

*Leave of Absence**Friday, September 07, 2001***HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES***Friday, September 07, 2001*

The House met at 1.30 p.m.

The Clerk of the House: Hon. Members, I wish to announce the absence from today's sitting of the Speaker of the House of Representatives. The Deputy Speaker will take the Chair.

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

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, I have received no correspondence from Members requesting leave of absence from today's sitting of the House of Representatives. However, the hon. Rupert T. Griffith, MP, Speaker of the House is out of the country. He is attending the 47th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference in Australia which commenced from September 02—14, 2001. He will be returning to Trinidad and Tobago on September 16, 2001. He has been excused from sittings of the House during this period.

Thank you.

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT OF LAND BILL

Bill relating to the planning and development of land, brought from the Senate, [*The Minister of Integrated Planning and Development*]; read the first time.

PAPERS LAID

1. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation for the year ended December 31, 1997. [*The Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs (Hon. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj)*]
2. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation for the year ended December 31, 1998. [*Hon. R. L. Maharaj*]
3. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the Naparima Bowl Board for the year ended September 30, 1999. [*Hon. R. L. Maharaj*]
4. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the project for a National Biodiversity Strategy Action Plan and report to the CBD as per Agreement TRI/97/G31/A/IG/99 between the United Nations Development Programme and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago for the year ended December 31, 2000. [*Hon. R. L. Maharaj*]

Papers Laid

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5. Report of the Auditor General on the accounts of the project for enabling Trinidad and Tobago to prepare its First National Communication in response to its commitments to United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change per Agreement TRI/98/G31/A/IG/99 between the United Nations Development Programme and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago for the year ended December 31, 2000. [*Hon. R. L. Maharaj*]

Papers 1 to 5 to be referred to the Public Accounts Committee.

6. Annual audited financial statement of Telecommunications Services of Trinidad and Tobago Limited (TSTT) for the financial year ended March 31, 2001. [*Hon. R. L. Maharaj*]

To be referred to the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee.

7. The Integrity in Public Life (Period for Furnishing of Information) Regulations, 2001. [*Hon. R. L. Maharaj*]
8. The Integrity in Public Life (Prescribed Forms) Regulations, 2001. [*Hon. R. L. Maharaj*]
9. The Supreme Court of Judicature (Amendment) Rules, 2001. [*Hon. R. L. Maharaj*]
10. Trinidad Nitrogen Company Limited—audited financial statements for the year ended December 31, 2000. [*Hon. R. L. Maharaj*]

To be referred to the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

The Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs (Hon. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I ask for a deferral of question No. 34 for a period of two weeks and question No. 41 for a deferral period of one week.

The following questions stood on the Order Paper:

Charlotteville (Overall plans)

34. (a) Would the Minister of Transport, Tourism and Tobago Affairs inform this House of Government's overall plans, including a schedule of dates for the development of the port at Charlotteville, Tobago?
- (b) Would the Minister indicate whether consultations were held with the people in Charlotteville on Government's plan for the port, and if so, could he specify?

- (c) Would the Minister say what Customs and Immigration facilities are in place at present to facilitate the (almost) daily arrival and departure of yachts and other crafts using the port? [*Mr. N. Moore*]

**Secondary School Syllabus
(Form Is Special)**

- 41.** (a) Would the Minister of Education indicate whether children registered for the Form I's Special for the up-coming school term are to pursue the regular Secondary School syllabus or curriculum?
- (b) If the answer to (a) is negative, would the Minister outline the syllabus they would pursue and explain the rationale for this programme/syllabus? [*Mr. F. Hinds*]

Questions, by leave, deferred.

Mr. Colm Imbert (Diego Martin East): Mr. Deputy Speaker, could I ask that question No. 30 in the name of the Member for Diego Martin West be deferred for one week?

The following question stood on the Order Paper in the name of Dr. Keith Rowley:

**Caroni (1975) Limited (INNERCOB)
(Annual Rental)**

- 30.** Could the Hon. Minister of Enterprise Development and Foreign Affairs state:
- (a) With respect to the lease of lands at Caroni (1975) Limited to INNERCOB Industries Limited for the establishment of InnCogen and other industries in 1998, could the Minister state what is the annual rent due to Caroni (1975) Limited?
- (b) Could the Minister state how much money has been paid by INNERCOB to Caroni (1975) Limited as at June 30th, 2001?
- (c) If any arrears are owed to Caroni (1975) Limited, could the Minister further state:
- (i) for which year/s and how much is the total indebtedness; and
- (ii) what action the company intends to take in order to collect, in a timely manner, all monies owed to it by INNERCOB?

Question, by leave, deferred.

**Self-Help Programme
(Allocation for)**

31. Mrs. Eulalie James (*Laventille West*) asked the Minister of Community Empowerment, Sport and Consumer Affairs:

- (a) Could the Minister please indicate what was the allocation for the Self-Help Programme for the period 1999/2000, and for the period 2000/2001 for the Laventille West Constituency?
- (b) Could the Minister further indicate what was the actual expenditure for the above periods in Laventille?
- (c) Could the Minister further indicate what were the projects undertaken in Laventille during these periods?

The Minister of Community Empowerment, Sport and Consumer Affairs (Hon. Manohar Ramsaran): Mr. Deputy Speaker, the National Commission for Self-Help Limited approved 12 self-help projects in the Laventille West constituency between the period 1999—2000. The total cost of funding for these projects is estimated at \$333,540.11. Approximately 7,500 persons in the community would have benefited from these projects.

For the period October 2000 to March 2001, no projects were approved for this constituency, and this is as a result of limited financial resources. The actual expenditure on projects in the Laventille West constituency are as follows: for the period 1999—2000, \$214,440.54 and for the period July 2001, \$123,016.49.

Projects undertaken in the Laventille West constituency during the periods under consideration are as follows:

- Mothers in Unity Project at Production Avenue, Sea Lots.
- Road rehabilitation works at Upper Picton Road, Laventille.
- Road rehabilitation works at 33c 2nd Hamlet Trace, St. Barbs Road, Laventille.
- Road rehabilitation works at LP#16 Beetham Highway, Laventille.
- Construction of a retaining wall at LP#34A St. Barbs Road, Laventille.
- Road rehabilitation works at LP#3A Sogren Trace, Laventille.
- Road rehabilitation works at LP#51D Readymix Private Road Quarry, Laventille.

- Drainage works at LP#53 Chinapoo Village, Morvant.
- Road rehabilitation works at LP#58 Mentor Valley, Laventille.
- Mothers in Unity Project, Sea Lots.
- Road rehabilitation works at Upper Picton Road, Laventille.
- Construction of retaining wall at LP#167 Laventille Extension Road, Morvant.

**Best Village Programme
(Hosting of)**

32. Mrs. Eulalie James (*Laventille West*) asked the Minister of Community Empowerment, Sport and Consumer Affairs:

- (a) Would the Minister indicate whether his Ministry would be hosting the Best Village Programme for the year 2001?
- (b) If the answer is in the negative, could he further indicate the reason for not hosting the Programme this year?

The Minister of Community Empowerment, Sport and Consumer Affairs (Hon. Manohar Ramsaran): Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Best Village Programme as it is currently structured and executed, is unable to effectively realize its full potential in meeting the economic and socio-cultural needs of our citizens. Moreover, given Government's policy of social unification, self-empowerment and engagement and redirection of youth, it has become necessary to review the programme to ensure that aspects of the culture of the society are effectively represented and that the programme truly contributes to national development.

Accordingly, on the recommendation of the Minister of Community Empowerment, Sport and Consumer Affairs, Cabinet recently agreed to the following:

- a restructuring of the Best Village Programme on a phased basis;
- the hosting of strategically targeted symposia which would act as the clearing house for proposals to improve the quality and efficiency of the present programme of activities; the symposia to be the first set of activities within the planned restructuring;

I may add that on October 06, 2001 we will have our first symposium in Port of Spain.

- the appointment of a special committee to review the structure and operations of the Village Olympics Competition with a view to attracting wider participation by communities;

- the special committee to be comprised of representatives of the Ministry of Community Empowerment, Sport and Consumer Affairs, sporting bodies and the business community; and
- the committee to report within six months of its appointment.

Notwithstanding the review process, the Ministry of Community Empowerment, Sport and Consumer Affairs will be hosting the Best Village Programme in 2001. However, the 2001 programme will not be in the format of previous years. In this connection the 2001 programme will take the form of seven regional community festivals and the very popular folk fair. These festivals will be free to the public and will be held before December 2001.

Post Offices
(Closure of)

33. Mrs. Eulalie James (*Laventille West*) asked the Minister of Communications and Information Technology.

- (a) Could the hon. Minister state whether there is a plan to close down the post offices in the Laventille West area?
- (b) If so, is the Minister aware of the hardships this closure would cause to the elderly who collect their old age pensions at these venues?
- (c) Could the Minister indicate:
 - (i) what alternatives are being provided for these pensioners to collect their pensions in the Laventille West area; and
 - (ii) what provisions would be made for the general public for the delivery of mail?

The Minister of Communications and Information Technology (Hon. Ralph Maraj): Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Trinidad and Tobago Postal Corporation has indicated that no further closures of post offices are planned for the Laventille area, since this is primarily due to all of the network changes which have been taking place for some time now.

The following network changes have already taken place to TTPOST retail operations. We have converted St. Ann's Post Office to a franchise; Laventille has been converted to a franchise; Blundell, we have converted to a stamp retailer; Morvant we have converted to a franchise; Belmont, to a franchise; Gonzales we have converted to a stamp retailer. These changes have all been put in place over the last few months in consultation with the local community councils. There have been no complaints received about this exercise.

Let me also say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that postal delivery operations remain on site in all of these locations and they continue to operate as normal. In fact, delivery is being progressively expanded to deliver mail directly to the homes in as many of these areas as possible. The geography of Laventille, of course, is particularly challenging and it is difficult to achieve 100 per cent delivery to homes, but we are taking steps to achieve this. Postal agents will remain in operation at the following locations:

- East Dry River
- Belle Eau Road
- St. Barbs Road
- St. Francois Valley Road
- Upper Belmont Valley Road
- Pelican Road and so on.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, no change for these locations would be considered until total postal delivery negates the need for people to collect their mail. In the meantime collection of pension cheques can be done at the respective delivery branches offered for franchise.

**Watts Trace, Malabar
(Repairs to)**

35. Miss Penelope Beckles (*Arima*) asked the Minister of Infrastructure Development and Local Government,

- (a) Could the Minister kindly state when his Ministry will undertake resurfacing work and repairs on the road at Watts Trace, Malabar, Arima, including the repairs of the drains on either side of the said Watts Trace?
- (b) Could he also indicate:
 - i. the type of repairs planned;
 - ii. the estimated costs of repairs; and
 - iii. the anticipated date of completion?

The Minister of Infrastructure Development and Local Government (Hon. Carlos John): Mr. Deputy Speaker, Watts Trace, Malabar, Arima will be included in our Development Programme and Road Improvement Fund of Local Government during fiscal year 2001/2002.

Watts Trace, Malabar, Arima is approximately 500 metres in length. Repair works would include strengthening, paving, changing of cylinders crossing and drainage works at an estimated cost of \$800,000. It is anticipated that these works will be completed within six weeks' time.

**Peter's Circular Road
(Repairs to)**

36. Miss Penelope Beckles (Arima) asked the Minister of Infrastructure Development and Local Government:

Could the Minister indicate:

- (a) When his Ministry will undertake resurfacing and repair work on the Peter's Circular Road, including the repair of the main bridge on the said road?
- (b) Could he also indicate:
 - i. the type of repairs planned;
 - ii the estimated costs of repairs; and
 - iii the anticipated date of completion?

The Minister of Infrastructure Development and Local Government (Hon. Carlos John): Mr. Deputy Speaker, Peter's Circular Road will be included in our Development Programme and Road Improvement Fund of Local Government during fiscal year 2001/2002.

Peter's Circular Road is approximately 2 kilometers in length. Repair works include strengthening, paving, changing of cylinders and drainage works. The estimated cost of repairs is \$1.2 million. It is anticipated that all works will be completed within two months.

1.45 p.m.

**Arima Indoor Sports Facility
(Construction Details)**

37. Miss Penelope Beckles (Arima) asked the Minister of Community Empowerment, Sport and Consumer Affairs:

Could the hon. Minister indicate:

- (a) When will his Ministry undertake the construction work on the Arima Indoor Sports Facility?
- (b) Could he also indicate:

- i the location of the said facility;
- ii the estimated cost of construction;
- iii the reason for the delay in the construction of the facility; and
- iv the nature of the sporting activities to be conducted at the facility?

The Minister of Community Empowerment, Sport and Consumer Affairs (Hon. Manohar Ramsaran): Designs for the Arima facility are currently being undertaken and are expected to be completed before the end of 2001. The tendering process is expected to be initiated and a contract for construction of the facility shall be awarded.

The Arima Borough Council recommended India Ground, Subero Street, Malabar for the site of the facility. This site was subsequently approved by the Town and Country Planning Division. The estimated cost of construction is \$12 million, which will be required in three years. In 1998, the site for the construction of the Arima indoor sports facility was identified at the Princes Royal Park. However, due to the uncertainty of the borough corporation's decision to hand over the above-mentioned site, the consultant was unable to pursue designs. In October 1999 a decision was subsequently made to construct the facility at India Ground, Subero Street, Malabar. Upon the identification of the final site, the Ministry had to await the approval for the availability of funds before the Central Tenders Board could appoint a consultant. The sporting activities that are envisaged to be conducted are in the following areas: basketball, netball, volleyball, table tennis, badminton, gymnastics, martial arts, aerobics and fitness programmes. Thank you.

Miss Beckles: Mr. Deputy Speaker, just a supplemental, because I am not clear. Hon. Minister, did you indicate whether there is a time frame within which this facility is likely to start—the construction?

Hon. M. Ramsaran: It will start in the new financial year 2001/2002.

**Ibis High School
(Shareholding)**

39. Mr. Fitzgerald Hinds (*Laventille East/Morvant*) asked the Minister of Education:

- (a) Would the Minister state from whom was the building that houses the Ibis High School bought?

- (b) If the vendor at (a) is not a natural person or persons, could the Minister state the name(s) of the directors and the registered shareholder(s) of the said entity?

The Minister of Education (Hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to thank the hon. Member for Laventille East/Morvant for asking this question in the Parliament so that we can clarify the misconception and the untruths that are being bandied about with respect to the ownership of the BH Rose building.

The properties that now house the Ibis High School were originally owned by BH Rose Limited, now known as London Street Properties Limited. The properties are assessed as numbers 6-10 London Street and 223-29 Sackville Street. The parcels of land altogether comprise 2,980 square metres. The name of the directors and shareholders of the vendors of this building was BH Rose Limited, now known as London Street Properties Limited. BH Rose Limited was incorporated on October 8, 1935 and, as required by the Companies Act, 1995, the company was continued on March 24, 1999. The directors of the company at the date of continuance, which is March 24, 1999 were: Geoffrey Inglefield, David Inglefield, Anthony Inglefield, Dennis Gurley, Nils George Voss, Gary Voss and Ann Marie Ali, Corporate Secretary.

On December 29, 1999 the company changed its name from BH Rose to London Street Properties Limited. The company was formerly located at 6-10 London Street, Port of Spain. Its registered address was, during August 2000, changed to Furness Complex, 11-13 Milling Avenue, Sea Lots, Port of Spain. The directors of London Street Properties were the same as those listed above for BH Rose except that Nils Voss and Gary Voss had ceased to hold directorships from July 16, 1999. Therefore, the directors of London Street Properties Limited as at April 2, 2001 are: Geoffrey Inglefield, David Inglefield, Anthony Inglefield and Dennis Gurley. Ann Marie Ali ceased to hold office with effect from November 13, 2000.

