposition Member (to be named)

The resolution is accordingly forwarded for the attention of the House of Representatives at its early convenience.

Yours sincerely,

Ganace Ramdial  
President of the Senate”

**Hon. R.L. Maharaj:** Mr. Speaker, at a later stage in the proceedings we will deal with the motion in order to comply.

**DEFINITE URGENT MATTER (LEAVE)  
Removal of North Coast Rural Transport Service**

**Miss Pennelope Beckles** (*Arima*) Mr. Speaker, in accordance with Standing Order 12, I hereby seek your leave to move the adjournment of the House to discuss a definite matter of urgent, public importance, to wit, the removal of the rural transport service in the North Coast, particularly as it relates to the areas of Blanchisseuse, La Fillette and Brasso Seco/Paria.

It is definite because it pertains to the hardship and inconvenience imposed on the villagers and residents of these areas, who rely on the rural transport service as the only means of everyday transport. It is urgent because villagers in these areas spend approximately \$30—\$40 daily on transport; while tourists and visitors to these areas spend as much as \$215 on transport provided by private cars; whereas the rural transport service would cost just about six dollars.

The matter is of public importance because villagers, residents and other persons interested in visiting these scenic areas now have to travel long distances, especially if they do not go in their own vehicles and cannot afford private transportation.

Persons from Arima interested in visiting Blanchisseuse and surrounding areas, now have to travel from Arima to Port of Spain to get transport to Blanchisseuse.

Mr. Speaker, no doubt this is an area that you would be very familiar with. I so move.

**Mr. Speaker:** The Member is right, this is an area that I am familiar with. However, I know this matter is of great concern to the people of Paria, Brasso

*Definite Urgent Matter*  
[MISS BECKLES]

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Seco, Mon La Croix, Blanchisseuse and La Fillette, but it does not qualify under this Standing Order. I recommend to the Member that she raise this matter under Standing Order No. 11.

**DEFENCE FORCE RECRUITS  
(FALSE ALLEGATIONS)**

**The Prime Minister (Hon. Basdeo Panday):** Mr. Speaker, I know that you will permit me this opportunity to thank the nation for the concern and the prayers and the outpouring of goodwill that uplifted me yesterday, following my recent, successful encounter with the lion. I must confess, though, that it seems that the lion is getting stronger as I am getting weaker.

I also wish to thank Members of this honourable House for their solicitude over the circumstances that led to my sojourn of less than 24 hours at the Mount Hope Hospital.

No Member of this honourable House was more publicly solicitous than the hon. Leader of the Opposition, who gave public expression to his concern for the health of the Prime Minister. He also gave public concern for the health of the Minister of Health and that of the Minister of Integrated Planning and Development. I thank the hon. Leader of the Opposition for his expressions of concern in wishing my two ministers and me a speedy return to work.

**1.40 p.m.**

The hon. Leader of the Opposition is, no doubt, relieved at the Prime Minister's speedy recovery and is, no doubt, delighted to have him back in Parliament. We are all delighted to have the Minister of Health back on the job and with us in Parliament today, and the hon. Leader of the Opposition will be relieved to know that the Minister of Integrated Planning and Development is due to return to the country tomorrow and will be back immediately on the job upon his return. Mr. Speaker, thank you for permitting me the expression of these courtesies and I now move to the purpose of my statement today.

Mr. Speaker, the scriptures, at St. John, Chapter 8, verse 44, tell us that when a man speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own, for he is a liar and he is the father of the lie that he speaks. In other words, the paternity of a lie cannot be shared. The speaker of the lie is the father of the lie. Thus it is written in the scriptures. It is also written in the scriptures that "thou shalt not swear false witness against thy neighbours". For some people, these injunctions are of no consequence.

This is especially true of certain Members of this honourable House who, under the cloak of parliamentary privilege, deliver the most heinous fabrications,

patently intent on using fear, ignorance and bigotry to smear other Members. We experienced a frightening example of that at the last sitting of this honourable House. Friday, March 16, 2001 was a day of infamy for this Parliament. On that day, the Member for Diego Martin Central made a statement in this House that was intended to discredit the Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. It was a statement of calculated malevolence, manifestly directed to the most primal instincts among the mindless in our society.

*Hansard* records the false and heinous allegations of the Member for Diego Martin Central hurled at the Prime Minister last Friday. In an abuse of parliamentary privilege it has no parallel in its evil intent. The Member of Parliament accused the Prime Minister and Minister of National Security of egregious misconduct in public office. Those allegations, those calculated, malevolent falsehoods, are recorded in perpetuity in *Hansard*. Mr. Speaker, permit me to refer to *Hansard*. I quote:

"Supplemental Police (Amdt.) Bill

EL 2001.03.16

3.20 - 3.35 p.m."

Here, verbatim, is what the Member for Diego Martin Central told this Honourable House.

"...the first thing that comes to my mind is that there is a distinction to assist the Government in the establishment of its private army. We know that in other Caribbean countries—one very close to us—there was this whole concept of a Mongoose Gang. Is that the Government's intention?"

I continue to replay from *Hansard* the calculated malevolence of the hon. Member for Diego Martin Central in his heinous fabrications in this Parliament one week ago, and I quote:

"As a matter of fact, the information coming out is that the Regiment that is accustomed to going through its normal hiring procedure, went through that procedure, selected persons to join the army, sent that to the Minister of National Security—who as you know also happens to be the Prime Minister—the Prime Minister looked at the list and crossed it off. He said 'There are not sufficient East Indians on this list,' and has sent a new list down to the army, and said, 'These are the people you must hire'. He has everybody down in the army mad, because they do not operate in that manner."

*Hansard* continues with the incendiary statement delivered by the Member for Diego Martin Central in this honourable House one week ago, and I quote again:

*Defence Force Recruits*  
[HON. B. PANDAY]

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"I want to caution this Government, because they are playing with dynamite. They are playing with dynamite! The people have gone through their procedure. They have informed persons, and these people have already made all their arrangements to enter the army, and here comes 'Mr. Big Stuff', scrapped the whole list and say, 'Hire these; not sufficient East Indians in the army!'"

That was *Hansard* on Mr. Kenneth Valley, "EL 2001.03.16"

Mr. Speaker, we have just revisited a masterpiece of malice; a malevolently calculated incitement to ethnic strife; and a pernicious attempt to trigger discord in the Defence Force. The calculatedly emotive triggers stand out, Mr. Speaker:

Private army!

Mongoose gang!

East Indians—twice.

Dynamite—twice.

Everybody down in the army mad!

The patent attempt to discredit the Prime Minister with the tag of racism and the blatant effort to subvert and disrupt the Minister of National Security are matters of serious importance and serious concern.

What is a matter of overwhelming concern is the attempt by the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin Central to ignite racial conflagration in this plural society. He may have already succeeded in that evil intention. The media could not ignore such incendiary charges. Predictably, *Newsday* published them with the greatest stridency, not so the reply of the Defence Force.

*Hansard* records that the hon. Leader of the Opposition was a collaborator with the Member for Diego Martin Central in the false allegations and incitements that so demeaned this honourable institution and which have already activated racist utterances of unprecedented violence on the daily call-in radio programmes. I read from *Hansard* again:

**"Mr. Manning:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. Attorney General for giving way, and I would like him to state categorically that it is not correct that the Prime Minister and Minister of National Security vetoed the recommendations of the army for recruitment and instead submitted his own list to them for implementation."

That was the Member for San Fernando East—twins of deception; twin horsemen of calumny riding primal tribal instincts; twin horsemen of calumny abusing the privilege of Parliament to carry out their evil and un-Christian agenda of manipulating the population by the use of fear, ignorance, bigotry and smear.

Mr. Speaker, when a man speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own, for he is a liar and the father of the lie that he speaks. In the case at hand, the paternity of the particular lie can be shared between the Centre in the West and the East in the South. The truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, the facts, the true facts, and nothing but the facts, are presented in a statement issued by the Defence Force Headquarters this week. With your permission, I will read into the record the following statement issued on behalf of the Chief of Defence Staff:

"Recruitment in the Defence Force carries a structured process. It commences with a publication in the newspapers inviting candidates to present themselves for a written academic test. Successful candidates are then interviewed by a recruiting panel led by a senior officer. Dependent on grades secured at the interview stage, selections are made and those selected are subjected to a thorough medical examination. The final stage of the process entails the security vetting of each potential recruit to satisfy the recruiting officer that personnel to be enlisted are of the character acceptable in the Force.

On completion of the exercise, a list is submitted to the Chief of the Defence Staff, indicating that the persons identified have successfully undergone the recruitment process, recommending that they be enlisted. That list, after being approved by the Chief of Defence Staff, is forwarded to the Ministry of National Security, informing them that the persons identified have been enlisted in the Defence Force.

The document informs for the Ministry's records and does not seek approval. The approving authority is the Chief of Defence Staff."

The communication issued on behalf of the Chief of Defence Staff continues:

"Brigadier General John Sandy has occupied the office of Chief of Defence Staff for the past eight months, three of which he acted in the post before being confirmed, and during that period, the Defence Force has engaged in three recruitment exercises. In November/December last year, the Regiment recruited and enlisted one hundred and sixty (160) candidates. The Coast Guard recently concluded a similar exercise and enlistment is due to commence on March 23, 2001. At present, the Volunteer Defence Force is in the process of recruiting and should be effecting enlistment in a few weeks."

*Defence Force Recruits*  
[HON. B. PANDAY]

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**1.50 p.m.**

Mr. Speaker, the emphasis and the quote from thereon are mine.

“At no time during the tenure of Brigadier General Sandy as Chief of Defence Staff has any external agency or agent, including any government Ministry or Minister, interfered with the recruiting process or recruiting lists finalized by the Defence Force.”

Let me repeat that Mr. Speaker, as it is asserted in the statement issued on behalf of the Chief of Defence Staff.

“At no time during the tenure of Brigadier General Sandy as Chief of Defence Staff has any external agency or agent, including any government Ministry or Minister, interfered with the recruiting process or recruiting lists finalized by the Defence Force.”

The statement from Defence Force Headquarters ends with the following:

“Additionally, the Chief of Defence Staff has no knowledge of any such interference in the past.

As such, it is not an issue and has not engaged the concerns of senior officers of the Defence Force.”

Mr. Speaker, we would think that neither the Member for Diego Martin Central, nor the Member for San Fernando East, could have the gall to challenge the statement from Defence Force Headquarters which I have just read. We have, however, witnessed recently, how the very same hon. gentlemen, and their cohorts, have set out to ruthlessly and systematically destroy the reputation of the commissioners and officials of another institution of the State, the Elections and Boundaries Commission. We well remember the savagery with which they went after that institution when its officers presented facts to the public to refute the fabrications of the leader of the People’s National Movement. We ought not to be surprised, Mr. Speaker, if the Member for Diego Martin Central were to challenge the integrity of the statement issued on behalf of the Chief of Defence Staff.

Mr. Speaker, would any Member of this House dare to suggest that the founder of the party now in Opposition, and the legitimate “father of the nation”, would have countenanced the abominable action of the Member for Diego Martin Central? The current leader of the People’s National Movement not only countenances the violation of the parliamentary privilege of which his deputy leader is guilty, he supports the calumny and collaborates with the nefarious incitement to discord in the defence force and in the wider society.



Seldom has the privilege of Parliament been so misused, abused and violated as was done last Friday in the Member for Diego Martin Central's pernicious attack upon a fellow parliamentarian. Never, in this House has there been a cruder, more naked attempt to use fear, ignorance and bigotry to smear a Member of this honourable House. Never has the privilege of Parliament been so flagrantly violated in an incitement to racial division in our plural society.

Mr. Speaker, can anyone seriously argue that the inflammatory statements under reference are acceptable as freedom of speech, as freedom of expression, as the exercise of democracy? Surely, our Parliament should recognize and nurture an ethos that hon. Members would respect, however limited might be the personal ethics and sense of responsibility of certain Members opposite. The privilege accorded Members of our Parliament is an enormous power. Such power should carry with it the obligation of responsibility.

We have learnt that every excess committed by Members opposite is but the prologue to greater and continuing excesses. We saw that in the systematic attempt to destroy public confidence in the Elections and Boundaries Commission. Reparation should be required of Members guilty of the atrocious conduct of the Member for Diego Martin Central and his leader.

