

*Leave of Absence**Friday, July 27, 2001***HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES***Friday, July 27, 2001*

The House met at 1.35 p.m.

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

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, I received correspondence from the Member for St. Ann's East (Mr. M. Joseph) who has asked for leave to be absent from today's sitting. I have granted him leave.

**PAPERS LAID**

1. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo Regional Corporation for the year ended December 31, 1995. [*The Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs (Hon. R. L. Maharaj)*]  
*To be referred to the Public Accounts Committee.*
2. The Enterprise Development Policy and Strategic Plan for Trinidad and Tobago for 2001—2005. [*The Minister of Enterprise Development and Foreign Affairs (Hon. M. Assam)*]

**OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH (NO. 2) BILL****Special Select Committee Report****Presentation**

**Mr. Subhas Panday** (*Princes Town*): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the following report:

Second Special Report of the Special Select Committee of the House of Representatives appointed to consider and report on a Bill respecting the safety, health and welfare of persons at work.

**ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS**

**Paramin and River Estate/Blue Basin  
(Adequate Water Supply)**

27. **Mr. Colm Imbert** (*Diego Martin East*) asked the Minister of Infrastructure Development and Local Government:
  - (a) Would the Minister of state why it is taking the Government so long to provide an adequate water supply for the residents of Paramin and River Estate/Blue Basin?

- (b) Would the Minister state when these two communities in the constituency of Diego Martin East would get an adequate supply of water?

**The Minister of Infrastructure Development and Local Government (Hon. Carlos John):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to reply to question No. 27 as posed by the Member for Diego Martin East which qualifies for oral reply today. The Paramin Water Treatment Plant served by the Paramin well since commissioning in the early 1980s was designed to serve Paramin only. However, the facility not only serves two communities, which are Paramin and Le Platte, but the Paramin community has expanded over the years and has a stronger agricultural base.

During the 1990s, additional water from the Maraval Water Treatment Plant was utilized to supplement the production from the Paramin facility on a scheduled basis. Even this additional supply is not totally reliable, as the Maraval Water Treatment Plant is a surface water source and is adversely affected in the dry season due to reduced river flows. In the rainy season, however, production is interrupted from time to time, due to the turbidity of the water in the Maraval River.

The problem at Paramin, therefore, is as a result of a lack of adequate water sources. To improve the water situation, WASA, in June of this year, started to explore the possibility of new technologies, similar to those employed to solve the Tobago water problems. Currently, WASA is conducting geotechnical surveys and seeking approvals from residents to utilize lands for exploration.

Should state-of-the-art satellite technology prove successful, it is expected that this initiative will produce approximately one million gallons of water per day, at a cost of \$3 million. In the interim, Mr. Speaker, we are providing Paramin, with immediate effect, with water on a daily basis in four locations throughout the Paramin area.

With regard to the water supply in River Estate/Blue Basin, I wish to state that the residents of River Estate/Blue Basin obtain their water supply from the WASA facility in River Estate, which consists of six wells and a centralized treatment plant. This facility also supplies the areas of Diego including, *inter alia*, parts of the Diego Martin Main Road and St. Lucien Road.

Currently, plans are being developed to equip and commission the Bagatelle No. 1 well plant. This will improve the services to these communities. Additionally, other measures will be undertaken to improve the water supply, including the refurbishment of the River Estate treatment facility, chlorinators and storage tank, the purchase of a new pump set and the introduction of automatic controls. In parallel, Mr. Speaker, replacement of pipelines will be undertaken on a phased basis.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Imbert:** Supplemental, Mr. Speaker. Regarding Paramin, the Minister said effective immediately, water will be provided to the residents of Paramin at four locations on a daily basis. Could the Minister explain how this is going to occur?

**Hon. C. John:** I do not understand the question how, but a truck-borne water supply will be given on a daily basis in four locations. Saut D'eau comes to mind, Paramin central and two other areas.

**Mr. Imbert:** Further supplemental. You did not say truck before. Thank you. With regard to River Estate/Blue Basin, my question was, when will the water supply be improved?

**Hon. C. John:** Mr. Speaker, we believe within the next three months we will see an improvement in this regard.

I want to, however, make this point. It is passing strange that the gentleman who is raising the question here today, the Member of Parliament who is raising the question, has been the Member of Parliament for that area for the last decade. In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, he has been, and was, a former Minister of Government when he was in a position to regularize all these shortcomings and he did nothing while he was in office, but now he is looking for a scapegoat. He is looking to put the Minister on a guilt trip, and I will not have any of that! [*Desk thumping*]

### **Maraval Post Office (Relocation of)**

**28. Mr. Colm Imbert** (*Diego Martin East*) asked the Minister of Communications and Information Technology:

- (a) Would the Minister explain why the retail operations of the Maraval Post Office have been relocated from a government building to a private building?
- (b) Would the Minister state the capital and monthly rental cost incurred by the relocation exercise referred to in part (a) above?
- (c) Would the Minister state whether there has been any retrenchment arising from the relocation of the retail operations referred to in part (a) above?

**The Minister of Communications and Information Technology (Hon. Ralph Maraj):** Mr. Speaker, the retail arm of the Maraval Post Office has been closed and the new operation is a franchise located within a nearby existing

*Oral Answers to Questions*  
[HON. R. MARAJ]

*Friday, July 27, 2001*

business, which is Kappa Drugs. The franchise is a private business operating on a commission basis. They provide the building, the staff, and so forth, at their own cost in return for a commission on the sale of stamps and other postal services.

They receive 5 per cent commission on stamps, plus a small handling fee for any counter mail. Their main benefit is the additional customers brought to their business. TTPost pays the capital cost for the customers, and the counters and the signage at the franchise are approximately \$8,000, and the franchise is charged a monthly rental for that and also for any equipment they require.

Mr. Speaker, the Maraval Post Office, on average, sold \$5,000 worth of stamps per month. Only 20 per cent of revenue, which is \$1,000, amounted to the profit of the office itself. The other 80 per cent had to cover for transport, processing and delivery costs of the letters where the stamps are used.

The cost of the two retail personnel and an armed security guard is approximately \$11,000 per month. This post office had a monthly operating loss of \$10,000. Therefore, the rationale for franchise made good business and economic sense. Not only that; franchising allows TTPost to provide the same level of service to customers, that is, to sell the same \$5,000 worth of stamps at a reduced cost. In addition, the Maraval franchise is also open seven days per week until 10.30 p.m., which provides better hours than the old post office.

In answer to part (b) of the question, the capital cost of relocation is \$8,000, as I have stated, and there is no monthly rental cost. In answer to part (c), the options for the two retail personnel are redeployment, alternative duties within TTPost and, as a last resort, the possibility of redundancy.

Thank you.

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Speaker, is the Minister aware that the location chosen is one mile away from the population area; and that 95 per cent of the people who would buy stamps are unable to access this location which also has no parking?

**Hon. R. Maraj:** Mr. Speaker, as far as I am aware, the national retail manager of TTPost is currently in discussion with the hon. Member for Diego Martin East on the issue of the postal services in Maraval. What I want to say is that the relocation to a more central area has made postal services more accessible to the majority of people. This is evidenced by the fact that on the first morning of operations, over \$2,000 worth of stamps was sold; the equivalent of nearly two weeks of business at the old site.

**TSTT & WASA  
(Excavation and Reinstatement of Roads)**

**29. Mr. Colm Imbert** (*Diego Martin East*) asked the Minister of Infrastructure Development and Local Government:

- (a) Would the Minister explain why in 2001 several newly resurfaced roads are being, are scheduled to be, or have been, excavated to lay TSTT lines and WASA lines?
- (b) Would the Minister explain why his ministry is allowing these two state agencies to do substandard road reinstatement work when they excavate roads, especially newly resurfaced roads?

**The Minister of Infrastructure Development and Local Government (Hon. Carlos John):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to reply to question 29 as posed by the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin East which qualifies for oral response today.

The Ministry has only recently been approached by TSTT for approval to lay ducting and associated works along our newly resurfaced roadways. However, I wish to assure this honourable House that, as far as possible, we work in conjunction with TSTT and WASA to ensure that newly resurfaced roadways are not disrupted by the works being carried out by WASA and TSTT. However, with particular reference to WASA, it is always very difficult to determine when those newly resurfaced roadways would need excavation, as unforeseen leaks very often appear, requiring critical and immediate attention.

The Member of Parliament for Diego Martin East can be assured, however, that the Ministry is working closely with the government agencies, such as T&TEC, WASA and TSTT, to ensure that there is as little recurrence of this problem in the future as possible.

**Mr. Imbert:** Supplemental, Mr. Speaker. Is the Minister satisfied with the reinstatement work done by TSTT on the road that he travels to and from work every day, the same road that he paved and then allowed TSTT to dig up and destroy.

**Hon. C. John:** Mr. Speaker, not in all instances have we had the quality work when the resurfacing was done by those agencies. However, in those limited circumstances, we have gone back to the agencies concerned and asked them to comply and conform with the quality standards of the Ministry.

*Definite Urgent Matter (Leave)*

*Friday, July 27, 2001*

**DEFINITE URGENT MATTER (LEAVE)  
(UNDEMOCRATIC AND REPRESSIVE ACTIONS)**

**Mr. Hedwige Bereaux** (*La Brea*): Mr. Speaker, in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order 12(1) and (2), I hereby ask leave to move the adjournment of the House at the sitting today, Friday July 27<sup>th</sup>, 2001, in order to discuss a definite matter of urgent public importance, to wit the undemocratic and repressive actions of the Commissioner of Police in refusing to grant permission to interest groups, trade unions and community organizations to hold marches and/or meetings in Port of Spain and elsewhere in the country, for the purpose of highlighting injustices and/or dissatisfaction with corrupt and other practices by arms of the State.

The matter is definite because it refers to an identifiable practice which has manifested itself in the very recent past, to the extent that, within the space of four days, the Commissioner of Police has refused permission to three groups of persons: the National Association for the Empowerment of African People (NAEAP); Communities United for Fighting Underdevelopment (CUFU); and the National Union of Government and Federated Workers (NUGFW) to hold marches on the 24th of July, 2001 and on the 27th of July, 2001, respectively.

The matter is urgent, because, in Trinidad and Tobago at the present time, there are several important issues touching on the lives and welfare of residents of this country, and on utilization of state resources about which the population must be informed and must be able to indicate to the Government their agreement or disagreement on same.

Any delay in dealing with these matters will cause untold hardship to the population and can also have grave consequences for the stability of the country. The most effective method available to the people for communicating their feelings to the Government is by way of public meetings and demonstrations. The matter is of public importance, because, there is enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, freedom of speech, freedom of expression and freedom of association.

It is also specifically indicated therein that these rights are not to be altered or abridged except through a special constitutional process. Complementary to these rights and our democratic principles is the right of the citizens to petition the Government. The Commissioner of Police, by refusing the members of the public the right to hold meetings and/or marches in the vicinity of—

*Member's cellular phone rings.*

*Definite Urgent Matter (Leave)*

*Friday, July 27, 2001*

**Mr. H. Breaux:** I apologize, Mr. Speaker. [*Laughter*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Let us take this opportunity to ask all persons with cellular phones in the public gallery, as well as here, to check them now, please, and make sure they are off. Thank you. Please proceed, Member.

