

THE  
**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES**

**OFFICIAL REPORT**

IN THE FIRST SESSION OF THE SEVENTH PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD  
AND TOBAGO WHICH OPENED ON APRIL 05, 2002

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**SESSION 2002**

**VOLUME 1**

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**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

*Friday, April 05, 2002*

**1.30 P.M.**

*The House of Representatives having assembled, and it being the first meeting of the First Session of the Seventh Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, the Clerk of the House read the following Proclamation:*

REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

No. 2 of 2002.

[L.S.]

By His Excellency ARTHUR N. R. ROBINSON, T.C.,  
O.C.C., S.C., President and Commander-in-Chief  
of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

ARTHUR N. R. ROBINSON  
*President*

**A PROCLAMATION**

WHEREAS it is provided by subsection (1) of section 67 of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago that each session of Parliament shall be held at such place within Trinidad and Tobago and shall commence at such time as the President may by Proclamation appoint:

Now, therefore, I, ARTHUR N. R. ROBINSON, President as aforesaid, do hereby appoint the Red House, Port of Spain, as the place at which the First Session of the Seventh Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago shall be held and 1.30 p.m. on Friday, the 5th day of April, 2002, as the time at which the said Session shall commence.

Given under my Hand and the Seal of  
the President of the Republic of  
Trinidad and Tobago, at the  
Office of the President, St. Ann's,  
this 27th day of March, 2002.

**ELECTION OF SPEAKER**

**Clerk of the House:** Hon. Members, I call upon the House to elect a Speaker.

**The Prime Minister (Hon. Patrick Manning):** Madam Clerk, I rise to propose the name of someone who we believe is capable of holding the exalted office of Speaker of the Sixth Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago—the Seventh Parliament.

I rise to propose that Prof. Max Richards do take the Chair of this honourable House as Speaker. In doing so, Madam Clerk, I would like to begin by repeating something that I have said in this House, and elsewhere, on more occasions than one. If the profession of politics today is not held in high repute by the wider community at large in this country, then politicians have nobody to blame but themselves.

Madam Clerk, today is an historic day in the parliamentary life, in the political life and, in the secular life of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. We are called upon today to demonstrate whether we will act in a manner as politicians which will redound to the eternal credit of ourselves and to our profession and to the people in whose interest we sit here and whom we serve; whether we will take a course of action that will redound to the eternal shame of this Parliament and the eternal condemnation of those who put us here.

For our part, Madam Clerk, speaking for those of us on this side of the House, we give you the assurance and through you, the national community, that we will act at all times in this Parliament in a manner that is a credit to the Parliament, to the profession of politics, and to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. [Desk *thumping*]

Madam Speaker—[*Laughter*] Madam Clerk, I knew you felt a little uncomfortable when I said Madam Speaker a few minutes ago. Madam Clerk, in the highest traditions of Westminster, there is a convention that there must be consultation between government and opposition in electing someone to hold the office of Speaker, since it is seen as an office that is non-partisan. Whoever occupies the office must be impartial and, therefore, bring no bias to bear on the conduct of the operations of the Parliament from the Chair.

It is a time honoured principle of consultation and, may I assure you that on this occasion in preparation for this Parliament and in preparation for this particular phase of our Parliament where we elect a Speaker, consultations did take place between the Government and Members of the other side, the Opposition.

I will take it one step further. Not only did consultations take place, but an agreement was arrived at, and it has happened quite some time ago, and the fact

that the Parliament is only now able to meet suggests, and I am sure it will suggest to you, Madam Clerk, experienced as you are, that something may have happened that now puts us in a position where we are not certain whether the agreement that had been arrived at sometime ago will, in fact, be honoured in this Parliament today, consistent with the highest traditions of Westminster.

The point is this: Are we, as politicians, going to act in a manner that is a credit to ourselves and to our profession, or are we this afternoon, when the eyes of Trinidad and Tobago, when the eyes of the Caribbean, when the eyes of the world are on us, going to act in a manner that will redound to the eternal shame of this Parliament and to the people whom we serve? That is the question really that lies before us.

On December 10, 2001, the people of Trinidad and Tobago, in their wisdom, granted an equal number of seats to two political parties in the House. Those on the other side, headed by my good friend, the now Leader of the Opposition, the Member for Couva North—they were granted 18 seats by the people of Trinidad and Tobago. We on this side, the PNM, were also granted 18 seats.

It is not the first time that the people of Trinidad and Tobago granted an equal number of seats to the same two political parties: the UNC on the one hand, and the PNM on the other. You will recall, I am sure, Madam Clerk, that in 1995 the people of Trinidad and Tobago granted 17 seats to the PNM and 17 seats to the UNC, except on that occasion, there was a third political party, the NAR, which was granted two seats and, therefore, that prevented the deadlock that otherwise could have arisen.

May I say to you, when at the end of the day, those opposed to us found themselves in Government and we found ourselves in Opposition, we did not protest, Madam Clerk. [*Laughter*] We took it in our stride. We put it down to the parliamentary system under which we operate. If those are the rules of the game, and if those rules of the game are agreed to beforehand, then you cannot now come after the game has started, and after the game has been played, to attempt to disagree with the rules and to change the rules, particularly unilaterally and to your advantage. [*Desk thumping*] It is not proper to do that.

You will agree, I am sure, Madam Clerk, that when a situation of 18/18 emerged in the general election of December 10, 2001, that the person whose responsibility it is under the Constitution to select a Prime Minister would have found himself in a very difficult situation indeed.

That is what happened. His Excellency the President, who incidentally, I would want to take this opportunity at this time to congratulate very highly on the

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way he handled this entire situation, [*Desk thumping*] found himself in a difficult position. After due deliberation, his approach to a resolution of that dilemma was calling the leaders of the two political parties together, the hon. Basdeo Panday from Couva North, on the one hand who, at the time, occupied the office of Prime Minister, and the then Leader of the Opposition, the Member for San Fernando East and leader of the People's National Movement.

We were called together by the President who outlined a position to us which is now in the public domain and which I take it, is known by everybody but which is necessary to repeat for the benefit of the record of this honourable House, indicated to us that the three of us seated there in that room represented the three most experienced politicians in Trinidad and Tobago. That is how it started.

On the one hand, Madam Clerk, His Excellency, the President, has had a political life spanning some 45 years. In the case of my honourable friend opposite, the Member for Couva North, he has been a Member of Parliament since 1976 continuously and, perhaps, intermittently between 1971 and 1976, but has been in the political arena since 1966.

And in my own case, I became a Member of this august House on May 10, 1971 and, therefore, have spent the previous 30 years of my life seated here in the service of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] That was the President's position.

His Excellency's view was that if we are the three most experienced politicians in this country, then that experience must mean something to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. It must mean something. [*Desk thumping*] We do not boast that we are experienced merely because it is a feather in our cap. We do not do it for what has been described in other quarters as vainglory. We do not do it for those purposes.

We see it as an opportunity for bringing the best thinking and the best level of government for the people of Trinidad and Tobago. That is how we see it here on this side of the House.

And so, Madam Clerk, His Excellency said that if we are experienced, as we are, then we must be able to resolve a very difficult situation among ourselves. The alternative would have been this, that His Excellency would have had to make a selection, as between the honourable Member for Couva North, on the one hand, and the Member for San Fernando East, on the other and, clearly, His Excellency, while he was quite prepared to do it, because he is authorized in the Constitution to so do, felt that the better approach would be for the leaders of the

two political parties to get together and seek to arrive at some kind of arrangement which could redound to the credit of the people of Trinidad and Tobago, and which could bring to bear the political experience of which we so boast from time to time. It must mean something for the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Madam Clerk, I think what happened thereafter is known to you, and is known to the national community at large. But for the benefit of the record, again, you will permit me, I am sure, to just restate the details of it so that there is a record in this Parliament of what exactly transpired at that period in the country's history, critical as it was to the political development of Trinidad and Tobago and, may I say, there is economic and social development also. Very critical at that time. Let me put it into the record.

Madam Clerk, two delegations met; one from the People's National Movement, headed by the Member for San Fernando East and political leader of the Movement, and the other headed by the hon. Member for Couva North, on behalf of the UNC.

In our case, before we met, we went to our General Council, which is the highest authority in our political party, and which is authorized to take major decisions outside our annual convention. We went to our General Council and we asked the General Council of the PNM what it wished us to do, and we took that course of action because we recognized that we do not act on our own behalf. That it was not a question of what my view was or what the view of my other colleagues were. I will tell you who they were in a minute.

It was not a question of what our individual views were, but we come from an organization that is democratic in structure, that was founded on principles of democracy, and which has internal processes that are based on a recognition that democracy is the superior method of political organization. Our General Council told us, "We authorize you to meet with the team from the UNC and to discuss to finality."

Before saying that, a discussion took place in the General Council itself and, therefore, while we appeared to have a *carte blanche* authority in relation to an agreement, that authority was circumscribed by the discussions that had taken place within the General Council. So, we had a feel of the sentiments of the party, as those sentiments were reflected on that fateful day in December, in the General Council's deliberations as we met at Balisier House.

Madam Clerk, I would like to place on the record my thanks for my other two colleagues who sat on that team with me. One of them is the very distinguished

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Member for Diego Martin West, Hon. Dr. Keith Rowley; [*Desk thumping*] the other one now sits in the other place, Sen. Joan Yuille-Williams, who holds the position of Deputy Political Leader, Party and Elections of the People's National Movement.

We met a delegation from the other side headed by the hon. Basdeo Panday and including the now Member for St. Augustine—and let me welcome him to this august Chamber—the hon. Gerald Yetming, and somebody from the UNC, another person who was replaced eventually by the Member for Caroni East. I am sorry. It is the other way around. Initially, the delegation comprised the hon. Member for Caroni East, the hon. Ganga Singh who was subsequently, for reasons that were never explained to us, replaced by Mr. Fyard Hosein, a lawyer operating at the courts in Trinidad and Tobago.

We sat at Crowne Plaza and we began to discuss in what I thought was good faith. Before the teams met, the two leaders—the distinguished Member for Couva North and the Member for San Fernando East—sat alone and decided to talk. We did that Madam Clerk, because experience has told me that whenever I sit with my honourable colleague, whenever we sit together alone, I find that reason always prevails. [*Laughter*] That is what I found in the past.

That is why you see, what subsequently transpired—I am beginning to wonder whether what subsequently transpired was influenced by the addition to the team of the distinguished Member for St. Augustine and/or the hon. Member for Caroni East. I do not know. I do not know.

What I am saying is that my experience in the past is that when I meet with my honourable friend from Couva North, we sit and address any problem and come to conclusions and, in fact, as in the course of this Seventh Parliament, Madam Clerk, legislation is going to come to this honourable House which was as a result of a similar discussion like that where my good friend from Couva North and I sat down and raised a matter of national concern, the levels of crime in Trinidad and Tobago.

We agreed that it was a matter that had to be depoliticized, and it was a matter which responsible politicians ought now to deal with in a particular way ignoring the cut and thrust that traditionally is associated with the conduct of political affairs. The records will show that not only did we come to an agreement. It took us two and a half years and we have come to an agreement on that matter which is going to be a landmark arrangement for Trinidad and Tobago—the upgrading of the police service, new arrangements for management of the police service, and so

forth. But let me not take advantage of your generosity, Madam Clerk, and let me get back to the point that we were discussing.

Whenever my friend and I sit to talk, my experience is that we come to some amicable arrangement. So we did that. That aspect of the discussion lasted for about 20 minutes, but I will tell you this, Madam Clerk, when we rose and when we called our colleagues into the meeting, I was sure that we had indeed met common ground in a number of areas, and what transpired subsequently, confirmed my initial view that common ground had, indeed, been found. It was relatively easy to strike an agreement. An agreement was struck in just about two days. It took us 20 minutes really to discuss all the difficult things and get them out of the way—two reasonable men sitting. What has happened to him subsequently, I am in no position to say. He was reasonable, I believe, at that time.

One of the important decisions we took was on the first matter that we discussed, the selection of a Prime Minister. Madam Clerk, you will be pleased to know that we both agreed on one thing. That we did not wish to participate in the selection of a Prime Minister because the Constitution does not authorize either of us to do that. That was our decision.

The Constitution authorizes His Excellency the President to select a Prime Minister, and we were fearful of two things. One is that if we engaged in any discussion at all about the selection of a Prime Minister, we could be justifiably accused of acting in a manner that is ultra vires the Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago, and, secondly, we did not wish to be seen as two people acting in our own cause. It was not a matter for us. Our decision was, let the President decide.

Madam Clerk, I must tell you this. Nowhere have I recorded these feelings before. At that point, the very first matter we discussed, I felt that I was dealing with the statesman that I have always seen the Member for Couva North to be. That is how I felt about him.

We met on December 13 and 14, 2001 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel. We arrived at an arrangement that was signed on December 14, 2001 by the hon. Basdeo Panday. This is his signature here, Madam Clerk. Would you like to verify it, or that is only for the Speaker? Madam Clerk, may I say to you that the Speaker does not speak, but the Clerk could speak. [*Laughter*] Signed by the hon. Basdeo Panday on behalf of the UNC, and signed here by the hon. Patrick Manning on behalf of the PNM.

It is important that the text of this agreement be read into the record of this august House because, you see, what transpired subsequent to this agreement was

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what was expected of us in the highest traditions of Westminster, and that was to consult on the selection of a Speaker. That we did.

Conclusions of meetings held on December 13 and 14, 2001 at Crowne Plaza between the United National Congress and the People's National Movement.

Matters agreed upon: One, Prime Minister to be appointed by the President in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

What was meant by that? What was meant by that was that it is the President who is authorized under the Constitution to select a Prime Minister and, therefore, nobody should act in any manner that encroaches on the authority—the constitutional authority of the President. Nobody should encroach on that and, therefore, it would have been very improper for us, either individually or together, to do anything that appeared to be encroaching on the authority of His Excellency the President of Trinidad and Tobago, and worse, it would be acting in our own cause.

All the talk that we have heard subsequently that the selection was not made in accordance with the Constitution is nothing more than a lot of obfuscation. It is nothing more than that. Let us see it for what it is. One of the things that I would like to say to hon. Members opposite is that in the school from which I come, there is a question of right and there is a question of wrong. [*Desk thumping*] If something is wrong no amount of re-christening it, no matter what church you take it to, no amount of re-christening could make it right. [*Desk thumping*]

It is important, you see, because we have schoolchildren in this country. We talk about delinquency, about a lost generation among our young people. We talk about high levels of crime and so on. Let us all understand that the young people in this country and all around the world learn by example, and if they put people in positions of authority, they expect those persons to behave as exemplars. It is not by accident that the Members of this House are called honourable. We are all honourable. Do you know why we are called that, Madam Clerk? Because we are expected to act like honourable men and women. That is why we are called that. [*Desk thumping*] How much more time do I have, Madam Clerk?

**Mr. S. Panday:** Forever.

**Hon. P. Manning:** Matters agreed upon: Two, the parties to agree on a Speaker of the House of Representatives who is to be identified before the appointment of the Prime Minister. Madam Clerk, it was the second matter on which we had agreed. The parties to agree on a Speaker of the House of Representatives who is to be identified before the appointment of the Prime Minister.



Do you know why that was so? We agreed to do it before a Prime Minister was appointed and not after because, you see, Madam Clerk, none of us knew who the Prime Minister would be. The Member for Couva North, I accept that he did not know, and I can assure you that I did not know, therefore, when we sat down to agree on a Speaker, we would have been selecting somebody who would be presiding over us. We did not know who would have been in Government and who would have been in Opposition and, therefore, that fact in itself was more likely to get us to agree on somebody who was truly above the cut and thrust of the politics of the Parliament and who truly fit the bill as that bill is expected to be fit in the highest court of Westminster. We did that before a Prime Minister. None of us knew.

Madam Clerk, let me assure you and hon. Members that we did that. We identified someone who we felt fit the bill. At the time, none of us knew who would be Prime Minister, and it is the person who I rise to propose today: Prof. Max Richards. That was the person agreed to by the Member for Couva North, acting on behalf of his political party, and the Member for San Fernando East, authorized by the General Council of his party to act on the party's behalf.