Mr. Speaker, I await the advice and initiative of the hon. Leader of Government Business insofar as a patent breach of privilege has been wilfully committed. I await the advice of the hon. Attorney General as to whether the Member for Diego Martin Central has contravened the law of defamation in his reiteration to the media, of the unfounded and inflammatory allegation that he had made in Parliament.

We will return to the matter I have just raised. I give my word on this.

I thank you, Sir. [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. Kenneth Valley** (*Diego Martin Central*): Mr. Speaker, for the benefit of the hon. Prime Minister, who I am extremely pleased to see in the House today—I know that he is recuperating, and I wish him the very best of health—I am to inform him that at 11 o'clock this morning I had a press conference where I restated what I said in the House, with one correction. I referred to the coast guard and not the army. I stand by my statement and he is now free—I wanted to ensure that there is no abuse of the Parliament, it is now out there in the open. [*Interruption*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Order please.

**Mr. K. Valley:** If the hon. Prime Minister feels that he is wronged, he is now free to take legal action.

**IMMIGRATION (CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY SKILLED NATIONALS) (AMDT.) BILL**

Bill to amend the Immigration (Caribbean Community Skilled Nationals) Act, 1996 [*The Minister of Enterprise Development, Foreign Affairs and Tourism*]; read the first time.

**JOINT SELECT COMMITTEES  
(ESTABLISHMENT OF)**

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

*Whereas* Section 66A of the Constitution makes provision for the establishment of Joint Select Committees of Parliament to inquire into and report to both Houses of Parliament on the administration, manner of exercise of their powers, methods of functioning and on any criteria adopted in the exercise of their powers and functions by:

- A) Government Ministries;
- B) Municipal Corporations;
- C) Statutory Authorities;
- D) Enterprises owned or controlled by or on behalf of the State or which received funding from the State of more than two thirds of its total income in any one year;
- E) Service Commissions with the exception of the Judicial and Legal Service Commission.

*Be It Resolved* that the House appoint five Members to serve with an equal number from the Senate to enquire into and report to the House on Municipal Corporations and Service Commissions with the exception of the Judicial and Legal Service Commissions on their administration, manner of exercise of their powers, methods of functioning and on any other criteria adopted by them in the exercise of their powers and functions:

The Members are:

Mr. Subhas Panday

Mr. Carlos John

Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar

and two Opposition Members to be named.

*And be it further resolved* that the House also appoint five Members to serve with an equal number from the Senate to enquire into and report to the Senate on Government Ministries with responsibility areas listed in Part I of the Appendix.

Part I of the Appendix states:

“Attorney General and Legal Affairs  
 Communications and Information Technology  
 Community Empowerment, Sport and Consumer Affairs  
 Education  
 Energy and Energy Industries  
 Enterprises Development, Foreign Affairs and Tourism  
 Environment  
 Finance  
 Food Production and Marine Resources”

And on the Statutory Authorities and State Enterprises which fall within the purview of such Ministries, or which received funding from the State of more than two-thirds of their total income in any one year, on their administration, manner of exercise of their powers, methods of functioning and on any other criteria adopted by them in the exercise of their powers and functions:

The Members are:

Mr. Subhas Panday  
 Mr. Ganga Singh  
 Mr. Trevor Sudama

And two Opposition Members to be named.

*Be it further resolved* that the House also appoint five Members to serve with an equal number from the Senate to enquire into and report to the House on Government Ministries with responsibility areas listed in Part II of the Appendix.

**2.00 p.m.**

Part II states:

“Health  
 Housing and Settlements  
 Human Development, Youth and Culture

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Infrastructure Development and Local Government  
Integrated Planning and Development  
Labour, Manpower Development and Industrial Relations  
National Security  
Prime Minister  
Tobago Affairs  
Transport”

And on Statutory Authorities and State Enterprises which fall within the purview of such Ministries, or which received funding from the State of more than two-thirds of their total income in any one year on their administration, manner of exercise of their powers, methods of functioning and on any other criteria adopted by them in the exercise of their powers and functions.

The Members are:

Mr. Mervyn Assam  
Mr. Ralph Maraj  
Dr. Hamza Rafeeq

Two Members of the Opposition to be named.

The Motion is to set up these committees to give effect to the amendment to the Constitution, No. 29 of 1999, which empowers the Parliament in addition to the committees, under the Standing Orders, to appoint these additional joint select committees to enquire and report to both Houses of Parliament. The inquiry and report are in respect of government ministries, municipal corporations, statutory authorities, enterprises owned or controlled by and on behalf of the State, or which received funding from the State of more than two-thirds of its total income in any one year and service commissions, with the exception of the Judicial and Legal Service Commission. As stated in the Motion, it is to enquire and report to the House in respect of matters relating to their administration, manner or exercise of their powers, methods of functioning and any criteria adopted by them in the exercise of their powers.

I do not want to go into the merits of this matter, but may I say, that these joint select committees would be able to appoint sub-committees and specialist advisors. Their hearings would be public and they would sit from place to place.

Their reports to Parliament would create an obligation on the relevant Minister to present a paper to the House within 60 days after a report has been presented, responding to the recommendations and comments. All these responses would be laid on the Table. This is all part and parcel of the reform of the parliamentary committees. It is all in order to promote greater openness and transparency of governance.

Thank you.

*Question proposed.*

**Mr. Kenneth Valley** (*Diego Martin Central*): Mr. Speaker, you might be aware that when this matter was debated, the Opposition had certain difficulties with the manner in which these committees were being established. You are aware that at present there are constitutional provisions for the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) and the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee (PAEC). They are governed by special majorities and chaired by the Opposition. These committees would not be so chaired, on the face of it. They seem to be in conflict with the existing Public Accounts Committee and Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee.

In the circumstances, the Opposition has decided that it would take no part in the operations of those committees and would therefore not appoint any Members to those committees.

Thank you.

**The Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs (Hon. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj)**: Mr. Speaker, the Opposition is entitled to express its view. Notwithstanding the Opposition, however, the Parliament will have these committees. We will have the Independent Senators. The committees will go from area to area to look at governmental departments. Here it is, the Opposition is losing an opportunity in which to scrutinize Government. That is one of the most important functions of opposition. They owe that to the people of the country. That is their duty. They do not have the time to spend on the people's business. They do not have the time to come here and therefore, they have decided to use some excuse.

In every Commonwealth country in which there are reforms of the parliamentary system, there are these committees that give to the people—through the Opposition—the ammunition to scrutinize Government for the people to know what is happening. There would be three parliamentary committees. One parliamentary committee would scrutinize all the service commissions, with the

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[HON. R. L. MAHARAJ]

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exception of the Judicial and Legal Service Commission, and all municipal corporations. There would be another parliamentary committee to scrutinize half of the ministries and another one to scrutinize the statutory authorities. This should go down in the *Guinness Book of Records*. It is the first Opposition that has refused to do its duty and “brazen face” to tell the people that they do not want to do their duty.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Would the Member for Couva South give way? I would like to ask a question please, through you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to find out—if I am mistaken; I hope I am not. As far as I understand it, these committees will have a majority of Government Members and be chaired by the Government to examine the Government?

**2.10 p.m.**

**Hon. R. L. Maharaj:** Mr. Speaker, in the Parliament there is a majority government. [*Interruption*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please! I call for order! Member for Diego Martin West, I call for order! You can proceed, hon. Attorney General!

**Hon. R. L. Maharaj:** In many countries—

**Mr. Speaker:** It is not a motion. The Hon. Member has not given way. It is not a debate. The Member for Diego Martin Central made an input and the Attorney General is responding to it. It is not a debate. Please carry on!

**Hon. R. L. Maharaj:** Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member for Diego Martin West does not even know when he is debating and when he is not. He has come here and he is reading something else. He does not pay attention to what is happening. At the end of the Opposition’s contributions, I am responding and he is asking if it is a debate. He does not want to participate in it as he is reading some magazine.

**Mr. Speaker:** Member for Diego Martin West, you will not sit in your seat and yell across the floor and disturb the recording of the *Hansard* reporters who have indicated to me that they are having difficulty following what the Attorney General is saying! You are to desist from that type of behaviour! I am on my feet and you are to remain silent in your seat!

**Hon. R. L. Maharaj:** The Opposition is showing that they do not know what happens in these matters. In all countries in which this system has been introduced: England, South Africa and Canada, the governments are of the majority and the government chairs it. If they wanted to debate the Motion they could have come and produced. They are sitting in their chairs and shouting, just

as the hon. Member for Diego Martin Central, who made statements, which were totally inaccurate. He was corrected and he does not have the gall to apologize. One cannot believe anything that they have to say. On the committees in other countries are government members and opposition members and matters are heard independently and in the glare of the public. Therefore, there could be a minority report: there could be a unanimous report.

I want to put on the record of this Parliament that the Opposition was always against parliamentary committees to monitor government. As a matter of fact, from 1991—1995, the United National Congress in opposition, requested the then government to set up parliamentary committees and there was indecision. They refused to have it because the PNM administration could not subject itself to scrutiny. Instead of the Opposition making all these wild allegations of corruption, mismanagement, and fraud, they are being given the opportunity, in a legal framework, to discharge their duties to the people of Trinidad and Tobago, and they are refusing.

Mr. Speaker, as the hon. Prime Minister has reminded me the hon. Member for Diego Martin Central last week made a statement which was calculated to ignite the population. If he genuinely wanted information, he could have used the parliamentary committee system to get that. He could have asked a question. It would have taken him three weeks but, with the parliamentary committees, it would have been contemporaneous. The Opposition is prepared to fashion its policy on the basis of lies, untruths and trying to ignite the population based on differences in the way they have operated all of these years which they believe would continue.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move.

*Question put.*

*The House divided:*      Ayes 18      Noes 11

AYES

Maharaj, Hon. R. L.

Panday, Hon. B.

Assam, Hon. M.

Persad-Bissessar, Hon. K.

John, Hon. C.

Sudama, Hon. T.

Maraj, Hon. R.  
Rafeeq, Dr. The Hon. H.  
Baksh, Hon. S.  
Panday, S.  
Ganga, Hon. S.  
Peters, Hon. W.  
Nanan, Dr. The Hon. A.  
Partap, Hon. H.  
Ramsaran, Hon. M.  
Khan, Dr. the Hon. F.  
Chaitan, Hon. W.  
Sharma, Hon. C.  
NOES  
Valley, K.  
Rowley, Dr. K.  
Imbert, C.  
Robinson-Regis, Mrs. C.  
Narine, J.  
James, Mrs. E.  
Joseph, M.  
Boynes, R.  
Callender, S.  
Rahael, J.  
Achong, L.  
*Mr. N. Moore abstained.*  
*Question agreed to.*



*Resolved:*

That the House appoint the following Members to serve with an equal number from the Senate to enquire into and report to the House on Municipal Corporations and Service Commissions with the exception of the Judicial and Legal Service Commission on their administration, manner of exercise of their powers, methods of functioning and on any other criteria adopted by them in the exercise of their powers and functions:

Mr. Subhas Panday

Mr. Carlos John

Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar

Two Opposition Members to be named

*Further Resolved* that the House also appoint five Members to serve with an equal number from the Senate to enquire into and report to the House on Government Ministries with responsibility areas listed in Part I of the Appendix and on the Statutory Authorities and State Enterprises which fall within the purview of such Ministries, or which received funding from the State of more than two-thirds of their total income in any one year on the administration, manner of exercise of their powers, methods of functioning and on any other criteria adopted by them in the exercise of their powers and functions:

Mr. Subhas Panday

Mr. Ganga Singh

Mr. Trevor Sudama

Two Opposition Members to be named

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the House also appoint five Members to serve with an equal number from the Senate to enquire into and report to the House on Government Ministries with responsibility areas listed in Part II of the Appendix and on the Statutory Authorities and State Enterprises which fall within the purview of such Ministries or which received funding from the State of more than two-thirds of their total income in any one year on the administration, manner of exercise of their powers, methods of functioning and on any on other criteria adopted by them in the exercise of their powers and functions.