**Mr. H. Breaux:** I apologize, Mr. Speaker. The Commissioner of Police, by refusing the members of the public the right to hold meetings and/or marches in the vicinity of and around Parliament, when Parliament is sitting, is, in itself, repressive to those rights and is one of the hallmarks of a police state.

Any government and/or Parliament which refuses to permit such protest or uses as an excuse the fact that a meeting of the dissenting or dissatisfied citizens is likely to disturb parliamentary debate, is thereby refusing to hear the voice of the electorate and, in effect, condoning dictatorship. In the circumstances, having regard to the fact that the President of this Republic has warned the nation about a creeping dictatorship, I submit that debate on this matter is definite, is urgent, and of public importance.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** Okay, hon. Member. I am not satisfied that this matter qualifies under Standing Order 12(1).

#### **DOLLAR FOR DOLLAR EDUCATION PLAN**

##### **(LAUNCH)**

**The Prime Minister and Minister of National Security (Hon. Basdeo Panday):** Mr. Speaker, at the end of November last year, the governing party of the country gave the undertaking that, if re-elected, the Government would match citizens, dollar for dollar, on the cost of tertiary education. That was a mere eight months ago. It gives me great pleasure, Sir, to confirm to this honourable House that we were honouring the commitment we gave to the nation.

The dollar for dollar education plan will be in operation from September, Mr. Speaker—September this year. It is projected that some 24,000 persons will benefit from the generous contribution of the dollar for dollar education plan initially. The appointment of the ministerial team to structure the Dollar for Dollar Education Plan was the key item on the agenda for the first meeting of Cabinet in the second term.

**1.55 p.m.**

That emphasis underscores the significance that the Government attaches to the immediate creation of opportunities, for sons and daughters of Trinidad and

*Dollar for Dollar Plan*  
[HON. B. PANDAY]

*Friday, July 27, 2001*

Tobago, to go on to higher education and technical studies after secondary school in substantially higher numbers than ever before in the entire history of Trinidad and Tobago.

The introduction of universal free secondary education last year has increased the intake into the secondary school system. This should logically lead to increased demand for enrolment in tertiary institutions. The Dollar for Dollar Education Plan will dramatically reduce the expenses that citizens will be faced with for education at university and other tertiary institutions.

Mr. Speaker, at its meeting on Wednesday, July 25, 2001, Cabinet agreed to the implementation of the Dollar for Dollar Education Plan from September 2001—that is this September. From September, Government will pay half, that is 50 per cent, of the fees that apply to new enrolments at institutions of higher learning.

We have set the specific objective of increasing the proportion of graduates of the secondary school system going on to tertiary education from the current 7 per cent to 20 per cent by the year 2005. That would place us far ahead of the curve in the region and far above the Caricom target of 15 per cent by 2005. We expect the Dollar for Dollar Education Plan to increase tertiary enrolment from the current 17,929 persons to 24,000 persons from this coming September.

Tertiary enrolment is projected to rise above 30,000 from September 2002. That number is predicted to increase to 36,000 plus from September 2003. We envisage tertiary enrolment at 43,000 from September 2004 and we expect that by September 2005 the number of persons enrolling in tertiary institutions in this country will grow to more than 50,000.

The Dollar for Dollar Education Plan as would be imagined, Mr. Speaker, would be a very expensive undertaking. However, the Government is committed to removing at least half the burden of the cost of higher education that falls to citizens. Irrespective of age, all citizens meeting the required academic or other relevant standards will enjoy this benefit. To this end, close to a quarter of a billion dollars will be provided in the 2001—2002 budget; for 2002—2003, the budget dollar for dollar will be over \$300 million; for 2003—2004, the figure is an estimated \$366 million; for the 2004—2005 period, the funds required will be \$430 million and for the period 2005—2006, the provision will be in the region of half a billion dollars. The aggregate funding for persons who will benefit under the dollar for dollar from this September through the 2005—2006 period is projected at over \$1.8 billion.

Mr. Speaker, can we afford to spend that kind of money in expanding tertiary education? The real question should be: can we afford not to? While conscious of



the infinite number of competing claimants for state funding, we must recognize that the extent to which all countries develop their human capital will determine the extent to which countries will be able to hold their own in a fiercely competitive global trade arena.

Acutely conscious of this reality, my administration has set itself the challenge of transforming Trinidad and Tobago into an intelligent nation. We see it as imperative—not as an option—that there should evolve and evolve rapidly, a knowledge-friendly culture in Trinidad and Tobago. To foster a knowledge-friendly culture in our nation, we are expanding facilities and upgrading and improving the methodologies at all levels of our education system.

We have invited the diverse religious groups in the society to expand their involvement in education. We have established the College of Science, Technology and Applied Arts of Trinidad and Tobago (COSTAATT). We have established the Institute of Technology of Trinidad and Tobago; we have established the National Energy Skills Centre; we have established the National Training Agency; we are doubling the number of government scholarships to 200. [*Desk thumping*] We are offering every citizen the opportunity for life-long learning.

The National Skills Bill will be a further catalyst to learning, to self-development. All of this is fundamental to the national goal of achieving first-world status and standards by the year 2010, and we believe that education is the key. We now live in a world in which many companies no longer publish job descriptions in recruiting personnel; they are publishing person descriptions. Knowledge and skills are increasingly the prime guarantee to secure lives. All of our citizens must come to grip with the reality that the less they learn, the less they will earn.

Mr. Speaker, the national mission statement formulated in Tobago last month when members of the Cabinet went into retreat with leaders of the social partners, demands that we foster a knowledge-friendly culture in our society. In fact, the Mission Statement reads:

“Our mission is to transform Trinidad and Tobago into the Jewel of the Americas by mobilizing the diverse talents of our population and the natural resources of our country, so that ours will be a knowledge-based society with a globally competitive, technologically driven and diversified economy that will sustain full employment, equal opportunity, growing prosperity, a secure life and the highest standard of living for all our citizens.”

And as I always add, Mr. Speaker, the best place to live in this hemisphere.

*Dollar for Dollar Plan*  
[HON. B. PANDAY]

*Friday, July 27, 2001*

Mr. Speaker, the introduction of the Dollar for Dollar Education Plan underscores beyond any doubt that there is indeed a revolution in education that is helping to transform Trinidad and Tobago into an intelligent nation moving inexorably to develop country standards and status within this decade. It is important, therefore, indeed it is an obligation that Members on both sides of the House should meticulously refrain from actions which, though not probably intended, may seem as supportive and participating in acts of anarchy. Should lawlessness be seen to be embraced by Members of this House, the momentum that is carrying this nation to a better life for all citizens will surely be arrested.

Mr. Speaker, such a development will lead inevitably to frustration of the aspirations of many, if not most of the tens of thousands of our citizens, particularly our young citizens who will be empowered by the opportunity to improve their education and thus improve their lives because of the Dollar for Dollar Education Plan.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

#### **ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT POLICY AND STRATEGIC PLAN**

**The Minister of Enterprise Development, Foreign Affairs and Tourism (Hon. Mervyn Assam):** Mr. Speaker, it is with a sense of accomplishment and even excitement that I introduce to this honourable House the Enterprise Development Policy and Strategic Plan for Trinidad and Tobago 2001—2005. This Enterprise Development Policy and Strategic Plan is in sync with the overarching objective of Government to establishing a robust and diversified economy in which the non-oil manufacturing sector and the services sector would be transformed into the new engines of growth in Trinidad and Tobago.

The theme of the policy, Mr. Speaker, “Forging a Competitive Economy through Partnership” underscores the collaboration needed between the public and private sectors to pursue sustainable development of the economy. The enterprise development policy and plan addresses and seeks to achieve the following objectives:

To attain sustained economic growth and development;

To expand business activity with emphasis on the development of the micro, small and medium enterprises sector;

To generate a larger number of sustainable employment opportunities for our citizens;

To enhance the competitiveness of the non-oil manufacturing sector in order to increase exports and capture new and emerging markets;

To improve the quality and accentuate the development of our human resources in tandem with our developmental strategies;

To increase foreign direct investment inflows and improve our financial system through the establishment of a sound, legal and regulatory environment to facilitate investment.

This policy is a comprehensive document derived from widespread consultation with stakeholders in both the private and public sectors, as well as the non-governmental organizations. Indeed, I even took the opportunity to send the draft to the distinguished Leader of the Opposition and the Member for Diego Martin Central, notwithstanding the fact that I have not had the courtesy of an input from them.

The views and comments of all interest groups were solicited to highlight their respective roles in fostering competitiveness. In developing this policy, there was a distinct aim to inculcate the need to be competitive at all levels of the economy since Trinidad and Tobago now operates in a very dynamic and competitive global environment. A pragmatic approach was also adopted as reflected in the range of strategies and measures that have been formulated together with the assignment of responsibility for its implementation.

Mr. Speaker, what we are witnessing today are generally new dimensions or new configurations evolving from a dynamic, international, economic environment. This environment is characterized by globalization and international competition emanating from the pervasive influence of the technological revolution in all countries impacting globally on consumers who are now satisfied and increasing proportions of their needs by buying goods made in other countries, and Trinidad and Tobago is no exception.

Investment in most countries has moved increasingly towards export industries and away from those concentrating on home demand as manufacturers seek to exploit foreign markets. In this regard, Trinidad and Tobago has moved from a trading environment that was essentially protectionist and inward looking to one that is open and competitive. Government has recognized the need to change its policy goals and strategies to enable the manufacturing sector to benefit from the gains that are available from trading in a liberalized environment.

As enunciated in its predecessor which was the Industrial Policy 1996—2000, which I had the honour to lay in this House some years ago and in the new Enterprise Development Policy 2001—2005 which I lay before this honourable House today, we continue to hold the view that through prudent policies and

*Enterprise Development Plan*  
[HON. M. ASSAM]

*Friday, July 27, 2001*

action, and the broad involvement of the private sector, the economy will be transformed into one that offers the manufacturing sector the opportunity to be a meaningful player in the new global trading arrangements. Sustainable economic development could be facilitated through the creation of a dynamic, vibrant and diversified non-oil sector fully capable of confronting the challenges of the global economic environment of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

As you are aware, Mr. Speaker, Government with a concerted and sustained effort has put in place legislative and policy initiatives to spur the development of the non-oil manufacturing sector focusing on export potential. Hence, a more facilitative environment has been created such as a new Companies Act, and Intellectual Properties Rights laws have come into effect. Considerably, progress has been made in preparing a proposed competition policy framework for Trinidad and Tobago. A Fair Trading Bill has been drafted by the Chief Parliamentary Counsel and is to be reviewed by the legislative review committee for early submission to Parliament for approval and eventual enactment. This legislation will foster increased competition between firms and encourage new entrepreneurs to enter particular sectors as restrictive barriers to entry are eliminated.

Following the enactment of the Security Industry Act, 1995, a Securities and Exchange Commission was established in 1997. In addition there has been liberalization of trade in goods and services while price controls and foreign exchange restrictions no longer exist. An Investment Promotion Bill which will replace the Foreign Investment Act is in the final stages of drafting.

Double taxation treaties as well as investment promotion and protection agreements and intellectual property agreements have been entered into with various countries. Measures have also been taken to improve the institutional framework which will allow for a more expeditious response to administrative requirements including customs and investment approvals.

In addition, through the auspices of the Tourism and Industrial Development Company, we are seeking to encourage foreign investment in sectors such as—and this is what this policy provides for—tourism, information technology, agro-processing, marine industry, downstream activities of every sector, international, financial services, entertainment and floriculture.