Therefore, when I rise today to nominate Prof. Richards, I rise to do it because that was the agreement we had arrived at. That, Madam Clerk, would have been consistent with what is expected within the Westminster parliamentary system. [*Desk thumping*]

Matters agreed upon: Three, electoral reform including the removal of systemic and personnel constraints. We agreed on electoral reform. The hon. Member for Couva North, the Member for San Fernando East. Both of us acting on behalf of our parties were not satisfied with the electoral system. Whatever the toing and froing might have been, we were not satisfied that the system gave us the best chance of a government in which everybody would have had confidence, and we felt, whatever the allegations that may come, maybe, but we felt that as experienced politicians, one coming in the winter of his years, the other one with some considerable distance to go, [*Laughter*] we thought we would sit and agree to electoral reform and to remove the systemic and personnel constraints in the electoral system.

Matters agreed upon: Four, constitution reform relevant to a plural society, so as to foster *inter alia* a cohesive national community. Madam Clerk, the very experienced Member for Couva North, the Member for San Fernando East, sitting and saying that something is wrong, our experiences over the last few years suggested to us that the Constitution of 1976 may have served us well, as it indeed

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did, but that in the year 2002, 26 years later, we believe that the Constitution is in need of some kind of upgrading.

We agreed on that and, in fact, I can assure my good friend from Couva North that we have begun to think about this exercise and we are now formulating proposals that we would like to discuss in due course and, of course, I hope that the discussions begin on that occasion, as we have always done in the past, that you and I could start by talking alone. Whenever we do that, we tend to arrive—

**Mr. B. Panday:** Never again!

**Hon. P. Manning:** Whenever we do that, we tend to arrive at arrangements that we believe to be acceptable, notwithstanding the view of my good friend from Couva North that political agreements are not worth the paper on which they are written, but I tend to ignore that. I prefer to talk with him. My experience is whenever we do that, we arrive at some arrangement. We agreed to constitutional reform relevant to a plural society.

Five, we agreed on the appointment of commissions of enquiry to the following: It was a discussion. There was a negotiation. He wanted something, we wanted something, and we said, “Okay, could we meet each other half-way? Let us meet each other halfway.” We agreed on that and, therefore, in the commissions of enquiry on which we agreed, they were as follows:

A: The first commission of enquiry would be on two matters. One, Piarco Airport terminal construction and associated projects and two, Project Pride. One commission of enquiry. We agreed to that. We agreed that there should be a commission of enquiry on Piarco Airport terminal construction and associated projects and on Project Pride.

Commission of enquiry number two, the La Brea Industrial Complex and the Southwest Soldado Project. We agreed on both of them. They were of the view that the La Brea Industrial Complex, which was done in my time as Prime Minister between 1991 and 1995, may have had some questionable activities, and we said, “Okay, we will investigate that.” We said that every tub sits on its own bottom. We are not hiding anything. We have nothing to hide. We are not afraid of anything. We believe in right and wrong. [*Desk thumping*] If corruption is not good for you, it is not good for us too. Therefore, we had no difficulty in agreeing that the next commission of enquiry should be on the La Brea Industrial Complex and the Southwest Soldado Project.

Madam Clerk, the third commission of enquiry: InnCogen, one, and the desalination plant. Both projects in their time. We said fine, we will have a commission of enquiry into InnCogen and the desalination plant.

D: Commission of enquiry, the fourth one, sale of Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission power generation facilities; two, sale of shares of Trinidad and Tobago Methanol to Ferrostaal. That was done in our time. They were trying to suggest that something might have been wrong. We said yes, investigate that. Three, the Severn Trent contracts. Some of it done in our time.

What we decided not to do, Madam Clerk, perhaps in deference to some of our colleagues, was to leave out TTPost. We would have dealt with that later and by different arrangements. So we agreed on commissions of enquiry.

The hon. Member for Couva North, having concerns about some projects that took place in our time, and we having some concerns about some projects that took place in their time. The only difference was that they had six years to investigate any transgressions in our time, but we now coming into Government, if that indeed be the case, would have, for the first time, had an opportunity to look into projects that were conducted in their time. That was the difference. We were not afraid of it.

E: The next commission of enquiry, five, Regional Health Authorities. Madam Clerk, let me advise you, that may yet come. In light of all that is now emerging with the RHAs, it is quite clear that all is not well in the State of Denmark, but we had known that before, because I think it was my very good friend from St. Augustine, in his first incarnation as Minister of Finance, who had brought to this honourable House a report that suggested that in the North West Regional Health Authority, all was not well. Therefore, we agreed—and I must also say that this Parliament and this country will be in the eternal debt of the distinguished Member of Parliament for Barataria/San Juan who was instrumental in getting these investigations going, notwithstanding the fact that some of his colleagues were not necessarily in agreement with a pursuit of that course of action. To this day, the position of the Member for Caroni Central is not clear on that matter.

F: Commission of enquiry into the award of telecommunication licences. We agreed to that, because a question mark had arisen. Questions have been asked. These commissions of enquiry; there was a Minister in Government who was—well, let me not descend to any matter that could be considered distasteful. Suffice it to say that there were concerns among us and concerns in the national community that led us to propose to my hon. friend from Couva North, and he was gracious enough to agree, that there should be a commission of enquiry into the award of telecommunication licences.

Finally, G: A commission of enquiry into state-owned financial institutions, write-off of customers' debts. I am not so sure what the suggestion was. That

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some bank—it might have been First Citizens Bank (FCB)—may have written off the debt of some customer who may have some contact with the PNM. I do not know. Whatever it was, we were not afraid. We were saying, let us investigate it. *[Desk thumping]* Let us investigate it and whatever happens, happens. The innocent would be set free. The guilty would be brought to justice. That is our position. *[Desk thumping]*

Six, Madam Clerk, now that we are off commissions of enquiry, consensus building at the parliamentary level, but not at the Executive level. That is to say, to establish mechanisms to achieve collaboration and cooperation on legislative matters and other parliamentary business. That agreement at item six, Madam Clerk, was perhaps one of the most significant developments of the Crowne Plaza discussions. What, in fact, we were saying was this: That there is a pattern of power sharing that was not inconsistent with the constitutional realities of Trinidad and Tobago and, therefore, which was a pattern of power sharing to which the PNM could subscribe.

If it is that hon. Members, in the context of an 18/18 situation, chose to view it as the need for sharing of power as between the two sides, then there were models of that which the PNM felt it could pursue, but was at all times concerned that it would do nothing ultra vires the Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago. That was the point. So, as we said that Parliament—what it would have meant was that no legislation could pass this Parliament unless we agreed; both sides would agree. *[Desk thumping]* That is power sharing.

What that would have meant is that even before we draft the legislation, we would have begun to consult with the Opposition. That is what would have happened. That is how we saw it. So that in consulting with the Opposition even before legislation is drafted, and therefore, at the policy stage, it meant that those in Opposition would have had a significant say in policy formulation. That is power sharing.

Madam Clerk, you will forgive me if at this stage I make reference to an alternative proposal, and that is, 18/18 means, you have nine ministers, I have nine ministers. You have six ministers, and I have six. Both parties operating in the Executive.

Madam Speaker—Madam Clerk—I wonder if that is not fortuitous. Madam Clerk, my apologies. The system of government under which we operate—and I think it is important that the national community be aware of this—is a system that arises out of the Westminster parliamentary democracy. That system assumes

the existence of a government and an opposition. The system assumes that: a government and an opposition.

That is why the PNM was so uncomfortable in 1971. When I first became a Member of this Parliament—if you do not have a government and an opposition, then the system cannot work properly. One must have a government and an opposition. Therefore, the PNM, conscious as we are of this need, and determined as we are to do nothing that will undermine the system of Government under which we operate, were careful to avoid the development of any situation where everybody is in the government and nobody is in the Opposition. That is what was being proposed: everybody in the government and nobody in the Opposition.

When the danger associated with that approach became clearer, it was modified to say, and those who are not in the government take the position of opposition. Does one know what that then does? That then undermines party politics, Madam Clerk, which was the vehicle by which this country can today boast of the extent of our political, social and economic progress. Party politics has led to it. [*Desk thumping*]

I commend to hon. Members opposite a pamphlet that was published by Dr. Eric Williams in the mid-50s. It is called the *Case for Party Politics in Trinidad and Tobago*. I commend it to you because it is as relevant today as it was then, and whatever we do, Madam Clerk, it would not be right for us to pursue a course of action that will undermine party politics, on the one hand or, worse yet, undermine the system of government to which we subscribe and under which we operate.

We could do neither and, therefore, we had no difficulty in rejecting the alternative that was put to us. It was inconsistent with the principles of the system of Government under which we operate. It cannot work. It was a little worse than that. Madam Clerk, it was downright dangerous. It was downright dangerous and, therefore, it could have led to a situation where the last state was worse than the first; that the travesty that you are seeking to correct turns out to be far better than the situation that you have now created. So we avoided it.

Number seven—these are points that have been agreed upon—give effect to Crossing of the Floor Act and associated regulations. Well, I could understand why my good friend is anxious to do that now, but we thought we would make that concession. It did not matter to us. The PNM is a disciplined party. All those who would win a seat in Parliament and then defect from the PNM have already done so. [*Desk thumping*] We were not concerned. We have survived it and we are back in government, but, I will not spend any time on that.

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We agreed, Madam Clerk, on fresh elections in Trinidad and Tobago. This is the Crowne Plaza accord, the antecedents to the selection of a Speaker for the House. We agreed on fresh elections, but we did not agree on a time. No agreement on time. Therefore, those in the national community who are saying that the PNM is afraid of elections, let it be known—I am prepared to shout it from the roof tops—that the PNM will take on any comers at any time whenever they wish under the parliamentary system of democracy. [*Desk thumping*] But, we will fight political parties. We are not fighting independent institutions. We are not fighting that. We are fighting political parties. We are not fighting the system. We are fighting the party.

Madam Clerk, the records will show that we have fought in the past and have lost, but we take our licks graciously. That is the system, those are the rules. We agree to those rules. Fresh elections, but no agreement on time. So we agreed to elections. We did not agree on the time.

All we are saying—my good friend from Chaguanas is asking, 2001. What we are saying is, we need a proper system of elections. In fact, your leader agreed in the Crowne Plaza accord to that. Let me remind you in case you forget. Item three, electoral reform, including the removal of systemic and personnel constraints. We did that, and what we are saying is that is a prerequisite to elections. We are not fighting anybody. We are saying if that is so, let us correct it. Then let us go to the polls. No problem. Any time.

Agreement number nine, establishment of standing parliamentary committees on energy policy and foreign affairs. Madam Clerk, and I should tell you that the PNM subsequently unilaterally modified that to include agriculture. Understand what that is saying. That if you have a standing committee of the Parliament where you discuss foreign policy, then what you are saying is that we are forging a consensus at the level of Parliament on foreign policy before we implement it. That is power sharing. You are prepared to share power at the level of Parliament.

We were also saying that it was not just foreign affairs. That energy policy was so important for Trinidad and Tobago that we wanted to have discussions with the opposition on this matter before we implement it. There must be consensus, and unilaterally, they did not force us, they did not ask us. We thought, so committed were we to the approach that we unilaterally expanded it and we said, let us forge a consensus also on agricultural policy, because you see, agriculture which is essentially an activity in the rural communities, is an activity in communities in which hon. Members opposite draw the bulk of their support. Therefore, if only by way of a letter of comfort, what we were saying to them is,

“Okay, we do not plan to discriminate against your communities”—well it is our communities, but communities in which you find a large percentage of support. “Let us discuss agricultural policy also. What further examples would you need to demonstrate the sincerity of our purpose and the rectitude of our cause?” We offered that.

Ten, referral of the Prevention of Corruption Bill to a joint select committee of Parliament without prejudice to the PNM’s proposal for the appointment of a special prosecutor. We said okay, we will refer the Prevention of Corruption Bill to a joint select committee. They did not like the idea of a special prosecutor. They felt that things could be done on the Prevention of Corruption Bill. We said okay. We will refer it to a joint select committee of the Parliament and we will see what modifications may be necessary to put proper arrangements in place to come to terms with this beast—the beast of corruption—which has reared its ugly head in the public life of this country, to a great extent than hitherto has been the case.

B: Madam Clerk, Crowne Plaza accord, matters not agreed upon. One, coalition government, Executive collaboration. They wanted a coalition government Executive collaboration—collaboration at the Executive level. The PNM said no. It is not by accident that the PNM will say no to a proposal like that. It is because, Madam Clerk, hon. Members, that we have had a history, a long history of association with the government of this country and that was from 1956—1986 and from 1991—1995. We have a view that when we adopt positions, we do not adopt positions because those positions sound right. We do not adopt positions because those positions, Madam Clerk, appear to be right. We adopt positions based on the experiences of the positions of the PNM in Trinidad and the experiences of others elsewhere in the world, that in our state of development, at our level of sophistication, we do not subscribe to the view that a coalition government along the lines that they were suggesting was an approach that gave us a reasonable and acceptable system of government to which we all aspire. We were not convinced of that at all.

So we did not agree on a coalition government. We did not agree on the timing of elections. They wanted elections, I think it was this year; we said next year; after a review of updating of the electoral system.

Or, in fact, I am now being reminded here. I stand corrected, Madam Clerk. We were the ones in Crowne Plaza who were calling for an election in one year because we anticipated it would take one year to update the electoral system and my good friend opposite, ably supported by the very distinguished Member for St. Augustine and his colleague from Caroni East, who by then had left us, they were

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calling for an election in three years—three to four years. You know why? They were saying that in addition to electoral reform, they wanted constitutional reform before elections. That is what they were saying. That is what they said. [*Desk thumping*] They wanted constitutional reform before the elections.

We were saying no, that will take too long. We expected it would take about three to four years. We said no; we were saying we wanted to go to the polls as early as possible. [*Desk thumping*] That was our position. And we wanted to go to the polls early because we did not want a situation to subsist for any length of time where there was doubt about the legitimacy of government and all that kind of talk. We did not want that. We were not afraid of the polls. We were saying we were going to the polls, but fix the electoral system. That was the prerequisite for the electoral system. [*Desk thumping*]

It just goes to show how times have changed. We were calling for one year; they were calling for three years. Now we are hearing they want elections now. Nearly killed me in Crowne Plaza because I would not say three years. Now being told.

Matters not agreed upon: Commission of enquiry into the Elections and Boundaries Commission. They did not agree on that, and four, they did not agree on a special prosecutor.

Position on matters not agreed upon. One, UNC power sharing. The UNC proposes power sharing at the Executive level. That is, Cabinet and the appointment of Senators, and the PNM rejects the UNC proposals for Executive collaboration. They wanted power sharing at the Executive level, that is to say, Cabinet and appointment of Senators. The PNM was saying no Executive collaboration. They were saying, UNC proposes elections to be held after electoral and constitutional reform. That is right. It is all here. PNM proposes fresh elections, not before the availability of a new voters list, generated from a national re-registration exercise. We were saying electoral reform. They were saying electoral and constitutional reform: one year in our case, three years in their case.

Three, commission of enquiry into the EBC. UNC rejects the PNM's proposal for a commission of enquiry into the EBC and, instead, proposes a reform of the electoral system. If lieu of a commission of enquiry into the EBC, they were proposing a reform of the electoral system. We agreed on that reform of the system and the need for it. The PNM's position was the PNM proposes a commission of enquiry into the Elections and Boundaries Commission as a prerequisite to electoral reform.

Madam Clerk, you will permit me just to digress for one minute to welcome to this august Chamber, Sen. The Hon. Dr. Linda Baboolal, the newly elected



President of the Senate. [*Desk thumping*] I am sure that I speak for all Members of the House on both sides in extending congratulations to Dr. Baboolal and to expressing the wish that she serves this country for many, many years to come.

The final position that needed to be explained, and which was included in the Crowne Plaza accord was the position of special prosecutor. The UNC rejects the PNM's proposal for a special prosecutor and proposes Prevention of Corruption Bill which provides for a permanent anti-corruption commission with full investigative powers. The PNM proposes the appointment of a special prosecutor to deal with allegations of corruption.

Conceptual difference. They like one approach, we like the other approach, but okay, divergences of views which are quite acceptable. You have one view, I have one view, and we may not be able to resolve it, but nobody is right or wrong in that situation. It is just what perspective you take up. That was the Crowne Plaza accord. This was the Crowne Plaza accord arrived at after two days of discussions and negotiations at Crowne Plaza Hotel headed by the hon. Basdeo Panday, hon. Ganga Singh, hon. Gerald Yetming on the one hand, and Hon. Dr. Keith Rowley, Mrs. Joan Yuille-Williams, Senator, and yours truly on the other. One side meeting for the UNC and the other side for the PNM. An agreement was struck.