The Members are:

Mr. Mervyn Assam

Mr. Ralph Maraj

Dr. Hamza Rafeeq

And two Opposition Members to be named

**2.20 p.m.**

**ELECTIONS AND BOUNDARIES COMMISSION  
(PUBLIC COMMISSION OF INQUIRY)**

[Second Day]

*Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question* [February 2, 2001]:

*Be it resolved* that this honourable House call on the relevant authorities to take steps to review by way of a Public Commission of Inquiry, all the actions of the EBC in the preparation of the preliminary and final voters lists which were used on December 11, 2000:

*And be it further resolved* that this House agree that the Government provide, through supplementary allocation, all the necessary financial and other resources to effect an immediate, comprehensive, nationwide voter registration exercise, inclusive of a new voter identification system:

*And be it further resolved* that this exercise be completed in the shortest possible time with a view to having improved procedures and a revised voters list available well before any other national election becomes due in Trinidad and Tobago. [Dr. K. Rowley]

*Question again proposed.*

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, on the last occasion the Member for Diego Martin East spoke for 27 minutes, therefore, he has 18 minutes remaining.

**Mr. C. Imbert:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I assume that is normal time and there would be an additional—[*Interruption*] Thirty minutes?

The Motion before the House is very serious. I am satisfied that a number of persons are Members of this House because of irregularities on the voters list. In particular, when one examines the case of the Member for Tunapuna, who previously was the Member for St. Joseph and was chased out of St. Joseph by his constituents, being the most unpopular parliamentary representative for St. Joseph for many years; when one examines the situation where you have a very unpopular representative, arriving in the constituency of Tunapuna just a couple

of weeks before a general election and somehow managing to achieve the miracle of increasing the votes for his party in that constituency by almost 2,000. There is no skill attached to that, none whatsoever, there are serious irregularities within the election lists and this is why we have called for a commission of inquiry. Mr. Speaker, these are figures available in the public domain. These are figures taken from published lists from the Elections and Boundaries Commission (EBC), the 1995 list and the July 1999 list. I will go to the 2000 list in due course.

In the published list of the EBC, you would see that between 1995 and 1999 there were some 263,000 changes in voters on that list. You are looking at almost one-third of the names on the 1995 electoral list, where there were some 800,000-odd names and we see between 1995 and 1999, 263,033 movements. I will explain what this means. If we take the constituency of Arima, when we examine the names on the 1995 list and the names on the 1999 list, we see that 2,699 names were removed from the 1995 list between 1995 and 1999. A total of 5,744 were added, a net movement in the constituency of Arima, of 8,443 names in a four-year period. It is impossible! If you go through every constituency, for instance, Arouca North, 2,690 names were taken off the list, again, 5,744 names added to the list, a net change of 8,434 names. With respect to the Arouca South list, 2,706 names were removed from the 1995 list and by the time the 1999 list came around 7,565 names were added, a total of 10,271 names. In Barataria, 2,057 names came off the list, 4,004 added to the list, a total change of 6,061 names. As you go through you would see this fantastic movement, a total of 90,413 names removed from the list and 172,620 names added. Now all sorts of explanations would be given as to why this happened. I am submitting, however, that there is no rational explanation for this sort of thing.

It did not only happen in marginal seats, it happened in Diego Martin Central where 2,101 names were taken off the list and 4,016 were added. In Diego Martin East 1,671 names were removed from the list and 3,978 names added. As you go through you will see this pattern, in Fyzabad, La Brea, Laventille and Naparima. In Nariva, 3,171 names were removed from the list and 5,048 names added—a total effective change of 8,219 names. Mr. Speaker, we are talking about constituencies with 25,000 and 26,000 voters, so if you have 8,000 out of 25,000 changes, you are looking at 25 per cent of the electoral list in a constituency like Nariva sorry, one-third, 33 per cent. With respect to Oropouche, 2,162 names removed from the list—I wonder where they went to—and 4,477 names added to the list—I wonder where they came from. A total change, again, in Oropouche of 6,609 names. In Mayaro, 3,202 were removed from the list and 5,250 added—the total change 8,362—and it goes on. One-third of the names on the list have been interfered with!

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You see, Mr. Speaker, this was a very sophisticated plan and not to cause suspicion they were removing the names of PNM supporters from the lists and inserting the names of UNC supporters on the lists. As my colleague has indicated they were reconfiguring constituencies. There were situations, therefore, as on December 11, where voters for the Diego Martin West area found themselves on lists in San Fernando. They had to leave Diego Martin and go to vote in San Fernando—PNM voters, of course. There were PNM voters in San Fernando—this is not “ol” talk, this is a fact. This happened. There were a number of voters in Diego Martin West who were forced to hire a maxi-taxi and travel to San Fernando to vote because their names were transferred from Diego Martin to San Fernando without their knowledge.

Mr. Speaker, you see part of the sophisticated plan—What do they call it? Party Administrative Support Unit (PASU)? Some party restructuring something or the other. That is why in my constituency I was able to determine, on election day, a number of persons who came to see me personally with their ID cards, showing me that they were on the 1999 voters list; showing their valid ID cards, in some cases, valid for seven, eight and nine years and demonstrating that they had been systematically deleted from the 2000 list of electors. Mysteriously!

**2.30 p.m.**

What was so mysterious is that these were PNM activists, not just PNM supporters but persons known in the community of Diego Martin East to be my supporters and my fieldworkers on election day. I even had situations where some of my agents found themselves with ID cards valid to the year 2008, yet when they went to vote being told that their names had mysteriously been deleted from the list. The EBC could shout and scream all it wants. They could take out all the full-page ads that they want. They could give all kinds of addresses to chambers of commerce and addresses to the nation. The Prime Minister could say “wha’ he want”. It does not change the facts; and it does not change the fact that for at least five years, and certainly before 1995, there was systematic interference in the list compiled by the Elections and Boundaries Commission.

There is no other explanation for the removal of 3,110 names from the constituency of Toco/Manzanilla and 5,952 new names coming on to that list. Are you going to tell me that one-third of our population is migrating around the country? Are there new industrial estates springing up in Trinidad and Tobago? Are there new factories? Are there new housing estates springing up all over Trinidad and Tobago, evenly, in every part of the country, that would cause this

even distribution where one-third of a constituency would just pick up itself and go to another constituency—all 36 constituencies?

You are going to tell me—we saw it in the House of Assembly election where an NAR candidate was on television with the voters list for the House of Assembly election and was pointing out that voters who were appearing in his electoral district in Tobago had come out of Maloney and ended up in Tobago to vote on the day of the House of Assembly election. Of course, they could not “t’ief” that well in Tobago so they did not get through in Tobago. Perhaps they are interfering with the list in Tobago as we speak; but you see, we are now wise to them.

They got away with it in 1995, they got away with it in 2000, but we are now wise to them because, you see, it has taken a while for the population to reconcile itself to the fact that voter fraud is now a feature of elections in Trinidad and Tobago [*Desk thumping*] and it has been imported into this country by the UNC from other territories where voter fraud has been practised for many, many, many years. As a matter of fact, I am advised that the UNC has taken electoral fraud to a new height and has now improved the model and is exporting it back out to various countries in the region. You saw the allegations of the Leader of the Opposition in St. Vincent where he indicated that UNC activists were in St. Vincent seeking to assist in the rigging of that election, and we have just seen what has taken place in Guyana where persons with valid ID cards, with the stubs from the Elections and Boundaries Commission were turning up to vote on election day and were being told, “Sorry, your name is not on the list.”

There were so many instances of that in my constituency and I was still successful. So that, it should be clear to those on the other side that this is not somebody who is a sore loser. I was still able to gain a margin of victory of 5,000 votes and therefore I am reporting what I saw with my own eyes, when I saw maxi-taxis belonging to a certain rental company that is affiliated to the United National Congress suddenly appearing in Maraval at 4 o’clock in the afternoon and picking up people in Maraval and carrying them up to Paramin to vote and, of course, these persons were not known to the residents of Paramin.

As I have said before and I am repeating today, this is the first situation where I saw instances of the electoral ink washing off people’s fingers in minutes in plain water—electoral ink washing off! I know a number of persons who went to vote, who actually voted, came back and demonstrated to me how easy it was to remove the electoral ink. You see, the plan was not just to have illegal transfers but to manipulate the list, either to randomly remove 1,000 to 1,500 PNM supporters, or remove them permanently, from the list.

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So you have—say, in any constituency you might have 6,000 or 7,000 PNM supporters who are known and identified, and the other side will get access to these names and will just take out 1,000 or 1,500 of these names—just remove them from the list. The other thing they did was, out of the remaining 5,000 or 6,000 persons, to randomly locate them in remote areas of Trinidad. So you take PNM people from Maraval, “dey never sign a transfer form, dey never applied to transfer their registration, but dey name showing up in Mayaro and dey name showing up in Oropouche and dey name showing up in Couva”. This is what happened in the last election. However, as I said, we are wise to these games.

You see, the EBC could say what it wants, you know; it could resist how it wants. This electoral registration that is about to begin will be watched and will be scrutinized very closely. I would like to know, what is the Elections and Boundaries Commission so afraid of? Why have they refused to allow political parties or representatives of political parties to monitor and scrutinize the electoral registration? What have they got to hide? Is it that they are now going to do a complete job? Having tampered with the list to give the UNC the edge in the last election, are they now going to cast it in concrete so that the damage they have done to the voters list in the 1999/2000 period will now be reinforced with this voter registration? Or is the EBC going to come clean and admit to us that there are at least 100,000 names on the voters list that are not real people?

If we look at the statistics, the EBC alleges that there are 850,000 voters over the age of 18—sorry, 930,000 voters over the age of 18 residing in Trinidad and Tobago. Let me repeat that. The Elections and Boundaries Commission alleges that there are in excess of 900,000 persons who are registered and eligible to vote in Trinidad and Tobago. However, when we go to the figures from the Central Statistical Office and we check the 15 and over age group, which includes people 15, 16 and 17 years old, we get a smaller figure than that published by the Elections and Boundaries Commission and the EBC is trying to defend this nonsense. If you extrapolate the figures from the Central Statistical Office, there cannot be more than 825,000 persons in Trinidad and Tobago who are alive, living in Trinidad and Tobago, and over the age of 18. So how on earth can the EBC have a voters list—[*Interruption*]

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

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

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Mr. C. Imbert:** Thank you. As I said, there cannot be more than 825,000 persons living in this country—approximately, give or take 5,000—living in Trinidad and Tobago, who are alive and over the age of 18. Yet, the Elections and Boundaries Commission would have us believe that there are in excess of 925,000 persons eligible—*[Interruption]* Yes, I said in excess of 925,000. The EBC's figures and the Central Statistical Office figures are different by over 100,000 persons and there is nobody on the other side who can explain the discrepancy between the figures of the Central Statistical Office or the figures of the Elections and Boundaries Commission except to say "CSO wrong".

Why should the Central Statistical Office, which has the personnel, has been gathering data for the last 50 years, has the experience and is the official source regarding population in Trinidad and Tobago—why should the Central Statistical Office figures be wrong suddenly? They were never wrong before. It is only when the glaring discrepancy between the number of names on the EBC list and the number of persons on the CSO figures is exposed that they start to laugh, "kee-kee-kee", you know, "dem figures" from the CSO cannot be right, and you know how manipulative the Members on the other side are.

I would not be surprised if we suddenly hear that the figures submitted in this Parliament in the last budget from the Central Statistical Office, the population figures, have suddenly been revised. I would not be surprised. We know how manipulative the United National Congress is. If I hear any statement coming from the CSO that the figures it has been quoting in this Parliament for the last 10 years were wrong, then I would dismiss that as not being worth the paper that it is printed on.

There is something seriously wrong with the Elections and Boundaries Commission. They do not answer correspondence. Prior to the last general election, as the candidate and the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin East, I wrote the EBC, as is required under law, and pointed out discrepancies in the list of voters that they were publishing. I gave them all the information. I pointed out to them that in my constituency between 1995 and 2000, there were in excess of 6,000 changes in names on the voters list. It is now five months later—no reply. You know, this is typical efficiency from an institution that is being defended so strongly by the Prime Minister.

I pointed out to them that over 6,000 names had been changed on the voters list in the constituency of Diego Martin East. I gave them the names—not a jot, not a reply, not a telephone call, nothing—no reply. Six thousand names have been changed on the voters list in Diego Martin East, and, in addition, I wrote

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them and I pointed out that a number of names of dead persons had appeared on the voters list—not a reply, not a single reply. So you wonder what is the role of the Elections and Boundaries Commission. If a Member of Parliament and a candidate writes to the EBC and points out that there are thousands of changes on the electoral list, “Could you please tell me who these people are? Where do they live? Where did they come from? Why have they suddenly appeared or disappeared from the list?” No reply. Am I supposed to wait for the next five years until the next general election for them to respond?