One of the stated national objectives is to rank among the top three countries in the hemisphere in terms of competitiveness. To this end, Government has already taken a number of steps to expand electronic commerce in Trinidad and Tobago. You may be aware that Government has recently passed the Telecommunications Bill

that will establish the legislative framework for telecommunications for the purpose of encouraging new service providers to enter the market, thereby facilitating competition in the sector and ultimately driving prices down and promoting further economic development.

The objectives of the e-commerce initiative are to strengthen the communication infrastructure in Trinidad and Tobago, increase participation by all citizens in electronic commerce, clarify the e-commerce marketplace rules, build confidence for users of electronic commerce and jump-start the electronic economy.

Government also, as facilitator of electronic commerce, would provide support for micro, small and medium enterprises by laying the legal, economic and social infrastructure for e-commerce to flourish. We will soon be bringing an Economic Transaction Bill to this Parliament to ensure the validity of electronic contacts and digital signatures.

Government has also embarked on an ambitious programme to transform itself into electronic government to provide a better level of service to all our citizens. We intend to build the capacity and capability of all our citizens so that everyone can have access to Internet services and can engage in e-commerce activities.

Mr. Speaker, the vision for enterprise development is to establish Trinidad and Tobago as the business and financial hub of the Caribbean. The intention is that Trinidad and Tobago will become the focus of business activity in the Caribbean region ranging from financial services to research and development.

Government has also embarked on a strategy to foster access to a range of markets initially within this hemisphere, but increasingly it is proposed to extend our reach to as many other countries and regions as possible.

### **2.15 p.m.**

The establishment of this market space is necessary since it allows for economies of scale and, by extension, competitive pricing of products which otherwise would not be possible given our limited domestic market. One of the major assumptions of this strategy is that our present business community must increasingly see its future outside of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, to date, local manufacturers have met the challenges of trade liberalization and structural adjustment, and have made immeasurable progress in overcoming the significant constraints encountered during that turbulent period. Our companies are increasingly being acknowledged as world-class producers of quality goods, and are now poised to take advantage of the myriad of trade possibilities that are being made available.

*Enterprise Development Plan*  
[HON. M. ASSAM]

*Friday, July 27, 2001*

The performance of the non-oil sector, using GDP data, revealed steady economic growth from 4.7 per cent in 1999 to 7.7 per cent in 2000. Within this sector, growth is being led by manufacturing, 10.9 per cent, followed by services, 7.2 per cent and agriculture, 6.6 per cent. Within the manufacturing sector, high growth rates were recorded for the year 2000 in the sub-sectors of food, beverages and tobacco, printing and publishing and assembly-type and related industries.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I leave you with some statistics on trade during the past year. Trinidad and Tobago recorded a trade surplus in the sum of \$6,082 million for the year 2000. Compared to 1999, the manufacturing sector showed an improvement of 14.2 per cent in its domestic trade balance largely because of an increase in domestic exports of 7.2 per cent of which 99 per cent was attributed to manufactured goods classified chiefly by materials category.

The purpose, therefore, of this enterprise policy and plan is to ensure that Trinidad and Tobago continues to enjoy sustainable growth in employment, international trade, the further development of the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) and services sectors and to provide the quality of life and standard of living for all as we move to establish ourselves as a first-world nation and the Jewel of the Americas.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**INTEGRATED SECURITY SYSTEMS LIMITED REPORT  
(PETROTRIN)**

**Dr. Keith Rowley** (*Diego Martin West*): Mr. Speaker, I, too, am amazed how Government Ministers who are normally very silent become so verbose on Private Members' Day when they seem to suffer from verbal diarrhoea as they expand on Government's discourtesies, taking up the time allocated to the Opposition.

Mr. Speaker, it is with some sadness that I approach the assignment before me today. As one looks at the Motion I know there are Members who might not be as fortunate as I have been to have had the benefit of the report which would form the subject of this debate. Before I go into the actual report it would help if I read into the records, again, the contents of the Motion which stands in my name.

*Whereas* the State Enterprises are entrusted with the management of billions of dollars of public monies and other assets; and

*Whereas* some of these enterprises are being managed in such a manner as to deprive citizens of the benefits which should flow from their operations;

*Be it resolved* that this honourable House take note of the existence and content of the Integrated Security Systems Limited (ISSL) Report which was commissioned by Petrotrin; and

*Be it further resolved* that this honourable House accept the recommendations contained therein; and

*Be it further resolved* that this honourable House direct the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee (PA(E)C) to summon Petrotrin to appear before the Committee at the earliest opportunity for the purpose of examining all matters relating to the award of contracts and matters incidental thereto with particular reference to Southwest Soldado (SWS), Sundowner and the Refinery Upgrade Project; and

*Be it further resolved* that the Minister of Finance be directed to so augment the parliamentary budget so as to ensure that all the necessary human and financial resources are available to the Committee, such additional expenditure to be taken up in a supplemental allocation.

Mr. Speaker, one of the reasons I brought this Motion to the House is so that the Members of Parliament can be confronted with the state of affairs which would call upon us to discharge our responsibilities with respect to the oath we took when we took up our assignment in this Parliament.

In the current climate in Trinidad and Tobago, not a day or week passes by—in fact it is fashionable every day in Trinidad and Tobago—when the public, who are owners of the state enterprises, are confronted with all kinds of revelations, some distasteful, some exciting, some eventful and some obscene, coming out of the state enterprises sector. There was one thing that bothered me a lot. We in the Opposition hear things. We see things and receive information, but when I saw the information that the chairman of a state enterprise was so confronted with the behaviour of members of his board that he had to pass the information to the police, as advised by the Prime Minister, so that the police could decide what action to take or to find out what the story was—a citizen, or citizens, of this country had gone to that chairman with information indicating that the conduct of certain board members was so reprehensible that it should be a matter for the police.

Mr. Speaker, it is a matter of record that at least one citizen of Trinidad and Tobago went before the police and gave a statement with respect to a board member in an energy sector state enterprise, seeking to extract a substantial bribe from that citizen. That is a fact. Disturbing as that was, I was not half as disturbed as when I received this report.

*ISS Limited Report*  
[DR. ROWLEY]

*Friday, July 27, 2001*

Mr. Speaker, fear not, we are constrained by the Standing Orders of the Parliament but, by the same token, we are the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago and I give you the assurance—

**Mr. Speaker:** Since you are giving me the assurance, I want to also give you the assurance that you will have the opportunity to speak to the people of Trinidad and Tobago, but in accordance with those very said Standing Orders and the rules of the Parliament. That is why they are there. So, please feel free and press on.

**Dr. K. Rowley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It seems as though we are on the same wavelength.

Mr. Speaker, what I have in my possession here is a confidential report commissioned by the state enterprise Petrotrin. In fact, there are two reports which should be read together: a first report and a second report. The first report is a confidential report for the Petroleum Company of Trinidad and Tobago by Integrated Security Systems Limited of 11 Lovat Lane, London dated December 03, 2000. The second report is a confidential report for the chairman of Petroleum Company of Trinidad and Tobago by the same company, Integrated Security Systems Limited. This second report was dated April 2001. What I do know is that according to information put in the public domain, on behalf of the last Minister of Energy, this report was funded by Petrotrin, which is owned by the people of Trinidad and Tobago. If I may quote from the public relations counsellors who spoke for the Minister—and I have heard no retractions from the Minister—“Millions of dollars of taxpayers’ money have been spent by Petrotrin on a forensic report.” So, the agent of the last Minister of Energy is telling me that this report has cost taxpayers millions of dollars.

### **2.25 p.m.**

I think if that is so, then the taxpayers ought to know what the report says. This report has been around since December; another one started in April and to date, I do not think that the taxpayers in this country are as fortunate as I am, to know what they got for their money. In this country, we have a habit of using taxpayers’ money to commission reports, like the *Soodhoo Report*. Taxpayers pay for them and then we bury them. Then, we see this report appearing.

I saw the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago on television, saying that the Attorney General, who is the legal advisor to Cabinet, ought not to have any access to this report, because as Prime Minister, he is ensuring that Ministers do not interfere with other Ministers’ portfolios. I nearly fell off my chair. This is the same Prime Minister who appointed a minister of logjams, whose portfolio was



precisely to interfere in other portfolios. Incidentally, today, he is the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries who is responsible for Petrotrin, under which this report falls. So here we are, Petrotrin has a report. The Prime Minister says that the Attorney General must not see it because he, as Prime Minister, is making sure that there are partitions between ministries. Then, lo and behold, the following night, I saw the Member for Caroni Central talking to the media about human resource development under the Dollar for Dollar Programme. He is the Minister of Human Development, Youth and Culture and the Dollar for Dollar Programme comes under his portfolio. He was there bright like a bulb talking about dollar for dollar coming. The press asked him, "What does the plan contain?" He said, "Do not ask me. The Prime Minister will talk about it tomorrow."

It is quite all right for the Prime Minister to talk about dollar for dollar, but a report that hits at the root of the economy of Trinidad and Tobago, the Attorney General cannot see it. I want to ask the Attorney General, if he enters the debate, to tell us how he intends to discharge his function as leader and advisor to the Cabinet, if he is denied the information on which he is to provide legal advice to the Cabinet. [*Desk thumping*] I am going to come back to the dollar for dollar at another time because I want a whole day to deal with that. I have only 75 minutes.

Petrotrin is not an ordinary company. It is not the end of the regional health authority. It is not Tanteak. Petrotrin is the single largest enterprise in Trinidad and Tobago that is owned by the State. In fact, it is the backbone of our economy in terms of employment and activity, throughout a large geographical area. If you look at the last report on Petrotrin's accounts that is available to us, you will see that Petrotrin is a company that, in 1999, did \$5.5 billion in revenue business, with assets of over \$8.5 billion. When Cabinet appoints people to run Petrotrin, what, in effect, those persons are being asked to do, is public service to manage a significant portion of the country's economy. If there is misbehaviour at Petrotrin, then it poses a risk to the economy and quality of life of all the people of Trinidad and Tobago. It is no light matter.

I would like to make the point that I am not here today to scandalize anybody. I am not here today to open myself to be accused of using Parliament to nasty anybody's name, or to throw sand in anybody's rice. What I am here to do today, is to provide this Parliament with information and to draw a line between information and evidence. I know that there are those on the other side who would get up and say—as I have seen published by public relations counsellors; for what fee I do not know—that is not evidence.

*ISS Limited Report*  
[DR. ROWLEY]

*Friday, July 27, 2001*

Information is important. When you get information, you are required to ignore it or to act on it. That is why I crave your indulgence and that of this House to introduce you to some of the information that is contained in this report, so that this afternoon, this Parliament would decide whether or not based on the information in this report, there is a role for the Parliament in terms of protecting the assets and quality of life of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. I will simply run through the report quoting a little here and there so that you could see what the report contains. I am saying that these are not my words. I am taking no position on the content. I am making no judgment on any person, as yet. In this assignment, this afternoon, I will tell you what we have paid for and what our employees told us.

Petrotrin did not go to anybody on Frederick Street or Charlotte Street or Carenage or Moriah. Petrotrin went to London, this multibillion dollar company. I presume that they were responsible enough to look for competent people. As we are told, they paid millions of dollars for this report.