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

As part of that agreement, Madam Clerk, the parties do agree on a Speaker of the House of Representatives who is to be identified before the appointment of the Prime Minister.

The records will also show, Madam Clerk, that subsequent to the Crowne Plaza accord being struck, discussions were held between the Member for Couva North and the Member for San Fernando East. We proposed Prof. Max Richards; the hon. Member for Couva North proposed Dr. Marjorie Thorpe and when we expressed a reservation, another name was proposed, which I do not now recall; another name was proposed.

After some discussions among us, we agreed that, perhaps, of all the alternatives that were available to us, Prof. Max Richards represented the best selection available. We agreed on that and, therefore, we arrived at a position that has led me to get up in this House today to propose the nomination of Prof. Max Richards to hold the position of Speaker of the Seventh Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago in the Lower House.

Madam Clerk, I just want to read for the benefit of a voice I just heard in the wilderness, I do not know who it was. I am quoting from the Internet Express of Wednesday, December 19:

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“Richards willing to be Speaker” [*Interruption*]

Let me quote because you doubt it.

“Prospective Speaker of the House of Representatives Prof. Max Richards last night said he was willing to come out of his blissful retirement to serve this country again.”

It is here:

“Prof. Richards, a former principal of the St. Augustine campus of the University of the West Indies, is expected to be formally appointed Speaker of the House of Representatives any day now.”

That was optimism.

“In fact, sources have already told the Express Prof. Richards' choice is as good as sealed as Prime Minister Basdeo Panday has already conceded and his choice UNDP representative in Barbados, Marjorie Thorpe withdrawn.”

She was the UNDP representative in Barbados.

“Richards who is the choice of PNM leader Patrick Manning said he was not informed of any such appointment up to last night. He added the country was facing a very difficult situation since the election dead heat last week Monday. He congratulated both Prime Minister Basdeo Panday and Mr. Manning for rising to the occasion, their genuine statesmanship and political maturity displayed.”

It reminds me of what caused the President to call us together in the first case and of what he said. He said, and I am reminded hon. Members, that the three of us are the most experienced politicians in this country, surely that experience could be brought to bear on the resolution of a difficult issue. That is what he said and I agreed with him entirely. Prof. Richards was now saying that he congratulated both Prime Minister Basdeo Panday and Mr. Manning for rising to the occasion, their genuine statesmanship and political maturity displayed.

The article goes on and this is from the Internet Express:

“The agreement of a choice for Speaker is a precondition to the naming of a new Prime Minister by President Arthur N. R. Robinson. At meetings last week both Panday and Manning agreed to this condition. Meanwhile the President would not be able to appoint a new Prime Minister until the Elections and Boundaries Commission gives the final results of the December 10 elections.”

Madam Clerk, the situation that subsequently emerged was a decision by His Excellency the President on December 24, 2001, Christmas Eve Day, that the leader of the PNM should hold the position of Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago. Madam Clerk, all hell broke loose. All hell broke loose. The way my good friend from Couva North operated is a lesson to all of us and we must see how the thing was done if only to make yourself familiar with the modus operandi so you can recognize it in the future; I know it from the past.

Then, after a lot of toing and froing, he calls a meeting of the UNC membership. Let me tell you how the game was played, so he could say, "Well, it was not me; I agree, but I didn't do that; is dey who told me to do that." I would read into the record the press release and, in fact, the report in the Internet Express on this matter why the UNC wants an election now; that was what the article was headlined. It was a shift from a situation where they wanted an election three years down the road and we wanted it one year down the road, to a position where they want an election now and we want an election one year down the road. Our position remains consistent at all times.

"The UNC membership attending yesterday's special national assembly..."

He called a special national assembly of the membership of the UNC—after we agreed:

"...unanimously passed the resolution which called on the party's political leader Basdeo Panday and the party's executive to demand fresh elections immediately."

He did not tell you how he set it up. His good friend from Chaguanas, the distinguished Manohar Ramsaran; I understand that he worked overtime that week to do all kinds of things, not to mention my good friend from Siparia.

"The lengthy resolution was moved by Chaguanas Mayor Orlando Nagassar..." [*Laughter*]

Ladies and gentlemen take note of the strategy; it is sweet too bad.

"and seconded by UNC Tobago East member Joanna Grant."

So you see, Madam Speaker, it was moved by Chaguanas and seconded by Tobago. Not me; I know nothing about that; they want that.

"Nagassar who read the resolution said the party's general secretary Fazal Karim received over 100 resolutions up to 9.00 a.m. yesterday from various units and organs of the party and they were reduced to one which encompasses all the resolutions received. The entire resolution states:

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Whereas a general election was held on December 10, 2001; whereas the UNC obtained 278,781 votes and 18 electoral districts; whereas the PNM obtained 259,250 votes and 18 electoral districts—”

They did not count votes in 1995; nobody was counting votes in 1995. All of a sudden votes are important, so we are counting votes in the year 2001. The fact that we operate a first-past-the-post system was acceptable to them in 1995, but not in the year 2001.

It goes on:

“Whereas on December 11, 2001 the political leader of the UNC, Basdeo. Panday proposed a national unity government in which both the PNM and the UNC would participate in Cabinet;

Whereas the political leader of the PNM rejected the proposal;

Whereas after general elections President Arthur N. R. Robinson, President, advised both Panday and Manning that Prof. Vernon Bogdanor of Oxford University was the person from whom guidance and advice should be sought in the resolution of the deadlock;

And whereas on December 16 and 21, 2001 the advice of Prof. Bogdanor was delivered to the President;

And whereas on December 13 and 14, 2001, representatives of the UNC and the PNM concluded an agreement which provided as follows:

- (1) The Prime Minister be appointed by the President in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago; and
- (2) The parties to agree on a Speaker of the House of Representatives who is to be identified before the appointment of a Prime Minister;

And whereas the UNC entered the second negotiations and concluded the agreement in good faith;

And whereas the UNC had a legitimate expectation that the President's appointment of the Prime Minister would be guided by the advice of Prof. Vernon Bogdanor to whom he had referred the parties...”

He referred us to Prof. Bogdanor; I am hearing that for the first time.

“And whereas on December 24, 2001, the President appointed Patrick Manning as Prime Minister...”

Even though, according to them, he referred us to Prof. Bogdanor; we did not talk to him, but he appointed me.

“And whereas providing said reason for selecting Mr. Manning as Prime Minister, the President:

- (1) Acted contrary to the provisions of the Constitution; and
- (2) Failed to be guided by the advice of Prof. Bogdanor who had recommended and on whose advice the UNC had a legitimate expectation that he would rely on and failed to advise the UNC that he would not rely on the advice of Prof. Bogdanor;

And whereas the PNM recommended Prof. Max Richards as the Speaker and in so doing failed to disclose he was a PNM political activist...”

You understand! All of a sudden, a very distinguished Professor from the University of the West Indies, the principal of the St. Augustine campus, Vice-Chancellor of the university, suddenly became a PNM activist. We now know that. [*Interruption*] False.

“...and that he had campaigned on behalf of the PNM and supported them politically;

And whereas on December 19, 2001 it was reported in the *Trinidad Guardian* that a PNM official stated: Since our nominee would be Speaker we would be in control of the House of Representatives and not the UNC...”

Madam Clerk, just let me go back to the paragraphs that precede this please and allow me to read it a little more slowly.

“Whereas the PNM recommended Prof. Max Richards as Speaker and in so doing failed to disclose that he was a PNM political activist and that he had campaigned on behalf of the PNM and supported them politically...”

In the last sitting, who was the Speaker of the House? For whom did he campaign, ladies and gentlemen? In the Parliament between 1995 and 2000, who was the Speaker and on whose behalf did he campaign? How all of a sudden, according to the non-disclosure of the fact that you campaigned for a political party, that was ground for the unilateral repudiation of the agreement? How come? Not that it is true; it was not true, ladies and gentlemen. It is not true, Madam Clerk, but that was the peg on which they chose to hang their hat.

“The special national assembly was being asked to vote that:

- (1) The appointment of Manning as Prime Minister by President Robinson is contrary to the rule of law.”

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In other words, I am an unlawful Prime Minister. I will take a drink on that one.  
[*Laughter*]

“...that his Excellency misguided himself in the interpretation of the Constitution.”

You know I sat and imagined His Excellency misguiding himself.

- “3. The President acted in a manner which was discriminatory and his comments prior to doing so discredited large sections of the national community and thereby created divisions among the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.
4. His Excellency in failing to adhere to the Constitution, committed a fundamental and fatal breach of the agreement made at Crowne Plaza which he was obliged to comply with and which went to the root of the said agreement and rendered it null and void.”

The important issue here, ladies and gentlemen, is that in trying to achieve their political ends it was not beyond them to seek to bring the Office of the President into the political arena and therefore into disrepute. I started off by saying that if today the profession of politics is not held in high esteem by the citizens of this country, then politicians have nobody to blame but themselves. [*Desk thumping*] That action on behalf of my colleagues opposite constitutes an action of which no politician, no group of politicians could be proud.

- “5. That the political leader of the PNM suppressed and/or failed to disclose material information relating to the political affiliation of Prof. Max Richards and in so doing the political leader of the PNM also acted in bad faith;

Be it resolved that this special national assembly hereby authorize the party's political leader and the national executive to demand fresh elections immediately to do such things as are necessary to protect elected democratic government in Trinidad and Tobago and to preserve the integrity of and observe the Constitution to ensure that public authorities observe the rule of law.”

Madam Clerk, is he a leader or is he a follower? What is he? Will the real Basdeo Panday please stand up? [*Desk thumping*] What is he? I have to put that question to hon. Members because on matters like these where some of us are much better informed than others, the way we conduct business in the PNM is that we first try to explain to the best of our ability as many angles to the problems as we can recognize.

We lead our membership and we are guided by them. As we put out various scenarios to them and as we draw to their attention the implications of what we are discussing, they, now better informed, are in a position to say, "Well, instead of going this route, we would prefer you to go that route." That is how the PNM operates. It is democracy at its best. But what my good friend has done, completely abrogating his responsibility, or so we are being told, because I am sure that that did not happen, and telling us that the party wanted that and therefore that is what they took.

Madam Clerk, the rest of this is history. There has been a unilateral repudiation of the agreement. Hon. Members opposite are calling for election now and they are saying that they no longer recognize the Crowne Plaza accord.

We took it one step further; we met with them again and we tried to see whether we could not come to some other arrangement, but it was not to be. What they seem to be bent on is disrupting the politics of Trinidad and Tobago and disrupting the smooth conduct of our parliamentary affairs as they are normally conducted in this honourable House.

On January 10, just three days after the publication on the Internet Express of the meeting of the national assembly of the UNC, the *Trinidad Express* published—I think the byline is Richard Lord: "No Parliament says Panday." This is the gentleman who sat with us in good faith in Crowne Plaza. I notice that my good friend from Couva South, whom I also welcome very warmly to this House on his return to the Parliament, is smiling; perhaps he understands what I am saying.

**Hon. Member:** You missed me.

**Hon. P. Manning:** This is how the article goes.

"Vowing last night not to cooperate in the election of a Speaker..."

This is the man who signed the Crowne Plaza accord. Do you see his signature here? We agreed on a Speaker, but now we are being told:

"...UNC leader Hon. B. Panday noted this would block the convening of Parliament and force the PNM Government to call an election."

On that score, Madam Clerk, let me advise hon. Members opposite that they are quite wrong on that, as they would find out.

"This was the game plan the former Prime Minister who yesterday officially rejected the job of Opposition Leader unveiled to hundreds of party supporters and other members of the public, at the ballroom of Crowne Plaza, Wrightson Road, Port of Spain. Attending a symposium organized by the UNC at the hotel, Panday stressed..."

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They have some likeness for Crowne Plaza.

“...Panday stressed the party would not cooperate with the Government in the election of a Speaker or Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives. The bottom line nonetheless is, no Speaker, no Parliament. No Parliament then the only alternative is back to the polls. We therefore do not intend to cooperate in the election of a Speaker, Panday declared, quoting from the Express of January 10, 2002. Panday added, the Constitution dictates that there must be a sitting of Parliament April 9, 2002.”

They were suggesting that it would not take place; here we are today, April 05; all the time he was telling everybody that we were afraid to come to Parliament; look us here, April 5.

“No sitting by April 9, then the only solution is back to the polls. Fresh elections is the only way forward.”

That is a quote. He continued:

“When the House of Representatives first meet after a general election and a Speaker or Deputy Speaker is not elected, then for the purpose of the Standing Orders and the Constitution, no sitting of the House is deemed to have occurred.”

Which again, is not true. This is how politicians misinform the public. Let me take the opportunity to inform you now, that this meeting in which we are engaging today, constitutes the first sitting of the first session of the Seventh Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

“He said, ‘If the two posts were not filled at the first sitting of the House no subsequent meeting of the House can be convened for electing the Speaker in the life of this particular Parliament. Consequently, the President is not entitled to prorogue that first session of Parliament and by Proclamation seek to convene a new session of Parliament for any purpose whatsoever. The categorical reality is no Speaker, no Parliament, no Deputy Speaker, no Parliament.’ This, just hours after Prime Minister Patrick Manning had told reporters he was committed to reconvening Parliament and hoped Panday would accept the position of Opposition Leader.”

I still hope that he would.

“But Panday said he had no intention of accepting that offer at this time and wrote President Arthur N. R. Robinson yesterday to this effect. In the letter he called on Robinson to withdraw the instrument purporting to appoint him as Opposition Leader.”



That is a quote.

“Panday also told the Head of State his assertion that he was willing to be appointed Leader of the Opposition was an imposition which was not sanctioned by the Constitution and an imposition which he did not accept. Panday also told the President that his appointment of a Prime Minister on December 24, 2001 was also an imposition that is not sanctioned by the relevant enabling section of the Constitution, a section which is clear and unambiguous.”

All of that is not true but, of course, one speaks authoritatively to add credibility to what one is saying, especially when one knows it is incorrect; that is what the article is saying; it is not true.

The point I am trying to make, Madam Clerk, is that all of a sudden notwithstanding the two days that we spent at Crowne Plaza, notwithstanding the fact that there was an agreement signed by both sides; notwithstanding the fact that that agreement called for the selection of a Speaker of the House before the selection of a Prime Minister; notwithstanding the fact that we met and agreed on it; the minute the Prime Minister was appointed who was not the distinguished Member for Couva North, he began to adopt a different position, suggesting that the President did not act in accordance with the Constitution and that he does not want election three years from today, he wants it now and he would take steps to frustrate the convening of Parliament.

Madam Clerk, I think I have said enough.

**Hon. Members:** Yes; hear, hear!

**Hon. P. Manning:** I think I have said enough. I want to tell Members opposite if you think you are going home now, “you making the mistake of your life”. [*Crosstalk*] We on this side are going to ensure that the record of this Parliament is accurate in relation to what transpired in this country at this time. We have said it before. [*Desk thumping*]

This sitting today is history in the making and whatever we do in this sitting is being observed not just by observers in Trinidad and Tobago or in the Caribbean, but internationally. The Commonwealth countries that are in a similar system of government are all looking at Trinidad and Tobago to see what we will do. They want to see whether the experience that we have in politics is experience for experience sake or whether that experience is going to redound to the benefit of the people of Trinidad and Tobago by our politicians, determined as we are, to raise the perception, the understanding and the view of members of the public on the

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profession of politics; whether we are going to take a course of action at this historic period, of which, in due course, not just we but our children would all be proud.

Madam Clerk, I propose for the office of Speaker Prof. Max Richards and may I say I have just concluded my first session in this Parliament and in this sitting there is more to come. [*Desk thumping*]

**The Minister of Planning and Development (Hon. Dr. Keith Rowley):**  
Madam Clerk, I want to begin by complimenting the leader of the political party of which I have the honour to be a member. [*Desk thumping*] I have heard him many times in many places and I have hardly ever heard a finer presentation. [*Desk thumping*]

I, too, speak with an eye on the record of Trinidad and Tobago, because a parliamentary record is, in fact, important for our children, our grandchildren, for historians, for researchers, for friends and all those who would view us when we all become history. Having been at Crowne Plaza, I want to confirm every item raised this afternoon by the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago.