In terms of the dead people who were on the list who we had identified as having died—and what is interesting is that these names were removed from the list in 1999. They died prior to the local government election of 1999. Their names came off the list for the 1999 election and reappeared in 2000. So that some conscientious official in EBC, being aware that the persons were dead, had done the proper thing and deleted the names from the 1999 list and then someone acting in collusion with the UNC put the names back on in the year 2000. Therefore, I was not surprised on December 11, 2000 when a number of persons came to me and told me that when they went to vote—and you see when you go to vote you are shown the list with your name on it and there is a line through all persons who have voted previously.

**2.45 p.m.**

A person who goes to vote can determine from the list that is presented to him, persons who have already voted, and I was not surprised when a number of persons—particularly from Maraval and Paramin—told me that their relatives who had died a year or two before were registered on the list as having appeared, presented themselves, and voted. The way they were able to establish this is that the family name was the same. If they had a name like Romany or Constantine—one of these common names in Paramin or Maraval—they would go to the polling station and their name could be John Constantine. Their dead uncle would be Brian Constantine, and they would go and see “Brian Constantine” who died, suddenly rose from the grave on election day and was registered and ticked off as having voted on December 11, 2000.

**Mr. John:** That happened?

**Mr. C. Imbert:** Many times. We were not worried because we knew they would have to pad and interfere with Diego Martin East by at least 9,000 bogus names to have any effect on the outcome of the election in my seat, but we took very careful note of what transpired.



You see the way the “ratch”, the skull, was perpetrated, is that a number of imaginary names were placed on the list, so, Mr. John Smith of Saddle Road suddenly appears on the list. Then there was the Elections and Boundaries Commission making a statement that no identification is required to vote and the further statement that all that is required is for one's name to be on the list and one can vote. One is not required to produce any identification. A very curious statement coming out from the EBC on the eve of the election.

So, Mr. John Smith, who is not a real person, who is a phantom, his name appears on the list, but another person impersonating John Smith shows up in the polling station, having already voted in another polling division or constituency; having gone to a constituency which was identified to him by the bright boys in the UNC. They systematically tampered with the electoral ink in certain polling stations so that these activists were given a list of polling stations where the ink was defective. They went there and voted, got in, came out, got the ink off their fingers and showed up in Maraval and presented themselves and said, “My name is John Smith”. They were asked, “Do you have any identification?” “No.” “Any passport?” “No.” “Driver’s permit?” “No.” They were then told, “You see this paper? Raise your right hand and sign that.” Bam! John Smith voted and he was gone, and there was no record of John Smith because John Smith does not exist. You see, this was systematically done throughout Trinidad and Tobago, so thousands of bogus names were planted on the list and a group of persons systematically moved from constituency to constituency, voting more than once.

**Mr. Partap:** “Nancy” story!

**Mr. C. Imbert:** You could say “nancy” story as much as you want. We even saw it in the great United States where university students were boasting in Florida how they voted six and seven times when there was that situation with Bush and Gore. What we are now seeing in Trinidad and Tobago is the end result of a sophisticated plan to steal the general election but, as I have said earlier in this debate, we are now wise to the games on their side. We know exactly what they are doing, and I can assure them that on the next occasion, it would not be so easy.

Those of you who suddenly turned up in marginal seats like Tunapuna and St. Joseph and parachuted out of the blue—nobody knows you. A record of poor representation from the Member for St. Joseph. One would have thought that it would have been impossible under those circumstances for increases in the order of 2,000 votes to occur, but it happened. We had the obvious situation in Tunapuna where the former Member was able to increase his votes by 1,500 because of the good representation in that constituency and, all of a sudden, the

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other side who had no candidate—infigting amongst themselves and bacchanal in the newspapers for a year. First it was Warner’s son, then he pulled out; then Emmanuel Hosein; then Carlos John, and so they were going over and over. They could not choose a candidate.

They threw Mervyn Assam out of St. Joseph and said they had no use for him. He parachuted into Tunapuna and increased the votes by 2,000 in three weeks. He did not even know the constituency. He was unable to even cover 10 per cent of the constituency in his house-to-house campaign, being chased from door to door as he went through Tunapuna. He managed to increase votes by 2,000 in Tunapuna in the space of three weeks? Give me a chance! I am sorry. It is not acceptable. I do not accept it.

I am convinced, when I look at these numbers and the systematic interference with voters in every single constituency, not one constituency was spared the evil hand of the UNC activists. Not one! From 3,000 to 2,600, 2,500, 3,031, and so forth. Names removed and names added, 5,000, 4,000 and, of course, we are going to hear illogical explanations for all of these movements.

What they would do is pick a house with a family name. Take a name like Robinson, for example, and we know that the family Robinson lives in Boissiere Village. So, there are six Robinsons living at 11, Valerie Street, Boissiere Village. They say, “Tag on four more!” so they now have 10 Robinsons allegedly living on Valerie Street, but totally unknown to the persons who live in the house.

We had the situation where someone was so boldfaced, he came to vote on December 11, 2000 and when asked their address, they gave the address of the Returning Officer. Boldfaced! He gave the address of the Returning Officer and then bolted out the station when he realized that he got caught.

We also had the other very surprising occurrence where, for the first time in the history of democratic elections in Trinidad and Tobago, the postal agency was taken out of the delivery of the poll cards. So, there was now a set of amateurs delivering. They paid them \$5 or \$10 per card, but there was a method behind this madness. There were hundreds of poll cards ending up in the rivers and in the streets, but there was also the very curious situation—I saw it at La Sieva Avenue in Maraval where a resident called me the night before the election to say that the day before, nine poll cards were delivered in her mailbox for persons who did not live there and had never lived in La Sieva in their lives. That pattern was repeated throughout this country, because it was all part of the systematic fraud and the systematic tampering with the electoral list.

I am sorry, I am afraid I have absolutely no confidence in the Elections and Boundaries Commission. Himself cannot improve himself. I have no confidence in the Elections and Boundaries Commission to do any countrywide electoral registration unless it is done under the scrutiny of the political parties, and I mean all political parties. I do not just mean the People's National Movement. I mean the United National Congress (UNC) as well as the National Alliance for Reconstruction (NAR) and every other political party.

Also, independent bodies should be involved in any new registration of voters in Trinidad and Tobago, because if it is not done, the corruption that now exists within the electoral list will just be intensified and we will have a situation in Trinidad and Tobago where a large percentage of the population—I dare say the majority of the population—will come away from the election believing that something went wrong as it occurred in December, 2000 where large numbers of persons came out and cast their ballots for the PNM and discovered, to their horror, that somehow, by some magic, the other side was able to acquire more votes. They were able to acquire votes in areas where they have no party groups, where they have no presence, no support, and so forth.

This was completely impossible! For example, in Laventille, someone will tell me that the UNC could get 2,600 votes? I am not buying that!

**Mr. John:** Why? You are lucky that you won your seat!

**Mr. Bereaux:** The Member for San Fernando West could tell you why, because he is the boss man up in Laventille.

**Mr. C. Imbert:** It is clear to me that there was systematic interference in every single constituency in Trinidad and Tobago. It is clear to me that in order to create the myth that the UNC had the popular vote, what they did was pad up the list to the extent that not only would they be successful in a majority of seats, but they would also get a majority of the votes cast.

Of course, this is not an actual majority. This is not a real majority. I am satisfied that at least 50,000 of the votes allegedly received by the UNC were not real voters. I am satisfied of that. I am satisfied that they do not have majority support in this country. They could say what they want, but we on this side are not going to allow them to interfere with the democratic traditions that have existed in this country for the last 45 years. Since 1956 there have been democratic traditions in elections in Trinidad and Tobago. Since 1956 there has never been a situation where there has been what we now see with this voters list.

**Mr. Sudama:** What about the voting machine?

**Mr. C. Imbert:** You could say what you want. You could make all sorts of excuses. I do not buy the argument that anything that may have occurred previously can justify the corruption that is taking place now. I do not buy the argument. I am sorry. And there are too many people in this country who feel disenfranchised because of what took place in the last election. There are too many questions about the Elections and Boundaries Commission. There are too many questions about the identification cards.

We have made the point that on the identification cards, the person's address is not stated. I remember on the last occasion, the Member for Barataria blurring out that that was on the old identification card. It is not so. On the previous identification card, there was no address. This is why someone can use a bogus card because it does not properly identify him. This is why we are calling on a new system of identification and for the issue of new identification cards where the person's polling division will be stated on the card. This will take care of persons moving around in the country. This will take care, to some extent, of forgery of identification cards. I cannot see that any reasonable administration would refuse to have that type of identification, and if a person wants to transfer, that person must give back his or her card and get a new card with the new polling division on it, and he or she must also present himself or herself in person.

### **3.00 p.m.**

We discovered in the last election that transfer forms, especially in San Fernando, were being handed out at an exhibition in a shopping mall. I understand that over 1,000 transfer forms were handed out in Southex in south, prior to the election. These forms were being photocopied and filled out by UNC activists and lodged within the Elections and Boundaries Commission without the persons turning up in person. This is the kind of irregularity we are talking about; it is a breach of the law. If someone has to transfer his or her registration, the law requires that he or she must show up in person to deliver the transfer form; but this did not happen in the last election. There were thousands and thousands of transfer forms being photocopied and handed in by agents of the UNC into the EBC, including UNC candidates, walking into the EBC with hundreds of forms without the persons being present, and the registration was effected.

Then we had the converse in the constituency of Tunapuna, where the candidate for Tunapuna was seeking to legitimately transfer persons. The persons were there, ready to lodge their forms, but they were frustrated by the EBC, and the transfers were not allowed to take place. So there were situations in the election where UNC candidates were able to give effect to transfers of hundreds,

perhaps, thousands of voters. Mr. Speaker, PNM candidates were prevented from doing legitimate transfers for persons who had moved into areas, had been living there for several years and were eligible to vote.

We also have the situation now where the Elections and Boundaries Commission is seeking to have a new nationwide registration and persons who are trying to get application forms to apply to be registration officers cannot get forms. The EBC is up to its old tricks. It is giving out the application forms for the registration exercise to specific persons, UNC activists. I make this claim with no fear of contradiction. United National Congress activists, aided and abetted by their agents within the EBC, are being given forms to register as itinerant registration officers for this national registration exercise.

**Hon. Members:** You know that?

**Mr. C. Imbert:** Yes I know that; UNC activists. Members of the public who are trying to get application forms are being denied. [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Breaux:** Up to yesterday I phoned Cayenne; that old crook!

**Mr. C. Imbert:** The ad is today for tomorrow. Persons who wish to apply to be registration officers cannot get the forms. The forms are already secretly given to UNC activists. [*Interruption*] You feel that we are stupid.

**Hon. Members:** We know so.

**Mr. C. Imbert:** We are not going to take this lying down. We are not tolerating this level of corruption, and we are going to keep pressing for an inquiry into the Elections and Boundaries Commission. People can shout and scream all they want. There are too many irregularities taking place in Trinidad and Tobago. There is too much resistance within the EBC. There is too much evidence of collusion by officials of the EBC with the UNC. There is too much evidence of opposition within the EBC to the People's National Movement, and we are pressing for a commission of enquiry. [*Interruption*] Yes, I am very serious. We are demanding that all the existing identification cards be scrapped and a new tamper-proof form of identification card be issued in this country.