There are two reports as I mentioned earlier on. Why are there two reports? The first report was commissioned on November 23. As soon as the enquirers began to unearth interesting information, members of the board of Petrotrin met—you heard about this recently in the Parliament, one of whom is our colleague today—and took a decision to stop the investigation. So, let me tell you about the first part. When the investigation was stopped, this is the information that was available to Petrotrin.

I am going to quote. Page 1 states:

“Integrated Security Systems Limited (ISS) were instructed by the Board of Petrotrin to carry out a forensic audit of the SouthWest Soldado (SWS) and Sundowner bids to establish if any collusion had taken place and if any person(s) had benefited from the processes.”

By November 23, they were stopped in their tracks.

The executive summary on page 3, 2.7 says:

“Intelligence has identified individuals who represent FW Oil Inc.,”

A company that will feature very prominently in the report—

“and others interest in Trinidad. The same individuals also have close contacts within the Government and have received funds for performing facilitation services.

Current enquiries were terminated on 23 November 2000, on the instructions of Petrotrin Board and consequently enquiries are incomplete...

Recommendations are made to continue enquiries into the Sundowner bid to substantiate or disprove the information obtained...

Recommendations are also made to reinstate the integrity and reputation of Trinmar and Petrotrin and the private and public figures identified during the course of the investigation.”

Page 6 says:

“...FW Oil Inc., and L-Con Marine, a US based fabrication company, approached the management of Trinmar with a proposal to activate the SWS project...

It is known that whilst Aventura submitted two identical bids in the manner and time scale agreed, FW Oil Inc., requested an extension of one hour to the deadline to enable them to complete their bid and deliver it to...”

their bidding place.

“It is noteworthy that Aventura complained about this to Trinmar but to date has received no response...”

Time does not permit me to go into a lot of that. But interestingly on page 9, they identified a complaint and they talked about this company. It says:

“At the time ISS was instructed to terminate investigations; acting enquiries were on the way in Canada to research this local company.”

The first part of the report indicated that an investigation was on the way and it was turning up some very interesting developments. The investigation was stopped. However, on the Sundowner bid it had this to say:

“Enquiries have been initiated into this matter and examination of all available documents held within Trintomar offices has not revealed any evidence of malpractice.”

That was up to the point when the enquiry was stopped.

However, when it was restarted, what did this discover? Individuals tried to stop the enquiry. When it was restarted, in report 2, it turns out that these are the findings. ISS was informed that some of the invitation letters of the bid were hand delivered in the States. You had people in Trinidad hand delivering bids to a company in the States, saying that that was to expedite it. Concerns were

*ISS Limited Report*  
[DR. ROWLEY]

*Friday, July 27, 2001*

expressed about the choice of companies invited to bid. It is understood that some companies had not been pre-approved by Trinmar and therefore, technically, should not have been invited. One such company was Sundowner Trinidad Limited. However, with respect to how the bid was managed, the report shows that even though Sundowner was not pre-approved, they put in a bid and it was arranged. Not a figure. It said:

“Each bid comprised two packages comprising technical information and commercial information. ISS was advised that normal practice is to initially open the technical package to determine if the bidder had met the criteria. However, on this occasion they opened both.”

All the bids were opened. One bidder did not have a single price. He had a range. Then, one member of the board having seen all the bids, got up, went to the phone, called this company and asked, “What is your bid?” He came back and the company’s bid is now the lowest bid, because that individual would have seen all the bids. Since the company had a range, the company could have then agreed where its bid fell within the range. This is what the report says. It says that the company that was so lucky to have been given that facility—in fact, this is what the report says:

“It is advised that at this point it became apparent that the Sundowner Trinidad commercial package was incomplete and that it offered a price range for the contract, instead of specific costs.”

We are told that the bid should have been rejected on those grounds. However, at this stage of the proceedings, a certain gentleman apparently made a call to Sundowner to clarify and the bid was accepted.

**2.40 p.m.**

“The technical analysis ranked Parker Drilling as No. 1, Cliffs Upgrade as No. 2, Cliffs Upgrade as No. 3 and Sundowner No. 4. ”

So on technical grounds the said Sundowner was ranked No. 4 having not pre-qualified, having put a range in for the bid ranking No. 4. technically, and the finance package ranked No. 2, yet the bid was granted to Sundowner in that situation. This is a multibillion-dollar operation and our company Petrotrin is conducting its tendering procedure in this way—and then a master contract was awarded. One more interesting thing is that the bid offer was made by Neighbours Offshore Corporation and Sundowner Trinidad Limited but by the time the board made the offer it was made to Neighbours Offshore Corporation and Sundowner Offshore International (Bermuda) Limited. So by the time the thing worked out

and the contract was awarded Sundowner Trinidad Limited had metamorphosed into Sundowner (Bermuda) and the one-year contract had now become a monster service contract granted on September 29. The partner to Sundowner is telling the investigators that it never thought that was a bid. It had not considered it to be a bid because their involvement was not really a bid had Sundowner got the contract. In the report it makes reference to Texaco's objection to Petrotrin going in this way.

Mr. Speaker, the report has some testimony from individuals who were required by the Government to manage state affairs. It is important for the Parliament to know what testimony some of those individuals gave to the investigator. This is the testimony given by Mr. Baldeosingh, the chairman, with respect to Dr. Gordon Bartlett, the chairman of Trinmar, which is a subsidiary of Petrotrin. Mr. Baldeosingh was interviewed on February 14, 2001. He had this to say:

- “5.1.1 Petrotrin experienced a number of problems with Gordon Bartlett.
- 5.1.2 Petrotrin Board passed a vote of no confidence in Dr. Bartlett's performance.
- 5.1.3 Finbar Gangar refused to confront the problem.
- 5.1.4 Petrotrin obtained a legal opinion that the only option available to them was to remove Dr. Bartlett from the board.”
- 5.1.6
  - (1) Mr. Baldeosingh the chairman of Petrotrin.
  - (2) ...met with the Prime Minister—”

Remember that person?

“—to discuss the friction with Mr. Bartlett.

- 5.1.7 Mr. Angus Khan was proposed as the new Chairman of Trinmar, however, the post was not taken up on the advice of the Prime Minister.”

The Prime Minister was informed that this ISS investigation was under way and that information was received. Petrotrin board at that stage using the authority of the board dismissed Dr. Bartlett from Trinmar, having met the Prime Minister and informed the Prime Minister of the state of affairs which I have alluded to with the bids and so forth.

- “5.1.9 Dr. Bartlett was successfully reinstated.”

and Mr. Baldeosingh was dismissed from Petrotrin.

You understand how Petrotrin has done its business? There is further testimony in this report from Mr. Baldeosingh about Mr. Gangar. It says:

“5.4 Mr. Baldeosingh volunteered the following information in relation to Mr. Gangar.

5.4.1 Mr. Gangar had attempted to involve Petrotrin in a questionable deal with BVI Power, which concerned the construction of a Power Station. The deal involved a Japanese man called Matsiumuro, who actually attempted to take legal action against Petrotrin.”

Mr. Baldeosingh further gave testimony to the investigators that:

“Mr. Gangar deliberately placed Dr. Bartlett in Trinmar to assist the former Minister to further his own personal agenda.”

Mr. Speaker, with that kind of situation, let me come back to the beginning of the report. The report contains information that shows that even the people who are working as professionals in the company are compromised or forced. Let me read from the Executive Summary of the second report after the stoppage.

“Enquiries to date...”

up to April

“...have resulted in the identification and investigation of over three hundred lines of enquiry throughout the Caribbean region, the United States and Europe. A substantial number of witnesses have been traced and interviewed. They have provided corroborated evidence and a clear picture of conspiracy, fraudulent activity and personal greed. The plot involves a former senior member of the Cabinet of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, Chairmen of State controlled industries, senior Banking officials, international financiers, oil magnates....”

and so forth.

“A substantial amount of information in written and oral form indicates that substantial fraud has been committed. The enquiry has identified the key individuals involved in the matters under investigation together with their methods of operation and associates.”

And take note, Mr. Speaker. It says:

“Following the completion of the recent national elections and the resignation of Mr. Gangar from public office a number of witnesses have provided

information which would not have been available whilst Mr. Gangar was in office. It is an indication of the former Minister's influence and 'reach' that almost without exception every person interviewed expressed concern for their personal safety if they cooperated with the enquiry team whilst he remained in office."

Mr. Speaker, remember Hansraj Sumairsingh? On page 3 of the second report it says:

"The role and scope of Mr. Finbar Gangar's involvement cannot be overstated. It is evident that the former Minister of Energy has influenced every aspect of the matters under investigation. In addition he has planned, co-ordinated and executed whole scale manipulation of the contractual process and used his position in Public Office to benefit his own personal and financial aspirations."

They talk about enquiries in the Sundowner contract being frustrated. I want to quote for you item 2.9 on page 5. When I talk about protecting the public quality of life and our assets, at item 2.9 it says this:

"The decision to award the contract to Sundowner was made despite the fact that Cliffs..."

which had been ranked high in any case—

"...were in a position to provide an alternative rig at substantially less cost than was eventually agreed. Comment is also made that despite advice from the Board Finance and Tenders Committee, that \$12,000 a day was not economical a letter of intent was later issued setting out a daily rate...\$24,000 a day."

While they were advised and the Board was taking a position that \$12,000 per day was not economical, the contract was awarded for up to \$24,000 a day.

When the Motion says that we should endorse the recommendation, the information provided here was as of April but the report says:

"At the request of Mr. R. Parriag, Chairman Petrotrin, a separate proposal has been compiled detailing the methodology and resources required to complete this investigation."

They had recommended earlier on that given what they had seen that they be allowed to continue the investigation to its conclusion. I am asking this honourable House: was Petrotrin being instructed to allow this investigation to be completed? This is because, in the report, there are witnesses who have indicated

*ISS Limited Report*  
[DR. ROWLEY]

*Friday, July 27, 2001*

that they have provided some information and would cooperate if the investigation comes to that and we should want to know what they have to say.

Let me give you an idea of what is involved. In one instance there are two American companies ending up in this kind of scenario, fighting over the spoils of the contract. One company is claiming—let me read. L-Con, which is one of the companies, believes that MEI, which is mentioned in the document in relation to an agreed fee of 2 per cent—and it is widely suspected that figure represents a certain high ranking government official's percentage for his part in the deal. Before that the reporter said it became abundantly clear to L-Con that Mr. Wade, which is Wade from FW Oil, was dealing directly with Minister Gangar. These suspicions were increased when FW Oil Incorporated demanded that L-Con representatives in Trinidad and Tobago play no further part in the deal. It was clear to L-Con that FW Oil Incorporated was dealing directly with Finbar Gangar and MEI, a local minister and a local company.

Mr. Speaker, when one officer said this to the investigators, the officer who is named in the report stated that she had been instructed by Dr. Bartlett, chairman of Trinmar—who is still a member of the Petrotrin board—to remove the incomplete clause from the FW Oil contract because it was considered too onerous.

Mr. Speaker, what that means is that standard contractual protection for the client—here is an officer telling the investigators that the chairman of the company, who should be seeking to protect the company's interest—that she had been instructed to remove that protection from the contract because the chairman considered it too onerous on the foreign company. If that is true—as I told you earlier on, I am not making any judgment, I am simply reporting what is in the report—then how can we accept that the public interest in Trinidad and Tobago is being protected when, in fact, we are foregoing standard contractual protections so as to allow escape clauses for persons who are, in fact, beneficiaries of major parts of the public assets?