Madam Clerk, it is very easy for what is not true to become accepted as fact and repeated; sometimes innocently, sometimes deliberately. As I rise to second the nomination of a distinguished son of Trinidad and Tobago, [*Desk thumping*] I crave the indulgence of my colleagues to say a few words. First, it is not right that we allow the record to go unchallenged when such a son is portrayed in a light less than shining.

Yesterday afternoon I was listening to one of my favourite radio stations and I heard the news. I am sure that there is somebody from that radio station here and I am sure that such a person would carry what I am going to say back to the radio station so that it would not perpetuate a mischief that was spawned in somebody's breast somewhere.

The news item said that Prof. Richards is to be nominated today by the PNM; that he was the person on whom there was agreement but that agreement fell because he was found to have appeared on a PNM platform. Now, that is not correct and it ought not to be produced a news item. In fact, so unseemly was the response by some of my colleagues, as outlined by the Prime Minister, Member for San Fernando East, that Prof. Richards was forced to make a written public statement confirming that he had never appeared on a PNM platform. In fact, he went as far as to acknowledge the error might have been made by some fallible person—all of us are fallible—and anticipated that some apology might have been made to him. Unfortunately, no such apology was forthcoming, but so be it.

It ought not to be put on the record or allowed to be propagated to our children that such a distinguished son of the soil was disqualified from holding the high office of Speaker of this country, because he appeared on a PNM platform, as if that is some crime. But we put it on record so that the record can be correct.

Madam Clerk, it is a source of extreme pleasure for me to second this nomination. In fact, I am honoured and privileged to stand in our Parliament and second the nomination of Prof. Max Richards, a former principal of the campus of the University of the West Indies in St. Augustine. I have been on that campus for decades and have known Prof. Richards in his academic capacity for many years. I have known him as a teacher, an academic, an administrator and teacher. I have known him as you have known him, those of you on the other side as an organizer of the charity in which we all have fun from time to time, the famous UWI fete.

Having served at the university in the capacity of research fellow and head of a department, over the years I have had on many occasions to interact with Prof. Richards. My political affiliations are not unknown to any person in this country. I have been a member of the PNM for many, many years. I have been on the PNM platform for decades. I have been a PNM parliamentarian—in fact, I served as a Member of the Upper House while holding the position as a member of the Faculty of the University and that would have been known to Prof. Richards.

I want to put on record here today that contrary to what has been said, that Prof. Richards never appeared on a PNM platform and is a PNM activist, Prof. Richards and I never had a conversation about the PNM or politics in all the years I have known him at the university. That is why I was the most surprised person to see that item put out as a reason purporting to disqualify such a distinguished son of our soil.

Madam Clerk, I do not want to go into the details of what transpired behind closed doors at Crowne Plaza, but since there are public positions taken purporting to advance amendments, abrogations or reviews of what took place, I think I must let my colleagues know what took place. We sat in Crowne Plaza seeking to come up with a workable arrangement recognizing the outcome of the election and in a spirit of conviviality, a spirit of seriousness, when we came to the point of agreeing on who would sit in the Chair in the Parliament to adjudicate over our proceedings, we said, let us look at the national community and see who is there. And we thought for moments, both sides of the table.

When the name of Prof. Max Richards came up from our side after some thought, I was very excited because I thought we could not have found a better person. When the name was put forward, my friend and colleague from Couva

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North, also got excited, and his words were, "That's a good name." So good was the name that when we said, "Is there anybody else who you could put forward?" They thought for a while and said, "Not now."

What I am trying to say is that on the first day when we came up with the name Prof. Max Richards, it found great favour across the table and a second name could not be brought forward. However, I must say that it was said to us, "Okay, we'll think and come back tomorrow." Subsequently, another name was advanced and subsequently, even in the face of another name being advanced, as we were told this afternoon, even when other names were advanced, in the end agreement was for that distinguished son, Prof. Max Richards. [*Desk thumping*]

That is why, Madam Clerk, colleagues, on both sides of the House, I am not going to go into any detail about Prof. Richards' academic background; his administrative acumen; his long record of impeccable service to country and region; his standing in the national community; his willingness and potential to serve with distinction; I would not do that.

What I would do is remind all my colleagues on both sides of the House that our system is that the people go to the polling stations and they pass authority for their affairs on to 36 people. Once the election results are known, the people have done their part: they have elected 36 Members to come to this House and to conduct the affairs of this House. If it is that there are Members in this House who choose not to do their duty, let it be known that as I stand here this afternoon, in doing my duty, I second the nomination of Prof. Max Richards to sit in the Chair as Speaker of the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. Ganga Singh** (*Caroni East*): Madam Clerk, I beg to propose Mr. Robin Montano of No. 3 Henderson Road, Maraval, to take the Chair of this honourable House as Speaker. In so doing I, unlike the hon. Member for San Fernando East, do not intend to breach Standing Order 3(4) which reads:

"No debate shall be allowed upon proposals for filling the office of Speaker, but any member may call for a division after the decision on the proposal has been announced."

**Miss Gillian Lucky** (*Pointe-a-Pierre*): Madam Clerk, if it pleases you, I beg to second the nomination of Robin Montano. [*Desk thumping*]

**Madam Clerk:** Are there any further nominations? There being no further nominations, hon. Members, the question is that Prof. Max Richards do take the Chair of this House as Speaker. All in favour say "Aye".

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**Government Members:** Aye.

**Madam Clerk:** Any against?

**UNC Members:** No.

**Madam Clerk:** Hon. Members, the voices appear equally divided. I must take a division.

Ayes 18

Noes 18

AYES

Valley, Hon. K.

Manning, Hon. P.

Rowley, Hon. Dr. K.

Imbert, Hon. C.

Robinson-Regis, Hon. C.

Narine, Hon. J.

Joseph, Hon. M.

Williams, Hon. E.

Bereaux, Hon. H.

Boynes, Hon. R.

Achong, Hon. L.

Beckles, Hon. P.

Rahael, Hon. J.

Job-Davis, Hon. E.

Hart, Hon. E.

James, Hon. E.

Hinds, Hon. F.

Callender, Hon. S.

NOES

Singh, G.

Lucky, Miss G.

Panday, B.  
Persad-Bissessar, Mrs. K.  
Panday, S.  
Peters, W.  
Yetming, G.  
Baksh, S.  
John, C.  
Ramnath, K.  
Khan, Dr. F.  
Nanan, Dr. A.  
Rafeeq, Dr. H.  
Ramsaran, M.  
Partap, H.  
Baksh, N.  
Sharma, C.  
Moonilal, Dr. R.

**Madam Clerk:** There being an equality of votes, the proposal is declared lost.

**The Minister of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education (Hon. Hedwige Breaux):** Madam Clerk, I would like to point out that in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order 3(3) the condition precedent for putting the question in respect of any other person who has been proposed has not been fulfilled. In respect of the nomination of Prof. Max Richards, the proposal has not been negatived and accordingly you cannot now, in accordance with the Standing Orders, put the question.

Madam Clerk, Standing Order 3 refers to the election of a Speaker. It says:

“If another such Member or person, willing to serve if elected, be proposed and seconded, the Clerk shall propose the question that the Member who was first proposed should be the Speaker. If that proposal be agreed to, the Member or other person so chosen shall be Speaker, but if the proposal be negatived, the Clerk shall propose a like question in respect of any other such Member...”

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Madam Clerk, as you have just indicated, there have been 18 votes for and 18 votes against; that is an equality and as such it has not been negated and in accordance, therefore, the question cannot be put and in fact, Prof. Max Richards has been duly elected Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

**Madam Clerk:** Hon. Members, with a division of 18/18 the proposal is declared lost. [*Desk thumping*] Therefore hon. Members the question is that Mr. Robin Montano do take the Chair of this House as Speaker. All in favour say "Aye". Any against?

**Hon. Members:** No!

**Madam Clerk:** The noes appear to have it.

[*Calls for a division*]

Noes 36

NOES

Valley, Hon. K.

Manning, Hon. P.

Rowley, Hon. Dr. K.

Imbert, Hon. C.

Robinson-Regis, Hon. C.

Narine, Hon. J.

Joseph, Hon. M.

Williams, Hon. E.

Bereaux, Hon. H.

Boynes, Hon. R.

Achong, Hon. L.

Beckles, Hon. P.

Rahael, J. Hon.

Job-Davis, Hon. E.

Hart, Hon. E.

James, Hon. E.

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Hinds, Hon. F.  
Callender, Hon. S.  
Singh, G.  
Lucky, Miss G.  
Panday, B.  
Persad-Bissessar, Mrs. K.  
Panday, S.  
Peters, W.  
Yetming, G.  
Baksh, S.  
John, C.  
Ramnath, K.  
Khan, Dr. F.  
Nanan, Dr. A.  
Rafeeq, Dr. H.  
Ramsaran, M.  
Partap, H.  
Baksh, N.  
Sharma, C.  
Moonilal, Dr. R.

**Madam Clerk:** The result of the division, hon. Members, is no Member voted for, 36 Members voted against.

**The Minister of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education (Hon. Hedwige Beraux):** Madam Clerk, I rise again to draw your attention to Standing Order 3(2) which says:

“A Member, having first ascertained that the Member or other person to be proposed, is willing to serve if elected, may, rising in his place and addressing the Clerk, propose any other Member (not being a Minister or Parliamentary Secretary), or any other person who is not a Member of either Chamber of the



Legislature, to the House as Speaker of the House; and if that proposal be seconded, the Clerk, if no other such Member or person be proposed for the office, shall declare the Member or the person so proposed and seconded to be Speaker of the House.”

That is, if there is a proposal and nobody else, that person becomes the Member of the House. In this instance, Madam Clerk, what we have is a situation where we had one person proposed and that person had 18 votes for and 18 votes against which, as I indicated previously, and you ruled upon I was prepared at that time to consider it. However, what we have now is a situation where, in fact, not even the persons who have nominated and seconded the second nominee proposal, have voted for their own nominee.

In fact, therefore, logic says that we have only had one nomination and, accordingly, Prof. Max Richards is the Speaker of this House. [*Desk thumping*]

**The Minister of Planning and Development (Hon. Dr. Keith Rowley):** Madam Clerk, I rise to get a clarification. I am labouring under the impression, and I would like clarification given to your account. I was talking to my colleague and I might have missed the count.

Am I correct in understanding that 18 votes were cast for Prof. Max Richards and zero for Robin Montano? [*Crosstalk*]

**Madam Clerk:** Hon. Members, you all know very well that I am not empowered to make rulings.

**Dr. K. Rowley:** Just a clarification. I just want to get the numbers clear. Am I correct with the numbers? Madam Clerk, I want to be very clear. I am not inviting you to take part in the House proceedings. I understand your position, but I want to be clear for the record. What were the numbers? I might have missed the vote. How many votes were cast for Prof. Richards and how many for Robin Montano?

**Madam Clerk:** On the question that Prof. Richards take the Chair as Speaker of this House, 18 Members voted for and 18 Members voted against. On the question that Mr. Robin Montano take the Chair of this House as Speaker, no Members voted for and 36 Members voted against. Accordingly, hon. Members, I once again call upon this House to elect a Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

**The Minister of Health (Hon. Colm Imbert):** Madam Clerk, we are proceeding under protest; we do not agree. [*Desk thumping*]

**The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries (Hon. Eric Williams):** Madam Clerk, it is under duress and under protest in this House that I rise to make another nomination for the post of Speaker of this honourable Chamber.

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Madam Clerk, as previous speakers on this side have indicated, we intend, as it has indeed always been our intention, to adhere to the agreement which was forged at Crowne Plaza by individuals, members of political parties on sides opposite, who were believed to be responsible, intelligent and honourable persons.

As a result, it is my pleasure to present as a nominee for the post of Speaker of this honourable Chamber, Dr. Marjorie Thorpe, who was proposed initially by Members opposite and who Members on this side believe has the requisite qualities, the requisite persona and reputation, not to mention a distinguished track record, to more than adequately perform the duties, the leadership role, the impartial role of Speaker of this honourable Chamber.

This House ought to know of the record, the curriculum vitae of Dr. Thorpe. She obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree, with honours in English from Mc Gill University in 1963; an MA from Mc Gill University in 1965; a PhD from Queen's University in 1975.

Madam Clerk, in 1965, Dr. Thorpe was appointed an assistant lecturer at the University of the West Indies. In 1969, she was promoted to lecturer at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine and in 1982 became a senior lecturer also at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine.

Apart from those appointments, she has served the university for a considerable period of time. From 1987 to present, she has been university dean at the Faculty of Arts and General Studies. From 1987 to present, she has been campus dean, Faculty of Arts and General Studies. From 1986—1987, she was coordinator of Women and Development Studies. From 1982—1985, again, she was also coordinator of that Women and Development Studies group. From 1984—1985, deputy campus dean, Faculty of Arts and General Studies; 1983—1984, vice-dean, Faculty of Arts and General Studies. From 1979 through 1985 she was head of the English department at the university.

In addition to these posts, 1987 to present, chairperson of the Faculty Consultative Committee; 1987 to present, chairperson of the Campus Board, Faculty of Arts and General Studies. In fact, from 1983—1984 and then 1987 to present, chairperson of the Faculty Subcommittee on Higher Degrees, and from 1987 to present, chairperson Faculty Subcommittee on Assessment and Promotion.

From 1982—1985, she was a member of the Faculty Subcommittee on Assessment and Promotions; 1987 to present, member of the University Assessment and Promotion Committees; 1987 to present, a member of the University Appointments Committee; 1987 to present, member of the Campus

Appointment Committee; 1987 to present, member of the University Council; 1987 to present, member of the Campus Council; 1987 to present, member of the Campus Finance and General Purposes Committee.

From 1987 to present, member of the University Finance Committee; 1983—1984 and then 1987 to present, member of the St. Augustine Planning and Estimates Committee; 1987 to present a member of the University Planning and Estimates Committee; 1983—1984 and then 1987 to present, a member of the University Academic Committee; 1979—1981, then 1982—1985 and then 1987 to present, a member of the Campus Academic Board; 1982—1985, 1987 to present, a member of the University Senate.

### **3.30 p.m.**

In 1980—1981, a member of the Library Committee; 1979—1980, member of the Faculty Executive Committee; 1974—1975, Treasurer of the West Indian Group of University Teachers at St. Augustine; 1972—1973, member of the Executive of the Senior Common Room Committee; 1968—1969, a member of the Open Lectures Committee, and, Madam Clerk, lest it misses the record, in 1988, Dr. Thorpe was the permanent representative of Trinidad and Tobago to the United Nations in New York.

She has received several awards for distinguished academic work. In 1963, she had a graduate fellowship at Mc Gill University; in 1969, she headed a CIDA Fellowship to Queen's University; in 1979, she received the Association of Commonwealth Universities fellowship to Ife's University. In 1985, she was awarded a senior Fulbright Fellowship to Howard University; in 1986, she received the Ford Foundation Fellowship to the Institute of Development Studies at Sussex University.

Madam Clerk, we have before us for consideration of this honourable House a distinguished daughter of the soil who has given yeoman service in the field of academia at our university. She has demonstrated over the time of her career, increasing levels of responsibility and, indeed, influence over the educational development of citizens, not only of Trinidad and Tobago, but indeed all students who would have attended the university from throughout Caricom and regions distant.

In terms of her public service: in 1965 to 1988, she was involved in radio talks, lectures, and addresses on aspects of West Indian literature, literary studies and women studies. In 1981, 1983 and 1984, she was a judge of the National Cultural Competition in the category of fiction; in October 1986, she was a viewpoint panelist introducing Women Studies at the University of the West

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Indies; in 1987, she was a judge of the Trintoc School Debating Competition; in 1988, she was a member of a Cabinet-appointed Scholarship Selection Committee; and from February to April 1988, she was Chairman of the Cabinet-appointed Committee on School Books, and, Madam Clerk, lest it not be said that she has developed herself in terms of her academics, she is the author of several publications and conference papers.

Madam Clerk, under publications, these include, but are not limited to, feminism. “Women and Culture”, a literary view, a paper that was read at a symposium sponsored by women and National Development Unit, Cavehill, Barbados for Carifesta 1981 and which was published in *Journey in the Shaping*, a report of the First Symposium on Women in Caribbean Culture edited by Margaret Hope. Here it is we have a distinguished woman, she is not just academic, she has not just developed herself in academia, she has demonstrated cultural and social responsibility. She has demonstrated that she is one of our foremost experts in the area of the development of our women and, Madam Clerk, it cannot be lost on all of us—Members present of this House and members of the national community—the importance of having someone as distinguished as this to be the Speaker of the House of Trinidad and Tobago.