**Mr. John:** One with a balisier on it?

**Mr. C. Imbert:** Otherwise you are going to have an increase in social tensions. You are going to have a climate of uncertainty in this country, and we are going to retreat. Trinidad and Tobago, which has had a proud history of democratic elections, is going to deteriorate into a banana Republic and take its place among those countries of the world, where, when elections are held, nobody takes them seriously. [*Crosstalk*]

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I am setting the Government on notice. We, in the PNM, are not going to tolerate this interference with independent institutions. We are not going to tolerate the corruption of our electoral system. We are going to do whatever is necessary within the confines of the law to resist this evil attempt to institutionalize electoral corruption in Trinidad and Tobago.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Minister of Infrastructure Development and Local Government (Hon. Carlos John):** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [*Interruption*] This is not my maiden speech; you were not here when I made my maiden speech. You must come to Parliament a little more often. [*Laughter*]

**Mr. Sudama:** To represent the people.

**Hon. C. John:** Mr. Speaker, the critic is convinced that the chief purpose of sunshine is to cast shadows.

**Mr. Bereaux:** Original talk!

**Hon. C. John:** I believe that the Opposition, through this Motion, is once again casting at shadows. One would recall that in the budget debate in the Senate, Sen. Montano accused a Member of the Government of having \$12 million in a bank account. We asked, time and time again, for proof so that appropriate action could be taken, whether it is against the Minister of Infrastructure Development, whichever Minister, or the Attorney General; we are prepared to take action. "Not a drum was heard: not a funeral note." We went through an entire election campaign. That would have been a hot number on the campaign trail to present to the people if we were discredited, if a Member of the Senate was discredited. They dared not call the name because such a person does not exist. [*Desk thumping*] It is desperation, Mr. Speaker.

We heard the Member for Diego Martin Central last week, yet at the end of the Prime Minister's address to the nation this afternoon, he back-peddled. The Member said: "It's not the army I meant, it is the coast guard." Next week when the coast guard makes a statement, he would say, "It is not the coast guard, it is the prisons." The following week, "It is not the prisons, it is the cadet force." The following week it would be the scouts. When will it end? We are fed up with this nonsense! We have come here, and the People's National Movement must wake up and smell the coffee! You must wake up and smell the coffee! You have lost your national appeal. [*Desk thumping*] You are no longer relevant to the people of this country, and the people of this country have spoken. I will tell you what I mean, Mr. Speaker.

In 1995, the PNM got 250,771 votes out of 36 constituencies. We contested 34 constituencies and we got 240,871 votes. *[Interruption]* Sorry, in 1995 you got 250,771 votes, and we in the UNC got 240,871 votes. *[Crosstalk]* There was an increase of 9,900 votes over the UNC in 1995. In the year 2000, the PNM got 267,000, only 17,000 more. We got 307,537 votes, 40,000 more than the PNM. *[Desk thumping]* It just goes to show that performance beats “ol” talk all the time. *[Desk thumping]* Our benchmark for good politicians is not smile and wave; we are into perform and deliver, that is what we are doing. *[Desk thumping]* We are not into smile and wave. Performing and delivering, that is what we have been doing.

**Mr. Maharaj:** Jump and wave. *[Laughter]*

**Hon. C. John:** I believe we must bring this down to market share. You have lost your national appeal; the product called PNM is no longer relevant. The product called UNC is the flavour of the day and the people have endorsed that flavour. *[Desk thumping]*

I want to bring it down. I think I want to simplify it for them, because the Member for Diego Martin East—which is now a marginal seat—as a matter of fact, he is not the Member for Diego Martin East. I live in that constituency now, and I said that I should be getting two salaries. I really straddle two constituencies, Diego Martin East and St. Joseph. *[Interruption]* Yes, I straddle them. The people do not come to you, they come to me. *[Laughter]* *[Desk thumping]* The people were kind to you; they said you were moribund. I said, “You are dead.” *[Laughter]*

**Mr. Imbert:** Five thousand votes are marginal?

**Hon. C. John:** Mr. Speaker, it is simple. I want to simplify it for the Members of the Opposition once and for all. *[Interruption]* The next time the election is called, 2005, I will be against you, wait and see. *[Desk thumping]* *[Laughter]* I want to simplify it for my friends on the other side, because they have to wake up and smell the coffee.

On Monday, December 11, 2000 two trains were leaving the station; one was the PNM train which was making 36 stops, the other was the UNC train making 34 stops. The trains stopped at their various positions and, at the end of the day, 307,000 people had been on train B, the UNC. Train A only had 267,000 passengers. Do you know why? This PNM train was taking them to nowhere; the UNC train was taking them to paradise. The UNC train was taking them to paradise, the jewel of the Caribbean. They were going somewhere, that is why the

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majority of people in this country endorsed the UNC on December 11, 2000. So do not come with voter padding and all that sort of nonsense. We do not make false promises on this side; we perform.

You said during the election, "All this road paving is hogwash; it is only an election gimmick." Has the election stopped it? The election is long gone and we are continuing about the people's business, delivering goods and services to the people in the most efficient way. So do not come and tell us—[*Interruption*] [*Member for Diego Martin West rises*] I will take my seat. Sorry, I thought you wanted to say something Member for Diego Martin West, because I will give way. [*Dr. Rowley leaves the Chamber*]

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar:** He is running.

**Hon. C. John:** I am not surprised, because the truth always offends them.

**Hon. Members:** He is running.

**Hon. C. John:** I heard the Member for La Brea the last time around and the up—I would not say upstart, sorry—[*Laughter*—the Member for Diego Martin East talking a while ago about St. Joseph. In St. Joseph, Mr. Speaker, the People's National Movement got 6,960 votes in 1995; the UNC got, at that time, 7,258 votes. We won by a margin of 604 votes. My colleague, the Member for Tunapuna, laid an excellent foundation. I have 66 pages of achievements; he laid an excellent foundation. [*Interruption*] Yes; that is all right. It is the content. Forget the number of pages. [*Interruption*] No, not 66 pages here; we have 66 pages of achievements in the constituency; in every polling division, and we laid a foundation. Based on the foundation that was laid, this time around, the PNM got 7,564 votes and we got 9,882 votes. [*Desk thumping*]

The People's National Movement increased its market share—if you understand the term—by 298 votes. They could not even make 300, despite the fact that they brought out the best. They made a gentleman with a defective heart leave San Fernando East and go up there, walking in hot sun house to house, bringing in troops from St. Ann's East and other surrounding constituencies; walking up and down, up and down, and they got 300 votes in addition to what they had the last time, as opposed to 2,624 votes. [*Desk thumping*] Mr. Speaker, do you know why? Because we have a vision and a plan.

Even the constituency of St. Joseph has its own manifesto, and it is better than theirs. They have a national manifesto, this is a constituency manifesto, and it is better than theirs. The people voted for progress, because they saw the ship taking them safely into the harbour.



**Hon. Member:** Give them greenheart.

**Hon. C. John:** Of course; so when you come here and want to use the ruse that we padded, we are fed up with that “ol” talk; we have performed. Look at this front line: Attorney General, Prime Minister, the super Minister, my colleague from Tunapuna, the Minister of Education. [*Laughter*] [*Crosstalk*] Look at that front line that you have presented to the people. Just look at this front line, how professional! Look at it! [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon. Member:** The back line better. [*Laughter*]

**Hon. C. John:** We are totally fed up with this nonsense. The last time the Member for Tunapuna was here he talked about cry-babies. Stop crying! In fact, he has identified the problem, and I have brought a solution this afternoon. [*Member takes out a pack of pampers and a baby bottle from a black plastic bag*] You are a cry-baby. I have the pampers here for you and the bottle to give you afterwards. Stop crying! [*Laughter*] [*Desk thumping*] We are fed up; we are not taking “ol” talk from you anymore. [*Desk thumping*]

### 3.15. p.m.

The people have voted us fair and square and we are here to stay. Come for the pampers and come for the bottle afterwards. Stop crying! We do not want to hear anything after today. [*Desk thumping*] All we are hearing from the other side, before it sees about the nation’s business, is a lot of “ol” talk.

You are forming Cabinet, you are taking over—well, with the greatest respect to the Member for San Fernando East. He identified the day, he did say the 19<sup>th</sup>, he identified the month, he said February, but he did not say the year, so I would not hold it against him. He is a gentleman obsessed with power. He and the Member for Diego Martin Central want to sit on this side so badly. The only time they can come here again is if they sign these forms. [*Minister holds up some forms*] These forms are to join this party. You all are not coming back on this side again. [*Desk thumping*] Fill out this by the close of play today and you will have something on Monday. [*Laughter*] You all are not coming back here again, none of you will sit here again until you fill out this. Until you come home to Papa and fill out this. That is what you have to do. [*Interruption*] It is all right, I am with a high-performance team.

You all are obsessed with power. You are forming Cabinet with 24 persons. The Member for San Fernando East announced the Attorney General already—Glenda Morean is Attorney General. And listen, I was in the new headquarters of your party in Sumadh Gardens over the carnival season and I got the names of

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other members of your Cabinet. I have them here, I can tell you. I was there sitting at the table and I took notes. Mr. Speaker, just give me one minute, please.

I recall—some fellas are going to suffer very badly—the Member for Diego Martin West being Minister without portfolio in the Office of the Prime Minister—very bad. [*Laughter*] Yes. I was told the “bulldog” from La Brea—there would be a new Ministry of Canine Development and he would be in charge of dangerous dogs. [*Laughter*] Siberia for them, all of them who are talking; let them wait and see. Everybody is coming from outside, every single person. The man announced his Cabinet already and he is bringing in the Attorney General from outside. So any lawyer on that side, sorry. Member for Arima, “yuh” gone through. You fought for your seat, you worked hard, “nutten for yuh” as the calypsonian says. That is what your leader said.

Listen, let us put things in perspective. [*Interruption*] This is what I heard. I went to the headquarters of your party in Sumadh Gardens. You know that is where your party is based, you know all the decisions are made there. The Chairman of the Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation I understand, is the new Minister of Trade. Of course, he is talking 2020. I understand that the Member for St. Ann’s West will be posted to Syria as Ambassador. [*Laughter*] Get him out of the way.

I want to return to the statement made last week by the Member for Diego Martin because that statement affected me a lot. When he accused the hon. Prime Minister of that, do you know what he has done? He has accused every Member of this professional team of the same impropriety. Seriously. He is accusing this Government of being racist, and this thing about “Indian Government” let us put it to rest.

In the last Cabinet, when I walked into a Cabinet meeting do you know who I saw? I saw Brian Kuei Tung; I saw Lindsay Gillette—[*Interruption*] It does not matter, I am telling you who I saw. I saw John Humphrey; I saw Mervyn Assam; Vincent Lasse; Daphne Phillips; Joseph Theodore; Morgan Job and the hon. Speaker, and, of course, myself. More than half the Cabinet was non-Indian and the Member keeps giving the people of the country the impression that this is an “Indian Government”.

This time around, I see Sen. Yetming, Sen. Gillette, Minister Assam, Minister Humphrey, Carlos John, Jearlean John. Why do you want to divide people and misguide them like that? Every day there is something you concoct. You must read the editorial of today’s *Trinidad Guardian*; it is talking about parliamentary

abuse, Member for Diego Martin Central. I see you reading the *Daily Express*. Read the *Trinidad Guardian* for a change and read the truth. [Laughter] Read the story in the *Daily Express* which says; “Your Statement Provokes Racial Hatred” and they do. What are you trying to do? Do you want to get on this side of the House at all costs? You will mash up the country just to sit over here? I did not realize that you were so power hungry. I am surprised. I never knew that, and I have known you for a very long time as a professional in the private sector. I cannot believe that you have become so obsessed with power.

I remember during the debate on the Appropriation Bill, the Member for Laventille East/Morvant pointing across the Chamber and saying “I am surprised at you.” Do you know why he made that statement with anger, disgust and venom? Because he feels that “Jah” says, it is PNM or nothing. Nonsense! We must put that nonsense to rest in this country once and for all and move forward. We do not intend to take this nonsense anymore. I am fed up with it, and my colleagues are fed up with it. We are a party committed to national unity, a well-diversified Government and the people are fed up with hearing the same old talk every time: “Yuh thief”, “yuh pad”, all kinds of nonsense. The people are interested in delivery, not “ol” talk, you know. [Interruption]

**Mr. Bereaux:** Fix the road in La Brea.

**Hon. C. John:** That is all you are studying, La Brea. You must have a more global outlook, forget La Brea and have a more global outlook. You are a part of a national party, think national. All you are talking about is pitch lake whole day; day in, day out, that is all we are hearing from you. Shut up “nah” man. La Brea, La Brea, La Brea. We know that, but rise above the tide and talk about something else.

Mr. Speaker, I think we have reached a stage now where these racist remarks must stop. We have to move the country forward. No useful purpose will be served by these wild utterances from the other side and I really want my colleague, the Member for Diego Martin Central, to take note because he came here and inflated the situation, and every week is some “Nancy” story, catching at straws. The people of this country are fed up with that; they want delivery, they want professionalism, they want good governance. All those qualities reside on this side of the House, and all they are asking is for a little peace and stability, not those wild, inflammatory remarks where you want to say something today and backtrack tomorrow.