**2.55 p.m.**

Mr. Speaker, there is a lot in this report that ought to be of interest to all of us, but I do not want to read anymore from this report. If we in this Parliament are serious, I have read enough from this report, which exists in the state company, to indicate to all persons in the House, who have sworn on the Bible, the Gita and the Qur'an, to discharge responsibilities without fear or favour. I have just extracted some of what is in this report to indicate to my colleagues that there is enough information here that steps can be taken to convert information to



evidence where evidence exists. Insofar as evidence is adduced, action should be taken to protect the state assets and resources and guilty persons should then be made to pay the price.

Way back in 1996 I think it was, when this spectre of corruption—a word that the Government does not want to hear about now, but a word that is an avalanche on the backs of the people of Trinidad and Tobago today—when the Government was first confronted with this corruption issue, the Prime Minister called all chairmen of state enterprises to Cascadia Hotel and said to them and to the country that he was not going to allow state enterprise personnel to behave as though it was their private “thiefdom”, because if he did not act to protect the state resources, what he would preside over was a “thiefdom”. Now, if a king presides over a kingdom, then who is presiding over this “thiefdom”?

Mr. Speaker, when this report is made available to the Attorney General, what he will see are not rogue elephants in the state sector, he will see a betrayal of the trust of the people of Trinidad and Tobago by persons who agreed to serve the public. There is an attitude problem with some of the people that the Government has appointed to boards. I do not know if they have taken to heart the campaign slogan, “It is we time now”. I cannot, for the life of me, understand why they are so “never see come see” and so “loacho”.

My colleague—I think it was the Member for Diego Martin Central—and I first started hearing about the misbehaviour of fellow citizens with respect to state enterprise expenditure—taking things that did not belong to them. The Cabinet had laid out how they should be paid, what emoluments they should receive and what perks they should receive. We in the Parliament know that when one goes on a board, one is doing public service. We alerted this Government by asking the Government to tell the Parliament and the country what each chairman is entitled to. The Government told us. I cannot recall any chairman being entitled to entertainment allowance, but once the Government appoints a UNC lackey, they believe that they can just take public money and spend it as they see fit.

In this report, one gentleman is telling a partner of his that the contract is worth, not US \$200 million, but \$1 billion. He is offering to pay the partner less than \$100,000 for his portion of the deal. The fellow is saying that he is entitled to 2 per cent of the deal. Two per cent of US \$1 billion—you know how much that is, partner—that is US \$20 million. That is the kind of thing they are squabbling over. It is an oilfield to produce oil and to service the oilfield over years. I know it boggles the mind. The reason the public has not been able before to grasp this corruption issue is that the numbers were just too big for them to digest.

When I was talking here about the US \$200 million with InnCogen, the average person in this country cannot conceive of US \$200 million. I told this country that the Government gave a guarantee and that the Americans used our guarantee to extract US \$30 million to pay off their debt in New York. The sum of US \$30 million: that is almost TT \$200 million. The public could not grasp it. When it was broken down into bits that are palatable, like a salary at the end of the RHA, where somebody is alleged to have paid themselves \$100,000 in overtime in five months, the public is now able to grasp it.

Mr. Speaker, the conduct is there. It is a pattern of behaviour we are dealing with. I do not know that the chairman of Trinmar is entitled to any allowance for entertainment. He is spending my children's money. He is spending your money. He is all over the world. Listen to the kind of expenses that are being incurred in those enterprises. I do not know what business Trinmar has in Miami Beach. I know there is golf and plenty entertainment.

Wyndham Hotel, Miami Beach—3 nights—\$3,800

Wyndham Hotel, Miami Beach, 2 days later, a further \$7,000.

Old San Francisco Street, Houston, \$1,000

Four Seasons, Houston, \$8,000

Calgary, \$9,000

Mirage Hotel, \$6,000.

A case can be made that he is travelling on Petrotrin's business, but I am only telling you the kind of expenses that are running. To come home to Trinidad: Soong's Great Wall—and this is only a few months—bill, bill, bill, bill. From \$181 to \$3,500.

A chairman can go into Soong's and in one sitting spend \$3,500. He is not entitled to an entertainment allowance. This is theft. If you take public money that you are not entitled to, you are stealing it. Every Tom, Dick and his little brother has a credit card under this Government and they are out there spending money as if Rockefeller is their father, every one of them.

So, he sampled Soong's Great Wall. He sampled Valpark Chinese, Jenny's—a number of occurrences, House of Golden Palace, Marabella—numberless expenses, TGI Friday, Apsara, Tamnak Thai, Kapok, Hilton, Skipper's, Solimar, Crew's Inn, Pizza Boys. [*Interruption*]

I tell you they are “loacho”—from Pizza Boys up. The bills range from a few hundred dollars to a few thousand dollars. The bill that intrigues me most is the

Royal Hotel—\$59. Is that a room or a drink? It may very well be that the State is funding rooms.

As my friend, the Member for Tunapuna, reminded me, Caroni (1975) Limited is a pattern. It is not Trinmar only; it is not Petrotrin only. Last week we heard from the Minister that members of Petrotrin, senior executives, have got themselves—

**Mr. Speaker:** Colleagues on the Opposition side, the level is high enough that I am having difficulty to follow the debate. I am trying to listen to what the Member is saying, as well as the *Hansard* reporter. Please lower it a little so that I can hear what the Member is saying in this House.

Thank you very much. Will you proceed.

**Dr. K. Rowley:** Mr. Speaker, we were told that senior executives of that bankrupt company, the ward of the State, Caroni (1975) Limited, were lucky enough to get bonuses put into their contracts. If you perform you get a bonus. We were also told that the bonuses were paid, in some instances, in advance. We were also told that no evaluation was made to allow the bonuses to be assessed. When I examined what the targets were, I discovered that in every instance where a bonus was a condition in the contract of the employee, the targets were largely not met. So what did they do? Not evaluate and report that targets were not met, but they just paid themselves the bonus. Now that is a form of theft. If the bonus is due based on performance and the performance is not arrived at, then the bonus is not due.

Worse than that, the Chief Executive Officer of that company, bankrupt Caroni (1975) Limited, always running to the Minister of Finance for money to pay the workers who are out in the cane field working, was earning \$30,000 a month as his basic salary, plus perks. The Board of Caroni (1975) Limited, against which I have complained in this House time and time again, loaned to that individual, \$70,000 as an interest-free loan. So, Caroni (1975) Limited is a bank now. So, a man earning \$30,000 a month wants to borrow a few thousand dollars. Before he finds himself at the bank, he finds himself in the kitty at Caroni (1975) Limited and the board lends him \$70,000 interest-free.

I want to find out why the Government allows this kind of thing to happen. I hear the Prime Minister say that people who are doing these kinds of things would not be allowed to hide. On the basis of this, \$70,000 interest free loan to a CEO is

*ISS Limited Report*  
[DR. ROWLEY]

*Friday, July 27, 2001*

reason for me to call for the dismissal of the Board of Caroni (1975) Limited and I so do. The Board of Caroni (1975) Limited must be dismissed because such a board is not acting in the public interest.

**3.10 p.m.**

Listen to this obscenity, Mr. Speaker, to show you the pattern of behaviour. The loan to the chief executive officer was advanced out of the company's budget allocation for the payment of wages. The contractual provision for performance-based incentive to the employees—other than the chief executive officer—is now being investigated by the board. So the same board that approved to put a bonus in his contract; the same board that paid him the money interest free, is now telling me that they are investigating the matter. They are not only stealing the public's money, they are taking the public for fools and this has to stop!

I am saying to the Minister if he reads the Constitution, he has the power for general or specific directions and he has the power to intervene. The Minister must intervene. I plead with you. [*Interruption*] Have you fired the board?

**Mr. Assam:** That is why they are investigating the board.

**Dr. K. Rowley:** So you are part of the investigation too? What is there to investigate when your chief executive officer is earning \$70,000? It is known—

**Mr. Assam:** You must go through due process.

**Dr. K. Rowley:** Mr. Speaker, it is Trinmar, Petrotrin, Caroni, and OWTU, writing to the Minister of Finance, the Corporation Sole, about NP. Now OWTU is not a fly-by-night union. It is probably the largest and the best organized union in the country, the backbone of Caribbean labour movement. Here they have put pen to paper, to write to the Minister of Finance to raise certain matters with him in the same pattern that I have been describing. Permit me to mention a couple of them because you will see the pattern of behaviour of state boards:

“Breach of Tendering Procedures...”

Well that is standard.

“The obscene hustle by the Board...to implement the restructuring...to provide high paying jobs...for some members of Management and staff.

The unexplained and scandalous increase in operating expenditure for the financial year 1999/2000 from \$118.8M to \$157.6M...”

Operating expenditure—all NP does is sell gas and other materials from year to year, but your operating expenses will jump from \$118.8M to \$157.6M in one year? Should that not bother us as parliamentarians? It bothers OWTU. The OWTU

is asking the Corporation Sole to look into these matters: the frequent, expensive and non-beneficial overseas trips by the chairman and senior managers; the use of company funds to host parties and functions for board members. This is a pattern of behaviour in the state sector that we cannot continue.

If we do not act with some purpose, Trinidad and Tobago is going to end up missing out on the promise of prosperity. Right now oil prices are high but those of us who follow the international economic environment would know that there is great unease about the prospect of global recession. The Asian flu has not been cured. The US economy is still touch-and-go for maintaining growth. I make these points to tell you that if, in fact, a period of global recession comes upon us in the next few months, what we are now calling good times could easily turn around to hard times because it will have a serious effect on oil prices. Already there is a glut of oil in the world because of a slowing down of the world's economy, causing Opec, this week, to cut back by a million barrels to try and maintain the price. We know Opec and maybe by the next meeting you might not be able to maintain that cut, when members start to cheat and the price of oil could fall. What would that mean for Trinidad and Tobago? What does it mean for Petrotrin?

We are engaging in hundreds of millions of dollars of contracts that are improperly awarded and persons are boasting about the hundreds of millions they will make because they knew the right person, in the right place; on the right board. We sit here as a Parliament trying to defend that? Well, no person in this Parliament is required to defend it. We are not defenders of anybody outside. We ought to be defenders of the public's interest, especially the public purse. If we do not take action, then we are all, especially the Government, guilty of gross negligence. [*Desk thumping*]

I want to turn to the point of limitations and imperatives. This Motion calls for the PA(E)C to bring Petrotrin before it. I wrote that as part of the Motion understanding full well that there are serious limitations with respect to what the PA(E)C can do in this matter. Under the Constitution, the PA(E)C can only deal with the audited reports and matters incidental thereto. Let me read for you, Mr. Speaker, just to refresh your mind:

“The Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee shall consider and report...on—

- (a) the audited accounts, balance sheets and other financial statements of all enterprises that are owned or controlled by or on behalf of the State; and
- (b) the Auditor General's report on any such accounts, balance sheets and other financial statements.”

*ISS Limited Report*  
[DR. ROWLEY]

*Friday, July 27, 2001*

That is the extent to which the PA(E)C can deal with Petrotrin. The matters that I have raised with you here today, Mr. Speaker, are not going to be shown on Petrotrin's balance sheet in the very near future. The last balance sheet we have before us is 1999. This scandalous conduct on which ISSL has reported is the 1999 and 2000 action, and God alone knows what is taking place now in 2001. So clearly the PA(E)C is not designed to treat with current type problems, so we are exposed. Until it is broken; until they have flown the coop; until they have damaged the enterprise, the matter does not come before the Parliament's PA(E)C, so something else is required. Or, we have to put our hands up in the air and say that we can do nothing.