In addition to her publications, she has done the introduction to Earl Lovelace’s the *Wine of Astonishment*, one of the premier literary works in Trinidad and Tobago. Madam Clerk, there are Members opposite who believe that we are entirely silly and do not know why they initially nominated her. What we are merely doing, Madam Clerk, is reminding them of why they nominated her and why we find her to be acceptable in the present circumstances. [*Desk thumping*]

She has written *In Search of the West Indian Hero* and, Madam Clerk, clearly this is what we are now in search of, a hero for this Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago. A study of Earl Lovelace’s fiction, Roger Mais, “Brotherman”, Longman Guide to Literature, Literature and Nationalism, a paper read at the conference of UWI and the CVI English Departments, St. Thomas, in May 1981 and published in *Critical Approaches to West Indian Literature*. The editors were Robert Knowles and Erica Smilowitz.

*Select Bibliography of Women Writers in the Eastern Caribbean* with Barbara Commissiong, published in 1978. Earl Lovelace’s *Jestina’s Calypso*, a review article, Trinidad and Tobago’s Review Vol. 2, No. 7, 1978. The *Problem of Cultural Identification in Crick Crack, Literature in Trinidad and Tobago in the ‘60s* along with Lloyd King in the Inter-American Review of Bibliography. The

*Mimic Men*, A Study of Isolation New World Quarterly. Madam Clerk, you will agree with me that Members opposite are distinguishing themselves in this particular regard in their association with reason and with the proper development of governance of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

In terms of conference papers, Madam Clerk, eight of them: Feminism and the Female authored West Indian novel; Man /Woman Relationships in the Literature of the Anglo-phone Caribbean; The Other Caribbean Woman; Challenging the Stereotype, a re-reading of Merle Hodge's Crick Crack Monkey paper; Growing Up in the Caribbean; Perceptions of Three Female Writers; New Perspectives on the Woman of the Black Middle Class; Religion in Derek Walcott's Dream on Monkey Mountain. There are Members opposite who are suggesting that she ought to be nominated for a Nobel Prize in Literature but, you know, Madam Clerk, apparently a prophet is without honour in his own country, and we wish to see if Members opposite will now vote for this distinguished daughter of the soil of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Finally, Madam Clerk, the Black Woman in West Indian Fiction. Madam Clerk, we bring to the table an individual, a distinguished individual who was brought to the attention of those involved in the selection of Speaker by the Member for Couva North and Members opposite. It was they who brought her to the Table and we are saying, Madam Clerk, that in the circumstances, we believe that Dr. Thorpe—[*Interruption*]

Madam Clerk, they are seeking to coach me, if only they would seek to behave and move along in an orderly manner we will get somewhere. [*Desk thumping*] They are seeking to demonstrate to the nation how to be disobedient.

**Hon. Minister:** Civil disobedience.

**Hon. E. Williams:** Madam Clerk, lest it be said that Dr. Thorpe may not have demonstrated a knowledge of laws and rules and regulations in the governance of a body such as this, let me take us back to the fact that she served as a diplomat of Trinidad and Tobago in the period 1988—1992. During the time, Madam Clerk, as ambassador and permanent representative of Trinidad and Tobago to the United Nations, she was head of Trinidad and Tobago's Mission to the United Nations and she was part of the team that led the now President Robinson's successful initiative to promote the establishment of an International Criminal Court, and Madam Clerk, because of this initiative Trinidad and Tobago continues to enjoy a position of pre-eminence and respect in the international community. It is because of the work, as part of the team, of Dr. Thorpe that today there is an International Criminal Court, of which the Head of State of Trinidad

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and Tobago is recognized as one of the initiators and the creators. Madam Clerk, a distinguished woman, a distinguished daughter of the soil. [*Desk thumping*]

In 1992—1995 she was Deputy Director of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and during that period while on the staff of UNIFEM, she was appointed to the Eight Person Committee established by Sir Shridath Ramphal, Chancellor of the University of the West Indies, to review the governance of the university in the light of its current and prospective development role in the region and relevant developments in the university's administration and practice elsewhere. Questions addressed included how the university might be made more outward looking in terms of its relationship with other tertiary institutions.

In 1995—1998, she was resident Coordinator of the United Nations System Operational Activities in Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean and resident representative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). In 1991—1992 she was a member of the Senior Management of the United Nations Development Programme, and up until June 2000 she was head at the Centre for the Gender and Development Studies of the University of the West Indies at the St. Augustine Campus.

Madam Clerk, and Members of this House, Dr. Thorpe is eminently qualified to be the Speaker of the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago at a time like this. This is a time, Madam Clerk, when our nation is about to see a phenomenal—in fact, we are experiencing, and will continue to experience phenomenal growth in our economy, industrial and petroleum sectors. Indeed, Madam Clerk, and Members of this House, because of our initiatives from the Crowne Plaza accord to set up and to operate a committee on energy policy, there are indeed quite a number of initiatives, a number of issues, projects and opportunities that avail themselves to us as a nation of Trinidad and Tobago at this juncture in our history. Madam Clerk, if it is that we are moving ahead as the duly appointed and elected Cabinet, we are moving ahead in this nation with policy. We are seeking as part of the agreement that was arrived at and circumscribed to by all of us because you will recall—Madam Clerk, let me take you back—that His Excellency asked each leader to go to their membership and sign an affidavit indicating who they recognize, or would support as their leader and therefore, Madam Clerk, for those who do not understand the importance of that particular activity, we have each collectively co-joined ourselves to the decisions of our leadership as it occurred at the Crowne Plaza.

Madam Clerk, in my role as Minister of Energy and Energy Industries, we are part of a team which needs to ensure the safe operations of the energy sector, and

that includes both the upstream in terms of exploration and the downstream, the industrialization aspects of the energy industry. There are a number of regulatory issues which are required to be dealt with and passed in this honourable House and in the other place so that we can move forward in a situation where we require to modernize the laws and regulations which govern our petroleum sector.

Madam Clerk, I refer to the Petroleum Act and Regulations which have existed since 1969 and therefore, Madam Clerk, since then there have been technological changes and marketing arrangements have changed significantly. The ways of doing business within the energy sector, to some extent, Madam Clerk, the legislative framework has not kept pace with these developments—*[Desk thumping]* Therefore, I must bring to the attention of the national populace, the community that there is a need for reform and/or modernization of the legislation which governs our activities in the petroleum sector. *[Desk thumping]*

Indeed Madam Clerk, the Ministry which I am asked to lead at this time, is currently assisting and has been assisting the Ministry of Finance in ensuring that the country derives its fair share of the economic rent from the energy sector, and these functions are governed currently, as I mentioned before, by the existing Act and Regulations. At present Members present and members of the national community, representatives of the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries are included in the membership of a committee that is established to review and make proposals on the fiscal regime for oil and natural gas. *[Desk thumping]*

Madam Clerk, there are Members opposite who have been going into the press, into the public domain and who have been saying and acknowledging that we are about to receive a large windfall from our activities in the petroleum sector and yet they will not work with us, or they appear to not want to work with us to have a Speaker in the House so that we can move forward and take our nation forward into this millennium. *[Desk thumping]* They have been going publicly and saying this, and here it is, all that is required at the moment and in a situation where we are committed to having a standing committee on energy policy in this House, and in a situation where we have agreed to go to the polls at the earliest opportunity after those items which have been agreed to in the Crowne Plaza accord have been put in place in the national interest—*[Desk thumping]*

Here it is, after we have in good faith agreed to all these things—we have agreed to work towards the proper development of Trinidad and Tobago—that in a situation that is indeed 18/18, we have brought two to the attention of the House of Representatives; first a distinguished son of the soil, and now a distinguished

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daughter of the soil to merely preside over the Parliament until we get to that point that we had agreed to, that our leaders agreed to.

Madam Clerk, I have before me a list of persons who have applied for work permits in this country in the energy sector. Many of these posts here could be filled ultimately by locals, by citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. Indeed, Madam Clerk, we have been espousing that since 1977, when we embarked upon the monetization of our natural gas via industrialization, we set out at that time to set a future vision that included ammonia, methanol, urea, steel and aluminium.

We are in a situation where the driver for development in Trinidad and Tobago based on our petroleum sector was based on an economic consideration where in fact, we said what can we do as a nation to enhance our production and, therefore, get the economic rents to go with that. We are now in a situation, Madam Clerk, where we are faced with a new paradigm and that has to be what can our production do to enhance our nation and the citizens of our nation. Mr. Deputy Clerk—[*Laughter*]

[*Deputy Clerk in the Chair*]

He is the Deputy Clerk. We are faced with a situation now where we need to update our laws, we need to change the systems by which we currently operate and, therefore, work towards the development, the enhancement of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago and urgent legislative attention is required while at the same time we repair those areas of our Constitution and indeed of our overall operations which were identified.

[*Madam Clerk in the Chair*]

Madam Clerk, lest it be misunderstood, I am not speaking extemporaneously off the top of my head as some have been known to, these are the facts that face us as representatives of Trinidad and Tobago and this is why at this time we need to get on with the proper functioning and the business of this House of Parliament and in fact, we need to have a Speaker and we have brought to the House and we have brought forward a distinguished—[*Interruption*] It is not the house in St. Ann's which you have had to vacate, it is this House, it is the proper House of legislation of this country.

Madam Clerk, we have had passed in a previous Parliament, Act No. 61 of 2000, an Act which is cited as the Minerals Act of 2000. It was assented to on November 02, 2000 and this Act which was set up by the other side when they were in office, sought to regulate the quarrying industry and the mining industry in Trinidad and Tobago as they exist now. In fact, the current operations are



guided by the Mines, Boring and Quarries Act which was repealed, but the Regulations of that old Act remain in place. It talks about transporting dynamite in a horse and buggy and what must be done in those circumstances. This new Act sought to bring us into compliance with what exists today. It seeks to bring us into compliance with taking care of our fragile environment, the ecology and what is required and work is ongoing on this; we met it in place and it is currently being shaped and directed—work is in place to put in place the regulations which will give effect to the Minerals Act of 2000 and Madam Clerk, let me read from clause 48(1) of this Act:

“The Minister may make regulations subject to negative resolution of Parliament in respect of matters that are required by this Act to be prescribed or in respect of which regulations are required or authorised to be made under this Act.”

Madam Clerk, we are faced with a situation where there are numerous individuals who are currently conducting operations in the quarrying industry which are detrimental to the ecology and environment in Trinidad and Tobago. Indeed, the Members opposite felt this was such an important thing that this Act was passed and proclaimed and work began on the regulations. It is important that we bring these Regulations to the Parliament in the shortest possible time so that we can give effect to this Act, lest the significance of this Act not be understated or not be understood. We are in a situation where there is a shortage of housing in this country; we have determined, Madam Clerk, that the shortage of housing is of the order of at least 10,000 housing units. In fact, we have to begin. It is a national imperative which this Government has begun. It is a national imperative that we find a way to build those housing units in this nation in the shortest possible time.

**4.00 p.m.**

Madam Clerk, one of the ingredients, which is integral to the construction industry in this country, is a properly managed quarrying industry which allows us to bring aggregate to the market. We are about to sign additional contracts to build petrochemical plants in this country. We are currently being visited on a regular basis by persons who would seek to be investors in Trinidad and Tobago, to build these plants. We are going to be required to build those plants with aggregate that has to be won and produced here in Trinidad and Tobago. Indeed, it would really be my pleasure to bring the regulations to this House which would give effect to the Minerals Act of 2000. [*Desk thumping*]

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Madam Clerk, how can the Minister of Housing, or any responsible person, now go to the citizenry of Trinidad and Tobago and say to them, “We cannot build the houses which you require because we are unable to have a speaker in the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago and, as a result of not having a speaker, we are unable to pass the regulations that go with this Act which would cause us to properly find the aggregate that is needed to build the houses that are so desperately required in this country; and not to mention the proper building of schools in this country upon active faults which seep hydrocarbons into the air and want to poison our children.”

It is because I have studied the area, and it is because I am the only geophysicist in the country, to date, [*Desk thumping*] who has utilized the reduced to the poll magnetic data superimposed on the synthetic aperture radar data [*Desk thumping*] along with the development of the only linear regression model for interval velocities with depth in this country. [*Laughter and desk thumping*] I am in the process of arranging for a 3D seismic survey to properly cover the area so we understand it better. [*Desk thumping*] I am able to say that we are not likely, in the future, to use the aggregate which we will win in this Act to build a school in a place that that side sought to build a school. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Clerk, they have been saying in the press that they were right to build it there. In fact, there is a person who used to be among us, and claims to be a geophysicist, who went to great lengths to talk about all of this. It is shameful, shameful, shameful. If I tell you about him and some of his other work which I have had to correct—anyhow!

Madam Clerk, we have brought before you, and to Members on both sides, a distinguished daughter of the soil, Dr. Marjorie Thorpe. It is my distinct pleasure to nominate Dr. Marjorie Thorpe, the Crowne Plaza nominee of the United National Congress, for the post of Speaker in the House of Parliament, and that, by the way, is true national unity. That is true cooperation. That, Madam Clerk, is true power sharing. It is my distinct pleasure to nominate Dr. Marjorie Thorpe for the post of Speaker of the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago.

Thank you, Madam Clerk.

**The Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs (Hon. Roger Boynes):** It behoves me to express myself, at this grandiloquent and auspicious occasion, and it gives me great pleasure to second the nomination of one Dr. Marjorie Thorpe. It would, in fact, be a sad, sad day in Port of Spain if we do not take the opportunity to demonstrate to Trinidad and Tobago that we of the Parliament are grown men and women, and are adults and big enough to put country first. This is the time that we

have the opportunity to demonstrate—[*Interruption*] All of you. You can have a conscience vote with Dr. Marjorie Thorpe. [*Desk thumping*] You can have that. She was your own nominee. I am saying to everyone on that side but, with particular emphasis, the Member for Princes Town: “You know what you have to do.”

Member for Barataria/San Juan, you also know what you have to do. I have seen you throughout the length and breadth of our country, in the media—the radio and television—saying to the national community that you are coming here today to exercise your conscience vote. Every single man, woman and child in Trinidad and Tobago, and the rest of the world, would be looking at you, Member for Barataria/San Juan, to see if you really have a conscience. Let me indicate that the nominee, Dr. Marjorie Thorpe, is someone that the nation is proud of. Let us go on record to say that immediately. Her character and reputation stand very tall in Trinidad and Tobago and abroad. I can tell you, from the perspective of the Minister and the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs, she is someone that every young person should look up to and find as a good role model in Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] We need, today, to demonstrate to the national community that we are prepared to take the country forward.

Madam Clerk, I have heard all sorts of talk about this 18/18 scenario, let me tell you my position on that. We have, in Trinidad and Tobago, a golden opportunity to use this 18/18 scenario for the benefit of every single constituency in Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] Every single one. Might I add that the Crowne Plaza Agreement that the other side agreed to, and conceded to, would work in the best interest of our country at this time in an 18/18 scenario, but do you know what is being left out?

**Mr. Peters:** A date for election.

**Hon. R. Boynes:** Not a date for election. You all wanted the election to be held within three to four years’ time, so I do not understand why you all are asking for it now.

**Mr. Ramnath:** We changed our minds.

**Hon. R. Boynes:** You changed your minds. The agreement that is referred to as the Crowne Plaza Agreement states—and I wish simply to quote clause 6 which states:

“...and provides for, consensus building at the parliamentary level but not at the executive level. That is, to establish mechanisms to achieve collaboration and cooperation on legislative matters and other parliamentary business.”

What does it mean by “other parliamentary business”? What is the business of a Member of Parliament, if not to serve his constituents and his constituency? What is the business?