**Mr. Bereaux:** Talk about murderers.

**Hon. C. John:** You want to talk about murderers, boy? They reside on that side, too, you know.

**Mr. Bereaux:** You said, too?

**Hon. C. John:** The Member for Diego Martin Central—

**Mr. Valley:** You are with me again?

**Hon. C. John:** I am at you again, yes, I will tell you why I am at you. I told you your statement pained me a lot. I took it very personally. You gave the national community the impression that the Prime Minister, and by extension, the Members of this side of the House are against black people. I think that is the impression you gave the national community by making that racist statement in Parliament last week, and I am sorry that the Member for San Fernando East is not here because I would like to ask him who killed Morris Marshall. A few days before she died, Muriel Donawa-Mc Davidson told me how peeved, depressed and broken she was by the treatment meted out to her. Many people bit the dust—  
[*Interruption*]

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** So her husband was lying then?

**Hon. C. John:** I know what her husband said; I am telling you what Muriel told me. The Member for Diego Martin Central is talking about not liking black people and the Member for Diego Martin West has suffered; the Member for Arima has suffered; Overand Padmore has suffered; Russell Huggins has suffered; the new political leader of AIM has suffered.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** What do you mean by suffered?

**Hon. C. John:** Ostracized, they were ostracized. As a matter of fact, I was at a function recently where—I am sorry the Member for San Fernando East is not here—they said he had succeeded in deflating the wind from the PNM balloon. So bad is it.

**Mr. Bereaux:** You are rivalling your Prime Minister.

**Hon. C. John:** No, I am not rivalling, I am putting facts on the table and when you talk about people of the East Indian community, look how my friend, the Member for Naparima was ostracized and so was his sister; and so was the Ambassador to Caricom; and so was Errol Mahabir. So what are you talking about? You give people the impression that the venom is on this side and you do not even do some introspection. That is what is happening.

The Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West got away by the skin of his teeth because there was a young lady in close contention. They begged for him and he is here today because he represents the financial backbone of the party. That is why he is here today, he has a role to play.

**Mr. Bereaux:** You represent the financial backbone too.

**Hon. C. John:** Member for Diego Martin Central, I urge you in making these public utterances in your quest to get back into the corridors of power that you need not take that course. Do like what our Prime Minister did, do like what Mr. Sudama did, do like what John Humphrey did. They spent 20 years in Opposition building their party from the ground up until the party was accepted by the population. They never came here and chastised the EBC, or any Government, they took their time and built their party step by step, brick by brick from the ground up.

Over 20 years he was in Opposition, have you ever heard him say, “they thief”? You have never heard him say that. He took his loss like a man, but no, you cannot take two terms in Opposition. You feel you must spend one term in Opposition. Why? Do you feel you have a God-given right to run this country? Do you feel you have a God-given right to be in Government? It cannot be like that.

**Mr. Bereaux:** You are living in denial. You were a PNM.

**Hon. C. John:** It does not matter, and I saw the light at the end of the tunnel. My friend, the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries said he was in the PNM’s doldrums and he saw some light at the end of the tunnel, and when he got to the end of the tunnel he saw the rising sun, that is why he is on this side today. [*Desk thumping*] There is nothing wrong with that; we all make mistakes. What is wrong with that?

**Mr. Bereaux:** He is on that side because he is breaking the law and you all would not stop him.

**Hon. C. John:** The thing is—I do not want to stray from the point, Mr. Speaker—that we are fed up with the “ol” talk, we have earned our keep, we have presented ourselves to the population fair and square, the people have endorsed us because of our policies, our programmes, and the vision we have for this country. [*Interruption*] You are not in the same race with us you know? We have completed the race and you all are still in the starting box tying up your spikes. You all are still lacing up your spikes, you all are not in the same race with us at all. [*Laughter*] The race gone. We are talking about digital era and the new world economy, and you all are still talking about common entrance and chalk and blackboard. We are in two different races. You all do not know what is happening.

**Mr. B. Panday:** Paradigm shift.

**Hon. C. John:** Yes, it is a paradigm shift. Thank you, my friend. You all are out of touch with reality, you have lost touch with the common folks, you do not

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have the finger on the pulse, and now because of that, you want to look for a scapegoat because you sit there. We did our time when we were in Opposition; we did our homework; we understood the needs and requirements of the nation and we fashioned our programme to suit and presented ourselves. In our first term our delivery and performance were unparalleled, 60,000 jobs; 12,000 jobs a year; 1,000 jobs per month, and for this term it would be 100,000 jobs, minimum; 20,000 jobs per year. Put that in your pipe and smoke it. Unheralded!

We are talking about over 2,000 roads paved in this country in the last year. You all have not done that from 1956. Look at the former Minister of Works and Transport—the worst the country has ever seen, the absolute worst. [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. Sudama:** That's right, that's right, I endorse that.

**Hon. C. John:** A failure at anything he touches. A Member of Parliament failure, the Member for Diego Martin East. That is what the people tell me. They keep calling me every day at my home; they come to my door; they want jobs; they want roads; they want water. The people in Paramin are bawling, and I am giving them water.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Out of the 100,000, how many of them you give so far?

**Hon. C. John:** I am not going to make my business public. From which constituency—because I have two. Which constituency?

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Which one are you giving to?

**Hon. C. John:** I am giving to Diego Martin East.

**Mr. Narine:** What about Arouca South? [*Interruption*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Member for St. Joseph, I know you are still sort of new in the Parliament, but you are allowing yourself to be distracted. I think you ought to address the Chair and you would stay on course.

**Hon. C. John:** Mr. Speaker, the central theme of this contribution was to tell the Opposition to stop this frivolous, vexatious type of Motion and argument and get on with the job of nation building. We have performed; we have delivered to the people as promised; we have honoured our mandate; we have taken our mandate of governance very seriously. We see ourselves as the architects of a modern Trinidad and Tobago. We are on a rescue mission you know, because you people have mashed up this place for decades. We are on a rescue mission, and so far the rescue is going very well.

In terms of investment, you cannot beat us. We are second in the hemisphere in terms of foreign, direct investment flows. The Member for Port of Spain North/St Ann's West will know how competitive the global investment dollar is.

**3.30 p.m.**

Investment dollar goes where there are the best incentives and where they are best treated. In Trinidad and Tobago, our record is second to none for investment in terms of incentives; and we are second to none in terms of how it is being treated. We have had no capital flight because we have been able to keep the economy on an even keel, ensure stability, a progressive industrial climate and economic environment. So our track record is well established as we begin our second, consecutive term in office. I do not care what accusations they make, they are not going to lop this largesse; and we are not going to countenance any elections until 2005.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you very much.

**Mr. Nathaniel Moore** (*Tobago East*).Mr. Speaker—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. The Member is asking for some assistance here.

**Mr. N. Moore:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to participate in this debate. I have to repeat what I said sometime ago, that I am not accustomed to this kind of sitting, having spent about four years in the Senate, where the atmosphere was much different.

You can imagine that I am still getting acclimatized to the situation. Nevertheless, I am not jealous of the kind of exchanges that I am hearing. In fact, I am not in a position to be able to do that. I cannot claim that we have done so many things and try to make a claim one against the other. Sometimes some of our achievements came because of sheer luck. I remember in the 1970s when we had a good amount of resources that we were able to do many things. I am noticing that since the middle 1990s we are enjoying a fair amount of income from hydrocarbons and we are able to carry out a fair deal of activity in the country and some of us are taking it to our credit. It might be a good thing if we were faced with some adversity to see how well we do under those circumstances. Nevertheless, I do not want to stay on that.

The Motion calls on this House to institute an enquiry into all the actions of the Elections and Boundaries Commission in the preparation of the preliminary and final voters lists which were used in the December 11, 2000 election; and also wants the House to agree that the Government provides, through supplementary

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allocation, all the necessary financial and other resources to effect an immediate, comprehensive nation-wide voter registration exercise, inclusive of a new voter identification system; and further that this exercise be completed in the shortest possible time with a view to having improved procedures and revised voters lists available well before any other national election in this country.

We recognize that voting is the only contribution that some people make in that decision-making process of providing representation for our people. Most people only vote and the thinking is that these people should not be deprived, or disadvantaged in any way, in their attempt to participate at this level. In addition, no voter should have undue advantage over others, like being able to vote more than once; or to be voting for more than one person in the same election.

Up to now, as far as I remember, we never had any election in which we had to vote at two levels at the same time. I stand to be corrected. To be fair to our voters, no one should be deprived and no one should have an undue advantage over others. So that the election machinery must be efficient and should be facilitating of accuracy and integrity; and the agency in our country responsible for constructing and operating such a machinery, as in any other country, must inspire confidence of the electorate.

If for any reason some people happen to lose confidence in the integrity of the Elections and Boundaries Commission, they will feel that it is possible for them or others to be cheated; and if there are enough people who lose confidence in the EBC, there can be a total breakdown of the electoral system. So that before such a stage is reached, it makes sense for corrective measures to be taken to avoid a collapse of the system. I think it is in that light that the Motion was brought to this House.

During and after the December 2000 General Election, there were too many allegations and charges of electoral discrepancies or irregularities. The daily and weekly print media were replete with reports and discussions on the subject. These should not easily and cannot easily be ignored. For example, when I looked at some of the headlines which I copied, I have headlines like this: "70 face charges for vote padding"; "EBC split over vote padding". This one is from the *Sunday Express* of November 12. I would like to read a little part that says:

"The Elections and Boundaries Commission is split over how to handle the allegations of vote padding in the run up to the December 11 general elections after its own internal investigations uncovered conclusive evidence of attempts to illegally transfer votes in the marginal constituencies."



**3.40 p.m.**

That was just a brief excerpt. Then we have another.

"Mother, daughter charged with voter padding."

This one, perhaps, is pretty extensive and it says here:

"Voter fraud EBC nabs 252."

The statement says:

"The EBC in a release yesterday, said it rejected 252 applications for transfers in the five marginal seats."

Another excerpt lower down says:

"The EBC found people who had transferred to bogus addresses such as empty lots and gas stations."

And so on. I do not want to bore the House with more of that; I am just trying to give the impression that there are many people who are unhappy about the preparation made for the last general election. I have here—I have to read it; I do not like to call people's names in these areas, but you have here:

"Cops interview Maraj on voter padding"

I have highlighted a section which says:

"Maraj had said he was approached by 'over enthusiastic' supporters of the United National Congress to be part of a scheme to pad the voter's list in marginal constituencies."

Another statement below says:

"Investigators said they got 'permission' to speak to Maraj, and also visited several homes in south and central Trinidad to interview people whose change of registration was disallowed by the Elections and Boundaries Commission (EBC)"

I do not want to go into any more of those, but I just wanted to show that, really, in the country, there were and have been and, perhaps, still are, many people who were unhappy about the system of voter registration and all transactions having to do with drawing up that final list of people who were supposed to vote in the election.

Indeed, since this Motion has been discussed here, I have heard so many bits of information about irregularities which happened across the country in various

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areas, so that I think, if for nothing else, we realize that because of the host of disaffection over the final list for the general election and the various comments we have heard being made by the Elections and Boundaries Commission itself, that there were serious irregularities, and some people say, massive fraud and so on, I do not know—indeed, if anybody else, or if the PNM people felt that they were negatively affected, they have all right to ask for an inquiry. The Motion here calls for a public Commission of Inquiry.

Some people might think that this is too elaborate. In fact, I heard comments made by a representative of the Government that there must be a public Commission of Inquiry into this matter, as it were, to admit that there is something illegal about the Government. I think it is fair, in light of the fact that people are dissatisfied, that there should be some inquiry. In fact, the Cabinet of this country has conceded that some measure of correction is necessary. They have shown that they were unhappy about the voters list that existed in the last election. Perhaps I may be told that they are concerned over allegations made about voter padding and irregularities, and so they want to satisfy the people who are making these suggestions. I could suggest also, that they not only agree that there were irregularities and decided to agree with the last two parts of the resolution to make funds available for updating the list, and also to prepare, or see to it that we have as near perfect as possible a list for any other election in the country. They might also agree to have the inquiry, because it might vindicate what they have been saying about the fairness of the election process and the legitimacy of their Government. Or it may justify the fears of the people on the Opposition Benches and other people in the society who agree that there were too many irregularities in the election.