The Attorney General understands that very well, because he came to this Parliament and he said that parliamentary committees should be incorporated so as to treat with this very type of problem. We said we did not have any problem with parliamentary committees, but we have a problem with the Government examining the Government in the parliamentary committee, especially since the Government will be chairman of the committee and the Government would have the majority of members on the committee.

Mr. Speaker, the time has come for us to look very seriously at this situation and with those matters. Those persons who drafted our Constitution did two things when they drafted the Constitution about the PA(E)C. They were at pains to point out and to record in our document that the PAC and the PA(E)C must be chaired by an Opposition Member in the Lower House. It says in section 119 of the Constitution that if a member of the Opposition in the Lower House is unwilling to chair that committee then you go to the Opposition in the Upper House to get an Opposition Member to chair the committee. If a Member of the Opposition in the Upper House is unwilling to do so, then the President must appoint an Independent Senator to chair that committee, either the PAC or the PA(E)C. That is registered in our Constitution.

The point that is very clear is that it is saying that it is not acceptable for the Government to examine the Government. That is why the committees that were formed by the Government under the last initiative—where the Government would chair the committee and the Government would have the majority of members on the committee—runs counter to the spirit of the Constitution. [*Desk thumping*] I am pleading with the Government, given what we are facing here today; current, scandal and wrongdoing in Petrotrin and the limitations that apply with the PA(E)C, that the Government revisit what they attempted to do with respect to those parliamentary committees.

If we do not attempt to treat with this issue then the country will see, very clearly, whether our words have any value. I came across a quotation recently, which I want to share with the Government. That quotation talks about morality. I am talking, particularly, to those persons on the other side who believe there is such a thing called morality. If you believe that there is something called morality and it has any place in Trinidad and Tobago—it is said that the hottest place in hell is reserved for those persons who in a moral crisis choose to stay neutral—Trinidad and Tobago today is in a moral crisis. [*Desk thumping*] If there are people on the Government side who believe that they are to stand up for the values that their parents taught them, and not for the values that are now being inculcated; because there is an inculcation you know. When people see the statements coming from the Prime Minister who does not have time to treat with this report; who is not concerned about dealing with this, but he can find time to go and talk nonsense about who has connection to which newspaper; who is conspiring to what; who is attacking which leader; that is all he is interested in. He has not found time for this, but he has time to attack the press and slander me, but I want to tell the Prime Minister that I would ignore him every time he talks foolishness and I will identify his Government's shortcomings every time it comes up. [*Desk thumping*]

We have to decide if we are a serious people. We have to decide if we will progress or if we will stagnate. We have to decide if all we are concerned about is office and preservation of office. We are now hearing volumes of platitudes, but what is it worth? I can tell you that the words of the Government are now worth less and less and less.

This whole concept of dollar for dollar came up in my own constituency as the campaign strategy to woo the voter in the high-income end of the Diego Martin West constituency. The Government knew that such persons would have been interested in this package, because they have many children studying abroad and they spend substantial amounts of money on those children. So come to Victoria Gardens—my friend the Minister of Energy organized them and brought them out and told them, dollar for dollar; every dollar you spend I will match it. Today we are hearing the dollar for dollar programme but it only concerns local education. I am saying that is betrayal of what you told the people in Victoria Gardens. [*Desk thumping*]

### **3.25 p.m.**

What you told the people in my constituency when you pandered to them—Victoria Gardens, Bayshore, Westmoorings—you pandered to them during the

*ISS Limited Report*  
[DR. ROWLEY]

*Friday, July 27, 2001*

election period because you knew they had a lot of children abroad and they normally send their children abroad. By saying now that dollar for dollar is only for local study is a betrayal and you have gone back on your word. [*Desk thumping*] While I am very happy for those persons who will pay reduced tuition in the country, I am saying that this system is not a solution to our education problem, but I will come back to that in due course because I will tell you something: Paying half of the price you are paying now does not create spaces in the university.

“John D.” had no space last year, so if they are paying half price next year, no increased number of students can go in. All that will happen is, those who go will pay half price. [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Just to let you know that you are straying from your Motion and to remind you that you have three minutes left.

**Dr. K. Rowley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I went in that direction on the point that the Government’s word means less and less as we progress. [*Desk thumping*]

The Prime Minister said early in his term that he would not allow rogue elephants in the state enterprises. The elephants are trampling on the people and, as we proceed along the way, his word is worth less and less. What do we expect? We are seeing misconduct at lower levels in the society, which we can attribute to examples that people are taking from what they perceive to be taking place at the upper levels in our society, as high up as the Cabinet. If the Cabinet does not act when the Attorney General is blocked from getting a report like this, what do you want the criminals outside to think? What do you want the children to think? What do you want the vendors to think? The people in Cacandee, in Moriah, in Cedros, in Mason Hall and in Diego Martin, what do you want them to think?

Then, every five minutes you get up and harassing them by threatening them with social instability. If there is anybody in this country who is threatening the social stability of this country, it is the Prime Minister in the way he conducts his Government. [*Desk thumping*] People have put you here to conduct their affairs. They are being confronted with scandal after scandal after scandal and all you can tell them is, “If you come on the streets there will be a conflagration, there will be social disruption.” What they want you to do is stick to the lofty principles that you so glibly espouse from time to time. That is what they want you to do. That is what your job is.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Government to take this matter very seriously. What is going on in Petrotrin—the information we have—cannot be ignored. I am asking



the Parliament to take this matter seriously in such a way that the problems at Petrotrin can be addressed once and for all. Then Trinidad and Tobago can hold its head up as a country that is not listed among the most corrupt and rotten in the world. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Would someone second the Motion, please?

**Mr. Valley:** Mr. Speaker, I rise to second the Motion and reserve my right to speak at a later time.

**Mr. Speaker:** The Motion has been seconded by the Member for Diego Martin Central.

*Question proposed.*

**Mr. Subhas Panday (Princes Town):** [*Desk thumping*] Mr. Speaker, I have seen in this Motion where the Member has stumbled along so much that, in the middle of his contribution, he contradicted himself, in that when he quoted the Constitution, he said that the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee cannot do what the Motion seeks. However, in the beginning of the Motion, he requested the House to do certain things and in the middle of his speech he said “We cannot do it.” This is what we are going to deal with, and I am going to help him to untangle his thoughts so that he may start to think a little clearer.

This Motion is indeed misconceived. Having heard the Member, it can only be described as frivolous and vexatious in these circumstances because my friend knows full well in his contribution the powers of the PA(E)C, and I shall help him by rereading the Motion. Hear what he says:

“*Whereas* the State Enterprises are entrusted with the management...”

I stress:

“...the management of billions of dollars of public monies and other assets;  
and

*Whereas* some of these enterprises are being managed in such a manner...”

I repeat for him:

“...are being managed in such a manner as to deprive citizens of the benefits which should flow from their operations;

*Be it resolved* that this honourable House take note of the existence and content of the Integrated Security Systems Limited (ISSL) Report which was commissioned by Petrotrin; and

*ISS Limited Report*  
[MR. S. PANDAY]

*Friday, July 27, 2001*

*Be it further resolved* that this honourable House accept the Recommendations...”

He read extensively from a document. We have not heard what the recommendations are.

He says then:

*“Be it further resolved* that this honourable House direct the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee PA(E)C to summon Petrotrin to appear before the Committee at the earliest opportunity for the purpose...”

Not of examining, as he says, within the power and the scope and the purview of section 119(8), but:

“...for the purpose of examining all matters relating to the award of contracts and matters incidental thereto with particular reference to Southwest Soldado (SWS), Sundowner and the Refinery Upgrade Project;”

Mr. Speaker, I would like to quote for the hon. Member and I will quote the Constitution. [*Interruption*] I will come to that in a minute and let you know what happened with those Standing Orders, how defective they are. The Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago [*Laughter*] section 119, please Mr. Speaker, the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee—this is the Constitution, section 119(5) says:

“In addition to the Public Accounts Committee established under subsection (1) there shall be a Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee which shall consist of not less than six nor more than ten members.”

So the PA(E)C derives its existence from section 119(5).

What are the powers and functions of the PA(E)C? The functions and powers of the PA(E)C, Mr. Speaker:

“The Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee shall consider and report to the House of Representatives...”

I want him to listen carefully now. I want him to understand for the first time, if possible, [*Interruption*] that the order—[*Interruption*]:

“...consider and report to the House of Representatives [*Interruption*] on—

(a) the audited accounts, balance sheets...”

[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Members of the Opposition, it just cannot be right. When the Member for Diego Martin West was on his feet, the Members on the Government

Benches sat quietly and listened to his input. Would you please allow the Member for Princes Town to make his contribution? I think you can extend that courtesy to the Members on the other side. Please proceed.

**Mr. S. Panday:**—since I am making a very important contribution. Yes, Mr. Speaker:

“...shall consider and report to the House of Representatives on—

- (a) the audited accounts, balance sheets and other financial statements of all enterprises that are owned or controlled by or on behalf of the State; and
- (b) the Auditor General’s report on any such accounts, balance sheets and other financial statements.”

That, Mr. Speaker, is an entrenched section in the Constitution. So the Constitution specifies the power, the authority and the function of the PA(E)C. However, when one looks at the Motion before the House, it does not deal with that.

The functions of the PA(E)C are contained in the Constitution but what you are asking is for the committee to account on reports and, therefore, the PA(E)C cannot deal with a report like this pursuant to a Motion in this manner. It cannot. It cannot deal with it. The law does not permit it. So what the hon. Member for Diego Martin West is really doing is asking the House to do something it has no power to do. It cannot send this report to the PA(E)C because the PA(E)C cannot deal with it. So the question—I am not going into the motive of any speech, but merely to indicate that this Motion is a non-starter. It cannot get anywhere in these circumstances.

Mr. Speaker, one looks at section 119(1) also; that section speaks about the—although I have looked at the Motion and I tried to help by seeing if they could have amended it to let it fit anywhere but then we saw—section 119(1) spoke on the PAC, and even in that it cannot be dealt with. These are balance sheets, these are audited accounts, these are financial statements, but having regard to the contribution which was made today, we do not see that coming into play. [*Mr. Valley rises*] Sit down. Mr. Speaker—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Valley:** Mr. Speaker, if the Member would just give way for one second—you are not giving way?

**Mr. S. Panday:** No, no, no, no.

**Mr. Valley:** I just want to ask one question.

**Mr. S. Panday:** At the end, at the end.

**Mr. Valley:** Okay.

**Mr. S. Panday:** Mr. Speaker, so it is clear that this Motion has reached its end and we are going nowhere with it. If you want some help, I will give some further help en passant. The Standing Orders of the House or the Senate have not been amended to give effect even to the PA(E)C in its present form, but we will deal with that on another occasion.

The question is, the hon. Member made statements that we all think we need to deal with and the Members on this side of the House have no problems in dealing with these concerns which have been raised. As a matter of fact, this Government has passed a number of Acts—legislation—to deal with these problems. This Government is not concerned merely in bringing people—or scandalizing people or making statements that will damage people for the rest of their lives; this Government decides to do things in an organized manner.