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We have a golden opportunity, Madam Clerk, to give Parliament the teeth that it deserves so that it could ensure that it makes and gives power, from the parliamentary level, to every single Member of Parliament so that your constituents would be the beneficiaries. If the Executive is not assisting every one of its 36 Members of Parliament fairly and equally, then the power that you have pursuant to the agreement of an 18/18 scenario, and the consensus provided for, in this Parliament, will ensure that your constituents benefit equally. But, you are not telling your constituents that! You do not want to tell them that. You do not want them to know that in Trinidad and Tobago, this agreement provides that every single constituency would grow and develop. That is what you are not telling them. The fact of the matter is that the only reason they are attempting to reject this agreement is because 18 of them cannot sit in the Executive, but, at the expense of who? Every single one of their constituents! That is the point. You are not telling your constituents that. *[Interruption]* You with that Biche school, you cannot talk here, you know! You cannot talk here today you know. I heard your constituents are really annoyed with you and you know that is a fact.

The fact of the matter is that in an 18/18 scenario, do you know what that means? That simply means that in Trinidad and Tobago, for the first time in its history, the people have won. The people have won. With an 18/18 scenario the people have won. What happens if we go back to the polls tomorrow and we get 18/18 again? *[Interruption]* You could tell me what will happen? Then the people would have won again, but what do we do? How do we move the region forward? How do we move the country forward? How do we do it? What is the solution to take Trinidad and Tobago forward? *[Interruption]* The solution is that you all should stop acting like little children. That is the solution. *[Desk thumping]* Stop acting like little children and ensure that you put your country, your constituency and every single constituent first. Your word must be your bond! That is the fact. *[Desk thumping]* Let us stop playing games here in Trinidad and Tobago. The fact of the matter is that you all are getting on like little children playing cricket. A little schoolboy would take his bat and ball to play and if he does not like the out he gets, he would take his bat and ball and go home. That is exactly what you are doing here in Trinidad and Tobago today.

Let me ask you a question: How do you think every young man and woman is viewing you today? The fact that you have an agreement and because you were not chosen as the Executive you have decided to, willy-nilly, renege on that agreement. The fact of the matter is, with all sorts of frivolous excuses—one excuse after the next—Trinidad and Tobago is watching you; every single man, woman and child. They all know the reason you are frustrating development of

this country. By your behaviour here today, you are not fooling anybody at all. We all know that it is simply because you were not chosen as the Executive, but let me also say that this country is run by a very legal government. [*Desk thumping*] [*Interruption*] The fact of the matter is that you have come here today to try to frustrate the process of electing a Speaker.

Let me tell you something—and the national community should hear about this—not being able to elect a speaker is not ground for calling an election. Study your Constitution. It is not ground for calling an election. Do you know what you are doing there? You are strengthening the hands of the Government. That is what you are doing. You are also showing that you are not a responsible Opposition because you are refusing to work as Opposition. If a Speaker is elected today there could be checks and balances on the Government. You are refusing to do that because you do not want to work. You do not want to work at all. You all probably have enough money. You do not want to work. That is the problem. [*Desk thumping*] That is the problem. You do not want to work in your constituency; you do not want to come here to Parliament and elect a Speaker, electing a Speaker would cause all your constituents to benefit. You do not want to do that. You do not want to come here to elect a Speaker. You do not want to ask questions of Ministers. You do not want to have Motions on the Adjournments. You do not want to do anything in Parliament. You do not want to make the Government accountable. That is the most reckless and irresponsible action by every one of you. [*Desk thumping*] Reckless! Totally reckless!

I heard the hon. Member for Caroni East—Madam Clerk, sometimes I really wonder, with their actions, if I should use the word “honourable”. I listened to the hon. Member for Caroni East, when he made his brief presentation, and I heard him say, in referring the House to the Standing Orders, that he did not want to breach section 3(4) which states:

“No debate shall be allowed upon proposals for filling the office of Speaker, but any member may call for a division after the decision on the proposal has been announced.”

He feels, then, that by us talking here, this amounts to a debate and he brings into the House, the Standing Orders. So, he places on the record that in any consideration today, reference has to be made to the Standing Orders. I want you to take judicial notice of that. [*Interruption*] This is the highest court in the land, Madam. I want you to take due notice of that, Madam Clerk.

The other fact of it is that the Collins Concise Dictionary, just for education, indicates quite clearly, that a formal discussion in a legislative body, as this one,

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in which opposing arguments are put forward amounts to a debate. There are no opposing arguments. We are simply laying the foundation for Trinidad and Tobago to get a speaker that Trinidad and Tobago deserves. [*Desk thumping*] That is what we are doing. We are indicating, quite clearly, that Dr. Marjorie Thorpe, your nominee, is a person who had distinguished herself tremendously throughout Trinidad and Tobago.

We really want to see if every one of you will vote against her. We want to see that. Member for Barataria/San Juan, we want to see that. I want to know how you would look at yourself in the mirror. [*Interruption*] Yes, games are better than your country. Playing games is better than your country. I know you are all feeling ashamed, but it is something you are afraid of. Something is up. You all are afraid of something, that is why you are behaving so recklessly and the country knows it. You all are afraid of something. We know what you are afraid of.

We are saying to Members opposite who have no fear, let your conscience be your guide today in Port of Spain. Let it be your guide and do the honourable thing on behalf of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. That is our position here.

Madam Clerk, when you have the talented young people looking on—the Member for Chaguanas will, no doubt, appreciate that we do have tremendous talent in this country in the whole aspect of sport and youth affairs. He knows that. The Under-15 cricket team just came back from a successful run and again they have the championship. He knows that the Carifta team recently came back and they did very well. We also know that the hockey team went to Washington, DC and the women qualified for the World Cup competition next year February in Germany. [*Desk thumping*] He knows that. They are watching you all. They are watching every one of you hoping that you will do the right thing and not the reckless thing today. We have Darrel Brown watching you. We have Mark Burns watching you. We have so many young athletes who are hoping that politicians in this country would put aside their differences and ensure that the right thing is done and elect a Speaker.

I walk from Sangre Grande to Guaico, all through the length and breadth of my constituency. I walk all over the place. I was able to travel throughout the country. I have been walking through Ortoire/Mayaro, this country and Tobago and we are going because we are going to serve everyone in this country. During our walks, and talks with the people, do you know what the people are saying throughout the country? They hope that we all, as politicians, come together today and put the country first. That is what they are saying but, you come here and it is games and more games.

I am saying to you that the young people are looking at you. What bigger insult is there to the intelligence of this country, the young people and the old? What greater insult is there than to nominate someone for the post of Speaker of the Parliament and then vote against him or her as the case may be? What greater insult? That is the greatest level of childishness I have ever had to witness in my life. You all are very childish and this is a childlike act, so today we are asking you all to grow up. Member for Barataria/San Juan, today is your day, make a difference. Every one of you, if you have nothing to fear, make a difference and put Trinidad and Tobago first. I dare you to do that, but you cannot do that because there is something you are afraid of.

Let me indicate, once and for all, that the games you are playing here today are going to cost the country a lot. Now, the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs are going to go on from strength to strength, but with a Speaker, legislation for tax rebate for corporate sponsors who invest in sports could be passed, and the Member for Chaguanas knows what I am talking about. He knows. We are going to go from strength to strength, yes we are, but the games. I have been having discussions with corporate sponsors throughout the length and breadth of this country and they need you all to be responsible today. They need you all to be responsible today to ensure that there is a Speaker and we can carry on with that aspect of the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs. We are going on. You can try your best to frustrate all the sportsmen and young people in Trinidad and Tobago, they will not forget you. They will not forget you. Just remember that. The fact of the matter is—

**Mr. Ramsaran:** You voted against it. You do not even know what you voted against. I will bring the *Hansard* to show you.

**Hon. R. Boynes:** You go outside now and bring the *Hansard*. You know we have a sports policy—the sports policy is the nation's sports policy. As per that sports policy, there is to be established a sports commission. That, as well, you frustrated. I am saying that the games must stop and let them stop right now, right here. [*Interruption*]

Not simply because you, the Member for Chaguanas, cannot be a minister your constituents must suffer! That is the fact! You all want executive power at the expense of your constituents because based on the agreement that you all sat, negotiated and agreed to, the beneficiaries would be your constituents! All of them! I wish to reiterate that. All of your constituents will benefit from the Crowne Plaza Agreement, but you do not want them to know that. It is a well-kept secret, but we are saying it loud and clear so that the nation could hear us and every one of your constituents can hear it. The fact of the matter is that it is 18

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men who want power and 18 men are sacrificing every one of their constituents; sacrificing their constituents just so they can get the salute when they walk down the place. That is what they like and that is what they are missing. They are missing the blue lights and the salute. That is what they are missing.

Let me just indicate here and now, as I reiterate my support and second the nomination of Dr. Marjorie Thorpe, that the country expects better of you.

Thank you very much, Madam Clerk.

**Mr. Ganga Singh** (*Caroni East*): Madam Clerk, I beg to propose that Mr. Hamlin Jailal of No. 11 Braithwaite Street, El Dorado, Tunapuna, do take the Chair of this House as Speaker.

*Miss Gillian Lucky seconded.*

**Madam Clerk:** Are there any further nominations? There being no further nominations, hon. Members, the question is that Dr. Marjorie Thorpe do take the Chair of this House as Speaker. All in favour say "Aye".

**Government Members:** Aye.

**Madam Clerk:** Any against?

**UNC Members:** No.

**Madam Clerk:** Hon. Members, the voices appear equally divided. I must take a division.

Ayes 18

Noes 18

AYES

Valley, Hon. K.

Manning, Hon. P.

Rowley, Hon. Dr. K.

Imbert, Hon. C.

Robinson-Regis, Hon. C.

Narine, Hon. J.

Joseph, Hon. M.

Williams, Hon. E.

Bereaux, Hon. H.



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Boynes, Hon. R.  
Achong, Hon. L.  
Beckles, Hon. P.  
Rahael, Hon. J.  
Job-Davis, Hon. E.  
Hart, Hon. E.  
James, Hon. E.  
Hinds, Hon. F.  
Callender, Hon. S.  
NOES  
Singh, G.  
Lucky, Miss G.  
Panday, B.  
Persad-Bissessar, Mrs. K.  
Panday, S.  
Peters, W.  
Yetming, G.  
Baksh, S.  
John, C.  
Ramnath, K.  
Khan, Dr. F.  
Nanan, Dr. A.  
Rafeeq, Dr. H.  
Ramsaran, M.  
Partap, H.  
Baksh, N.  
Sharma, C.  
Moonilal, Dr. R.

**Madam Clerk:** There being an equality of votes, hon. Members, the proposal is declared lost.

Therefore, the question is that Mr. Hamlin Jailal do take the Chair of this House as Speaker. All in favour say “Aye”.

*[No response from Members]*

**Madam Clerk:** Any against?

**Hon. Members:** No.

**Madam Clerk:** The noes appear to have it.

*[Calls for a division]*

Noes 36

NOES

Valley, Hon. K.

Manning, Hon. P.

Rowley, Hon. Dr. K.

Imbert, Hon. C.

Robinson-Regis, Hon. C.

Narine, Hon. J.

Joseph, Hon. M.

Williams, Hon. E.

Bereaux, Hon. H.

Boynes, Hon. R.

Achong, Hon. L.

Beckles, Hon. P.

Rahael, Hon. J.

Job-Davis, Hon. E.

Hart, Hon. E.

James, Hon. E.

Hinds, Hon. F.

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Callender, Hon. S.  
Singh, G.  
Lucky, Miss G.  
Panday, B.  
Persad-Bissessar, Mrs. K.  
Panday, S.  
Peters, W.  
Yetming, G.  
Baksh, S.  
John, C.  
Ramnath, K.  
Khan, Dr. F.  
Nanan, Dr. A.  
Rafeeq, Dr. H.  
Ramsaran, M.  
Partap, H.  
Baksh, N.  
Sharma, C.  
Moonilal, Dr. R.

**Madam Clerk:** Hon. Members, the result of that division is no Member voted for and 36 Members voted against. That proposal is negatived.

Hon. Members, in the best interest of all hon. Members and the staff of the Parliament, it is necessary for us to interrupt the proceedings for a short while for some light refreshments and for some of us to visit some necessary rooms of this building.

The Assistant Clerk and I would be returning to the Table of the House to continue receiving your nominations at 5.30 p.m.

**4.40 p.m.:** *Sitting suspended.*

**5.31 p.m.:** *Sitting resumed.*

**Madam Clerk:** Hon. Members, I must once again call upon the House to elect a Speaker.

**The Minister of Health (Hon. Colm Imbert):** Madam Clerk, I wish to make the point again that on the last occasion, our nominee got 18 votes and, therefore, was not negatived and the other side's nominee got no votes and was therefore negatived. Our nominee stands and we are continuing under protest, without prejudice to any right we may have.

**The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley):** Madam Clerk, I nominate Barendra Sinanan to take the Chair as Speaker of this honourable House. Madam Clerk, today is a day of opportunity for Trinidad and Tobago, and we can either use that opportunity or we can spin it, as it appears those on the other side are wont to do.

Madam Clerk, for some time now in the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago election results have been extremely close. In 1991, the results were 21/15; in 1995, the results were 17/17/2; in 2000, the results were 19/16/1 and, of course, in that year 2000, there were all types of things happening in the election which, of course, affected those results.

Similarly, in 2001, with all types of charges of voter padding and what have you, the result turned out to be 18/18. If we, as leaders of Trinidad and Tobago, cannot see from that history that the Gods seem to be pushing us in a particular direction, then we are obviously blind. We know as a fact that in Trinidad and Tobago, for some time polling results represented the major races. I submit that today we have an opportunity to rise above that and do what the country expects of us.

Madam Clerk, we have heard talks of power sharing, and we on this side agree with the concept of power sharing but the issue is where it ought to start. There is no infant who can start by running a mile; an infant must start by creeping, and given all that has gone before in our history here in Trinidad and Tobago, it is logical that the whole concept of power sharing has its genesis in the Parliament, in the Legislature. Madam Clerk, I think the Leader on the other side and those who participated in the Crowne Plaza negotiations, saw that clearly, if not at first, but over the two days they spent at Crowne Plaza, it became obvious that the issue of power sharing is best started at the Legislature.

It does not mean that it is going to stop there, but credibility and confidence must be allowed to be developed. The Crowne Plaza Agreement spoke about the need for electoral reform. We have borrowed the Westminster system here in Trinidad and Tobago. We have now been independent for some 40 years and, yes,

perhaps, we need to review how we do business. The best way to do that is by our getting together here in the Legislative and looking at how we do things. We cannot, I submit, and if you simply consider it, you cannot do it by starting at the Executive level. If one were to try that, there would simply be pork barrel negotiations—who get what, everyone watching the other person and instead we would be mashing up Trinidad and Tobago.

*[Deputy Clerk in the Chair]*

There is the issue also, Mr. Deputy Clerk, of the level of, or the perception of corruption that we have seen over the last six years. And one cannot help but believe that certain positions are being taken at this time among some Members on the other side who may wish to protect their former friends. I say to the others, however, that you have to make a decision whether you would allow yourselves to be tainted with that brush of corruption. When we witness what has happened over the last six years, it is clear that some of you were extremely innocent. You have to make a decision, and to make that decision, it is your conscience that must in fact speak to you without fear. You have to make that decision whether you would allow those who want to protect those criminals from facing the brunt of the law.

Election is not an issue. The Crowne Plaza Agreement says quite clearly that elections would be held as soon as the list is clean. That is the PNM's position; we are not going to wait for the three or four years that your side wanted. As soon as the list is clean, we are prepared to go back to the polls and ask the people to elect a government. So in a sense, yes, we know that we are making interim arrangements for the benefit of the people of Trinidad and Tobago, and this matter of your wanting election now begs the question. Elections were held on December 10, 2001; a Prime Minister was not appointed until December 24, 2001. If there was that need for elections, if you felt that the 18/18 did not allow anyone to govern Trinidad and Tobago, the correct thing to do at Crowne Plaza was to say that you were going back to the polls. *[Desk thumping]* It just cannot be, and it is untenable that you would enter into an agreement and simply because you did not get your way, you want to take your marbles and go home.

I want to ask some of you, I want to ask the former banker, coming from that recognized institution, whether his word is still his bond. I want to ask him and I want to ask how he faces himself every day when he looks into the mirror. I can understand that. Sitting there and agreeing: “Number one—Prime Minister to be appointed by the President in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.” They now come and tell us that they

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have some opinion which says that meant that the sitting Prime Minister had to be re-elected, and then they are saying it is the PNM that came into the negotiations without clean hands. So when they were writing that in that form, they thought it meant something that it did not mean. It meant exactly what it said, that the President had the discretion and he could have exercised that discretion and so he did. Point one.