The shareholders of the London Street Properties are Aurelia Trestrail, Adrian Limited, Republic Bank Limited, Dennis Adrian Gurley, David William Guy Smith, Geoffrey Robert Inglefield, Signet Limited, B.D.C. Investments Limited, David Inglefield, Anthony Inglefield and Ann Marie Ali, Chartered Accountant.

Directors of the major shareholders in London Street Properties—Signet Limited is the most substantial shareholder with 41,107 ordinary shares followed by Adrian Limited with 6,931 ordinary shares. Signet Limited was incorporated February 4, 1977 and continued under the new companies law on July 14, 2000.

Its registered office is at 11-13 Victoria Avenue, Port of Spain. On May 8, 2000 Price Waterhouse was registered as secretary to the company. Directors as at July 13, 2000 were Jeffrey Robert Inglefield, David Inglefield, Christopher John Inglefield and Anthony Mark Inglefield.

The following are the shareholders in Signet Limited: David Inglefield, Christopher Inglefield, Anthony Inglefield, Katherine Inglefield, Katherine Anderson, Jennifer Castagne, Lesley Mendes, Elizabeth Crawford and Rebecca Thompson. The other shareholder, Adrian Limited—On April 7, 1999, the directors of the company were as follows: Brendan Gurley, Adrian Gurley, Dennis Gurley, Christian Gurley, Marie Bernadette Ali and Maureen Adrian De Gannes. There has been no change of directors up to this date. However, Maureen De Gannes and Dennis Gurley ceased to hold offices as secretary and assistant secretary respectively on August 16, 2000.

The shareholders of Adrian Limited, as at February 17, 1999 were Brendan Gurley, Dennis Gurley and Christian Gurley who hold 10,000 ordinary shares as trustees on the settlement of the estate of Rudolf Adrian Gurley. They also hold 250 ordinary shares as executors of the estate. The other shareholders are Marie Bernadette Gurley, Dennis Gurley, Aileen Mary Gurley, Maureen De Gannes, Jason Gurley, Damian Gurley, Justin Gurley, Ester Declé nee Gurley, BDC Holdings and BDC Investment. There is no indication of any changes in the shareholding since 1999. There has not ever been in the past or now any member of the Government holding any shares in any of these companies. I thank you, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Hinds: Supplemental. Would the Minister confirm whether the Government has thus far spent in excess of \$23 million for the purchase and the repair of the said building?

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar: If the hon. Member would file the appropriate question, we would provide all the facts to the Parliament in terms of expenditure on that building.

Mr. Breaux: Supplemental question to the hon. Minister. Do you have available the shareholders of BDC Investment Limited?

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar: I will provide that for the Member at the next sitting of the Parliament.

Mr. Rahael: Mr. Deputy Speaker, if you will allow me, I think I heard you say that Republic Bank was a shareholder in that company?

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar: Yes.

Mr. Rahael: Could you give us an idea of what is the shareholding of Republic Bank?

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar: Certainly. Republic Bank Limited holds 400 ordinary shares. I cannot provide the names for the 400 ordinary shares. It is Republic Bank Limited, yes, 400 ordinary shares, yes, but the majority shareholding, as I said, was held between Signet and Adrian.

**Form Is Special
(2000/2001 Details)**

40. Mr. Fitzgerald Hinds (*Laventille East/Morvant*) asked the Minister of Education:

- (a) Would the Minister indicate the number of children registered for entry into the Form Is Special for the new school term beginning September, 2001?
- (b) Would the Minister indicate the comparative figure for the school term, which began in September, 2000?
- (c) Would the Minister indicate the reasons for the decrease/increase?
- (d) Could the Minister outline the criteria for selection to a Form I Special?

The Minister of Education (Hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar): Mr. Deputy Speaker, last year the Ministry of Education scored another first with the introduction of Form 1s Special. These forms were created for children who did not meet the requirements to enter the mainstream system and who demonstrated a need for specialized attention. These are children who had been abandoned by the previous system. These are children who would have been unable to go after even non-academic pursuits because they did not have basic numeracy and literacy skills. So we placed them in an environment where, for the first time, we could begin to meet their needs and limitations and address them one step at a time.

In the 2000/2001 academic year, under the Common Entrance Examination and under the Universal Secondary Education policy of Government, 1,812 boys and 704 girls were placed in Form Is Special making a total of 2,516 children. In the 2001/2002 academic year, under the SEA examination, 2,240 boys and 1,110 girls were placed in Form 1s Special—a total of 3,250 children. The figures indicate that there is an increase in the number of students assigned to Form Is Special between the Common Entrance of 2000 and the SEA of 2001.

The reason for this, I am advised, is that the SEA, being a more thorough and accurate reflection of academic performance in the areas of literacy and numeracy, has allowed us to pick up those with deficits in literacy and numeracy to give us a higher number of students being required to do work at the Form Is Special level. Students who sat the SEA, previously the Common Entrance, who scored less than 30 per cent of the total marks, were the ones placed in Form Is Special classes. I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Hinds: Supplemental. Is the Minister to be understood as saying that the SEA is a more difficult examination and, as a consequence, more children are finding it difficult to make the required marks to enter into secondary school training?

Hon. K. Persad-Bissessar: No, the Minister is not to be understood as saying that. The Minister has said that the SEA is a more thorough assessment of the literacy and numeracy skills, which was the very purpose of the SEA. That is what the Minister is saying.

BUDGET DAY

The Prime Minister and Minister of National Security (Hon. Basdeo Panday): [*Desk thumping*] Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wish to announce to this honourable House that Budget Day will be on Friday, September 14, 2001 at 1.30 p.m. [*Desk thumping*]

REGISTRAR GENERAL (AMDT.) BILL

Bill to amend the Registrar General Act, Chap. 19:03 [*The Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs*]; read the first time.

FINANCE COMMITTEE

The Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs (Hon. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj): Mr. Deputy Speaker, as provided for in Standing Order 64(7), I beg to move,

That this House do now resolve itself into Finance Committee for the purpose of considering matters related to the 2001 Appropriation.

Question proposed.

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Members of the public, unfortunately these proceedings have to be carried out in camera. In the circumstances, we will ask you probably to stretch your legs for a few minutes and, the moment the proceedings are over, we shall send a message to you. Thank you.

Finance Committee

Friday, September 07, 2001

2.00 p.m.: *House resolved itself into Finance Committee.*

2.22 p.m.: *House resumed.*

The Minister of Finance (Hon. Gerald Yetming): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wish to advise that Finance Committee has met and has considered matters relating to the 2001 Appropriation.

The report of the Finance Committee will be prepared for presentation to this House on Wednesday, September 12, 2001 at 1.30 p.m.

**CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY (CARICOM)
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC FREE TRADE BILL**

Order for second reading read.

The Minister of Enterprise Development and Foreign Affairs (Hon. Mervyn Assam): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move,

That a Bill to give effect to the free trade agreement between the Caricom community and the Government of the Dominican Republic be now read a second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am particularly pleased today to be piloting the second reading of this very important Bill. As you are aware, Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of the centerpieces of the economic foreign policy of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago is market access, market expansion for our manufacturers/exporters.

2.25 p.m.

Ever since this Government came into office in November 1995, we continued with the pattern of economic policy and economic strategy of pursuing markets that would facilitate and enhance our international trade.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have succeeded so far in completing a number of agreements: the Colombia Caricom Free Trade; the Dominican Republic Caricom Free Trade; the Cuba Caricom Free Trade and, just recently, we initialled a partial scope free trade agreement with the Federative Republic of Brazil. In time, all of these would come to the Parliament for ratification. So today is a very important day for us, in that it would now give legal effect to many years of negotiations and, at times, disappointments particularly on the part of our manufacturers/exporters because this process has been somewhat drawn out and prolonged. So that, today, the purpose of the Bill is to give effect to the free trade agreement between Caricom and the Dominican Republic.

The Bill outlines the legislation which will govern the free trade agreement which was signed between the Caribbean Community and the Dominican Republic in August of 1998. However, this agreement is complemented by an accompanying protocol signed on April 28, 2000 which provides for the details of the trade agreement.

Under the agreement, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the parties are required to complete legislative and administrative arrangements for the agreement to enter into force, and that is exactly what we are doing today. The proposed legislation before this honourable House is therefore intended to give full legal effect to the agreement in respect of Trinidad and Tobago.

The trade policy for the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago as contained in the document, 1997—2001, states:

“Efforts will be directed toward expanding market share for non traditional products in traditional markets, particularly where preferential market access arrangements are available...”

The free trade agreement will provide preferential market access opportunities to a market of approximately 8.7 million persons, over 100 per cent more than all of Caricom, for an expansive range of traditional and non-traditional products. The Dominican Republic's economy has been one of the fastest growing economies in the hemisphere for the past few years, with an average growth rate of about 6 to 7 per cent annually.

In addition, rapid tourism growth has been fuelling internal demand inclusive of the demand for imported products. Tourism arrivals to the Dominican Republic were estimated at 2.5 million in the year 2000. The Dominican Republic is emerging as a very important trading partner for Trinidad and Tobago, as Trinidad and Tobago continues to industrialize and to expand its non-oil sector in particularly non-traditional areas.

I would like to give you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and this honourable House some idea of the details of imports and exports between the Dominican Republic and Trinidad and Tobago. In 1997, Trinidad and Tobago imported \$27.8 million from the Dominican Republic, whereas we exported \$315.7 million with a favourable balance of trade in 1997 of \$287.9 million.

In 1998, Trinidad and Tobago imported \$38.2 million from the Dominican Republic and exported \$390.3 million with a favourable surplus of \$352.1 million; an extraordinary increase over the previous year. In 1999, Trinidad and Tobago imported \$20.5 million from the Dominican Republic and exported

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i\$388.9 million, a surplus of\$368.4 million. In the year 2000, it was the jackpot: We imported \$22.8 million from the Dominican Republic and exported \$679.2 million, a trade surplus of \$656.4 million. You can see the possibilities and the potential of this trade agreement coming into force where, even before we had all of these tariffs in place, we were able to export \$679 million. With this coming nto forces, the sky is virtually the limit.

Over the period 1997—2000, Trinidad and Tobago enjoyed a favourable balance of trade with the Dominican Republic as I have just described. The favourable trade balance increased by some 128 per cent, from TT \$287.9 million in 1997 to \$656.4 million in 2000; an impressive performance, and we should congratulate the private sector and all of the manufacturers in this country. Through their facilitative and encouraging trade policy and the investment policy of this Government, we were able to help the private sector perform so admirably on behalf of the Government and people of Trinidad and Tobago, generating thousands of jobs and, at the same time, a lot of foreign exchange.

With respect to exports, Trinidad and Tobago's exports increased from \$315.7 million in 1997 to \$390.3 million in 1998 or by 23 per cent. In 1999, there was a slight decrease of about \$1.4 million compared to 1998. However, in 2000 exports significantly increased and this represents an increase of 75 per cent of 2000 over 1999.

Imports from the Dominican Republic have remained steady over the period, averaging about \$27 million, but it means to say that we have to continue to be extremely competitive in Trinidad and Tobago, because once the barriers have been removed you would appreciate that more manufacturers/exporters from the Dominican Republic would want to come into our markets, where we have infinitely more purchasing power, and people have a propensity for improved choices, particularly as more and more imports are made available to them. In this regard, imports from that country increased by 37 per cent in 1998, that is \$38.2 million, compared with \$27.8 in 1997. However, imports declined to \$20.5 million in 1999 but rebounded slightly to \$22.8 million in 2000.

In addition to the demonstrated importance in the bilateral relationship in respect of trade and goods between Trinidad and Tobago and the Dominican Republic, it is to be noted that the Dominican Republic is increasing in importance as a strategic partner at the Caricom level, in issues and problems being addressed in other international fora. Examples of such interaction in which Trinidad and Tobago is an active participant with the Dominican Republic is

CARIFORUM/ACP-EU relations, the Association of Caribbean States, the Free Trade Area of the Americas and, of course, the World Trade Organization (WTO).

The under-mentioned articles of the agreement allow for the following key elements: Trade in goods—the article on trade in goods allows for the parties to implement a programme to liberalize trade inputs. This, in effect, means that both parties have agreed to allow products from the territories of the other party to enter their territory under preferential market access arrangements.

There is also an article on investment which allows the parties to agree to promote and facilitate investments within the free trade area. This is very important for us because, as you know, we are seeking to increase and to promote inflows of direct investment into our country, particularly in the non-oil sector. We have been more fortunate in the energy sector in the area of oil and, in particular, gas.

Economic cooperation—under this article related to economic cooperation, the parties have agreed to develop broad cooperation programmes in such areas as agriculture, industry, construction, tourism, telecommunications—and you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, how important telecommunications is becoming to Trinidad and Tobago. We recently passed a Telecommunications Bill which is now law and we are hoping that we would be able to develop a number of spin-offs as a consequence of the importance of this new piece of legislation and the impact that telecommunications will have on the overall economy of this country, as we move into knowledge-based industries, high-tech industries and the construction of our Science Innovation and Technology Park in Wallerfield, attracting some of the most important investors into this sector. [*Interruption*]

I thought you wanted to say something of importance? Why did you interrupt me with nonsensicality?

Mr. Hinds: Would you give way?

Hon. M. Assam: I will, but be serious.

Mr. Hinds: I am serious. So important it is that you fired the Minister recently, but more important is the fact that the Telecommunications Bill of which you just boasted and its importance to Trinidad and Tobago, you conducted the debate and passed it in the absence of the Opposition.

Hon. M. Assam: Mr. Deputy Speaker, was the Opposition denied an opportunity to sit in the House and participate in such an important piece of legislation? They opted voluntarily to be out of the House. If they wanted to drink bush tea for the fever of a particular Member, so be it.

Mr. Valley: But that is exactly what you are doing now! [*Laughter*] [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. M. Assam: It also encourages—[*Interruption*] I am not a bush doctor, I am a scientist. [*Crosstalk*] That is the difference between the PNM and myself: I am not a bush doctor, I am a scientist. It also encourages joint production of goods and collaboration in the provision of services to exploit market opportunities in the third states. That is a very important provision of this agreement.

Of course, the private sector is also included. This article governing private sector activities allows the promotion of the active participation of the private sector towards the fulfilment of the objectives of the agreement. Already in this regard, the Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers Association has seized the initiative and has scheduled a trade mission for the period 10—16, 2001, to promote interaction between the private sector from Trinidad and Tobago and that of the Dominican Republic. [*Interruption*] Of September 2001; thank you, if I omitted it.

This is an imminent mission and it is very important and very timely that they are going to the Dominican Republic with this piece of legislation being enacted into law.

Mr. Manning: Carry Sudama.

Hon. M. Assam: I have no difficulty with Mr. Sudama going or any members of this Government.

We also have a provision for double taxation agreement. The article on double taxation provisions allows the parties to work towards the adoption of agreements to prevent and to avoid double taxation between the member states of Caricom and the Dominican Republic. So that any company investing in Trinidad and Tobago or any Trinidad and Tobago company investing in the Dominican Republic will not have to pay taxes in both countries, but can opt to pay in one country in accordance with this agreement.

Equally important is the provision for the settlement of disputes. In fact, when I was driving down Richmond Street today I was so happy to see a lovely sign on a building next to the Sacred Heart Church, the Caribbean Court of Justice. We need to congratulate our Attorney General [*Interruption*] for the work he has put into the honouring of our obligation to provide suitable and appropriate accommodation for the Caribbean Court of Justice which, in the first instance, will act as a court for the settlement of disputes, in terms of the nine new protocols governing the new relationship within the single market and the single economy. The article on dispute settlement provides a mechanism for the parties

to settle disputes arising from any problem they face in the interpretation, implementation or execution of the agreement.