I wish to make reference to Act 29 of 1999 which has now become section 66A of the Constitution. What has happened is—that probably is the committee to which my friend should have directed the Motion. *[Interruption]* I will show how there is protection in that. It says, Mr. Speaker, that:

“in addition to any other Joint Select Committee which Parliament is empowered to appoint under its Standing Orders, Parliament shall, within one calendar month—

(i) after the commencement of the Constitution...”

set up this joint select committee, the constitutional amendment committee, to deal with certain things. So there is, Mr. Speaker, in the legislation as it stands, machinery in place to deal with these kinds of problems.

It goes on to say that:

“of the first meeting of the House of Representatives after any General Election, or such time as the Parliament may resolve not being later than three months thereafter, appoint Joint Select Committees, to inquire into and report to both Houses...”

This committee, Mr. Speaker, has the power to deal with the concerns of the hon. Member and it says at section 119(8)(b) that it can also deal with enterprises owned and controlled by or on behalf of the State or which receive funding from the State for more than two-thirds of its total income in one year.

So the state enterprises are caught within this section. *[Interruption]* Pardon? *[Interruption]* You should have come there.

What has been done since that? Since that, Mr. Speaker, what has happened is that the Standing Orders of this honourable House have been amended in such a way to give full effect to the legislation and that is in the Lower House, 79. It says, Mr. Speaker, the Standing Orders are in place. So after the Government passed the law in 1999, in March of the year 2000, the Government did not just pass the law and sat down and say we are going to pass the law to deal with these problems. What did the Government do? They went further and in April of 2000, Mr. Speaker, the Standing Orders of the House of Representatives and the Standing Orders of the Senate were amended to give effect to the legislation. It says, Mr. Speaker:

“A Joint Select Committee referred to in subparagraph (1), shall be empowered to study and report on all matters relating to the mandate, management and operations of the Ministry or body which is assigned to it by the House.”

Hear what the committee could do. This committee, Mr. Speaker:

“...shall be severally empowered to review and report on—“

Programmes and policy.

So the PAC and the PA(E)C cannot deal with programmes and policy but this committee has the power to deal with programmes and policy objectives of the ministry and the body. So whatever has been raised there can be dealt with. We have machinery in place. You went to the PA(E)C for nothing.

“...the programme and policy objectives of the ministry/body and its effectiveness in implementation of same;

other matters relating to the management organization of the ministry/body, as the Committee deems fit.”

### **3.45 p.m.**

What does the Motion say, Mr. Speaker? It says that the state enterprises are entrusted with the management of these moneys, and the state enterprise is managing in such a manner. So the Standing Orders of the House are there to deal specifically with these problems, and in the final resolution in which the hon. Member asked that the House direct Petrotrin, that the honourable House direct the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee to summon Petrotrin, well I am sure that my friend would have known that once we have the select committee, they have those powers.

*ISS Limited Report*  
[MR. S. PANDAY]

*Friday, July 27, 2001*

Mr. Speaker, the power is spelt out in the Standing Orders. So he asked this House to compel Petrotrin to appear before this committee, the PA(E)C, and listen to what Standing Order 79(b)(7) says:

“In addition to powers granted by these Standing Orders, each Joint Select Committee shall also have the following powers, namely:

to send for persons, papers and records;”

He also asked that the Minister of Finance be directed to augment the parliamentary budget to ensure the necessary human and financial resources available to the committee. Hear what the Standing Order says about that. This Standing Order has the power “to appoint specialist advisers either to supply information which is not otherwise readily available, or to elucidate matters of complexity within the Committee’s or Sub-Committee’s order of reference;”

So, all which my friend, the Member for Diego Martin West has requested in that Motion, which is a non-starter, there is law, there is a machinery, there are Standing Orders; everything is in place and this Government which is interested and concerned with dealing with those kinds of matters, has been working systematically to put things in place. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, the Act was passed in 1999. The year 2000 Standing Orders, and only this year, Mr. Speaker, in April or May, this House appointed this committee. So even the committee is in place, save and except Members from the other side.

**Mr. Hinds:** Why?

**Mr. S. Panday:** Because—I do not know why, but we on this side want to make sure that the work we do, we do not bring people's names into the mud, but those who are guilty, to investigate and deal with them. That is why! We want to make sure that we do things right; that innocent people are not hurt, but those who are guilty feel the weight of the law. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, we have gone further. The committee has sat and I want to inform the hon. Member for Diego Martin West that I have been elected the chairman of two of those committees. [*Laughter*] That is no laughing matter. Maybe that is the way they would have done it, had they been here. I give you the assurance, Mr. Speaker, that this Government will be transparent, because this committee is not like the PA(E)C or the PAC. This committee can hold its investigations in public, and we who intend to ensure that there is transparency, intend to do that.

We have also said that all these state enterprises and these Government ministries must submit their reports by the first of July and October, and by that time, even before then, we shall sit, but while they have been working on this, we have been working and we have put advertisements in the newspapers informing the public about the work we have done. We have put, as you see here, Mr. Speaker, a public notice in the newspapers. So if my friend did not read the Act, at least in the newspapers of May 30, the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago was informing the public that the committee is set up and we are ready to work.

Again, on May 31, we put advertisements in the newspapers inviting contributions, and we take this opportunity today to inform Members of the Opposition that these committees are waiting and will receive requests, and we shall act upon them. That committee is not, as you say, only Government Members. That committee also has Independent Senators. As a matter of fact, the person who is the Vice-Chairman of one of the committees is Sen. Mary King.

So, Mr. Speaker, this Government is working, unlike what they are trying to say, that we are not doing anything. I am just putting on the record that this Government is working, and before they know, this committee will be working in public and we will show you all how we will deal with the matter in a systematic manner.

Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that the Member for Diego Martin West knows full well that this Motion has nowhere to go and that in his contribution himself, he has indicated that. But I thought I had a duty to help him if he did not read the Act, if he did not read the Standing Orders, to let him know that this Government has machinery in place which we are willing to make available to everyone, including the Opposition.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Kenneth Valley** (*Diego Martin Central*): Mr. Speaker, we see for yet another time an attempt by the Government, a sham, to hide and to duck. Let me just remind you of the composition of the committee that the Member for Princes Town has just spoken about. Mr. Subhas Panday, Chairman; Mr. Trevor Sudama, Minister of Agriculture; Mr. Ganga Singh, Minister of Youth Development—

**Dr. Rowley:** What!

**Mr. K. Valley:** Dr. Daphne Phillips, Junior Minister somewhere; Dr. Roodal Moonilal, Junior Minister somewhere; Dr. Jennifer Jones-Kernahan; Mrs. Mary King, Independent Senator.

*ISS Limited Report*  
[MR. VALLEY]

*Friday, July 27, 2001*

Mr. Speaker, the Member wants the public of Trinidad and Tobago to believe that such a committee can really deal with the accountability of the Government. That himself to himself will, in fact, give credibility in the public's eyes, that they can, in fact, really deal with accountability. The sham! But that is not all.

When the Member makes the point, or attempts to argue that this matter cannot go before the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee, perhaps he should be reminded that it was only last week or the week before that another matter, the North West Regional Health Authority, it is not accounts audited by the Auditor General. It is a special report asked for by the Minister of Finance. A special audit report that was referred to the PAC.

In reading the mandate of the PAC, he stated quite clearly that it was accounts audited. Accounts! This is not accounts, but a precedent has been established long ago, Mr. Speaker, in this House, that matters requiring special investigation, if it relates to a Government department, it will go to the PAC, and if it is a state company, it will go to the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, I draw reference to the Winsure matter which did not even go to the Auditor General's Department, but because it was raised here, and because at the time the Government wanted to take the heat off, it was sent to the Public Accounts Committee. Not only the Winsure matter. That same report, the payment to the National Carnival Commission to liquidate debts to Northern Construction they were not accounts audited by the Auditor General, but the Public Accounts Committee spent some time and reported on the matter.

That is not it alone. What about the ADDA report? Those were not accounts audited by the Auditor General. Again, it was a special report sent to the PAC, and the PAC did its job. But you know, Mr. Speaker, obviously, what is happening, in an attempt to “confuffle” the population, the Government came here and said they are setting up these departmental committees which are in complete conflict with the Public Accounts Committee and the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee.

You see, Mr. Speaker, while those two committees are constitutionally protected, the Government, with their sham, attempted to amend the section of the Constitution which does not even apply to those committees—is illegal. They are a waste of time, Mr. Speaker. That is what they are. All that was required, and we argued that at the time, was to extend the mandate of the Public Accounts Committee and the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee to do what has been done before, meaning, to accept special reports and to widen its mandates. We



had already established that precedent with Winsure, with the National Carnival Commission, and with ADDA.

We had already established the precedent and that if we want accountability, the place to have it is with the PAC and the PA(E)C. They say clearly—my colleague for Diego Martin West said it—where the Constitution provides that these committees, because we are talking about accountability, must be chaired in the case of the PAC, by a Member of the Opposition in the Lower House; and in the case of the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee, by a Senator who is appointed by the Leader of the Opposition. That is if you want accountability. Failing that, an Independent Senator.

But here you have, Mr. Speaker, a committee chaired by a Member of the ruling party, consisting of a number of ministers, Cabinet Ministers, who are involved in setting policy; and remember, the Government has a majority on these committees. They are setting policy and so forth; they want to come and investigate themselves and the Member wants us to be part of that, and I saw some misguided—or ill-intentioned might be a better word—columnist say on Sunday that perhaps the PNM may now want to reconsider its position. The PNM does not want to. It knows it is a waste of time; we know it is a sham; it is intended to hide their corruption, and that is what they are for.

Mr. Speaker, there is something else, because you see, even the PAC or the PA(E)C may have to be strengthened in certain ways. Although those committees are chaired—[*Interruption*—and they may very well, by Members of the Opposition. The membership is majority government, or the ruling party. So, Mr. Speaker, let us just assume that there is a hot issue in the air. Let us take the current situation; the hot issue in the air with respect to the Public Accounts Committee is the matter relating to the North West Regional Health Authority which was referred to that committee by the Parliament.

Let us assume that the majority government membership on the committee wants to bury that report, although it is hot. It is a special report sent to the committee and in the past, the committee would give precedent to special reports, but let us assume the majority on the committee decides, “We are not looking at that. We want to look at reports 10 years ago—all the reports 10 years ago. We are not looking at what is important.”

Let us assume, as in the current situation, there is a Member of the Public Accounts Committee who was the previous chairman of that body; and let us assume that Member is vociferous in trying to bury the report and says, “No. We

*ISS Limited Report*  
[MR. VALLEY]

*Friday, July 27, 2001*

do not want to look at that right now. Let us look at other things.” Can the committee really function, Mr. Speaker?

Or should it be that given the constitutional provision of the Public Accounts Committee, that either first, the Chairman, because of the accountability required, decides the matters to be considered—the order in which they be considered—or that the House directs that such a special report, when it is sent to the committee, be given urgent attention, Mr. Speaker? Otherwise, the Public Accounts Committee and the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee can sit and we could have all types of corruption at Petrotrin and the North West Regional Health Authority, and the committees are looking at reports from 10 years ago; audited reports that are now coming to the committee.

If we want accountability in the Parliament, we need to do two things, simply. First, we need to extend the power and authority of the Public Accounts Committee, as well as the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee. Also, we need, at least, to rethink how matters are considered in that committee.