Point two in the Agreement—“The parties to agree on a Speaker,” and after giving your word, you are coming here to vote against that nominee. I am saying that in doing all this, you are missing the opportunity implied in the 18/18 decision, you are missing that fundamental opportunity to build Trinidad and Tobago, the democracy that it is, in a particular way. We are at the crossroads here today and we can either go right, or we can go left. Either you want us as a people to continue with blacks and East Indians not at each other’s throat going about our normal business, but having our politics so influenced that voting results at all times reflect the racial polarization, or you can make a decision today that we would work together to build our democracy in a particular way. Nobody knows where it is going to lead—the opportunity provided to start power sharing at the legislative level as agreed in the Crowne Plaza accord.

Item 6, “Consensus building at the parliamentary level.” That is what we are about here today and I submit to my honourable friends opposite. We have looked at the nominations. Let us compare. We have offered you Prof. Max Richards, a son of the soil with a long history of achievement, the current Chairman of the Salaries Review Commission. You have offered us Robin Montano. Let us just consider what we are doing. I have, at all times, said that I would never speak ill of a former colleague, so I will say nothing about Mr. Montano. [*Desk thumping*] But let us understand what we are doing. Let us understand what we are doing when we propose Dr. Marjorie Thorpe—with her permission—so eloquently advanced by my colleague, the Member of Parliament for Port of Spain South. You offered us an individual that few of us know. Understand the requirement of a Speaker of this House. Of course, you have compromised that on the last occasion, but a Speaker of this House ought to be someone in whom we can all have confidence, and that is what we are looking for. It is not simply a question of whether we are in Opposition or in Government, but what is critical is that the person be someone of stature that we can respect his rulings, that we can look to him for guidance, that we can believe in his honesty and that, at all times, he can represent this House as a person of some rank—someone like my good friend, the former Deputy Speaker, who did an excellent job.

It does not matter whether one is a politician because I would expect at all times—and that is the only time it becomes annoying that when you get to that Chair, you are shorn of political affiliation—you respect the Chair and your internal integrity is seen for what it is. So, Mr. Deputy Clerk, it is in that context I am pleased to propose our former colleague, Mr. Barendra Sinanan, a former Member of Parliament for San Fernando West to take the Chair of this honourable House until the next election.

Mr. Sinanan, as you know, is an attorney at law of long standing. His honesty and his humility are quite known as a partner in one of the top law firms in Trinidad and Tobago. He has excelled quite quietly, without any fuss, he goes about his business. In terms of stature, he served as a Director in Southern Medical Clinic Limited, and Land Securities Limited. Formerly, he served on the National Petroleum Marketing Company Limited, on the La Brea Industrial Development Company Limited. At present, he is the Chairman of the First Citizens Bank Holdings Company, First Citizens Bank, a person of stature in our society who has been a Member of this House, who has annoyed no one at any time, a person fitting for the office of Speaker of the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago.

[*Madam Clerk in the Chair*]

Madam Clerk, for me, it is critical that we get this Parliament moving as quickly as possible. In my own Ministry of Trade and Industry, there are certain policy issues that require immediate legislation. Members would know that there is that Investment Bill which should have been in the Parliament since 1995—1996. That piece of legislation is now ready to come to the Parliament. That piece of legislation is extremely important to allow us to attract further direct investment into Trinidad and Tobago. It is a critical piece of the infrastructure to provide the environment for success to attract those who know and those who have money to locate here to access markets around us.

We need also, Madam Clerk, to have the Parliament functioning so that we can ratify certain trade agreements that your government initiated. There is the agreement of Caricom and Cuba, there is the last agreement between Trinidad and Tobago and Costa Rica, all work done by my predecessor, your government, that requires parliamentary approval.

Madam Clerk, even in the last budget, the Minister of Finance at the time stated that as of March 31, legislation would be brought before the Parliament with the effect of providing for the roll-on, roll-off vehicles and the termination of

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the CKDs coming into Trinidad. We need the Parliament functioning so that we can make the changes necessary in the Motor Vehicles Act. So that while we play the fool here in the Parliament and propose individuals such as Robin Montano and other nonentities and vote against them, there is a critical point one ought to note. As a layman, I wonder whether a nomination is valid if the proposer as well as the seconder turns around and votes against that person. The thing is a charade, we are having fun here this afternoon. This was our last government, Madam Clerk, the government that was in office over the last six years running our affairs and this is the manner in which they operate.

Madam Clerk, you would recall that after this accord was signed, we saw on our national television the Prime Minister coming out and when asked “What happened? How do you know that this accord would not be broken?” He said, “Anyone who does that would have to face the wrath of the population.” Leaders must know when to lead. But when the Member for Chaguanas decided he was the real leader and started a march on St Ann’s, and found his leader in a drunken stupor, the leader did not know when to lead. He went running and hiding and so we are in this position today.

There is still time, Member for Couva North—

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar:** He begging.

**Mr. B. Panday:** Get on your knees boy, on your knees.

**Hon. K. Valley:** There is still time to show some leadership. I will tell you and you will see it, whenever the elections are held, you will see the wrath of the people. You will experience that. [*Desk thumping*] I think you underestimate our citizens. You would realize that they must be taken seriously on all occasions. So that here you have the Prime Minister at the time stating one thing but simply because he was not chosen, everything is now ol’ mas’, missing a great opportunity here in Trinidad and Tobago, an opportunity to bring our people together to sit and negotiate, discuss policies, to make sure all our 36 constituencies are properly serviced to have input on every policy decision of the Government. If that is not getting involved in the Executive, what is? It is the concept of implementality. The only way it is going to work—it cannot work by coming in at the Executive level. More than that, our Constitution, as it is written right now, does not allow that. We know over the last 10 years if we wanted to pass a bill requiring the most simple of special majorities, the Government was required to speak with the Opposition. If the Government had legislation that required a two-thirds majority, they had to speak with the Opposition. That happened with the Police Bill, when



the now Prime Minister—then Leader of the Opposition—consulted with the Member for Couva North and established a committee to look at what was happening in the police service.

**6.00 p.m.**

What it would mean, from here on until at least the next election, is that a bill requiring even the simple majority would require that consultation, and that is power sharing. Any bill, the budget, the most important piece of legislation on our legislative calendar, where we can determine exactly how our resources are shared across the country; ensuring that there was equity in Couva North, Couva South, Diego Martin Central, Tobago; the opportunity is provided by 18/18, and we are losing sight of that. Instead of that we want to put our people at war. Talking about bringing 20,000 to Port of Spain, and it is better to die than to live as second-class citizens. I do not know who is a second-class citizen in Trinidad and Tobago. Where are we getting these notions? We have an opportunity, as leaders, to do things for our country and we are wasting it.

So that, Madam Clerk, we have the opportunity this evening to put our country; put our Parliament back on a proper course. Whether we do so or not would depend on the actions of 36 of us. I am asking my colleagues opposite to go into themselves and decide, this day, what type of Trinidad and Tobago they really want. It is their decision.

Madam Clerk, it is with pride and pleasure, knowing the individual that we fondly call, Barry Sinanan, that I propose he takes the Chair in this Seventh Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

Before I close, Madam Clerk, I want to touch on one point, because one of the issues raised by the Opposition, in refusing to support the election of Prof. Richards, is that they thought that the President would have been guided by Prof. Bogdanor's advice. Madam Clerk, if the truth be told you would see that: (1) The President never instructed anyone to obtain advice from Prof. Bogdanor. That, in fact, the President had obtained an opinion from the Professor relating to the previous skirmish in the Opposition, that is, when they had lost three of their Members, whether the President could have appointed a new Prime Minister.

Madam Clerk, let me inform the House this evening for those on the other side who do not know. The President had a difficulty in getting that Government to pay the fees of the Professor relating to that advice. They refused to pay it! The Member for Siparia who was then the Attorney General refused to pay the Professor and the Professor kept writing to the President. He made the statement

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that he was having real difficulty getting the Government to honour its liability. In fact, Madam Clerk, that bill was not paid until this Government came into this office.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar:** That is not true.

**Hon. K. Valley:** That is the fact. The bill was incurred by the President; understand that. I repeat, the bill was incurred by the President. The President needed advice; got advice from the Professor and the Government of the day refused to honour that liability to the Professor. Notwithstanding that, when she thought the President would appoint the UNC as the Government, she went offering advice from the same Professor to the President trying to buy favour. When the President acted on his own, after considering all available opinions, they became extremely annoyed.

I submit, Madam Clerk, that as a country we cannot go forward when our leaders behave in that manner. I appeal once more, therefore, to those with a conscience on that side, to be so guided this evening and make a decision where you stand, lest history condemn you forever.

I thank you, Madam Clerk.

**The Minister in the Ministry of Public Administration and Information (Hon. Fitzgerald Hinds):** Madam Clerk, the pleasure is mine, following my colleague, the Member for Diego Martin Central, as he proposed Mr. Barendra Sinanan and in so doing, commending him to all of us in this honourable Chamber to assume the very exalted office of Speaker of this honourable House.

As the mover and proposer of Barry Sinanan as a worthwhile candidate for that office spoke, I reflected on the history of Trinidad and Tobago. I reflected on the first Parliament and on the first Speaker that we had in this country and of this House of Representatives. I reflected on names like Mr. John L.H.W. Salvary, who served as Speaker between 1950 and 1954. I reflected on the Late Great Mortimer Duke, who served us from 1956, before I was born, to 1961; Arnold Thomasos, Matthew Ramcharan, Nizam Mohammed, Occah Seapaul. I reflected on these people and it struck me, rather poignantly, Madam Clerk that as I went along the names of Speakers who served this country, there seems, in my own estimation, to be a measure of removal from the very high standard that we began with in the earlier years. That reflects to me, Madam Clerk, a state of affairs that might very well characterize everything that is happening in Trinidad and Tobago, a diminution and a reduction in standards, generally.

Madam Clerk, my good friend, the Member for Diego Martin East, attempted to get your attention, and I did as well, failingly I must recall, when the name

Hamlin Jailal was proposed. Hamlin Jailal was not very well known to me. In fact, when I got up trying to get your attention, Madam Clerk, it was in an attempt to ask you to cause the Members from the other side, at least, the Member for Caroni East, the chief stick or rather the Chief Whip, to tell us if you expected us to vote for Hamlin Jailal. Who is Hamlin Jailal? I had never heard of him before. So during the tea break my curiosity urged me to enquire whether he was a real person, because it is not beyond that side to propose an unreal or non-existent person to be Speaker in this honourable House. They are capable of it! [*Desk thumping*] In fact, I am being told by some on my side that they could even provide us with ghosts; ghost Speakers. [*Interruption*]

I will not be distracted by the Member for Siparia, I hear the whining voice. I will not be distracted, because the President heard it recently and not only was it a disturbing tone but the contents of the suggestion about the President were equally disturbing and distasteful; and I would even like to add, even disgraceful but that is a matter for later, to which I will return.

Madam Clerk, Hamlin Jailal, it turns out, is or was until very—well is a local Government councillor. [*Interruption*] He was a local Government councillor and a member of the United National Congress. He campaigned with and managed the campaign of the “late” Mervyn Assam. [*Laughter*] You know what struck me about the distastefulness of this, Madam Clerk, is that Prof. Max Ifill who was proposed earlier today—[*Interruption*] Prof. Max Richards who was proposed earlier today with a record that stands tall and proud for everyone; like a beacon of light in Trinidad and Tobago, the region and the world to see—and this is why I am proud to be associated with this side—that was the calibre and quality of the nomination we offered this country and you obstructed it in your wickedness?

**Mr. Ramnath:** We will do it all the time.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** I know you will. That is your character. [*Laughter*] [*Desk thumping*]

As for the Member for Couva South, this is your first day in this honourable House and we are trying to rebuild the standards of this honourable House. I urge you to respect that and allow me to make my contribution undisturbed because I will come to you later.

Madam Clerk, we offered you the noble Professor as our nomination and he was rejected purportedly on the grounds that he was seen once on a PNM platform with no proof, not a scintilla of evidence; not before, not during the wild allegations, and not since. Even as we claimed it here today, not one of them from Couva North to Siparia could offer any scintilla of evidence that he was ever seen

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on any political platform. However, they offer us Hamlin Jailal, a non-entity who was a UNC councillor and who managed Mervyn Assam's failed and fleeting campaign recently when Eddie Hart gobbled him up, politically. [*Desk thumping*] Madam Clerk, you see the double standards that they represent? You understand why it is a gift of God that the PNM is in power in Trinidad and Tobago today? [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon. Member:** They bring Robin.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** Well do not talk about Robin Montano, a cheap mouthpiece, as he was dubbed during the campaign—[*Interruption*] I am proud to be on a PNM Back Bench. The last bench in the PNM better than the Front Bench in the United National Congress, every time. [*Desk thumping*] I would rather be in the last carriage of a hundred-carriage PNM train than to be the driver of the UNC train. [*Desk thumping*] I am proud of the PNM. I will carry any briefcase they give me to carry for the PNM, it would not have drugs; it would not have thief money in it. [*Desk thumping*] I ask you all to allow me to make my contribution undisturbed.

Madam Clerk—[*Interruption*] I am hearing the Gypsy singing a very sad song; attempting to extempo with difficulty. Let me tell him about this business of election and selection. When the agreement at Crowne Plaza was signed, both leaders on behalf of their parties, in the face of Trinidad and Tobago, agreed that the President would select one. [*Interruption*] If your political leader was made Prime Minister, you would have no trouble with selection! You have trouble now! I tell you it is double face, you double face! [*Desk thumping*] But that is typically UNC. I know as we talked about: they ran for an opinion from Prof. Vernon Bogdanor. I had the pleasure of listening to Prof. Bogdanor personally on two occasions while I studied law and did my Masters Degree in London. He is a well-recognized and well-respected constitutionalist but I am sure he must be ashamed to be associated with, and come on the tongue of the Members on the other side. I am sure he must be very ashamed!

You corrupt and spoil anything; even Jesus Christ, if he walked, had to be careful with the United National Congress. [*Laughter*] Although my learning tells me that he is beyond reproof, you would have tempted him to the ultimate. You are a sorry bunch, and thank God we have seen the back of you as the Government and it must remain so for 35 years. [*Desk thumping*] I told my 13-year-old son that I am determined to ensure that the next time the PNM leaves government in Trinidad and Tobago—especially to be replaced by the UNC, it is unlikely it will exist then because when Couva North perishes, UNC perishes—his grandchildren must be members of the PNM youth league. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Clerk, I do not propose to be long, I am only here to second the nomination but the spirit is moving. I could feel the PNM power deep within my soul and if you urge me, only marginally, I shall second it for two hours. Madam Clerk, when we talk about morality, what do we mean by morality? What does the constitutionalist mean when he speaks of the concept of morality, or the absence therefore in relation to the UNC and its hosts; its band of hapless followers and hosts, who saw Government in this country as nothing short of an opportunity to enrich themselves at the expense of the poor and the downtrodden, and mislead people with expensive and glossy advertisements while they did it?

We have spent three months in Government in this country and we have been able to demonstrate beyond reproof, all manners of iniquity coming from those on that side, but that we will deal with later as well. Right and wrong and morality, that is what I want to address very briefly. Madam Clerk, I remember on the day like this in year 2000, we had a ceremonial opening of the parliamentary session. We had the Regiment band; we had police officers in their ceremonial uniforms doing their routines on the streets; the President came here to address this honourable House—both Houses. I mean that was the standard to which the people of this country had become accustomed until the advent of the UNC in Government. This is what you have brought us to! Ordinarity! *[Interruption]* That was normal long before you came and it will continue long after you have gone.

**Hon. Member:** Why did you not have an official opening?

**Hon. F. Hinds:** We could not, you would have undignified even Christ if he was not careful; I told you so! However, we had a very ceremonial opening on that occasion and I remember the head of ASJA, Dr. Ibrahim, coming into this Chamber, and when he was invited to say prayers he said some words that have remained etched on the tablets of my heart and into my mind; the deep recesses of my mind. He said, and I quote—and he was looking straight at the Member for Couva North when he said it, I do not know if there was any relationship between the words and the stare and I add none. He said, and I quote:

“Even if you smear a dead pig with honey, that would not make it sweet.”