I do not see anything unreasonable in asking for a public Commission of Inquiry and I have not heard any argument from the other side to give any real reason why there should not be, in terms of, say, the finances or anything of the sort. We are yet to hear this, but I am thinking that it is a reasonable demand.

If we really have nothing to hide; if everything has been clear, straight, then we have nothing to be afraid of. [*Desk thumping*] So let us have the inquiry and let us spend the money to clean up the list and so restore confidence, because if people have no confidence in the system, then some people are not going to vote at all.

**Mr. Assam:** You had confidence in the THA elections?

**Mr. N. Moore:** Some people are going to resort to other means to get satisfaction in some other way. I do not know what they will do but the point is—

**Hon. Member:** He is advocating violence? What?

**Mr. N. Moore:** Mr. Speaker, I am not a man of violence and I never suggested that anything of the sort might happen. [*Desk thumping*] I am not trying to put fear into anybody's minds, or anything violent. You see, Mr. Speaker, I have been around too; I have been listening and I notice that some of our friends on the other side, when things would suit them, they resort to the law. They talk about law, decency and integrity, but when things do not satisfy them, they are at everybody's throat. If it is the President or the Chief Justice or the DPP or the policemen, or whoever they are, they are at their throats. So we are calling on them to be more fair-minded. Let us be always law-abiding people.

In addition to that, let us honour the wholesome traditions we have cherished in this country over the years and let us be people of integrity. I do not want to recall the treatment that we, in Tobago, received. I am hearing a lot of talk about elections in Tobago and so on, but I do not want to recall the experiences that we, in Tobago, and the NAR side, have experienced in our relationship with the past regime in Government, where we recognized and we supported the leader over there so that he could form a government, and when he was able to buy, let us say—because it was paid dearly for—two people from this PNM party, were able to do without the people who actually got them to say, "I am PM; I am Attorney General; I am Minister of Finance; I am Minister of this and that." The people who enabled them to do that from the start, to set them on the road, they were able to put "foot" on them and get them out.

**3.50 p.m.**

I would like them to think about this little word "integrity". They should not only speak it, but live it out. We want you to realize that we must set the right example as we make a lot of complaints about crime in the country. I have been a teacher for many years and I am also a parent and I know that example is the best teacher. If we cannot find good examples in the people who sit in the highest echelons or in the government of the country, then we may have people in the lower strata of society copying the examples of the people in the higher seats.

Mr. Speaker, I suspect that much of our irregularity in society comes from the wrong example being set by people in high office. For this reason, I am calling for a higher standard of conduct and integrity on the part of us who sit in this Parliament; whether it is when we go outside to do business in preparation for bringing people into this House or whether we are in the House itself doing the peoples' business. We must maintain a very high standard of integrity so that the children who are looking at us would have something to copy. They should have

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heroes to emulate so that we can look forward to a better society which would mean having fewer criminals and fewer problems as we seek to prepare our country for the future.

If there is nothing else that I can say, I want us to bear in mind that we owe the right example to the younger people who would like to be where we are today, so that they could have better sittings than we have here, in terms of our exchanges and they will also have better government. I recognize that what is required is not only a commission of inquiry, and more money to provide a less imperfect list of electors for future election, but we also need a thorough overhauling of the constitutional measures which govern the country and provide for the establishment of institutions in the country. I mentioned briefly a case about Tobgao, and I want to mention Tobago again because my main business here is to represent the people of Tobago and I am going to do it with all the understanding and force I have. I do not want to have to say that I was deprived, somehow as when I made my first attempt in the other place to represent Tobago. People felt that when you were seeking the interest of Tobago you were going against their interest so they sought to silence you. If they could not silence you then they put you out.

In Tobago we find that we, too, can use our vote to some good effect. We believe that the vote is a valuable tool in having desires fulfilled and making decisions. We also find that in Tobago we are restricted considerably. Consider that my colleague, the Member for Tobago West and I could vote for many things in Tobago but we would not succeed because of the constitutional arrangement under which we operate. We can talk from dawn to dusk and not effect any kind of change in what the majority of you here would think about what we want for Tobago. In Tobago we have two seats which represent two votes in this House and here, in Trinidad—the sister isle, as we call it—we have 34 votes. If we want to put forward any measure for Tobago and representatives from Trinidad do not want those measures for Tobago, we cannot get them.

On the other hand, if the representatives for Trinidad want anything for Trinidad and the two of us from Tobago do not want them, there is nothing we can do by way of voting to prevent them from having it. Is that a fair situation? When we from Tobago joined with Trinidad to form one country, we joined with the impression that we would be people of equal status—we are all human beings—and we would share everything on the basis of equality.

It happens now that we find that—I am not blaming the Elections and Boundaries Commission—our votes cannot do much for us in Tobago in line of

getting facilities for Tobago. When we negotiate with the central government to get facilities for Tobago, at any level, we often find ourselves being frustrated. For example, in 1996, if I remember, we sat in the previous Parliament, and worked out a system whereby in Tobago representatives can be elected by the people over there to do Tobago's business. Not too long ago we had representatives of the central government coming over to Tobago and undertaking work that was given to the Tobago House of Assembly as part of its function.

**4.00 p.m.**

Not too long ago, I heard a representative of the Government complimenting themselves with words to the effect, that what Tobago wants is to have things done for them. I am paraphrasing. It does not matter who does it. Where I am concerned, I am totally against that sentiment. That is erroneous, false and unfair, because Parliament has established the Tobago House of Assembly to do certain things under the Fifth Schedule of the Tobago House of Assembly Act No. 40 of 1996. We are expecting that the central government would have the integrity to allow the people of Tobago, through the Tobago House of Assembly, to do what they are elected to do. Until the people of Tobago say that they are not able to do it, come please and do it for them; please give them a chance to do it.

I ask the question: Why would any member of the central government want to come to Tobago, to do anything for Tobago, when there are so many things and so many pressing problems in Trinidad? In spite of what they say about crime, perhaps there is more here than in Tobago. Why do they want to do it? Perhaps there is something good or satisfactory about doing something or delivering for Tobago. Please think about us in Tobago. We, too, want a bit of that satisfaction which is derived from doing things for Tobago. Do not take all. Do not take too much. They have given us and they should not take it back. When I was small, I used to hear people say that if you give somebody something and you take it back you would get "cattle boil" or "cow boil". That is something like an abscess over the eye. In Tobago, we believe that.

We do not expect that a central government with any integrity will come to Tobago to usurp the functions of the Tobago House of Assembly without being invited by the people who are elected to do that. We want them to understand that if the people who elected them to do that ask them to come, to think about it twice and find out if they are doing the will of the people that they were selected to do.

As I said earlier, I am not blaming the Elections and Boundaries Commission for this aspect of the predicament in which Tobago has found itself. We are thinking about the people who might enable and select the Elections and

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Boundaries Commission, or facilitate the commission in its work, even in Tobago, to consider some of these comments I am making in reference to the operations of the Tobago House of Assembly.

I will stop very soon because I think I have made the main point I had in mind. I want to emphasize something which I said before. I do not think it is normal for a central government to take back functions that it gave to any subordinate unit in the country. So we are not expecting any action in Tobago which will make the people of Tobago unhappy, and prevent them from carrying out their functions which the voters over there asked them to carry out. Perhaps, we would have more to say about this in the future.

In addition to a public commission of inquiry, and putting \$10 million or more into the correction of the electoral list, we want government to be magnanimous and begin immediately, to have some measure of constitutional reform to enhance the dignity and autonomy of the Tobago populace, and to respect those measures which would result from the constitutional improvement which would be undertaken on behalf of Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity and I hope these few words of advice would be well taken, so that we can improve or restore the confidence which the country once enjoyed in the Elections and Boundaries Commission. I am not reputing any wrongdoing on any particular individual. I do not know about the circumstances, but there were too many complaints about irregularities, and too clear an admission by the Elections and Boundaries Commission, for this to be ignored. We must do it so that this population would have some commendation for them, and we could have some justification to boast that we have done something on behalf of the country.

Thank you.

**Mr. Kenneth Valley** (*Diego Martin Central*): Mr. Speaker, I was trying to catch your eye for some time and I thank you for recognizing me. I join this debate at this time and perhaps, we should look quickly at what the Motion is calling for. In the first resolution it asks for the commission of inquiry, and then it goes further and asks that the Government provide supplementary allocation and the necessary financial resources, so as to allow the Elections and Boundaries Commission to carry out its work.

Since my colleague for Diego Martin West moved this Motion, we have seen certain actions. We see, for example, the Government in the person of the Prime Minister coming here, and making a statement that Cabinet had agreed to allocate

about \$10 million for the Elections and Boundaries Commission to carry out its work. We have also noted that the Prime Minister stated that they cannot agree to a commission of inquiry, because by agreeing to such a commission of inquiry, they would be implying that something went wrong with the election on December 11. I do not know whether he stopped to consider that the mere fact that he was allocating this \$10 million for the Elections and Boundaries Commission to clean up the list, implied that the list needed cleaning up, and therefore, something was wrong with the list.

You would be aware that the People's National Movement has approached the court, through its general secretary, seeking judicial review and asking that the court institute a commission of inquiry into the Elections and Boundaries Commission.

**4.10 p.m.**

In fact, leave has been granted to the PNM for that judicial review. Therefore, I believe that in dealing with this Motion this afternoon, one would be circumspect. I must say that the information coming out from the Elections and Boundaries Commission as gleaned from today's *Newsday*, confuses the issue because on page five there is an article which says "EBC gets set for electoral update".

First of all, it begs the question because the EBC has been saying that nothing is wrong with the list but one sees there is a sum of \$2 million for advertising and another \$8 million to clean up the same list that nothing is wrong with—they are cleaning it up. But what is most interesting is we are informed they would be hiring some 1,000 temporary persons to clean up this list and that these persons must apply by tomorrow, Saturday. I do not know whether anyone has seen this advertisement in newspapers before. I might have missed it. I am wondering how many other persons like myself have missed it. *[Interruption]* Obviously, I am not applying but it is closing tomorrow.

The most fundamental point is that here we are putting, as it were, the cart before the horse. If we do not know what went wrong, I do not know what we are correcting. It is the same persons who were there and saw things going wrong and did nothing who are now supposed to be supervising, as it were, this updating of the list. Our position is that it is critical, and that a public inquiry be undertaken to determine exactly what caused the breakdown before we embark on any update of the list. *[Desk thumping]* More than that, I want to ask this Government whether it is correct that the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) agreed to provide funding for the updating of the list on the condition that it be supervised by a friendly Government, a Government known for its democracy. I want the

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Government to answer that. The reality of the situation is that we are all aware that the Elections and Boundaries Commission has had a long history of professionalism and integrity. I was not surprised that when I raised this issue in the first instance after the last general election, that I was the subject of editorials, both in the *Trinidad Express* and *Guardian*. But, I maintain that in Trinidad and Tobago we have come to a point in time when we cannot be diplomatic with the ‘unBritish,’ and I say those on that side know nothing about diplomacy. They are crooks, vagabonds, thieves and murderers and that is the reality.

**Mr. Sudama:** Mr. Speaker, the Member has just said—

**Mr. Speaker:** No, no, state the point of order.

**Mr. Sudama:** Mr. Speaker, the Member has just said everyone on this side are vagabonds, thieves and murderers and I think that is against the Standing Orders and I would ask him to withdraw.

**Mr. Speaker:** I take it that the Member is indicating that the Member is imputing improper motives. I think that is Standing Order 36 (4) or 36(5). I must admit that I was seeking the advice of the Attorney General on a matter that occurred in the Parliament today, and I did not quite hear exactly those words, so I am in a difficult position to rule on that position. However, if that is what was said, I can ask *Hansard* to produce it and at another point make a ruling. The other option available to me is that I can ask the Member if, indeed it was said, to withdraw it. If he does not, I will then check the *Hansard* and if, in fact, it was said I will expunge it from the record.

**Mr. K. Valley:** Mr. Speaker, I withdraw the statement.

**Mr. Speaker:** I have asked the Member to withdraw it and he has kindly done so and that has taken care of it. Please proceed, Member for Diego Martin Central.