There is another interesting point, Mr. Speaker; especially for these two committees, because these two committees are different from the committees on privileges and other things. One wonders whether it is right and just that the Government has a majority on these committees; because I will tell you, my experience in the Public Accounts Committee, even in the WINSURE matter, because we were looking for consensus.

This report had to be watered down considerably to get it reported. We still came to the conclusion, because everybody knew that something was wrong, but the tone of the report had to be watered down considerably, and if we are serious about accountability, if this Parliament is serious about holding the Government accountable for its actions, we need to look at the composition of this committee.

You see, Mr. Speaker, we have to remember that in the UK, these committees comprise, really, the Back-benchers. If you look at any of the readings—I am quoting here from *Parliament* by Griffith and Ryle, and it says under select committees—[*Interruption*] It would be interesting, Mr. Speaker, very interesting to have a book on Parliament written by yourself and that other Member. Very interesting reading. Chapter 11 says here:

“Select committees consist primarily of Back-benchers.”

It says that in the UK, even Opposition Front-benchers are not members of select committees.

**4.05 p.m.**

I made the point when we were debating that matter, that in our attempt to set up these departmental committees where the Government does not have available Back-benchers, it makes no sense. What we ought to be doing is strengthening the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) and the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee (PA(E)C). That is what we ought to be doing.

The central point here is that in the case of the United Kingdom even the PAC is chaired by a Back-bencher, perhaps a former minister, but one who is now in a position on the Back Bench, but he is first because we are talking about a Parliament with almost 600 Members. There is no such luxury here in Trinidad and Tobago.

When we look at the committee my friend is speaking about—he speaks glibly about the committee. Ask him how many times it has met. Once, and do you know why, Mr. Speaker? Because the Government has not provided the resources for the committee.

The Clerk—one person is supposed to service these three committees—has been on vacation so that the Clerk of the PAC has to be doing that work. Since March or April, the PAC has been asking for a meeting. We cannot have a meeting because first of all the Clerk had to go to some conference somewhere about the place. It was only last Wednesday, and I want to tell the *Newsday* that the PAC met last Wednesday, and the meeting was called for more than a week ago.

Mr. Speaker, so the Clerk of the PAC, who is now burdened also with these three additional committees, had to prepare for some conference, so that not only are these committees not meeting, but because of the lack of resources, the other committees, PAC and PA(E)C, are now facing problems. This is why the Motion is clear, that if in fact we want accountability in the Parliament, then the Government has a responsibility to provide the resources.

I know my friend, the Member for Oropouche, will support that point because for years he has been arguing that the PAC as well as the PA(E)C ought to have specialist experts assigned to them. Do you know today, the resources are much more available, all you have to do is to stop the wanton corruption that has now become the norm of the Government. That is all you have to do. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, simply to recap because I am not going to be long—I think that the Motion correctly calls for Petrotrin to appear before the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee and that there is precedence for that, and other matters

*ISS Limited Report*  
[MR. VALLEY]

*Friday, July 27, 2001*

have been referred to the various committees without our talking about accounts coming from the Auditor General. The precedence has been established. I have quoted four of them: The Winsure/Maritime matter, the ADDA matter, the National Carnival Commission matter, and the latest—which came even after the formation of those other committees just two weeks ago—the North West Regional Health Authority.

I argue further that sending this matter to the Government committee—which it is really, it is a Government committee—makes a mockery of the whole concept of accountability, not only because of the abundance of Government Members, not only because it is chaired by a Member of the ruling party, but most importantly, added to that, is the fact that the Government Members are also Cabinet Members who are charged with policy formulation and expenditure approval. The Government, according to the report, is implicated in this whole matter and it is a mockery to even consider a situation of Caesar to Caesar. It is a mockery.

I had argued that we need to strengthen—and we would be doing an appropriate motion in the special case of the report which was sent to the PAC on the North West Regional Health Authority. I had drafted a Motion asking the House to direct the Public Accounts Committee to give that report its most urgent consideration and to report by September 07. In that Motion, I am asking that we use the power of the House. We ask that you agree and the House waive the notice that is normally required for Private Members given the importance of the matter, because as you know, we are about to go on recess and the Public Accounts Committee, after its meeting on Wednesday—and given the supposition that I outlined—is eager to investigate that matter in the public's interest.

I am saying further that the appropriate motion would be drafted to effect a change in the composition of the numbers comprising the Public Accounts Committee and the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee. I should point out that nowhere in the Constitution does it say that either of these committees ought to have majority Government membership and we would use that as the base, and given the need for accountability we would suggest that, at best, those committees should be evenly divided. In other words, the Opposition plus the Independent Senators ought to equal Government membership. In other words, if the committee is 10, there ought to be five Government members, or five members from the ruling party because Government members ought not to be on the committee, and five members from the Opposition and the Independent combined.

That is my submission, Mr. Speaker. I do not agree with the Member for Princes Town that this matter is ill-conceived or frivolous or vexatious as he has

said, that in fact, there is precedence for sending it to the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee and I would ask this House to so agree.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

#### ADJOURNMENT

**The Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs (Hon. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj):** Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the House do now stand adjourned.

Mr. Speaker, I had indicated to the Opposition Chief Whip that we will be going on a short recess, and in order to leave it open, I beg to move that the House do stand adjourned to a date to be fixed.

There are three Motions on the Adjournment, Mr. Speaker. I do not know if we are doing them.

**Mr. Valley:** Mr. Speaker, we are asking that Motion No. 1 be deferred for the next sitting of the Parliament, but Motions Nos. 2 and 3 would be taken.

**Mr. Speaker:** Motion No. 1 was from the Member for Arouca South. Is it agreed that this be deferred until a date to be fixed at the next sitting?

*Agreed to.*

Motion No. 2 is from the Member for Point Fortin, and it deals with the failure of the Ministry of Education to replace the following schools which have been closed for over three years: (a) Icacos Government Primary School, (b) Point Fortin AC School and (c) Parrylands Government Primary School.

#### **Ministry of Education School Replacement (Failure of)**

**Mr. Lawrence Achong** (*Point Fortin*): Mr. Speaker, the constituency of Point Fortin has been deprived of three of its—

**Mr. Speaker:** Is there a problem? One moment, Member for Point Fortin. Okay, proceed, Member for Point Fortin.

**Mr. L. Achong:** Mr. Speaker, the people of Point Fortin have been deprived of three primary schools over the last three years. It is causing undue hardship to the parents and children of those schools. For some unknown reason, we have not been able to get a proper response from the powers that be as to why these schools have been closed for such a lengthy period.

*School Replacement*  
[MR. ACHONG]

*Friday, July 27, 2001*

We are now entering a new school year and, again, the children and parents will be faced with the prospect of not having those schools open. I am simply asking the Minister to do all in her power to ensure that these three schools are reopened in the shortest possible time. I do not want to think that Point Fortin has been singled out for special treatment because it is quite unusual to have three primary schools in one constituency closed for such a prolonged period. I do not think there could be any justification for that and I ask the hon. Minister to do all in her power to ensure that those schools are reopened.

The Guapo Government School is in a state of disrepair, it is simply in a dilapidated condition to the extent that it poses—

**Mr. Speaker:** I am sorry, but that is the other Motion on the Adjournment. Do you want to take both of them at the same time? By consent you could do it, but I want to know if that is what the Member is doing because Guapo is the third Motion. Do you want to do both together?

**Mr. Lawrence Achong:** Yes, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** All right, so the Minister would reply to both questions. You may proceed then.

#### **Guapo Government School (Dilapidated condition of)**

**Mr. Lawrence Achong** (*Point Fortin*): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The condition of the Guapo Government School poses a hazard to the health of the children. I do not think repairs could be effected because I have visited the school and I think that that school has to be rebuilt. So we are looking at a situation where four out of seven primary schools in Point Fortin need urgent repairs and I hope that we will get some action.

Thank you.

**The Minister of Education (Hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar):** Mr. Speaker, I share the Member's concern with respect to these schools and I would like to give him the assurance that we are taking whatever steps we can to have this situation rectified.

With respect to the Point Fortin AC School, there has been a difficulty because for this school—that is a denominational school as the Member well knows—we have gone through the process where the Anglican Education Board had submitted their costings for this particular school. The bill of quantities was submitted by their board of education. There was a sole tender because the way

the church schools are done, is through the education boards, which send their documents to the Ministry of Education.

This is for a primary school for 840 students and the bills of quantities show \$22 million as the cost for that school. Based on that, a meeting was held with the Ministry of Education officials and technical officers, the Anglican board and their consultants because nowhere in Trinidad and Tobago have we built a primary school at that kind of cost. I think the highest cost we have spent on primary schools is \$9 million and those are the new schools that we built during the course of last year and the last couple years.

So there was a meeting with them because there was no way that the ministry could agree with the bills of quantities coming in at \$22 million. So that is what is holding up the Point Fortin AC School because sites have been identified; they have been checked and so forth. We agree that this school must go on, but we cannot agree with the cost that has been put forward. We are now waiting on the Anglican Education Board to give us their further bills of quantities to revise what they have done to come up with something that is more in keeping with what is normally done for primary schools of this size. That is the Point Fortin Anglican.

With respect to the Icacos Government Primary, a replacement school is to be done. The site has been identified, the cadastral survey has been completed, the geotechnical survey has been completed, the preliminary designs have been completed and upon getting funding within the new budget year, we will proceed with construction, so that we are well on our way for everything prior to construction. The final point will be money in the Public Sector Investment Plan (PSIP) for 2001—2002 that will give us the green light to go ahead.

With respect to the third school, the Parrylands Government Primary School—in that school, as the Member well knows, the students and teachers there had complained of health problems due to the closeness to the Petrotrin facility and, therefore, students were moved out of that school and relocated.

I am advised that there are only 25 students on the roll of this school at the moment. So the Ministry of Education is doing two things: one is, further tests were carried out by Petrotrin and we are awaiting the results as to what is the situation at the site of the now vacant Parrylands building. Secondly, what we are looking at is the whole demographic data within the region to see whether it will sustain having the Parrylands school continue either at the existing venue, or a new venue.

With respect to the last school, the Guapo Government School, substantial repairs are to be effected within this year's vacation repair programme. Last year

*Guapo Government School*  
[HON. K. PERSAD-BISSESSAR]

*Friday, July 27, 2001*

a contract was awarded to Petrotrin, some repairs were carried out, but I am advised that they did not do what was one of the most important things—the beams of the building; so we are looking during this vacation period for such substantial work to be done.

If it is—based on what has been brought to my attention—that this building should not even be repaired, this is something we will have to look at. I will ask my technical officers again to go out—based on what you have brought to our attention—to see whether we should repair it, or see whether in fact it is something that should be demolished rather than repaired. So I will follow up on that matter for you.

That is the position with them. I want to give you the assurance that once the Anglican Education Board gives us a proper kind of costing with respect to Point Fortin AC, we would be ready to proceed, again, subject to funding being placed in the PSIP for 2001—2002.

The Icaos Government Primary, the position is the same—subject to funding. Parrylands, we are awaiting a demographic study as well as the health tests that are being done on that school; and Guapo, I will send technical officers there to give us further feedback on that school.

Thank you very much.

**Mr. Speaker:** Well, as I have done with other new Members in this Parliament, let me compliment the Member for Point Fortin for his first intervention in this House.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*House adjourned accordingly.*

*Adjourned at 4.25 p.m.*