In addition, there are other areas identified that the agreement covers relating to specialized disciplines, which are either complementary to or facilitate trade in goods. These disciplines include trade in services. As you know, this is becoming increasingly important, in fact, more important than trading goods. It would be the growth pole for the future development and diversification of the economy of Trinidad and Tobago, as we seek to position Trinidad and Tobago as a First World country by 2010 and with a standard of living second only to Canada and the United States; putting in place the necessary physical, legislative and human infrastructure, with the kinds of skills we are attempting to develop and the facility that we are trying to provide, particularly in the dollar-for-dollar programme which will raise the level of the number of high school cohorts who leave high school and enter into the tertiary level of education in Trinidad and Tobago.

These disciplines include trading services, government procurement and intellectual property rights. Trinidad and Tobago is already well poised legislatively for all these areas to be pursued with advantage. These areas are to be further negotiated in the near future, as the Caricom region is in the process of determining regimes which will allow favourable interaction with the rest of the world in these areas. When these regimes are completed, the parties will then conclude negotiations completely in all of these areas.

In terms of the administration of the agreement, the agreement is to be administered by a joint council comprising representation from member states of Caricom and the Dominican Republic. The key functions of this particular joint council will be as follows:

1. supervising the implementation and administration of the agreement;
2. resolving any disputes which may arise from interpretation, execution of and non-compliance with or application of the agreement;
3. establishing and delegating responsibilities to ad hoc or standing committees, working groups and expert groups established under the agreement;
4. keeping the agreement under periodic review; and
5. evaluating the function of the agreement and recommend measures which it considers suitable to better achieve the desired objectives.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is a very short simple Bill, although the document is quite voluminous—because it takes into account the entire trade agreement and the protocol that accompanies it—but, in essence, it is a very simple Bill.

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The most important part of it is clause 3, which is very fundamental to the agreement. It provides for the establishment of the free trade area. This clause allows both the Dominican Republic and the member states of Caricom to trade in goods on a duty-free basis as provided for in the agreement. Specifically, the agreement provides for immediate duty-free entry for products leaving the member states of Caricom and entering into the Dominican Republic and for products leaving the Dominican Republic and entering the MDCs, that is, the more developed countries of Caricom, because the less developed countries are not at all affected by this. They are totally exempt from all the taxes or tariffs that are imposed on either side. I see the Member for Port of Spain North is looking on very attentively; as a businessperson he is going to benefit.

This category of products is the majority of products in the classification, and the arrangement is varied only in the following instances outlined in the under-mentioned lists. Firstly, the list of products to which the most favoured nation (MFN) or normal rate of duty will be applied. Secondly, the list of products to which phase reduction of the MFN rate of duty to zero will be applied over the period stated, and thirdly, a selected list of agricultural products will be afforded special treatment in keeping with the seasonable nature of such products.

Clause 4 empowers the Minister responsible for trade to make, by order, such provisions as he may consider necessary or expedient to give effect to any other article of the agreement except Article IV. Instead Article IV, the exception in this clause should refer to Article V, which pertains to the conditions, that is duty-free, phase reduction of MFN rate of duty or MFN rate of duty under which the goods under the agreement are traded.

It is to be noted that the list of goods under the different schedules ought not to be amended unilaterally by parties to the agreement.

Such amendments, Mr. Deputy Speaker, ought only to be made as a consequence of an agreement between the parties, otherwise they will constitute a breach and this is the whole purpose of the joint council.

2.45 p.m.

Recognizing further that there are a few trade issues, other than trade in goods in the agreement, which are still to be developed and which may require the Minister to give effect to those provisions, it was felt that the Minister should be empowered to give effect to the other aspects of the agreement subject, of course, to parliamentary approval, and I see the Member for Diego Martin Central is smiling. [*Interruption*]

In clause 5, the Minister is given the authority to amend the schedule where the parties to the agreement agreed to amend any aspect of the agreement or its constituent documents. It is only the Member for Diego Martin Central who understands and knows everything about trade. He is such an encyclopedia, almost totemistic.

In clause 6, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the President is given the power to make regulations in respect of the trade in goods. This clause facilitates the enactment of the annex on trade in goods which is attached to the agreement. This would guide authorities on the conditions under which goods are to be traded between Trinidad and Tobago and the Dominican Republic. The clause goes further to empower the Minister to make regulations in respect of the free trade issues other than the trade in goods.

Having regard once again to the fact that the other free trade issues are still to be developed, whereas the trade in goods aspects are already outlined in the agreement, it was felt that regulations made by the Minister in respect of other free trade issues should be subject to parliamentary approval.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as an interim arrangement, Cabinet by Minute No. 780 dated June 20, 2001, authorized invoking of the exercise of the President's discretion under section 9 of the Customs Act, Chap. 78:01, to facilitate the commencement of trade prior to the full implementation of the agreement. This was done simply because the agreement had been ratified by the Assembly in the Dominican Republic and we had done nothing in terms of either legislative or administrative arrangements and, therefore, we took "in front" and the Cabinet authorized and the President gave his consent to this authorization allowing the Trinidad and Tobago manufacturers exporters to benefit from the agreement.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wish to indicate that this agreement—

Mr. Valley: How long ago was that?

Hon. M. Assam: It was June 20, 2001.

Mr. Valley: Thank you, last month.

Hon. M. Assam: Well, I think we are in September. I do not know if June is August, but whatever it is.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wish to indicate that this agreement is the first full-fledged trade agreement to be negotiated between Caricom and an external country. I would also like to indicate that Caricom has concluded a trade and economic co-operation agreement with Cuba as I had mentioned earlier and, of

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course, as I had entered into the records that I propose to bring legislation as soon as possible to this honourable House to pass legislation to give effect to this agreement.

The passage of this Bill, Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Dominican Republic Free Trade Act, 2001 will allow Trinidad and Tobago to fulfil its responsibility as a member of Caricom through the completion of its internal procedures which are required to be put in place before the free trade agreement can properly enter into force. It would also give full expression to the trade policy of this country which was started many years ago so that our manufacturers/exporters would get the full benefit of exporting their goods without much hindrance and with lower tariffs and eventually zero tariffs to other third world countries.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move.

Question proposed.

Mr. Kenneth Valley (*Diego Martin Central*): Mr. Deputy Speaker, a former Cabinet colleague of mine, Barry Barnes, had a concept. He said that when Columbus visited Trinidad in 1498 and saw the Trinity Hills, there was a blessing to Trinidad and Tobago that was supposed to last half of a millennium (500 years) and he cautioned us in Cabinet that after 1998, we would be on our own.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is now 2001 and as a fact, it seems that my former colleague was wrong. It seems as though that blessing, the good fortune of Trinidad and Tobago, would continue perhaps for a millennium rather than half a millennium. I say that Mr. Deputy Speaker because, as a fact, you know our economy still continues to experience growth having more to do with what is happening in the Middle East and the price of our oil and so on, rather than the performance of this Government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we look at the matter before us this afternoon, if we simply turn to page 20 of this document we would see that this agreement, its annexes and appendices shall enter into force on the first day of January 1999. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is September 2001, which means that this extremely important agreement is some two years and nine months late. And export gains which the Minister informed us that our manufacturers have been experiencing in Santo Domingo over the years could have been exceedingly much more if this Government is able to achieve schedules.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have to complain because this whole initiative was part of the last PNM government, it was way back in 1994 at Caricom when we proposed that Trinidad and Tobago ought to be given the lead in negotiating trade agreements. Taking that lead—because I am sure you would remember the whole

NAFTA initiative that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago embarked on in 1993—which saw us positioned just after Chile to negotiate that NAFTA agreement with the United States.

I am sure you would be aware of the bilateral agreements that we were able to negotiate with the United States, all in preparation of that; and at Caricom, our colleagues were at one time taking us to task. They were saying: Why are you thinking about going into NAFTA on your own without Caricom? And I remembered the Leader of the Opposition at that time on the NAFTA debate when he was making the point he said, let Caricom “mash up” because we were looking at going into NAFTA and Caricom because some of the OECS countries were saying they were not ready for that.

So we proposed to our colleagues in Caricom that in fact we can go forward with our market access agreements based on certain principles and the first and most important—and that is why I had to comment that the Minister really was reading without an understanding of the real policy initiatives. Because what we were able to tell Caricom is that we understand that the OECS countries may not be ready for reciprocity as it were. They felt that if we were to go into NAFTA or have these trade agreements with Latin American countries they would be swamped. So we said, let us have a carve-out for the OECS countries, meaning that while the more developed countries of the Caribbean—Guyana, Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica—while there will be reciprocity with respect to these countries, there would be a carve out and the less developed countries would not be required to have reciprocity, meaning that they would still have duties on goods coming into their country, but they would be able to enter these markets—for example, Santo Domingo in this case—without having to pay the duty; a carve-out to benefit the less developed countries, meaning that they would have non-reciprocity whereas we would have reciprocity. In other words, Santo Domingo’s goods would enter the Trinidad and Tobago market, other things being equal, free of duty and our goods would enter into Santo Domingo free of duty. [*Interruption*] That was one set of goods, you had three levels. So that was the first list of goods.

The other principle on which these agreements were to be based is the principle of the exceptions listing. When we looked at earlier trade agreements, for example, with Venezuela, what was attempted Mr. Deputy Speaker, was to list each good that would qualify for the free trade agreement and we thought that was rather burdensome, let us do it the other way, let us have an exceptions listing, let.

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us say that everything would come in free other than these goods and conceptually that list ought to be shorter, and because of that, we thought that these trade agreements should have been able to be negotiated much quicker. So that there was the carve-out, there was the exceptions listing and the reciprocity with the more developed countries, and so we were able to complete the negotiations with Colombia. The memorandum of understanding was signed with Santo Domingo before we left office; it was signed in 1995 and yes, these negotiations would take some time. My good friend, Mr. Maraj, was there head and head with me doing the work that they are boasting about now, but tell them we were there and we were carrying the fight as a good Minister of Foreign Affairs; and he might still be Minister of Foreign Affairs in yet another Cabinet. A good man of Foreign Affairs. [*Laughter*] [*Interruption*]

Of dying men, what about the dead? If you only know, you may as well write your eulogy.

Mr. Manning: Your political epitaph.

Mr. K. Valley: If only you knew.

Mr. Assam: I heard that in 2000 too.

Mr. K. Valley: Mr. Deputy Speaker, obviously we do not really want to get involved in “all yuh ting”. We want to leave “all yuh ting” for “all yuh” but we have to be concerned when it appears that the Government is so concerned with their internecine warfare that they are not taking care of the people's business. [*Desk thumping*] An agreement such as this, of extreme importance to the manufacturing sector for investment in Trinidad and Tobago, should have been here a long time ago. [*Desk thumping*] That is why I started by making the point that, thank God that Trinidad and Tobago seems to be continually blessed and I am happy that it appears that my former colleague was wrong when he thought that the blessing would have gone by in 1998.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we need to look and see what has happened since this Government came into office. I make the point again that we can point at few, if any, initiatives undertaken by this Government to move this economy to the next level of growth which is of extreme importance. I want you to consider Mr. Deputy Speaker, what would have been our position in Trinidad and Tobago over the last two or three years were it not for oil prices. Understand that. I was listening to an officer from the Central Bank who was making a point at a forum at Queen's Park that since 1999 there was some slackening of the fiscal discipline. Nice, colourful, diplomatic language to say that they started spending money

“free sheet”. Ask my friend the Minister of Infrastructure Development and Local Government, taking a lot of “pappyshow”, waiting to get clouted. Ask him. He is running amok.

There is a Cabinet Note I have somewhere speaking about his excursions running, giving out contracts before the Central Tenders Board can approve them and having to come to the Cabinet after the fact for approval to ratify. “Payment of outstanding sums owed to contractors in respect of the National Road Enhancement Programme (NREP)”. How much is this? It is \$1.7 million and the Note says:

4. “It was brought to the attention of the Central Tenders Board and this Ministry subsequently confirmed, that work had been completed on the aforementioned roads. The Director of Contracts in the circumstances was unable to award these contracts...”

So that you have a situation where contracts are to be awarded by the Director of Contracts, but the work is already completed and the Director of Contracts is saying in the circumstances, I cannot award contracts for work already done and, therefore, you have to request Cabinet for covering approval. You go and do your thing, Mr. Paver, and this is only part of it. Do you know who paid this? The Tourism and Industrial Development Corporation (Tidco), an organization charged with developing tourism and industry in Trinidad and Tobago getting involved in road paving.

3.05 p.m.

But I understand Tidco is getting involved in other things. I understand there is a CEO at Tidco who has a credit card with US\$100,000 limit and he was always in the party when a certain high official travelled to allow purchases for that high official, paid for by Tidco. You understand! Petty thieves. US\$100,000 shopping for high officials—gallivanting all over the world—and perhaps for he and other family members also.

Mr. Manning: And that is what Mervyn say.

Mr. K. Valley: Thank God for oil prices—because all that has been happening is that there has been really a spending, a whittling away of the inheritance of this Government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what has this Government done since they came into government, that can compare with some of these initiatives which the PNM undertook in a short period to position this economy for the growth that we are now experiencing?

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Mr. Deputy Speaker, you remember that Easter weekend in 1993 when we floated the currency, the liberalization of the foreign exchange environment? Do you remember that weekend? And do you remember persons up and down were saying, “Oh God! Now we gone to \$10.00”, and so on but it never happened. The currency remained as steady as a rock. There were funds inflows into Trinidad and Tobago. Whereas before our US dollars were held externally, by allowing US accounts in Trinidad and Tobago there were inflows into Trinidad and Tobago and that set the environment for the development of our country.

We were signing one way trade agreements with Venezuela and Colombia. We completed the removal of the negative list in that period, all with a view to positioning the environment, positioning the economy for the growth that we are now seeing. We are not fighting in Cabinet and you may want to note on the two occasions when the PNM was not in Government, in 1988—do you remember in 1988 stabs—was it hugs by day and stabs by night? Whenever the PNM is not in Government, they fight. Fighting in 1988 and there was a gang of four then too, not so? It was a different gang of four.

[*Crosstalk*]

Who are the members of that gang of four? What I find so rather interesting—

Mr. Imbert: What is the minimum number for a gang?

Mr. K. Valley: The minimum number? It has to be four. They say that four is a bad number. Four means dead. And you remember clause 4? And now we have gang of four but we also had a gang of four in 1988 but a different composition. The Member for Couva North was the leader of the gang of four. What about the Member for Oropouche? I think he was in that gang too, and Ramnath. Who was the fourth one?

Mr. Imbert: Humphrey.

Mr. K. Valley: Oh yes! The gang of four. Whenever PNM is not in Government, the Government is fighting rather than taking care of the people’s business. That is why I would say again that the only people to govern Trinidad and Tobago are the PNM. We know how to govern.

Mr. John: The people did not say so.

Mr. K. Valley: The people did not say so. When all “yuh” cannot win an election, you “tief” the election. I make the point that the only thing we want is for the EBC to fix its business and let us go to the polls immediately because you have shown clearly that you are unfit for the corridors of office. None of you! Can you imagine? “Ramsaran did not spare his own personal attacks...”

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Would the hon. Member indicate the source, please.

Mr. K. Valley: Sure. It is the *Newsday*, page 5. Mr. Deputy Speaker, you see anything? You have not seen anything lately? Madness! “Ramsaran did not spare his own personal attacks, referring to Ma-ha-raj...”—yes we have to make the distinction—“...as an evil virus plaguing the nation.” That is what one Cabinet Member said about his colleague; and you want the people of Trinidad and Tobago to have confidence in you? “And to Sudama, as an always-sleeping...”

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Would you come back to the topic under consideration please?

Mr. K. Valley: I am on the topic under consideration. The point I am making is rather than seeing about the people’s business and getting this agreement here long before, they are out there fighting and taking care of their personal agenda. That is the point I am on. “And to Sudama, as an always-sleeping Parliamentarian suffering with dropsy...”