**Mr. K. Valley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am making the point that yes, the Elections and Boundaries Commission has had this history. But what has happened is that because everyone knew of that history of integrity and professionalism, there are two issues. Firstly, the Elections and Boundaries Commission appeared to have become somewhat complacent and one sees it quite clearly in this concept of ancestral voting. This is euphemistically “ancestral voting”—meaning that if you used to live at Mc Bean, Couva in 1968 as I used to—and somehow my name is still in Mc Bean, Couva that I can leave Glenco and choose to go and vote in Mc Bean, Couva where I have not lived since 1968. My name is still on the 2000 list. I am registered in Glenco and I am also registered in Mc Bean, Couva. That is a fact. There is this concept of ancestral



voting—I used to live in Mc Bean so I can go back there and vote. But the law is quite clear that to be able to vote in a particular constituency or electoral district, you must have lived in that electoral district or constituency for at least two months prior to the election. In spite of that, one has a Commissioner of the Elections and Boundaries Commission telling the rotary club that we are confusing things with the concept of ancestral voting: even though it is not allowed by the law, it is the practice. The law says one thing but the goodly Commissioner thinks there is nothing wrong in doing that. I am making the point that a certain level of complacency has set in at the Elections and Boundaries Commission. The second example of complacency is the manner in which they treat transfers and the registration of new voters.

**4.20. p.m.**

It is clear, Mr. Speaker, when we have financial institutions in Trinidad and Tobago—and it is a well-known practice—if you want to open an account with the bank you have to show proof that you are, in fact, living at the residence. You have to bring a T&TEC bill, a WASA bill or some bill to indicate third-party confirmation that you live at No. 62 Lorndale Road. Here at the Elections and Boundaries Commission (EBC), however, you could sign a form, say that you are living at 62 Lorndale Road, give it to someone and he is registered. Even when they send out an individual—as in my son's case, the person who came said, “You have a son name Shawn Valley living here?” I said, “Yes, do you want to see him?” He said, “No, that is all right, if you say so, it is okay.” That was the end of it, Mr. Speaker, you understand?

Mr. Speaker, when the Chief Executive Officer of the EBC could get up and say: “We are not police, if we go to a home and we ask if so and so is living there and they say, yes, that is sufficient for us.” I am saying that provides an environment for the unscrupulous to do what they did and that is the statement I am making.

My colleague from Tobago made the point a while ago that the Member for Naparima said, categorically, that somewhat over-enthusiastic supporters or activists of the UNC approached him to transfer names of people. Is that not what the article said? That is the information that is coming out. We are not manufacturing information. When I stand here I do not manufacture information. In that environment, therefore, the unscrupulous would do their thing, especially—and this is why I say they had to have had someone or persons within the EBC assisting them. While the law says that to transfer one's vote it must be done on an original transfer form, the information is that copies were made and persons were transferred, en masse, to other constituencies.

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I have looked at some constituencies—I saw my friend from St. Joseph speaking this afternoon. Mr. Speaker, when you look at the constituencies—the point my colleague for Diego Martin East was making—and you see the deletions, and the interesting thing about deletions is that you will see a number of them being transferred to other constituencies. In San Juan/Barataria, for example, of the total deletions we were able to identify some 1,600 names, persons going to other constituencies, far and wide. Similarly, with the additions to the constituencies, again, one can identify a number of those persons who were registered in other constituencies in 1995. That is what has happened and we are saying there is need to have the public inquiry to determine exactly what has happened before any attempt could be made to update or correct the lists. If, in fact, there are persons inside the EBC who were involved in the scam, we have to find them and weed them out, lest we allow them to do what they did before once more. That is the significant point, Mr. Speaker.

On February 20, I sent the list relating—

#### ADJOURNMENT

**The Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs (Hon. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj):** Mr. Speaker, I must thank the hon. Member for giving way because he, obviously, has not finished his contribution.

I beg to move that the House now stands adjourned to a date to be fixed. We did indicate to Members on the other side that we are giving Members an opportunity to have their Easter break.

There are two Motions on the adjournment and, by agreement, and subject to—I was about to say your Lordship's ruling—the Speaker's ruling, we can do the Motions now. There is an agreement between both sides so we can confine it within some time frame and we should be able to be out of here before 5.00 p.m.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, I am advised that there is agreement on both sides. We have two matters on the Motion for the Adjournment by the Member for Diego Martin East. The first matter is the Adverse Consequence of Proposed Traffic Arrangements on the less privileged residents of Boissiere, Long Circular and Maraval.

#### **Proposed Traffic Arrangements (Adverse Consequences of)**

**Mr. Colm Imbert** (*Diego Martin East*): The Member for St. Joseph, in all his previous incarnations, has been attempting for the last four months to implement a

traffic plan for Maraval. He was afraid to implement it before the general election because of the chaos that would ensue and since the general election, thankfully, he had the good sense not to implement it.

I think, however, I need to point out to this House that this plan involves a one-way system which would take traffic from the Long Circular area; not allow the traffic to go through Boissiere Village; send it through Federation Park; down to Long Circular Mall, bring it around by the Assumption Church and then into Maraval. It puts an additional two miles onto the route. Two miles! What it would do is cause an immediate increase in taxi fares. What is distressing about this plan is that it is at the behest of a very wealthy UNC financier who does not even live in my constituency, and who is bent on oppressing the 10,000 poor people who live in the Bournes Road, Dundonald Hill, Belle Vue and Debe area.

I am not going to sit idly by and allow wealthy persons who have the UNC in their pockets to cause 10,000 poor people to have to pay additional taxi fares; to have problems in getting their children to school; to be deprived of the normal access inside and outside of their homes. This is what the UNC is all about. It is a party for the rich; it is not a party for the poor. I am putting the Minister on notice that if he continues with this mad plan, which is all designed to prevent traffic from going outside one house—that is all it is, to prevent traffic from going outside one house—in front of a very wealthy person, it is going to give 10,000 poor persons pressure. When they come out of their homes—the people who live in Belle Vue and so on—and they go to schools such as Mucurapo Primary, other schools in St. James and their workplaces and so on, no longer would they be able to turn right on Long Circular Road. Long Circular Road is going to be converted into some mad one-way roundabout so that when these persons come out of their homes—these underprivileged persons—they would have to go left, come through Boissiere, come back through Federation Park, right back out onto Long Circular. In other words, where they could have previously travelled a distance of 200 yards to get to their lawful businesses and their children could get to their schools, they now have to travel two miles at the behest of a wealthy UNC financier. This is craziness!

I have spoken to the Minister about it and I have brought it in the Parliament today. There are other solutions to this problem. In 1995, plans were drawn up for land acquisition to improve the intersection of Saddle Road and Long Circular Road and to widen the road network at Maraval and the Savannah.

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**4.30 p.m.**

Those plans have remained dormant on the minister's desk—his predecessor's desk—since 1995. He has just left them there to gather cobwebs. [*Interruption*] 1995! The plans were drawn up by my ministry in 1995 and they have gathered cobwebs in the ministry since then. The minister can come and mislead this Parliament, but I happen to know because I was instrumental in having these plans drawn up. As a matter of fact, two plans were drawn up—plans for the St. Ann's roundabout and plans for the Maraval traffic situation. However, because the Prime Minister lives in St. Ann's, they implemented the St. Ann's plans and “dey t'row away” the plan for Maraval. So let us hear what misleading information the minister is going to give this House; but I am warning him: I will not allow 10,000 poor persons in my constituency to be subjected to pressure by that minister just to help one of his wealthy friends.

**The Minister of Infrastructure Development and Local Government (Hon. Carlos John):** Mr. Speaker, I would not be as theatrical as the last speaker. I would just want to put into the *Hansard* what the truth is. One of the alternatives under consideration by the Ministry of Infrastructure Development and Local Government is a plan which is called “Maraval Reticulation Scheme”, similar to what he discussed, and this plan has been developed by the technical expertise resident in the Ministry—our traffic management personnel.

The Ministry proposes, as one alternative, to put this scheme in place, if approved by us, for a trial period not exceeding 14 days. The Ministry has met and continues to meet with such public transport service providers as the Maxi-Taxi Association, the residents, and I have even met personally with the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin East. So it is one option under consideration. What this Minister will not do is succumb to threats from the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin East. He came to my office and told me that 3,000 people will march and he will be in front of them. I will not be intimidated by that!

I will put matters into perspective and we will come up with an alternative that is in the best interest of the public travelling that route every single day of life, [*Desk thumping*] but the Minister of Infrastructure Development and Local Government is not prepared to have the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin East intimidate him or run my Ministry for me. [*Desk thumping*] He was there before and he failed and now that we are showing him up, every Monday morning “is something in de papers”. If we dig a road he is saying, “Well, you know, we should put a traffic sign.” All of a sudden he has come alive because our performance beats his “ol' talk” every time. I rest my case. [*Desk thumping*]

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**Mr. Speaker:** The second matter—the severe hardship caused by the dilatory approach of the Government towards provision of an adequate water supply in Paramin.

### **Maraval/Le Platte Water Supply**

**Mr. Colm Imbert** (*Diego Martin East*): I certainly hope I will get more information on this occasion. I certainly hope we will get more information. This matter has become somewhat of a cruel joke. In 1995, plans were put in place by the then Minister of Public Utilities to improve the water situation in Maraval. Now, Maraval is one of the worst areas of the country where water is concerned. In fact, the capacity of the Maraval reservoir and the other wells is less than 50 per cent of the demand and the Maraval area is one that is expanding in terms of population.

In 1995, tenders went out and contracts were awarded, resulting in the laying of pipelines in 1996 along Saddle Road and upgrading of pumps in the Maraval reservoir. Regrettably, that programme was not completed. Some of the pumps were upgraded—not all of them—resulting in breakdowns between 1996 and today. As a matter of fact, there still remain old pumps in that reservoir, some 30, 40 years old, and it is entirely unfortunate that the UNC met something in place, gave us a half-picked duck and replaced two pumps instead of all the pumps. It is entirely regrettable.

In 1998 I took the then Minister of Public Utilities on a tour of the constituency. I showed him all the water installations and, in usual UNC style—and they are talking about performance; I will tell you about UNC performance—he promised to upgrade the reservoir, he promised to refurbish the pumps and the tanks and so on leading up to Paramin, he promised to deal with the water situation in Morne Coco and he promised to upgrade the well field in River Estate. That was in 1998. In 1999 I raised this matter in Parliament. The minister came here. He indicated that a contract had been awarded to Karamath—a \$12 million contract—for upgrading the Maraval Waterworks as part of the North Water Project. In 2000 he had to come and put his tail between his legs and tell me, “That contract has been cancelled and we are no longer upgrading the water supply systems in Maraval.”

We now have a new minister. I have heard five years of promises from the old minister. He was an absolute failure when it came to water. Let us hear what the new minister is going to promise the people of Maraval and the people of Paramin who do not have water for three and four months at a time. They were promised it in 1996, in 1997, in 1998, in 1999 and in 2000. If “yuh hear dem” on the election

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platform in 2000, “up and down Maraval and Paramin”. “Vote for us and you will get water.” Well, since December 11, taps in Maraval and Paramin, in particular, have been dry.

So I would like to hear what the “Performance Minister” is going to tell me now. What is he going to do, resuscitate the contract cancelled by the previous minister; refurbish the pumps that were never refurbished by the previous minister? Let me hear what promises this “non-ol’ talk” minister is going to give us.

**The Minister of Infrastructure Development and Local Government (Hon. Carlos John):** [*Desk thumping*] Mr. Speaker, the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin East is correct on this score. The production at the Paramin Waterworks is inadequate to meet the needs of the Paramin and Le Platte communities. We recognize that and we have two measures.

Now, the measures to be taken are in two phases. One, the short-term measure—we are about to refurbish the pumps at the Paramin booster station and we also have plans for early rehabilitation of the Maraval Waterworks at a cost of \$12 million. He did get the price correct. The longer term measure, Mr. Speaker, would be to upgrade the Maraval Waterworks, one; two, to upgrade the Paramin Waterworks incorporating the drilling of new wells as part of the Trinidad groundwater project; three, development of a new source in the vicinity of the fourth-level reservoir; and four, extension of the Caroni water supply into the Maraval/Paramin network upon completion of our desal project. Our desalination project is expected to come on stream by October this year.

So if it would comfort the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin East, we have been proactive and plans are well advanced to relieve the Paramin/Le Platte communities with the waterworks. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*House adjourned accordingly.*

*Adjourned at 4.38. p.m.*