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member, although you are quoting from a document, I humbly suggest that you are breaching Standing Order 36.

Hon. Member: But he did not say it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Even if you are quoting, in the quote itself, before the honourable House, you are casting aspersions on the hon. Member for Oropouche.

Mr. K. Valley: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I agree with you, but what about Ramsaran? He cast aspersions on his colleagues. And look at the kinds of aspersions. Can you imagine? Mr. Deputy Speaker, I must admit that some of my colleagues get me vex from time to time, but I would *never* say those kinds of things about them. I would never say he is suffering from dropsy.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member for Tunapuna, would you allow the Member to proceed, please.

Mr. K. Valley: —or that he is evil, an evil plague.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I really want the people of Trinidad and Tobago to understand that all governments are not the same. That is the fundamental point. And that in fact, yes, the PNM has its faults, but we beat whoever is second so badly that it is not funny. When we were in Government, we took care of the people’s business.

From 1991 to 1995, a simple thing as the relaxation of the work permits requirement, to allow foreigners to be gainfully employed in Trinidad and Tobago

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for up to 30 days—there was a time, if an investor were to come into Trinidad and Tobago to conduct business for two or three days, he had to get work permits.

3.15 p.m.

We were saying that if we have to get into that world economy, that a country such as Trinidad and Tobago cannot dictate the pace of world development; we have to just understand what is happening and carve out our path. We said that if we want to do that we have to remove these constraints; remove the work permit requirement.

I remember on Sunday mornings, meeting with members of the business community and discussing what was required—meeting at the Prime Minister's residence on a number of Sunday mornings, to deal—[*Interruption*] Yes, we used to be invited to the Prime Minister's residence; yes, all of us.

Mr. Manning: Sudama, when last you went there? [*Interruption*]

Mr. K. Valley: You remember InnCogen—the short pants man? When they come now and they are talking—the Member for Oropouche was in defense of that transaction. Do you remember? He was telling us that some four plants were supposed to come out—a glass plant—and he turned the sod and all sorts of things. What happen now? But I am glad you see the light. You cannot take it anymore. Because really, the issue is not so much the "Gang of Four" you know, but a fight for democracy against corruption. [*Desk thumping*] That is what it is. It is not a question of who is the leader, it is the fact that after some time some Members opposite—it is a pity it is merely four or them—as though their stomachs start to turn; they say: "Oh God, we cyar take it anymore—the corruption from top to bottom." When you come out and talk, then they push the police to go and search your place. Do you understand? Understand what is happening.

Earlier this year I faced a lot of criticism for some statements I made. Truth has a way of winning out. I do not want to go back there. We have agreement and all kinds of things, not so? So let me not go back there. But old people say, "Papa God don't sleep." [*Interruption*] That was a fundamental part of that agreement. I agree with that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, between 1991 and 1995, you remember the whole rationalization of the state enterprise sector, where we moved from some 87 state companies to 47, and I remember they on the other side, running up and down the town, criticizing the divestment policy. Lo and behold, they are following the same policy now, but they do not know how to do it. Ask them in five years what they have divested. Everything they are doing, they are trying to give it away to

their friends. I understand there is one Minister, who is still paid by his former company, in the Cabinet. Could you imagine that? Is that not a conflict of interest? If you are a Cabinet member [*Interruption*] I want to ask the national community whether they approve of a member of Cabinet that is paid by some other company. There is an old saying that “He who pays the piper—

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: —“calls the tune”.

Mr. K. Valley: You understand? So that when you see certain transactions going in a particular way, you want to know what is happening in Trinidad and Tobago. Understand what is happening in Trinidad and Tobago—while there is nothing being done to position this economy for the next level of growth; spending our inheritance, talking about economic growth, talking about market access agreement, of which they know nothing. Understand that!

The Minister stood here this afternoon, reading some prepared text, not understanding anything about what he is reading. What does one expect of a government? Is this an example of what we expect as a government in Trinidad and Tobago? January 1, 1999—September 2001, come here and talking about how the manufacturers selling so much to Santo Domingo. Thank God because of the initiative way back in 1994 and because of previous visits and so on, they are doing it on their own steam, without any help from the Government. Because if the necessary part of the infrastructure was there long ago, there would have been much higher levels of exports to that large market in Santo Domingo. [*Desk thumping*] That is the reality. What had happened?

You take the simple thing of the Venture Capital legislation that we brought in in 1994, over four years now they are looking at it, and every time I ask what is happening with the amendments to the Venture Capital Act, it is stuck somewhere. They cannot even get that out. It is stuck somewhere. More than that, he is promoted!

Tell us what is happening. What are you doing? We had this whole concept of positioning Piarco as an alternative hub into South America, because Belem in South America—two and a half hours from Piarco. If one wants to go to New York or anywhere, and lives in Belem, he has to go South to Rio, take a plane to Miami, while he can come through Piarco—two and a half hours—and catch a BWIA flight to Miami. We were positioning our airport as an alternative hub to Miami, into South America. What has happened? Nothing! They came in, in 1995; the airport contract all ready to sign in December of 1995—fiddle-daddle, fiddle-daddle, fiddle-daddle, \$1.6 billion—400 per cent increase; everybody get! Plane falling in pothole and all sorts of things. Everybody get!

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They talk about wanting evidence. Another thing dropped on my desk here. “Corruption at Airports Authority”, which states:

“Please, help us to save the Airports Authority and our job from...the Chairman of the Board who is robbing the Authority of its funds. At first, he brought in his cousin (I ain't calling names) who gave several contracts to (somebody else), all contrary to the tender rules. Finally, the one that broke the camel's back. He gave (the same person) the job to build the VIP lounge. The cost was \$1.1 million but the Authority paid \$1.6 million. The difference of \$0.5 million was shared by (A and B. I ain't calling names) Mounting pressure by the employees forced (one employee) to resign. But a dog sucking eggs cannot break the habit. (The other one) continues to run racket and rob the Authority.

He is associated by a fly-by-night computer company (Oracle Trinidad Ltd.) and instructs the Authority's accountants to pay to it inflated charges for services.”

It sent some bill here—[*Interruption*]

3.25 p.m.

We are not all equally blessed. I know I do not feel drowsy and sleepy in Parliament, neither do I dance on tables. [*Laughter*] Yes, \$441,600 to this company. Do you understand? [*Interruption*] I do not know. More corruption at the airport.

The point I was making, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is here we were positioning that airport in a particular way; contracts signed and we were ready to go. They came in and there was a 400 per cent increase. It was finished only in 2001, and not even finished. It is supposed to be finished, but we are hearing of an airplane falling in a pothole at the airport.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have the Member for St. Joseph here. Why could he not fix that? He paved the Savannah and all about. He made roads high, high, high like kites and he cannot fix the airport? Do you understand? That is where he should be looking. People's lives are in danger if that type of thing is happening.

Also in that period, 1991 to 1995, there was the whole area of investment facilitation. Individuals were encouraged to save with their credit unions and so forth. Do you remember? While we were in government we gave ordinary individuals a tax incentive to save via the credit unions. They came in and removed it. All we were doing was trying to encourage young people and ordinary citizens to save via their credit unions and they removed it. Now I do not know what the Minister of Finance wants to do with the people's credit unions now. Understand that.

There were the bilateral investment treaties that we were signing with the United Kingdom, all part of making that market access for our manufacturers in Trinidad and Tobago. The point I am making is that these are some of the things we expect a government that is concerned with its tasks to be engaged in. Fundamentally every government's obligation is to move the economy to the next level of growth. That is the fundamental objective of the Government—to improve the quality of life of its people; and you do that by increasing economic growth and social well-being in the society. They are not dealing with economic growth. They are not providing for that, and as for the social well-being, you simply have to take the pulse of the people. There is nervousness in the country at present. Every individual, every citizen, I am sure is hoping to see the back of this Government as quickly as possible. [*Desk thumping*] They are making the world news every day, if you go on the Internet; and then they go back and sit in the Cabinet as if nothing has happened. It is a marvel! Look how quiet and nice the deputy political leader is sitting next to the political leader! They are looking nice; nobody talking to each other! [*Laughter*] Glum, glum, glum and then they expect to be able to run this country! A masquerade, if there is one. A hapless sorry bunch that is inflicted on the citizenry of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what is so amazing is that they cannot understand that they need to do this decent thing. [*Interruption*] What? Get EBC to fix the list and let us get to an election as early as possible! [*Interruption*] What will happen? You would not be able to “tief”. Let EBC fix its list. [*Interruption*] “Tief” good and proper, ask Sadiq. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member—

Mr. K. Valley: I am sorry. My apologies.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: You were going well until then.

Mr. K. Valley: But you know that, “ent”? [*Laughter*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I ask you to withdraw that unequivocally.

Mr. K. Valley: I withdraw it, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is humbly withdrawn.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the rumour is that the boy had fun down south. He said, “You eh see nothing yet, come Sunday.” Well, he start from today. Let me ask you something: Why do you think the national executive say, “We want this gentleman and nobody else”? [*Laughter and desk thumping*] Why do you think they are saying that? Of everybody else in the national executive they are saying, “It is one man we want to take charge.” [*Interruption*] Track record! [*Interruption*]

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Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is not me. [*Interruption*] It is credibility. They are saying he has a lot of credibility in that area. He can do it in fine style. [*Interruption*] They say when you cannot pad the list then what you do is to take the ballot, put the X in the right place and give it to the individual and say, "Put that in the box and the ballot they give to you bring it back for me." That is \$500. It is amazing! While they are doing all of that they did not realize that—Papa God loves a nice joke—Gypsy and Chaitan did not have Trinidad citizenship alone. [*Laughter and desk thumping*] Do you understand? Papa God only watching at them and laughing. They say, "You all try that in the meantime." [*Interruption*] That is right, if Ramesh was there and they had proper screening, as in the case of the PNM, that would never have happened.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would end here. I wanted to make a fundamental point. The simple point is that we need a government that would see about the people's business rather than to deal with their personal agenda. We are happy that at least some of them have seen the light and have realized that corruption is a plague and they need to fight against it and I congratulate those Members who are doing that. That is our position. We need a government that cares about the people of Trinidad and Tobago and would take care of their needs. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are a number of other pieces of legislation that are stuck somewhere. Where is that Foreign Investment Bill? Where is it? What about the other initiatives that were in the pipeline? The Orinoco project, what has happened with that? We support this legislation. This is important for Trinidad and Tobago and Caricom. We regret the fact that the Minister was so tardy that he did not see it fit to get it here earlier.

I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Minister of Enterprise Development and Foreign Affairs (Hon. Mervyn Assam): Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. There is really nothing for me to respond to, most unfortunately. The only serious thing the Member said was in his peroration when he said that this was an important bill, and he treated an important bill as if he was at a circus. He reduced the Parliament to that of a circus this afternoon, and, of course, he reverted to the old theme of corruption, corruption and corruption. He attacked this Minister for not knowing anything about trade. I do not like to boast, but my credentials are well known. In my academic training I did international trade. I was president of the Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers Association for two years. I was in the private sector as a business person for several years and he wants to tell me that I know nothing about trade? What are his credentials? Absolutely none, except to come here and

act as a buffoon! That is all. And, to reduce the Parliament to a circus on a very serious piece of legislation which he admitted, in the final stages of his contribution, or, in fact, in the final stages of his non-contribution.

3.35 p.m.

He does not even know the chronology of this particular trade agreement. I said that notwithstanding the first part was signed in 1999, the second part which is the protocol, an important and integral complement, was signed in April 2000. Thereafter, we had to do a number of other things in order to bring the—

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. Standing Order 36(4) states:

“It shall be out of order to use offensive or insulting language about Members of either Chamber...”

I think that the word “buffoon” is certainly in violation of that Standing Order. I ask that it be withdrawn.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member.

Hon. M. Assam: “Buffoon” is offensive, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but “tief” and “paying somebody \$500”—and he actually said that the Member for San Fernando West was giving ballot paper in exchange for other ballot paper for \$500. Of course, it went unnoticed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Could we bring the House to order? Continue.

Hon. M. Assam: It went unnoticed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Try to keep in line.

Hon. M. Assam: As we say in common parlance, “Do so don’t like so.” “Yuh cyar take it.”

The accompanying protocol was an integral part of the agreement that was signed on April 28, 2000, notwithstanding that the first part was signed in 1999. We had to negotiate some little things with respect to law 176. He does not even know about that. His ignorance is so pervasive, that this afternoon he told us how little he knows about trade, trade agreement and negotiation. More than that, to negotiate an agreement among 14 countries with one country is a monumental task. Not only that, but to negotiate an agreement with a country in a foreign language. We speak English and Dutch in Caricom. Soon it would be French in Haiti. We had to negotiate with a Spanish speaking country and he does not even

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know that. He talked about free trade agreement. We signed partial scope agreements with Venezuela and Colombia not free trade agreements. Partial scope is totally different. He does not even know that.

We had to wait on the Dominican Republic to ratify the agreement. When it was completed in August 2000, the government went out of office and a new government was elected. We were really on tenterhooks not knowing whether the new government would honour and ratify the agreement that was negotiated by the predecessor government in the shortest time possible. It was only this year, 2001, that the Dominican Republic ratified this agreement. We could not go ahead and ratify it without them.

The Member for Diego Martin Central is talking a lot of inaccuracies. Something that he knows nothing about. He comes here “gallerying” to the press and of course, the press will print that the Minister was dilatory and the Minister was this and the Minister was that. He does not know what he is talking about. I hope the press will print this also which is fact and not fiction.

Mr. Rahael: Would the honourable Minister advise the House when the government of the Dominican Republic took it to their parliament to get it approved?

Hon. M. Assam: I just said it. It was in April, 2001 that they ratified it in their parliament. It was the new government because the new president was elected in August or September of last year. We had to wait for them to go to their parliament to ratify it. I do not know what he is talking about. [*Interruption*] Because you do not know the principle of international relations. You do not give something that you do not have, or you do not give something that you are not likely to get. You wait. You would not know about these things. You are not trained in those things. Even the things you are trained in you “cyar” do well.

These are the facts. This is the chronology of the whole thing. Because we knew that there was going to be a little delay, we went to Cabinet. I went to Cabinet and it agreed for the President to authorize the Customs and Excise Department to start this from June. We took the necessary steps to ensure that our manufacturers/exporters benefitted as soon as it was ratified by the Dominican Republic in April, 2001. I do not know what they are talking about.

This is the tenor of that side. They initiated everything. In 1994, they started that; in 1995 that, but they never finished anything. [*Interruption*] You must try and finish sometimes, boy. You must not start something that you do not finish. You must start and then finish. Do not come and boast. After six years in

Opposition, they still have “tabanca” about what they started and what they could not finish. They could not even finish their term. That is quite true. *[Interruption]* Why do you not leave that? Wait until you get back into office and try to do what you thought you should have done in the past.

He is saying that we have done nothing. Ever since this Government has entered into office, we have grown the economy every year. We did not depend on oil revenues. As a matter of fact, the Minister of Finance in the former administration was extremely conservative every year in what he put to the Parliament in the budget, with respect to the oil price/the US dollar price per barrel. It is well documented that the thousand million we got in excess, we are not eating it up. We are not spending it. Prudent management! The Member for San Fernando East attacked the Prime Minister saying that he does not know what he is doing because he would use all the surplus to build infrastructure, give it to poor people and he would have nothing for a rainy day. His Government is a wise, prudent, sober government and we are putting away for the rainy day. We have already put \$415 million in the Revenue Stabilization Fund. The Minister of Finance told you this afternoon, that he proposes to put another \$600 million in the Revenue Stabilization Fund. We intend to invest in the human resource development of this country by spending \$260 million out of the surplus revenue.

Mr. Manning: Would the Minister give way? I thank the hon. Minister for giving way. Would the Minister not agree that what the Government did is borrow money from abroad, put it in an account and christened it “savings”?

Hon. M. Assam: You continue your wicked vicious propaganda. A man who says that he is a born again Christian. Wicked, vicious propaganda! We borrow. He said that they do not bad talk the thing. He went out publicly and said that the Member for San Fernando East is a vindictive, spiteful man, when he fired the Member for Arima from the Senate. He said that they do not wash their linens in public.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: Who said that?

Hon. M. Assam: The Member for Diego Martin Central said it. The former Member for St. Joseph, Ramrekersingh; the former Member for St. Ann's East, Mottley; the incumbent of Diego Martin West resigned as deputy political leader saying that he is the worst leader ever. He is the worst thing ever. He knows nothing about leadership. The PNM does not wash their linen. They nearly killed the Member for Diego Martin West when he attacked you. I saw the picture on the television. They attacked him like ferocious wolves. PNM in public. *[Interruption]* Where? Where? Where? All of them ganged up against the

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Member for San Fernando East and came out publicly and said so. They are talking that they do not wash their dirty linen in public.

In every human organization since God created man you have had differences of opinion. In the church, sports, culture, government, in the house and in business, everywhere there have been differences. The important thing is that nobody has resigned here. Three deputy political leaders have not resigned from here. This Prime Minister did not fire anybody. *[Interruption]* You fired your foreign minister and humiliated him. You want to come today to say how hard he worked. That is the reward for hard work? Firing?

Mr. Valley: He cannot fire him! Nobody.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order! Order! Continue.

Hon. M. Assam: I like that. These fellows opposite are so shameless. They want to accuse people of corruption, ineptitude and inefficiency and they are the epitome of all these vices. Incompetence, inefficiency, corrupt and so on and they want to accuse people. From the very day that the PNM was launched in 1956, the first scandal was the printing press and it never finished after the MV Port of Spain, after Lock Joint and everything. The printing press, you do not know about it. I will one day document all the scandal of the PNM and I will write a book about how the PNM under-developed Trinidad and Tobago. *[Interruption]* You do not know your history and you want to talk about a TIDCO official with a US\$100,000 credit card, implicating Members of this Government. High officials! Call names! *[Interruption]* You afraid to call names. Do not hide under the cover of parliamentary immunity or by not calling names. Call names! About \$100,000 credit card and all that nonsense and people getting paid by other people and all kinds of things.

The late Ronnie Williams came out publicly and said that he could not live on that salary. "I did not take a vow of poverty. My company continues to pay me my salary and my bonuses and my dividends," he said so, publicly. He said, "I cannot live on a minister's salary. I did not take a vow of poverty." That is what Ronnie Williams said in a Cabinet of the People's National Movement. If you think that I do not know about "all yuh," maybe other people do not know. I know all of "all yuh" business and I can chronicle it. "All yuh doh even know all yuh business." They are talking about that. I do not even want to bring up the late Mr. Chambers, so let him rest in peace. I do not even want to bring him up. *[Interruption]* I do not want to bring you up either. *[Laughter]* I do not want any kind of infraction taking place in this Parliament.

Mr. Manning: Mr. Deputy Speaker, of course you know it is an attempt at innuendo to smear. Whatever he has on his mind to say, let him please say it.

Hon. M. Assam: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am so very sorry that after presenting a Bill—I got a note from somebody saying they want a copy of this wonderful contribution I made. *[Laughter]* I thought I would have heard some sensible comments from Members of the Opposition, particularly the Member for Diego Martin Central who was in some previous incarnation, the minister of trade for about two years. Mr. Kuei Tung was first and they did not last four years. I think that he was minister of trade for about a year and three quarter. He wants to pretend to be an expert on trade. He is not even an expert in insurance where he worked for so many years. He wants to be an expert on trade. *[Interruption]* That is not uncharitable. That is fact! There is no disputation here on fact. Uncharitable, what? You are the most uncharitable person that I know.

Why have we got to reduce every debate to this low level? This thing really annoys me. I came here and presented the Bill. Talk about the Bill! You are talking about elections.

3.50 p.m.

Last year from September to December, they paraded this hallway saying: Call elections now! Call elections now! All kinds of things. Assam yuh dead! We are going to write your epitaph, this and that, blah, blah. I see Assam is back. *[Desk thumping]* Alive and kicking, and very well politically and otherwise, and will continue to be so for a long time. And I know, of course, that you continue to hope. When we were elected in 1995, they said three months, six months, nine months, one year, two years, and three years. We started a little more than five because we were elected on November 6, 1995 and election was called on December 11, 2000 so we went a little over time.

Now they want to win the Parliament by court. They are always talking about Chaitan and Gypsy. He came here and said he would be prime minister in February, then in April, in May, then in July but of course, he never said what year. He is leading the public to believe it is 2001. Everytime he comes with a new month he is not saying what year. You know something? I am sorry for him. Before the election he went to Laventille and told the people this time is their time, this round is their round. Of course, he got beaten in the round. Do you know he went back playing cards again? The man gone back playing cards again. When the Oilfields Workers' Trade Union had a strike he went and drank some white rum and played some cards under a tent in Pointe-a-Pierre once. I saw him again in Laventille playing cards telling people this time is their time. He thinks

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he could fool people? I told him before the election of 2000 that the children of Sisyphus will decide and they decided on December 11, 2000. He does not understand what is the meaning, the sociological, fundamental implication of the children of Sisyphus. He does not know it. The children of Sisyphus will decide and do you know who they were? Three hundred and seven thousand decided on December 11, 2000 and you want to come back preaching your divisiveness and taking advantage of a little squabble that might be taking place now. You must never interfere in family business. I am telling you do not interfere in family business. When somebody's house is on fire, watch your own because you might be consumed in your own inferno before long because the Dantes are all around you and they are going to consume you in their own inferno. Watch out and you will see.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to thank the hon. Member, notwithstanding his very poor and circus-like performance and his very unfair allegations against Members of this side, for indicating in the last few sentences of his contribution that his side intends to support this Bill. Of course, they had no other choice. They had to support it because if they did not support it they would not be supporting progress. This Government has put all the economic strategies in place. This Government has a vision for 2010. This Government is going to transform this country, as one would have never seen before. Forty years of PNM! Do you know what a man told me, when I was campaigning in Tunapuna, what PNM stands for? Poverty, nakedness and misery. He said he supported PNM for 35 years, and never again! Tunapuna in the heartland, Upper Fairly Street, PNM stronghold. He said, "Mr. Assam, never again PNM: poverty, nakedness and misery," and that is what they imposed and inflicted on Trinidad's unsuspecting population for 35 to 40 years. Wicked people! God will not forgive you! The vengeance of Moko will fall on all of you because in five short years we have moved this country forward as it has never been moved before. [*Desk thumping*] Trinidad and Tobago is the talking point of every businessman, every investor, with respect to the phenomenal and meteoric rise in the prosperity, economic growth and development of the society. And when you see that dollar for dollar kick in, when you see Trinidad and Tobago Institute of Technology and COSTAATT, and all of these things and we expand this university education, and we have 20 per cent, Trinidad and Tobago will be like a concord, as I said before, in the world of small developing societies.

I am proud to be part of this team, this effort and this vision led by the Member for Couva North. [*Desk thumping*] You could say what you want. Why do you think I got into politics? I had a comfortable life, but I could not continue

to be governed by a bunch of nincompoops. I had enough of it. I said an intelligent man like me being governed by nincompoops all my life, I had to get rid of that. I had to jump into the political arena to get rid of that and I am so glad I did. Never again must we be governed by nincompoops in this country, total incompetent and inefficient people masquerading in their black ties as if they are all undertakers every Monday. That is what they did. They took us for a ride into the graves, most of us, and I am not joking. I am absolutely serious. Everything I say here I am absolutely serious. This is not picong. This is how I feel about the PNM and how they misgoverned and underdeveloped—and particularly poor black people that they say they represented. All yuh fool them. They were fooled left, right and centre. Look where they put black people. Look where they build houses. In the mang and in the labasse. Today, many of them are suffering from pulmonary problems because of the gases that are being emitted from the burning of garbage over the last 30 years. PNM do that to the people. Look where they put people. Hobble them into these houses in Maloney. No recreation ground, no hospital, no school, no community centre, no transportation, no nothing at all—

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Will the Member give way? Please do not mislead this Parliament. Maloney, La Horquetta, Malabar, all have recreation grounds; they all have community centres; they all have health facilities; they all have post offices—which are now being removed—they all have basketball courts—and not built by the UNC—you gave way and I am making a point because you all consistently bring down the people of Maloney and La Horquetta and it must stop. You are talking about poor black people. They are black people in Trinidad and Tobago and you must not bring down a whole group of people because of your misconceptions. It must stop!

Hon. M. Assam: Mr. Deputy Speaker, for a lawyer the Member does not even understand English. I was trying to defend black people against the rapacious PNM.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Could you kindly continue.

Hon. M. Assam: I was defending poor black people against the rapacity of the PNM for 40 years. That is what they did them. They fooled them. A set of guile that you used on them. That is what you did. I am defending them.

I was chairman of the St. George East County Council and Mr. Mottley was the Minister of Housing—on that occasion I made a speech, how could one put up housing and no recreation, no health centre, nothing. When it was erected there was nothing. The NAR started, and the UNC completed. [*Desk thumping*] When the PNM put down those apartments there was absolutely nothing in Maloney. I

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was there and I spoke to Mr. Mottley who was the then Minister of Housing about this atrocity at the time, total atrocity. Do not get up today and talk. You have no locus at all, you have no credibility. You do not even visit your constituency. I am servicing Arouca South. They are coming to me by the dozens every Monday. They cannot find her. [*Crosstalk*] I cannot go back to St. Joseph. I have a very proud record of achievement there. You never saw the manifesto? Brand new health centre, three new schools, four pre-schools, 2,200 roads were paved, water, electricity, six pavilions, six recreation grounds. There was so much achievement they wanted to know if I was bribing the Minister of Infrastructure Development and Local Government.

I am saying that this Bill and other trade agreements will ensure that Trinidad and Tobago trade policy takes into account market access, and that our manufacturers/exporters will now have an opportunity to get into larger markets even larger than all of Caricom combined. I am very happy this afternoon that we are able to pass this legislation. I thank Members opposite for supporting it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a second time.

Bill committed to a committee of the whole House.

House in Committee.

Clauses 1 to 3 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 4.

Question proposed, That clause 4 stand part of the Bill.

Mr. Assam: Mr. Chairman, I beg to move that clause 4 be amended in accordance with the circulated amendment which reads as follows:

Substitute for the words "Article 1V" the words "Article V".

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 4, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clauses 5 to 6 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Schedule ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Preamble ordered to stand part of the Bill.

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

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House resumed.

Bill reported, with amendment, read the third time and passed.

4.05 p.m.

**EXTRADITION (COMMONWEALTH AND FOREIGN TERRITORIES)
(EXTRADITABLE OFFENCES) ORDER**

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

Whereas section 6(5) of the Extradition (Commonwealth and Foreign Territories) Act, 1985 provides that the Attorney General may by Order, subject to affirmative resolution of Parliament, amend the First Schedule of the said Act:

And Whereas the Attorney General is desirous of amending the said First Schedule and has made an Order entitled, “The Extradition (Commonwealth and Foreign Territories) (Extraditable Offences) Order, 2001”:

And Whereas the Extradition (Commonwealth and Foreign Territories) (Extraditable Offences) Order, 2001 was laid in the House of Representatives on Friday, July 13, 2001:

Be It Resolved that the House of Representatives approve the Extradition (Commonwealth and Foreign Territories) (Extraditable Offences) Order, 2001.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, under section 6(5) of the Extradition (Commonwealth and Foreign Territories) Act, No. 36 of 1985, the Attorney General may by Order, subject to affirmative resolution of Parliament, amend the First Schedule of the said Act.

The First Schedule of the Act describes the Extraditable Offences in Trinidad and Tobago, under the laws. Under the list of laws it excludes the offences relating to firearm offences and offences under the Treason Act. So the Order was made in relation to offences under the Treason Act, Chap. 11:03 and any indictable offence under the Firearms Act, Chap. 16:01. The sum total of this Motion really is for those two sets of offences: offences under the Treason Act and offences under the Firearms Act to be included under the First Schedule.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move.

Question proposed.

Mr. Fitzgerald Hinds (*Laventille East/Morvant*): Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Motion before us is, as the Attorney General indicated, fairly flat and on the face of it, a very simple one. It is, as he explained so briefly, designed to improve or to extend the category of offences as are to be found in the First Schedule of the 1985 Act. In that Schedule there are listed from numbers 1 through 30, a series of such offences: murder, manslaughter, rape, child stealing, bribery, perjury and so on. Offences under the Larceny Act, Chap. 11:12; under the Coinage Offences Act and the list is there for us all to see.

The Attorney General did not, in this very short presentation—and I could understand why he would be short, I know the existing circumstances—tell us why he found it necessary to extend the categories of offences herein but we have grown accustomed to the conduct of the Attorney General. We understand that, what appears to be simple and flat on the face of it may have deep-rooted implications when one takes a closer look. It is only now, for example, we have begun to understand why Bob Linquist visited Trinidad so quietly many months ago and how he was systematically attending to the corruption that he sees around him and of which he now declares he has had enough.

It is not enough to say that the Attorney General is a perfect Attorney General, nor indeed a perfect man, for he is not, but one must recognize that in all his recent public utterances, he has been speaking a language that we on this side can comfortably identify with; he wants to deal with corruption, it is overwhelming him, where he sits on the other side. You will remember, and remember well, that it was the Attorney General who had indicated that the contract for the airport, for example, was an illegal contract and his Prime Minister disregarded his advice and went ahead with the deal, notwithstanding. Today we look at them, on the face of it; you could see the difference between the two men, just on the face of it; one's hair is perfectly black and the other's hair is perfectly white.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Would the hon. Member kindly come back to the issue before the House, please?

Mr. F. Hinds: Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am coming back. I am so sorry.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Would the hon. Member kindly come back to the topic under discussion please?

Mr. F. Hinds: Most certainly. I am dealing with the Extradition (Commonwealth and Foreign Territories) (Extraditable Offences) Order [*Interruption*] You want to know what the colour has to do with it? It reminds me of ebony and ivory, except that they do not live in perfect harmony. [*Laughter*] And for good reasons.

I want to, first of all, ensure—and what I am saying is particularly relevant because what we want is to be sure—and I must assist the Attorney General—that as we make the amendments that he is seeking today to this Act by virtue of the Order, that it really embraces all of the possibilities that surround us in Trinidad. As you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, must be fully aware, law reflects the societal circumstances, at least, in large parts. Sometimes the society's mores and circumstances get ahead of the law and it is necessary to amend laws to keep up with it. Sometimes the law takes a leadership on educative role, you have amendments and you hope that the society would rise to meet the standard of the law that the country would have put in place. In any event, laws reflect what is happening in the society.

The point I am making is, when I look at all of the offences in the Schedule none of them covers, properly, the situation in which Trinidad and Tobago finds itself. For example, we complained bitterly over the last three years running into the last elections about the fact that what was supposed to be a \$400 million project at Piarco wound up costing this country four times as much, \$1,600 million. We complained ad nauseam about that and we continued to see escalating costs. We understand that that is the upfront cost, \$1.6 billion, and we were told by this Government that they borrowed three massive loans to fund that expenditure. So when people in this country talking about \$1.6 billion, they must understand that those three loans to fund it would be repaid by the people of Trinidad and Tobago for the next 20 years, running up interest to the tune of \$1.8 billion. So that project is costing people in Trinidad and Tobago more than \$3 billion, and that is a fact situation but yet we understand section 75 of the Constitution provides that Trinidad and Tobago operates by Cabinet Government. When Cabinet sanctions something it is the law of Trinidad and Tobago, and no police, whether Fraud Squad or otherwise could interfere with it. So that some of the pilfering and the bleeding in this country has been taking place quite legally, above board, as it were.

If a Minister, having conducted himself in such a manner that could be considered to have bled the Treasury in that way, leaves Trinidad and Tobago and goes over to a foreign territory or a Commonwealth territory, territories that are covered by this extradition legislation, we would not be able to bring him back quite easily, because the offences that he may have committed would not necessarily be covered in this legislation. That is the point I am making. So my business is to assist the Attorney General and to point out to him that as we seek to extend the categories of offences that we deal with here today, maybe we could consider a few others. It is as simple as that.

I have been looking on, Mr. Deputy Speaker, at what has happened in this country for the last five years. It is the Attorney General who pointed out on a

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radio programme that I listened to this morning, with great interest, about a member of a state board, appointed by the Cabinet, led by the Member for Couva North, who having come to his position on that board, was a poor man; obviously poor without any significant means. Like me!

4.20 p.m.

Suddenly, he appears on the scene with two very expensive motor vehicles and a big house. We have reports of people breaking down a one-million-dollar house and building a two-million-dollar glass house. We have reports. I saw recently a cheque where a certain existing Minister of Government wrote a “bounce cheque” in September of 1995 to a supermarket, and this is no allegation—and if you all press me I am going to release it to the press. In September 1995, just before the December elections, “bounce a cheque” for five hundred and something dollars and today that Minister is better off than all of us. *[Interruption]* That was before he was in Government.

This is the point the Attorney General is making—obvious conspicuous wealth and opulence. So when you all speak in this country about prosperity and success and growth, we understand. We can see it and we know what you mean by it, but the people in the country, the people in my constituency and in Arouca North and South know that that prosperity is limited to the few in Government and the friends and family of some of you. They understand that. *[Interruption]* To correct the Member for Tunapuna, I am speaking about an existing Minister of Government. He was not a Minister in September 1995. So I would like to be certain—let us take another example, Mr. Deputy Speaker. *[Interruption]* Let me state another example.

Look at the matter of the Miss Universe pageant. We saw Trinidad and Tobago expend moneys to the tune of \$100 million for a one-night stand. I heard the Member for Tunapuna—and I am sorry sometimes I have to call him the Member because I know he came to this Parliament under questionable circumstances: unresolved issues as far as I am concerned; a matter that I will develop shortly. At any rate, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I heard the Member for Tunapuna, in his ministerial capacity then, boast to this country about the significant investments that that project would have brought us. I heard him boast about the number of tourists that would have come.

To this day we have seen no such thing and Trinidad and Tobago and the people of Trinidad and Tobago are \$100 million worse off. It could in fact be more because that Minister, that Government, directed the Chaguaramas

Development Authority to mortgage buildings in the Chaguaramas area, over which they had jurisdiction, to raise even more moneys for that project and left them with the tab. So as a result of sick and poor management and policy direction, Donald Trump was able to leave Piarco and slip away to his Plaza somewhere in New York, laughing at the people of Trinidad and Tobago, which includes yours truly, and there is no immediate obvious illegality because the Cabinet sanctioned it.

I want to assist the Government because the day will come—you know, I was looking at the television recently, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and you would have been looking too. Recently I heard for the first time of the offence known in some jurisdictions—South East Asia, South America, Peru and Philippines—an offence that is being referred to as state plunder, economic plunder. I saw two former public officials dragged before the courts of their jurisdictions and they are now being accused of state or economic plunder. They would have left their countries and gone elsewhere and extradition proceedings may have been set in train.

It is that kind of thing I want the Attorney General to deal with in today's amendment. If he wishes to break stride and get some time to draft it and come back, we are willing to give him that time. What we are arguing today is that a lot of the banditry that is taking place in Trinidad and Tobago is not—if one of my—if a citizen of Trinidad and Tobago, a poor man, walks down Frederick or Charlotte Street and steals a ballpoint pen valued at \$2.50, you could be sure if an estate constable or Constable Jack from the police service gets his hands on him, he will find himself before the magistrate the next day and he will be convicted, once the evidence is demonstrated, but for the big and rich and famous it is not so easy. Quite a lot is being done with the sanction of Cabinet—plundering of our economy.

One of the offences that the Attorney General brings today for addition to the list is the offence of treason under the Treason Act, Chap. 11:03. So I had a look at the definition of that offence, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and it says as follows:

“Any person owing allegiance to the State who, whether in Trinidad or elsewhere—”

Well, I am not so sure about those who have dual allegiances. They are in a class by themselves but the court will deal with them shortly. It says:

“Any person owing allegiance to the State who, whether in Trinidad or elsewhere—

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- (a) forms an intention to levy war against the State or to overthrow the Government or the Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago by force and manifests such intention by any overt act;
 - (b) adheres to the enemies of the State by giving them aid or comfort,
- is guilty of treason and liable to suffer death by hanging.”

Now, I looked at that definition and my sincerity of purpose is to assist the Attorney General today, a man who needs great help, a man who is standing, if but for once in his life, on principle, and he is now being vilified and marginalized. I watched those on the other side, those honourable men as they are supposed to be, defending that which is wrong, closing ranks to fight against who is against corruption—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member, you are casting aspersions on Members.

Mr. F. Hinds: I am most apologetic if I have, but truth is the highest principle, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I will abide by that high principle; and if the Deputy Speaker finds that my comment requires withdrawal, I will most certainly withdraw it, but it appears as though the Deputy Speaker does not, so I should proceed. I am grateful.

When I looked at the definition of treason I saw that it deals here with the question of levying war against the State, but we know from human experience that war has been waged in many ways. In the United States there is a—you know—in fact, let me not call any country—but there is a doctrine known to humankind where food could be used in a war against people. Drugs—the opium was used in a war. Food—if people are in conflict and you starve them, this is what sanctions are all about. So if you deprive people of their economic well-being, if you deprive the people of a nation of resources that are due to them by virtue of their citizenry and their participation in your economy, then that can be, in a strange sense, tantamount to a war against the people. I wondered whether the definition of treason could embrace that. I wondered because, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is not \$20,000 that this country has lost as a result of the kinds of things about which I have spoken.

Earlier today we heard in this House that when that \$400 million InnCogen racket was put in Trinidad and Tobago, and I remember Members on that side telling this Parliament about the virtues of it, how important it was for the development of Trinidad and Tobago and how many jobs it would bring. They promised us that once the InnCogen plant was established—it was supposed to be

a small plant to power four manufacturing plants and, to this day, not a single one. Eighty-two acres of prime Caroni agricultural lands were given to those who were behind the InnCogen scam. A thousand-room hotel was promised. To this day, no hotel. Today, T&TEC is struggling to stay in the black because the existence of InnCogen means that Trinidad and Tobago, as a consequence of the doings of that Cabinet, led by the Member for Couva North, has been caused to engage in a take-or-pay contract where, whether we use the power we get from InnCogen or otherwise, T&TEC—Trinidad and Tobago—must pay for it.

Here is where we find ourselves: \$400 million, \$300 million plus at the airport, \$100 million in Chaguaramas, and that is the kind of economic plunder that this country has come to suffer under the United National Congress and its operators. That is only to list a few. They do not like to hear us speak about it but we must constantly keep it in the fore of the minds of the people of this country, so that they will not make the mistake that they made again in year 1995 or indeed in 2000.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member, 4.30 p.m., the House is now suspended until 5.00 p.m. The sitting is now suspended until 5.00 p.m.

4.30 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.00 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Mr. F. Hinds: Mr. Deputy Speaker, before we took the break, I was attempting to assist the Government in dealing more effectively with some of the troubles that beset us in this country today. I was demonstrating that the legislation that we have in place, though expansive and extensive, does not meet some of the problems that we have to cope with, with that Government.

For example, the integrity legislation. We improved the integrity legislation recently, and I was astounded to see that the chairman of a state board resigned immediately upon the announcement that improved integrity legislation was passed in this country. He stated publicly, and it was reported in the newspapers, that he did not want to be bound by the terms of that legislation that would have included such people, and he was gone. He wanted to be sitting on a state board, but when the state asked him to account for his wealth as he acquired it, he did not want that and he resigned. A name that we heard a lot. Member for San Fernando West knew him well knows him well—Maritime fame!

As I say Maritime, again, another over the counter, on top the table Cabinet approved \$52 million paid to Maritime Insurance Company. No easy detection of crime in that, not easy to prove any bribery or any kickback or feedback in that,

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but it went down. So that the integrity legislation does not, cannot constrain some of the souls that are before me. Cannot! They are too wily; they are too skilful; they are too brave and bold and greedy. Freedom of information—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member, just stick to the Bill before us.

Mr. F. Hinds: Yes, indeed, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I heard the Government boast ad nauseam about freedom of information legislation. It is supposed to be legislation that will allow citizens access to governmental and state records that could help them in determining whether there was corruption or not. An Act that was lifted from the United Kingdom because, well not from the United Kingdom, it is suggested, wherever the Attorney General got it from—but right now they are grappling with the idea of that in the United Kingdom, because of the secrecy that surrounds cabinet government.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, even that is inadequate. Yesterday I saw the treasurer of the United National Congress on TV in tears. I felt a pain for him.

Mr. Assam: You did?

Mr. F. Hinds: Yes. I did. Because to be bitten is one thing, but to be bitten by your own fleas is another. The man cried! I cried too.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Would the hon. Member come back to the topic for discussion, please.

Mr. F. Hinds: Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I was talking about this extradition legislation, because the whole purpose of this legislation is to be able to reach persons who are operating outside of Trinidad and Tobago who would have committed crimes inside of Trinidad and Tobago, and with the help of other governments, Commonwealth governments, and designated foreign territories, we will be able to get them.

One of the offences covered in the schedule is the offence of bribery which can encompass a lot of the corruption of which we speak, but I am making suggestions about improving the suggestion in an earnest and sincere way, because the people of Trinidad and Tobago are now suffering. They are without basic drugs in the hospital.

Mr. Assam: I was there yesterday.

Mr. F. Hinds: They are without a number of things. As this Government, with its head in the clouds, boasts about prosperity and well-being, the reality on the ground is quite a different thing. I know that.

Mr. Assam: Where are you living?

Mr. F. Hinds: In my own constituency recently, I had to make representations. T&TEC went in and wiped out the lights of over 60 people in different households because they are unable to meet that very basic human necessity; to pay for their electricity. It is a reality.

So when the Member for Tunapuna says that his parliamentary salary could only buy gas, it is a different thing. But I was making the point, I saw the treasurer in tears. I saw him in tears, but the Freedom of Information Legislation cannot help him to find out who instructed that search on his house. Whether it was for good reason or for bad, we do not know. That is a matter for the investigators, but he will never find out who instructed the search. He has formed an opinion and he may indeed be quite right. He may be quite right, but no Freedom of Information Legislation, so I am saying that like the Integrity Legislation, that Freedom of Information Legislation is, indeed, inadequate to capture the determined bandit in our society.

Those who are determined to plunder public resources and get big and fat like fat cats at the expense of all of Trinidad and Tobago, and those who are brave enough to stand up against it are to be vilified and cringe. I suspect the Member for Diego Martin West, when he talked about the Attorney General pole vaulting on his own ambitions, I suspect he had a lot to do with this.

Since then, the Attorney General has been signaling that he is not intent on being accused of that anymore, so he has taken a stand and he is to be applauded, if only for that. I heard the same crying UNC treasurer, a man who talked for them up and down. I want to warn people in this country. I heard the Member for Tunapuna talking about who get fooled by the PNM. A lot of people were fooled by the UNC, and they ran and they dipped their fingers, because they were promised 100,000 jobs. They were told education for all; water for all by 2000, and a lot of other things. Dollar for dollar. A lot of people were fooled. A lot of people got a little ten days. A lot of people got a little \$500.

They did not stop and think that that was their own money they were getting, because somebody put their hand in the National Treasury and passed a little thing for them. So they are quite happy with the little thing, and they run behind the UNC. And I heard the Treasurer say, you know, as he spoke about the dictatorship element that is now emanating very publicly from the Member for Couva North, I heard him say, and he quoted President Robinson, as President Robinson addressed the nation and educated us some months ago, but he missed

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the real quote. President Robinson says that these dictatorial tendencies, they do not come in one big gush.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Would the hon. Member kindly have a look at Standing Order 36(1), please. You are breaching that.

Mr. F. Hinds: I will be more relevant as I deal with the issue.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Bereaux: I must congratulate you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I admire your approach.

Mr. F. Hinds: As I conclude on that point, I stood in this Parliament and I made reference to Ali Baba and the 40 thieves. It is now Ali Baba and 35.

Mr. Imbert: It is 36.

Mr. F. Hinds: No, 35. There is another one on the loose. He is still there, yet quiet and undetected.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, just before I conclude, another one of the offences that I think should be considered in a Bill such as this is the question of, and I do not know how best the Attorney General could put it or would put it—I think it has to do with a serious offence, because the act of treason, as I read earlier, speaks about the person or persons who form an intention to levy war against the state or to overthrow the Government or the Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago.

We were told some time ago by the very President Robinson—some of us knew it before—that the Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago is a political settlement. It is a political document arrived at on the basis of the democratic principle, so that the democratic principle underpins the Constitution and, therefore, while you may not be impinging on the constitutional provisions, if you dig away at the constitutional foundation, which is the democratic principle, the Constitution itself would come tumbling down. [*Interruption*]

And you know something, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not really wish to hear the Member for Tunapuna. He has had his say. He has had his bray. I do not wish to hear him, and he only got in here perchance. A second thought for the candidacy in Tunapuna, and really I want to deal with another offence that should be added to the list. I would not be distracted.

I want to talk about the possibility of corruption in respect of the electoral system, and I want to spend two minutes dealing with that. Because if you agree with me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the Constitution is founded on the democratic

principle and we express our democratic consciousness or consciences by way of the electoral system, anything that is done to adversely affect that is interfering with the democratic tradition or principle and, therefore, the Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago. It may very well be treasonous to do that too.

So when they had an office called the Party Administrative Support Unit (PASU) and you had the likes of Mr. Steve Ferguson, Susan Seepersad-Bachan, Sadiq Baksh and Rodney Charles sitting in an air-conditioned office somewhere doing whatever they did—and let me tell you something. This is serious. I am advising the Government that they should probably consider putting a serious treasonous offence, and include it in the extradition order; amendment. Because any time you decide to interfere with the electoral process—

Mr. Assam: PNM did it!

Mr. F. Hinds: You are putting the country on a path of disaster.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member, you are breaching Standing Order 3(4).

Mr. F. Hinds: Thank you. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will remember we are dealing with extradition. So those are—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member, you see, you are casting aspersions on other Members in the Chamber.

Mr. F. Hinds: I was not aware I was doing that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: When you made reference by name to the Member for San Fernando West.

Mr. F. Hinds: I think I recall simply saying that he was in a little room, part of a team. I never said that he did anything. At any rate, I do not want to pursue that matter now. We will have time for that. I simply want to conclude by saying that I am recommending firmly to the Attorney General that he considers that to be treasonous conduct and, therefore, it should be included in the amendments before us.

So with those very firm recommendations to the Attorney General we, on this side, readily support any action taken to improve the processes by which persons who have broken laws in Trinidad and Tobago can be apprehended. It would be remiss of me not to say, however, all of this comes to naught if we do not improve the investigative process and, at the moment in this country, it appears as though the investigative process needs a lot of attention.

I merely want to point out to the Attorney General, notwithstanding his best and his most tireless intentions, as he, for the last six years, brought a number of

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pieces of criminal legislation in this Parliament, and he must be a frustrated man, notwithstanding all of the 60 odd pieces of legislation he brought to improve the criminal law in this country right around him. He must get some cause for grave frustration.

I understand the circumstances and we are willing to support anything to improve the processes by which those who offend against the laws of Trinidad and Tobago, and those who steal from the people of Trinidad and Tobago, can be brought to justice from inside or extradited from outside. On that basis, my friends will join me in lending full support to this legislation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, to thank you.

The Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs (Hon. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am sure the hon. Member and Members of this honourable House will forgive me if I do not deal with all of the matters which the hon. Member has spoken about, because I would like to confine myself to what is before us.

What is before us, really, is an order in which we are asking the honourable House to approve in respect of including offences to be regarded as extraditable offences, which offences are not now covered under the Extradition Act. And the two sets of offences, or two categories, are all offences under the Treason Ordinance, and any indictable offence under the Firearms Act.

What has happened is that over the last few years, although we have been able to extradite persons to the United States of America and other countries, we have had a request recently for an extradition in respect of possession of firearms, but we could not comply with that request. Fortunately, the request included murder and possession of firearms, and we were able to comply because of the offence of murder. What this is trying to do is to cover all the major offences which are serious, so that if offences are committed abroad, that the authorities in Trinidad and Tobago would be able to extradite the person to Trinidad and Tobago.

What has happened, if you notice, under the first schedule, you would have a description of conduct, and it is not necessarily in sync with the names of the offences in Trinidad and Tobago; all the offences. The reason for that is that as long as the conduct which is complained of is covered by the laws of Trinidad and Tobago, then it can be extraditable.

For the record, may I put on the record, the House of Lords case of the Government of Denmark and Neilson, 1984, two All England Reports at page 81 in which this issue arose. As for example, we have bribery, but we have a

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Prevention of Corruption Act; and this bribery would cover all the offences under the Prevention of Corruption Act and even under the Integrity Act, and anything to do with bribery under the Representation of The People Act.

In that case, this issue arose as to whether it was not the same offence, and I will just read at page 82, at letter (f), on the true construction of section 10 of the 1870 Act which is equivalent to our Act. A magistrate considering an application for extradition of a fugitive under a treaty which incorporated the whole of the list of extradition crimes set out in Schedule One to the 1870 Act was only required to determine whether the conduct or acts of the accused constituted, under English law, a crime, so that he would be committed for trial. If he had committed such acts or conduct in England, provided that the crime is one of the crimes listed in Schedule One to the 1870 Act and in the relevant extradition treaty.

Take the example the Member has mentioned, bribery under the Representation of The People Act. If someone in Trinidad and Tobago is abroad, and the Trinidad and Tobago authorities want that person in respect of an offence of bribery under the Representation of The People Act, the fact that it is not mentioned, the name of the offence, but if it covers the conduct, then it would be extraditable.

So that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not think I could add anything more in this debate, so I beg to move.

5.20 p.m.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That the House of Representatives approve the Extradition (Commonwealth and Foreign Territories) (Extraditable Offences) Order, 2001.

MUTUAL ASSISTANCE IN CRIMINAL MATTERS (AMDT.) BILL

Senate Amendment

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

That the Senate amendment to the Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters (Amdt.) Bill listed in the appendix be now considered.

Question proposed.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 4.

Senate amendment read as follows:

Delete and substitute the following:

- | | |
|-----------------------|--|
| Section 40
amended | Section 40 of the Act is amended— |
| | (a) by inserting after subsection (1), the following subsection: |
| | (1A) Where a treaty has been concluded, whether before or after the commencement of this Act, between Trinidad and Tobago and any other territory, providing for mutual assistance in any criminal matter arising or criminal offence committed in Trinidad and Tobago or such other territory, not including a criminal offence referred to in subsection (1), the Attorney General may, by Order subject to negative resolution of Parliament, declare that the treaty shall have the force of law in Trinidad and Tobago subject to such limitations, exceptions or qualifications as may be specified in the Order.” |
| | (b) In subsection (2), by inserting after the words “subsection (1)”, the words “or subsection (1A)”; |
| | (c) In subsection (3), by inserting after the words “subsection (1)”, the words “or subsection (1A).” |

Mr. R. L. Maharaj: Mr. Deputy Speaker, what this amendment does is that under the Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters Act, if you have a treaty with another country, then based on this Act you can have assistance on a mutual basis on the investigation and detection of criminal offences. When this Act was passed, under section 40 there was an omission, in that, it applied only to drug trafficking offences. There have been some problems with respect to the conformity of the Act because, under the Commonwealth scheme, it is supposed to apply to all criminal offences. It was an omission of the draft person. We have tried to remedy that.

We brought the Bill here and it was approved in this House then it went to the other place and they redrafted clause 4 in terms of what we are seeing. In substance, the House had approved it, but the Senate redrafted it. It is a matter really of the drafting, that I thought it best to explain what is before the honourable House.

I beg to move that the House doth agree with the Senate in the said amendment.

Question proposed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member for Diego Martin Central.

Mr. Imbert: It is actually Diego Martin East.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I apologize.

Mr. Colm Imbert (*Diego Martin East*): Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is very interesting that we are doing an amendment to this legislation today, which deals with mutual assistance in criminal matters. The explanation the Attorney General has given us has further informed us, in that, now the legislation will apply to all criminal matters.

When I look at this amendment I see that the authority in the mutual assistance in criminal matters is the Attorney General. Is it not intriguing. We have heard a lot of talk in the last month about jackasses, corbeaux and “La Diabliesse”. All sorts of derogatory insults and names have been hurled at and between members of the Government by members of the Government. Jackass came to mind because we have had some braying in the Parliament this afternoon. I would not identify the jackass, but he knows who he is. Anyway, what I find—
[*Interruption*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: You would have read this document, “Parliament, Procedural and Administrative Guidelines”.

Mr. C. Imbert: Certainly, I thought “jackass” was as good as “buffoon”, which was allowed to pass today; but I am guided by your ruling, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Anyway, it is intriguing that the Attorney General is the authority under this legislation, because recently the Member for Couva North, the Prime Minister, in an effort to show that he is boss, that he is the maximum leader, that he is the “generale” of all his troops, decided to interfere with portfolios and he took away from the Attorney General the responsibility for some task force on criminal matters, corruption and so on, saying that that was not really within the portfolio

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of the Attorney General and that it should come inside the Ministry of National Security. Well you see, I see a certain inconsistency here.

If the Attorney General is the authority under this Bill dealing with assistance in criminal matters between Trinidad and Tobago and another country and he is the person who will deal with these issues, why did the Prime Minister not take that away from him too? What is the point of just hitting the Attorney General a little tap and saying, "I will take that away from you", but the Attorney General is the authority in dealing with criminal matters? So it just demonstrates the kind of political leadership that we have on the other side: petty, trivial, and quite silly as a matter of fact.

It is good that we are passing this because, as the Attorney General said, the previous legislation only dealt with drug trafficking, now it will embrace all criminal matters. So that if a current Cabinet Minister is found guilty of a criminal offence and he runs away to Canada or the United States, under a treaty with those countries, the Attorney General, the Member for Couva South, would be able to get assistance from the foreign government to deal with that Cabinet Minister who has tried to escape by running away to another country. Therefore, I am in total support of this amendment, but I merely want to point out to this House the total inconsistency and hypocrisy of the Prime Minister in taking away that task force on criminal matters.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member you are in breach of the Standing Orders.

Mr. C. Imbert: Which one?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Standing Order 36(5).

Mr. C. Imbert: I am so sorry. I was not aware that hypocrisy was wrong.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I will read it for you if you want.

"No Member should impute improper motives to any other Member of either Chamber."

Mr. C. Imbert: I am so sorry, Mr. Deputy Speaker; I did not realize that calling a Member a hypocrite was imputing improper motives, but I withdraw it. I withdraw the fact that I called him a hypocrite. [*Laughter*] I simply want to ask the Government not to yield to temptation; this is a very serious thing.

I do believe that the Attorney General is the proper person to deal with criminal matters and to deal with mutual assistance in extradition and bringing criminals to justice, whether they are Cabinet Ministers or ordinary citizens.

I thank you.

Mr. Hedwige Bereaux (La Brea): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise to make a very short intervention on this matter, the Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters (Amdt.) Bill. At the same time, I congratulate you on your having had this session. I always have great respect for people who can get elected, even by one or two votes. [*Desk thumping*]

I always say, that any politician who has come to his position by having people vote for him, understands what it is to serve and understands what people do here when they represent at whatever level. [*Laughter*] [*Desk thumping*]

We have seen two bills today; one earlier, which was passed with respect to extradition and, two, the Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters (Amdt.) Bill. What that does is bring home, most graphically, the whole question of globalization. It is not only globalization with respect to economics, but globalization with respect to criminal activities and how the criminal has to be followed throughout the world. You know it is said, you went to the mountain for a hiding place, but no hiding place from the Lord was found, but we on the mundane field must ensure that the criminals among us have no hiding place.

When we speak of criminals we always think about people stealing, drugs and so on, but we have to be extremely careful. Whereas in Trinidad and Tobago we are prepared to do our bit, we in the Opposition will support any moves made by the Government which will tend to make the process easier to follow criminals, bring them back and to assist other countries in getting criminals pursued and convicted. However, there is one major bring in international relations and that is the principle of reciprocity. [*Laughter*]

We have had a very strange situation existing in this country and in this Parliament today. Some time ago a young army officer—I think he was not a recruit but he was an ordinary soldier—swore to a false statutory declaration. I know you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are well aware of what a false statutory declaration or what a statutory declaration is, but just for the record, for Parliament to know and for the *Hansard* to have it properly, usually when you do these statutory declarations, at the end of the declaration it says:

“I make this declaration conscientiously, believing the same to be true, and according to the Statutory Declarations Act, Chap. 7:04; I am aware that if there is anything in any statement in this declaration which is false in fact, which I know or believe to be false or do not believe to be true, I am liable to fine and imprisonment”.

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But there are some times when even though we may know that a person has sworn to a false declaration, [*Interruption*] you need mutual assistance from abroad in order to bring the guilty to justice.

When you run into a situation where friendly countries to Trinidad and Tobago, some of them in the same Commonwealth, some of them like the United States of America, that have always gone all over the world parading and talking about democracy, saying that you must have democracy and you must bring people to justice, when they come into your country and they help with—and we do not refuse that help—drug interdiction and everything else, when we require the assistance of them to prevent the adulteration and abuse of our Parliament, they do not do it; they do not support it.

Now that we are talking about mutual assistance in criminal matters, I want to know from the hon. Attorney General, whether we are talking about the United States, having given us mutual assistance, we would have to assist them and they will be able to assist us and whether we are talking about Canada giving mutual assistance, we having to help them to catch criminals and to deal with it? I want to know.

You see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when the Director of Public Prosecutions was called upon—oh no, let me put it another way, because I do not want to impute any improper motives to anybody. We have and we have had a situation where allegations have been made against Members of this honourable House, where they were alleged to have committed offences. I am not dealing with any court matter now, but criminal offences for which the ordinary policeman or the ordinary citizen who swears like that, could be arrested, brought to court, charged and imprisoned.

The Director of Public Prosecutions has said that he is not able to move against these persons, these two Members, because he has been unable to receive the kind of assistance and information which he requires from the dominion of Canada and the United States of America (USA). In this Parliament, I am calling on this Government to refuse assistance to the USA and the dominion of Canada in respect of any criminal matters until they get up and start to behave responsibly. [*Desk thumping*]

I want to point it out clearly, because it is very problematic and it impinges, to some extent, on the security of the State, because if the United States of America is protecting one of its citizens from being arrested or charged in this country, because it is not providing the information, and that person sits in the Cabinet of

this country, then you know what has happened: you have a fifth columnist in the Cabinet and in the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, because [*Desk thumping*] he owes his position and the fact that he is free in this country to the fact that the United States is not doing it. [*Interruption*] I am dealing with them one by one. [*Desk thumping*].

This is a broad matter and it is an international matter. The United States of America is a country that purports to obey the rule of law. It is a country that runs all over the world telling everybody else that they must behave properly and what else. I am saying that they are—I want to say “hypocrites”, but—they are not true to the words which they are saying. I must believe the DPP; he holds an office under the Constitution. As far as I know he is an honest man, so I believe him. It is alleged that the request has been made and I want to know why the request has not been answered! Good.

When I was growing up as a young man, I wanted to study in Canada. The principal of the school I taught in was a man named Ephraim Mohammed; the Member for Barataria/San Juan would know him. I always remember him saying that in Canada—[*Interruption*]—

Mr. John: He was not very successful.

Mr. H. Breaux: He was very successful. [*Interruption*] I did not hear you. [*Interruption*] Who me? Yes, he was very successful as a teacher. The Member for Barataria/San Juan was his student, very successful; he does a lot of things for men that ordinary people cannot do. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I always remember Mr. Ephraim Mohammed saying that in Canada their hearts are as warm as their winters are cold. I have always thought about Canada as a country like that; as a democratic country, a country that supports anything good for democracy. Even yesterday I was speaking to the Cancer Care people who are doing something; they come from Canada. Therefore, I cannot understand how the Canadian Government will not give the necessary information, the mutual assistance required, to the Director of Public Prosecutions in order that we in this country—[*Interruption*]

5.40 p.m.

Forget whether they are in Parliament or not, forget whether they could win or could not win, that is not the point. The point is, should a Member of Parliament, because he is a Member of Parliament be allowed to speak an untruth in a statutory declaration and escape and be condoned in the escape by two big countries like Canada and the United States of America?

Mutual Assistance (Amdt.) Bill
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It is in my view, a democratic disgrace and I call on the High Commissioner of Canada and the Ambassador of the United States of America to do the proper thing and if they do not do it, I am giving them seven days, otherwise I will write the President of the United States of America, Mr. Bush himself and the Prime Minister of Canada. [Laughter] You all may laugh as you want, but this is a serious matter. I will write him. He may not even answer me. I am not bothering to do you anything you know. I am not concerned. I am sorry for you, it is the truth. This is the point, it has nothing to do—Mr. Deputy Speaker, you notice I am not talking about if you win or lose because George Spate won an election for jail, but the point is that you cannot be permitted to lie, or make a false declaration, commit an offence and because you are in Parliament you behave as though you are immune and moreover, you cannot be condoned.

Hon. Member: What about Laventille West and San Fernando East?

Mr. H. Béréau: Laventille West and San Fernando East are free. The Director of Public Prosecutions—[Interruption] No, no, that is the same reason why they rough “yuh” up in Woodland, you are not listening. [Laughter] [Desk thumping] The same thing. All I am saying is that if you did not speak the truth you get yourself in trouble—[Interruption] I am not getting into that, I just wanted him to know that that is the behaviour that got him in trouble; let him deal with it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am dealing with something here which is very serious and I am saying that it matters not, you see we have to think clearly. Did you speak the truth, and did you declare a false declaration? [Interruption] Please, I know you have a problem but, please, do not let me get to that. I do not want to do that, Member for Tunapuna. All I am saying is, these men did not speak the truth and when the—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have to intervene at this stage.

Mr. H. Béréau: No, I am going to deal with it. You see I am being interfered with by the Member for Tunapuna telling me about the Members for San Fernando East and Laventille West and now I am explaining the difference.

Nobody is hindering or putting any encumbrances in the way of the Director of Public Prosecutions to do what he has to do in respect of the Members for San Fernando East and Laventille West, so if he believes that there is a case made out against him, go ahead, nobody is stopping him. What I am saying is that two big and powerful countries in this hemisphere are defending the two other persons in wrongdoing as I see it and the Director of Public Prosecutions is saying that they are preventing him, and I am saying that I believe today, unless they do something

about it, they have an ulterior motive and they want two spies in the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and that is why they do it.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Khan: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order, I want to make reference to Standing Order 36(2).

Hon. Member: The Member has finished his contribution.

The Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs (Hon. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj): Mr. Deputy Speaker, if I could assist the hon. Member for La Brea, I think that he is mistaken and I think it is unfair to accuse the governments of the United States of America and Canada without the facts.

What has happened is this. First let me say that there has been no request made to the central authority of Trinidad and Tobago for any assistance from the United States of America or Canada and in any event under this Act, we could not ask for that assistance because under the existing law, it could only have related to a drug trafficking offence and that is what is being changed now. [*Desk thumping*]

Secondly, under the existing laws of Canada and the United States of America because of the nature of the Immigration Acts, et cetera, the governments were entitled in accordance with their laws to say that they are not disclosing. So I do not think that it is fair to the governments of the United States of America and Canada to accuse them of obstructing and also, it is not fair to imply that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago was in any way obstructing because the existing law did not permit that.

So what has happened is that the position now is that the law is being amended and under the Mutual Legal Assistance Act, it would mean that if it is that there is a request made—the central authority is headed by a very distinguished Mr. David West who used to be in the Department of Public Prosecutions—it will go through the normal course subject to law. I think we all have to agree that government must be according to law and if the governments of the United States of America and Canada could not do it, obviously they could not contravene the law, and if the Government of Trinidad and Tobago could not do it they could not contravene the law, so I hope that I have put those matters to rest.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move that the House doth agree with the Senate in the said amendment.

Question put and agreed to.

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

Adoption

The Minister of Labour, Manpower Development and Industrial Relations (Hon. Harry Partap): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move the following Motion:

Be it resolved that this House adopt the Second Report of the Special Select Committee appointed to consider and report on a Bill entitled “The Occupational Safety and Health (No. 2) Bill, 2001”.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Special Select Committee is seeking a further extension of four weeks beginning from today’s date to fully complete deliberations on the Bill before it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move.

Question proposed.

Question put and agreed to.

Report adopted.

ADJOURNMENT

The Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs (Hon. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move that this House do now stand adjourned to Wednesday, September 12, 2001 at 1.30 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as the hon. Minister of Finance has announced, on that day we will be doing the Report of the Finance Committee, the Supplementary Appropriation Bill and also on that day we intend to do the motion we were supposed to do today, Motion No. 3, concerning the forms for the Integrity Commission and we would also like to do Motions Nos. 7, 8, 9, and 10 from the Minister of Finance and we would make an application to try to have those motions done together and we can vote individually on them.

There is a very important and short bill and I am sure that the Opposition would not have any objection. It is Bill No. 2, a Bill to validate the Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic (Amendment) Regulations so I am sure we will have some time, and subject to the time factor, we would want to do that.

Thank you.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I wish to inform Members that there are two matters to be raised on the Motion for the Adjournment of the House; one by the Member for Arouca South.

Adjournment

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Hon. R. L. Maharaj: Mr. Deputy Speaker, may I announce that the other motion which hon. Jearlean John, the Minister of Transport, had to do, was asked to be deferred to Wednesday.

**Neglect of Roads
(Arouca South Constituency)**

Mrs. Camille Robinson-Regis (*Arouca South*): Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Motion before this honourable House deals specifically with what appears to be a situation where the roads in the constituency of Arouca South have consistently been neglected over the past five years and they are continuing to be neglected.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the roads in that constituency—in fact, that constituency has the largest number of citizens of Trinidad and Tobago and, as you well know, in this very Parliament, we passed legislation which stated that a percentage of the road tax would be given to local government bodies in order for them to be able to provide roads in their constituencies.

Indeed, the constituency of Arouca South is part of the Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation and part of the Arima Borough Corporation. I repeat that the Arouca South constituency is the most populous constituency in Trinidad and Tobago. However, we have been suffering under an administration which has consistently neglected to do any kind of road improvements in that constituency.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have been informed that out of the road improvement fund which was that Tidco fund, \$5 million was spent on roads in the Arouca South constituency. That was merely a drop in the bucket because if you traverse any part of that constituency you will see that the roads are in a deplorable condition.

The Member of Parliament for Arouca South has written the previous Local Government Minister, who was the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre, to no avail. Mr. Deputy Speaker, because of a lack of response, the Member for Arouca South wrote the hon. Prime Minister and I was referred back to the Local Government Minister. Again, absolutely nothing happened.

Since the portfolio has changed, I have written the Member for St. Joseph in his capacity as the Minister responsible for infrastructure. We got no response, even in circumstances where we were asked to list the roads that needed repairs and we had to list practically every road in the constituency.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, of late, since this Motion was placed before this House, which was several weeks ago, we have seen some work being done, but I must |

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use the analogy again of a drop in the bucket because, first of all, the corporations are not being given the requisite funds and, secondly, the kind of work that is being done is sub-standard work in circumstances where after a period of five years, the roads have deteriorated to such an extent that some of them have become almost impassable and the kind of material that is now being placed to repair the roads is only going to be a surface repair. What is needed is almost a whole reconstruction of the roads in that constituency.

Unfortunately, I do not know if to term this unfortunate or fortunate. Where the Larry Gomes Stadium is located in Malabar, because there was a directive, I understand, from FIFA, that the roads leading to that stadium must be fixed, those roads have been fixed. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is sickening that Members on the other side would thump their desks for that, where for five years we had asked for the roads to be fixed and only because the stadium is located there the roads in the direct vicinity of that Stadium have been fixed and if they feel proud of that, then they definitely have a problem.

6.00 p.m.

Today we heard the Member for Tunapuna talking about poor black people and several people of African descent live in that constituency and that side has never had any care or concern for those people. As he talked about hanging, the Chairman of the Tunapuna Regional Corporation and the Mayor of Arima, in their capacity as Chairman and Mayor have written to this Government asking for assistance and funding to fix the roads in the constituency of Arouca South and surrounding constituencies.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I repeat, there has been an unfortunate situation existing. If the Member for Tunapuna wants to talk about corruption and who have acted corruptly, perhaps he should look at the wife of the Member for Barataria/San Juan, who is a member of a board; or he should look at the wife of the Member for Caroni East. Do not talk about corruption when you live in a glass house. He should also look at the judgment that continues to subsist, which is recorded against him with Max Awon.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Could you kindly come back to the topic, please.

Mrs. C. Robinson-Regis: Additionally, he should also look at his wife who is a Member of staff at Tidco.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member, talk about the deplorable roads in Arouca South, please.

Mrs. C. Robinson-Regis: As I talk about deplorable roads. I also have to indicate deplorable behaviour. Because the deplorable behaviour of that Member and all the Members on the opposite side—Yes, Fritz is my husband.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member for Nariva.

Mrs. C. Robinson-Regis: He is one of the few people who has gotten a contract by correct and right means, which cannot be said for any of the persons to whom you have given contracts.

As I return to the issue at hand, they can say whatever they want, but they have consistently victimized the constituents of Arouca South, in that, despite the fact that we pay perhaps the most in relation to the road tax, we have had absolutely no benefit. They probably think that because they are poor black people that they do not own cars, but we own cars in Arouca South, Member for Caroni East. I know you all have a serious problem with people of African descent and that is unfortunate, that is why you consistently try to come against people of African descent. That is why you had to raise that today. It is unfortunate because the Member for Tunapuna at one stage, had to make the point that African clothes were pajamas and he did not know why people like Eddie Hart and other Members used to come to Parliament, occasionally, in African clothes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member has two more minutes.

Mrs. C. Robinson-Regis: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That is the kind of contempt they have for people of African descent and that is perhaps, what fuels their behaviour not to do anything for Arouca South. Once I am the Member for Arouca South and it continues in this way, I would come to the Parliament on every occasion and defend my constituents and ask the Minister responsible for infrastructure to do something within his power to assist with regard to the roads. I understand that a few things are being done but in circumstances where five years have passed and nothing took place over that period, I am imploring the Member for St. Joseph to assist with the roads in my constituency. Thank you.

The Minister of Infrastructure Development and Local Government (Hon. Carlos John): Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Member of Parliament for Couva South is quite right—sorry, Arouca South. Like I want to transfer her to a safe seat because I know that Arouca South is in jeopardy. The Member is quite right. The largest numbers of citizens do live in that area. It is surprising though, having represented that constituency for two terms, she has done nothing for the largest number of citizens. That is strange. She cannot put us on a guilt trip now where

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the infrastructure of this country is concerned. We have upgraded the infrastructure in this country more than any other administration in the history of Trinidad and Tobago. We have already started work on Maloney, La Horquetta, Malabar and Bon Air. If she visits her constituency—because I understand that she is an absentee representative, so I will pick her up in the morning and take her to La Horquetta and she would see the work we have done over the last week or two.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: It is substandard work.

Hon. C. John: Oh, you are an engineer now.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Minister, would you kindly address the Chair, please.

Hon. C. John: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I assure this honourable House that there is no substandard work being done because the contract has not been given to Imbert and Company. Contractors who have proven track records are doing everything. However, the point of the Member for Arouca South is well taken. The matter is in hand and we have already commenced infrastructural work in that constituency. I shall continue to monitor the progress in that area because I really was appalled at the level of neglect by the administration of the PNM to that constituency.

In addition, I want to assure this House that the Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation for the last year was given a subvention of \$55 million, money that was spent, with which this Minister has many problems and difficulties. We are now looking at the abuse of privileges and the siphoning of funds in various areas for vehicles, entertainment, cellular phones, etcetera; and not looking after the people's interest.

So they are not going to come here and put central government on any guilt trip or use us as any scapegoat when their representatives have not delivered; they have fallen down on the job. However, we would not turn our backs on the people. We have been voted into government and we are responsible for all of Trinidad and Tobago and where the PNM has fallen down, we intend to make good and deliver to the people of Arouca South, as we have been delivering throughout the country. Thank you.

6.10 p.m.

**Priority Bus Route/Pashley Street Laventille Junction
Lack of Safety Apparatus**

Mr. Fitzgerald Hinds (*Laventille East/Morvant*): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am most grateful—

Mr. Bereaux: Let the Minister be here. She is going to pick it up and try to “mamaguy” you.

Mr. F. Hinds: It is okay. It will give the hon. Minister a little more time. By presenting the Motion today and on the assumption she speaks to some persons in the Cabinet, she would have learnt of the Motion, at least before Wednesday, and it may save a life. Something could be done by Monday or maybe even tomorrow.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the situation that I raise here today is a very urgent and serious one, so even if the Minister is absent, I am urging her colleagues to bring it to her attention as soon as is practicable after we adjourn the sitting today. It has to do with—and I quote the text of the Motion: “the injuries to persons and the loss of property suffered by the residents of Beetham Gardens, Laventille and other users of the road at the junction of the Priority Bus Route and Pashley Street, South, Laventille, caused by the failure of the Government to install a traffic light and/or other safety apparatus at the said junction.”

First off, I am advised that before I assumed the representative function in that constituency, there were, indeed, traffic lights at that location, but I am told that over time they became dysfunctional, and that was assisted by one or two persons who operate in the area who are afflicted by—you know, they call them; I am putting it very flatly—I am told that some persons stole the cable out of those poles, because there is a very lucrative business. They pull the cables out; they burn it and they take the copper wire and that brings some kind of income for those who are so minded. Not very many. I am told that it had happened in the past and that was one of the problems.

So as the Government attempts to address this problem, it has to consider those matters and do like the Attorney General, try as he might to avoid other things, the Government must try. There may be some system. You may find it necessary to put overhead lights. The location of which I speak has been the scene of a number of instances of pure human tragedy in the form of vehicular accidents.

In fact, in my discussions with my constituents, I have a list here of 12 persons who, over the last 10 years or so, died as a consequence of accidents on that corner. I can list the names but it is not necessary. It is as serious as that. That is in addition to a number of very serious accidents that left people in very critical circumstances. So this is no fun; this is no game. In fact, only last week I attended a funeral service of the last victim, a 16-year-old by the name of Andell Burgess. This is the programme that was handed at the funeral service some time ago.

Andell Burgess was in that area, attempting to cross the road on his bicycle. He was struck by a vehicle and he has since gone to the hereafter. It is as urgent as that, hon. Members; it is that serious. The residents in the area demonstrated |

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remarkable goodwill and calm in trying circumstances, because they have been complaining about it a lot over time and a tremendous amount of patience was displayed. They were tempted to do the things that people would do in those circumstances to demonstrate their plight.

The Member for St. Joseph would recall, about three or four months ago, on the Lady Young Road, after the Government paved that road, widened it without placing the necessary traffic control apparatus—markings on the road, lights and so on—we had a death in the area, of an elderly gentleman. I raised the issue here; I raised it with the Member for St. Joseph, and I want to report that prompt action was taken because of the circumstances. Lights have since been installed; all the necessary markings, and since then we have had no fatality, and that is important. [*Desk thumping*] I would hope that this Government would act with similar dispatch in respect of the problem that I now raise.

The people reported to the Member of Parliament that they were tempted to act very, very antisocially, and perhaps with a measure of justification, based on the frustration that they felt, but they demonstrated remarkable maturity and patience, and they understood that the state was in some way responsible for the death of this young man and others. Lawyers would know that if a man sustained injury on the road and there can be any demonstration of negligence on the part of the state, the state could be involved and it could cost the state a lot of money over time. It is possible that one could be in the pipeline in respect of Andell Burgess, but that is not the important thing. We have many other children and adults operating in the community. They must cross from the southern side, if they are heading west along the Priority Bus Route—they must cross from their residences to get over to the Eastern Main Road and otherwise.

Therefore it is urgent and critical. Death surrounds them. I have seen myself, as I approach the area and stop for persons to cross, ignorant drivers of other vehicles—maxi-taxis, private cars using the Priority Bus Route—while I may stop on the extreme left to allow people to cross, you see vehicles flying pass me on the right hand side, posing circumstances of further danger.

I am asking the Government—someone or Members on that side—to communicate to the Minister of Transport and Minister of Tourism and Tobago Affairs so that she can deal with the issue. I saw a photograph yesterday, of the Member for St. Joseph and the very Minister, in close contact. I hope that he could resume that contact and communicate to her the urgency of this without getting into any trouble in the process.

So may I say, on behalf of all of Trinidad and Tobago, to the people of my constituency and the Beetham Estate, in particular, we are genuinely saddened at the death of Andell Burgess and all who have gone that way before him. I visited another elderly person in the area who is suffering as a consequence of an accident there. Calypsonian De Fosto recently ran off the road into the wall in that very area, and we urge the Government to act swiftly and have something done.

In the interim—because those works, from our experience, could take a matter of six weeks, based on what I saw on the Lady Young Road in that situation—police officers can be placed there at the more useful hours. I am talking about the peak hours, between 7 o'clock in the morning to about 9 o'clock, when children are crossing on their way to school. So as a short term measure, I recommend forcefully, that either police officers or school crossing guards be put in that area. Persons in the community who are unemployed, but capable of performing those functions would be very willing, so that we could provide a measure of employment. It is their community; they have a direct interest in it; it is their children, and the good of all could be met that way.

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

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, the response by the Minister of Transport and Minister of Tourism and Tobago Affairs will be given at the appropriate time.

The Minister of Infrastructure Development and Local Government (Hon. Carlos John): Mr. Deputy Speaker, while it is not my remit to respond, I just wanted to assure the Member for Laventille East/Morvant that already under construction is an overpass in the area of the Excel School—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: We will say that contribution was for information, and the response will come in due course.

Hon. C. John: In the area of the Excel School, we already have under construction—it is being prefabricated at the present time. So very soon we will install an overhead passing there. So the question of safety of pedestrians on that route has not been overlooked. That is all I wanted to place on record.

Mr. F. Hinds: Except of course—just to reply to the Minister, since he is applying his mind to the issue—I am speaking about another location further east, in the area of Pashley Street, South.

Hon. C. John: Okay. The point I wanted to make, though, is that—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member for Laventille East/Morvant, do you have any objections to the Minister—

Mr. Hinds: No, I have no objection at all.

Hon. C. John: Thank you. I want to assure you that we have not overlooked our commitment to the area, and we have started to look at the safety aspect in that area. That is the point I want to make.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, I want to thank Members on both sides of the House for their kind cooperation. [*Desk thumping*]

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 6.20 p.m.