When I heard those words I was thinking, as a young parliamentarian at that time, it was in the midst of his prayer and I was saying, we are called upon to perform an almost sacred duty of serving the people of Trinidad and Tobago and he was crying out to us, telling us, look man, the Office of Prime Minister; the Office of Attorney General, the Office of the Minister of Energy, the Office of Member of Parliament or Speaker does not make you sweet, it is the human person. You have to be good!

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What does “good” mean? I know all brilliant lawyers will join and say “good” means this and “good” means that. I know “good” means different things to different people but the question of morality has to do with right and wrong. I say that in Trinidad and Tobago we do not have any constitutional crisis; we do not have any legal crisis; what we have is a moral crisis. The political leader of the PNM and Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, the Member for Diego Martin Central, the Member for Toco/Manzanilla and the Member for Port of Spain South, earlier today told this honourable House that an agreement was arrived at Crowne Plaza, in order to deal with the constitutional or the legal issues that arose out of the 18/18 situation. A solution was found! A remedy was arrived at! All it required was the care and the nurturing of the nurse or the doctor to apply it to Trinidad and Tobago and all would have been well, but not so with the United National Congress.

So we have no constitutional crisis; 18/18, a simple solution was found. Had it not been for that solution at Crowne Plaza, we would have gone back to the polls a long time ago. It is on the basis of that Crowne Plaza Agreement that His Excellency called on the two leaders to go forward into the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago and this is why we are here today. But somewhere between then and now you had a change of heart—from bad to worse. I see some of us even had a change of clothing! I notice the Member for St. Augustine, no longer does he look like a senior wards man, [*Laughter*] he has now attired himself the way we are accustomed to in this House and I want to pay him some homage and salute him for that—something that troubled me when he misconducted himself but now he has gone, as I have said, from bad to worse. He sits here today and tells the Member for Diego Martin Central flatly; he does not feel a sense of shame, although he is in league with someone else to break an agreement. I mean you have just become shameless too. You see, Dr. Eric Williams went to Laventille in 1971 to introduce sponsorship to Desperadoes steel band and to give them a trap set, in those days. Some member of the band asked the late Great Dr. Eric Williams: “Doc, you think we should change the name Desperadoes, that rough, bad kind of a name and assume a name that is more palatable?” Eric Williams, in his way said: “No you don’t have to change the name just change your attitude.” And I am reminded of that, because you have changed your clothing but your mind and your heart remain unchanged. [*Desk thumping*]

So as I conclude my very short submission, Madam Clerk, my friend for Port of Spain, they were attempting in their most obstructionist way to shout him down but he is a man of God, a friend and brother of mine whom I hold in the highest regard. [*Desk thumping*] They were trying to shout down my good brother, my

brother friend; the Member for Port of Spain South, and all he was trying to tell them was listen, on the behalf of the people of Trinidad and Tobago, I have been given the responsibility of managing the energy sector as it relates to the public operation or elements and I want to do certain things. The portents are good! The economists, those with expertise in his field, they are saying that Trinidad and Tobago is likely to benefit, significantly, from major income flows arising out of the recent gas and oil finds off the coast of Toco—by my good friend Roger Boynes—again for whom I hold the highest esteem, and to whom I want to pay respectful tribute for a very powerful contribution here today. [*Desk thumping*]

The Member for Port of Spain South was saying, we want to serve the people of Trinidad and Tobago well but we need to get some legislation going for the benefit of the people of Trinidad and Tobago and rather than touch yourselves; rather than understand that you are obstructing the work and therefore inhibiting the development of Trinidad and Tobago by so doing, you attempted to shout him down. I heard in those shouts, the Member for Couva South talking about civil disobedience. Coming from his mouth the only word I heard was disobedience. There was nothing and there is nothing civil about your conduct today nor about what you are attempting to do.

Civil disobedience, if I may tell the goodly Member, is a very noble and spiritually attuned concept; concepts that were known to human kind a long time ago but in recent modern history it was perfected and practised by the late Great Mahatma Ghandi and Martin Luther King Jr. You know what characterizes both these great souls—about whom children would read for many, many years to come—was that they were pursuing righteous causes and there was no other option and both came to the situation of civil disobedience with clean hands.

There were unjust laws. The laws were inherently unjust and there was no choice but to go against those unjust laws. So under the pain of batons and bullets and tear gas they did it. What is most important to note is that they came with clean hands, not slimy hands; not bloody hands; not thieving hands; not corrupt hands; not hands that come to an agreement in Crowne Plaza and then stab the country in the back. Clean hand! Leave civil disobedience alone! You would be playing politics with a spiritual tool and you will pay greatly for it if you continue.

I heard other Members shouting 18 is not greater than 18! Well it was 18/18 that took us to Crowne Plaza. It was 18/18; had it been 19/17 there would have been no Crowne Plaza. His Excellency would have appointed the Prime Minister in the normal way, exercising his discretion and calling on the person, who in his considered judgment and opinion could have claimed to command the majority in

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this House but there was no such possibility because there was 18/18. What do you do? *[Interruption]* Your royal shortness would you be quiet? *[Laughter]* Eighteen/eighteen, there was no one who could claim to have commanded the majority and therefore—*[Interruption]* That same Member for Nariva, who appears in his manifestation like a wooden animated toy, bobbing up and down, shouting as I try to speak, he is urging the children of Biche to go into a school on which there is, beyond a shadow of a doubt, a geological fault. He wants to expose them because of his UNCness *[Interruption]* I did not say nastiness, I said: “UNCness”. They sound alike; they may even be synonymous but I am not going to be unparliamentary, I said: “UNCness” and that is the conduct.

Eighteen is not greater than 18. Come in the House and show us how 18 is greater than 18! You shameless bunch of ex-government ministers, thank God you are “ex”. And 18, in fact, is not greater than 18 in the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago! That is why we had Crowne Plaza. That is why His Excellency chose the noble and esteemed Member for San Fernando East as the Prime Minister. I want to tell you 18 may not be greater than 18 in the Parliament but in Government 18 is equal to 100 per cent, real, legal, constitutional, 100 per cent Government and so we proudly stand. *[Desk thumping]*

When the next election comes it will be other than 18/18. Trust me it will be, because since it was 18/18; and when it was 19/17; and when it was 17/17/2; the country has had a very good opportunity to see you unmasked for what you really represent. All the smiles, the gloss and the nice words and the national unity, they have seen your fangs, your claws, your greed and they know what you are responsible for in this country. So let us not forget that.

Eighteen/eighteen, however, as the Member for Diego Martin Central correctly said, provided an opportunity. We are now moving in this country to establishing a Caribbean Court of Justice for the region, housed here on Richmond Street in Port of Spain. We are now saying, as the young Caribbean people, a nation, the time has come when we can begin to make our own way in a very competitive and hostile world, forge our way forward. So we now feel that we are sufficiently mature; we now feel we are sufficiently blessed with sufficient trained and experienced legal personalities to run a court of appeal quite well and quite properly in the interest and for the benefit of the Caribbean people, without the help of those who helped us along for many years. There is where we are going.

So if we find ourselves in an 18/18 situation, a situation that probably never happened in the queen of all Parliaments; the mother of all Parliaments, in England, this was a perfect opportunity for Trinidad and Tobago, as it was



attempting to do with the Court of Appeal, and as we are being called upon to find new constitutionally reformed solutions to our political and social circumstances, to forge a new way out of what we call the Westminster system and to establish, perhaps, even a precedent for the other islands, and others who would watch and follow us. But not so! *[Interruption]*

I know you want me to be quiet. You, Mr. Member for Ortoire/Mayaro, that night at the clash in the Savannah you also wanted the people to be quiet but they could not remain quiet, the very sight of you—they were shouting while you were trying to sing. I was in the crowd and I saw them! I had to restrain one woman; she was about to toss a bottle and as a good spirited citizen I restrained her, and while I did it, I said to myself it was illegal, she should not have behaved that way but deep down in my heart I understood how the woman felt. *[Interruption]*

Madam Clerk, it is with those very few words that I join my good friend, and senior, and Leader of Government Business on this side, in supporting wholeheartedly, without reservation, the honourable personality, Mr. Barendra Sinanan, for the post to which he has been proposed, as Speaker of this honourable House.

I thank you.

**Mr. Ganga Singh** (*Caroni East*): Madam Clerk, I beg to propose that Mr. Ken Emrith of 1234 River Court, Palmiste, San Fernando, do take the Chair of this House as Speaker.

**Miss Gillian Lucky** (*Pointe-a-Pierre*): Madam Clerk, should it please you, I beg to second the nomination of Mr. Ken Emrith. *[Interruption]*

**Madam Clerk:** Are there any further nominations? *[Silence]* There being no further nominations, hon. Members, the question is that Mr. Barendra Sinanan, do take the Chair of this House as Speaker. All in favour say “Aye”.

**Government Members:** Aye.

**Madam Clerk:** Any against?

**UNC Members:** No.

**Madam Clerk:** Hon. Members, the voices appear equally divided. I must take a division.

Ayes 18                      Noes 18

AYES

Valley, Hon. K.

Manning, Hon. P.

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Rowley, Hon. Dr. K.  
Imbert, Hon. C.  
Robinson-Regis, Hon. C.  
Narine, Hon. J.  
Joseph, Hon. M.  
Williams, Hon. E.  
Bereaux, Hon. H.  
Boynes, Hon. R.  
Achong, Hon. L.  
Beckles, Hon. P.  
Rahael, Hon. J.  
Job-Davis, Hon. E.  
Hart, Hon. E.  
James, Hon. E.  
Hinds, Hon. F.  
Callender, Hon. S.  
NOES  
Singh, G.  
Lucky, Miss G.  
Panday, B.  
Persad-Bissessar, Mrs. K.  
Panday, S.  
Peters, W.  
Yetming, G.  
Baksh, S.  
John, C.  
Ramnath, K.

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Khan, Dr. F.

Nanan, Dr. A.

Rafeeq, Dr. H.

Ramsaran, M.

Partap, H.

Baksh, N.

Sharma, C.

Moonilal, Dr. R.

**Madam Clerk:** Hon. Members, 18 Members voted for, 18 Members voted against, the proposal is therefore declared lost. Therefore, hon. Members, the question is that Mr. Ken Emrith do take the Chair of this House as Speaker. All in favour say "Aye".

*[No response from Members]*

**Madam Clerk:** Any against?

**Hon. Members:** No.

**Madam Clerk:** Hon. Members, the noes appear to have it.

**Mr. Valley:** Division.

Noes 36

NOES

Valley, Hon. K.

Manning, Hon. P.

Rowley, Hon. Dr. K.

Imbert, Hon. C.

Robinson-Regis, Hon. C.

Narine, Hon. J.

Joseph, Hon. M.

Williams, Hon. E.

Bereaux, Hon. H.

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Boynes, Hon. R.  
Achong, Hon. L.  
Beckles, Hon. P.  
Rahael, Hon. J.  
Job-Davis, Hon. E.  
Hart, Hon. E.  
James, Hon. E.  
Hinds, Hon. F.  
Callender, Hon. S.  
Singh, G.  
Lucky, Miss G.  
Panday, B.  
Persad-Bissessar, Mrs. K.  
Panday, S.  
Peters, W.  
Yetming, G.  
Baksh, S.  
John, C.  
Ramnath, K.  
Khan, Dr. F.  
Nanan, Dr. A.  
Rafeeq, Dr. H.  
Ramsaran, M.  
Partap, H.  
Baksh, N.  
Sharma, C.  
Moonilal, Dr. R.

**Madam Clerk:** Hon. Members, no Member voted for and 36 Members voted against. The proposal has been negated. Therefore, hon. Members, I once again call upon this House to elect a Speaker.

**Mr. Imbert:** Madam Clerk, once again I maintain that this procedure is irregular, our candidate got 18 votes, our candidate was not negated. Their candidate got no votes. Their candidate was negated. Our candidate is Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

**The Minister of Legal Affairs (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis):** Madam Clerk, I have the honour and privilege to propose as Speaker of this honourable House, under protest, the honourable Justice Monica Barnes. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Clerk, you must have noticed that the names that we on this side have proposed before this honourable House have been names of persons of the highest repute in Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] We have proposed Prof. Max Richards; we have proposed Dr. Marjorie Thorpe; we have proposed Barendra Sinanan; we are now standing to propose Madam Justice Monica Barnes.

Madam Clerk, this whole scenario is being made a mockery of, by persons who, mere months ago, sat on this side of the House and claimed to be the Government of Trinidad and Tobago; claimed to love the people of Trinidad and Tobago; claimed that in this rainbow nation they would protect the people of Trinidad and Tobago, and today they have come to this Parliament and brought names such as Robin Montano.

Madam Clerk, Robin Montano has distinguished himself in the courts in Trinidad and Tobago, not as an attorney-at-law but as a respondent in a divorce case, where his name was brought to the lowest by his former wife. Robin Montano was rejected by the people of San Fernando East. Robin Montano has, through the media, been named as someone whose character has been called into question.

Then they have stood and nominated one Mr. Jailal, an almost complete unknown to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. They continued by nominating Ken Emrith, a man who travelled—under the guise of Chairman of the School Feeding Programme—to Australia, ostensibly to learn to mix milk for the schoolchildren of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Laughter*] A man who has only distinguished himself by being a man, whom we have learnt over time, we cannot trust, and it was clear that they made an awesome mistake by even putting him in charge of the School Feeding Programme, much to the detriment of the children of Trinidad and Tobago.

[*Deputy Clerk in the Chair*]

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[HON. C. ROBINSON-REGIS]

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Mr. Deputy Clerk, I repeat that I stand in this Chamber to nominate the honourable Justice Monica Barnes, a former judge of the Supreme Court; the first woman in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago to be appointed Chairman of the Tax Appeal Board. The honourable Justice Barnes is a mediator in family matters at the Legal Aid Clinic. She is the past Vice-President of the Commonwealth Legislative Drafting Association, former Member of the Law Reform Commission. She was the first woman in Trinidad and Tobago to be appointed Senior Counsel, and the only female Member of the 1987 Constitution Commission. Indeed, for many years she has been involved in activities to improve the quality of women's lives. For example, she was an initiator of a programme of rehabilitation for the inmates of the Women's Prison—perhaps a place that may soon be inhabited by the Members on the other side. She served on various Government-appointed bodies, including the Commission on the Status of Women and the Committee for the Establishment of the Family Court.

The Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago provides that when the House of Representatives first meets, after any general elections and before it proceeds to the dispatch of any other business, it shall elect a person to be the Speaker of the House, from among persons who are either Members of the House of Representatives or from the outside. We are gathered here for this noble purpose but as I entered the Parliament today, I recognized that there was an air of unease and uncertainty. I asked myself: Why would people who claim to love Trinidad and Tobago resort to negative tactics in an attempt to trample our democracy? What apart from deep-seated resentment and acrimony do they who sit on that side hope to achieve? What do they hope to achieve by indicating that if they are not in Government, those who support them would be deemed second-class citizens? Is it that when they sat on this side, those who supported us who sat on that side, they saw them as second-class citizens of Trinidad and Tobago? Why would people, who held high office, mere months ago, resort to putting their desire for high office before the people of Trinidad and Tobago, while bludgeoning the spirit of this beautiful island; while ensuring that they would resort to the basest of emotions in an attempt to deal with the people of Trinidad and Tobago?

Mr. Deputy Clerk, the answer is very clear. It was clear that under the last regime there was the galloping dictatorship; institutions were brutalized. Under the last regime the press was consistently under attack. Under the last regime, persons were not allowed to express their democratic rights. Remember if you will, the doctors, the teachers, the nurses, the trade unionists, who were not allowed to undertake legitimate protests. We were, under the last regime, subjected to continuous undermining of the integrity of the system; a continuous

undermining of our democratic traditions; a continuing undermining of the social institutions in our country. We were subjected, and continue to be subjected, to their hooliganism. We have been subjected to—as my friend from Diego Martin East said approximately a year ago in this very House—a group of thugs, Mr. Deputy Clerk, and what they are attempting to do today is an act of thuggery. They are of the view that they have not got their way, and for them it is their way or no way at all.

What we are witnessing this evening is insane mosaic from this group, who know that what they really live in fear of, is in fear of their past deeds catching up with them. What they clearly live in fear of is a situation where each and every day, as we sit in Government, we reveal the kind of conduct that they behaved with whilst in Government, and which has led to horrendous situations like the Biche School; which has led to situations where now, six persons are before the courts for corrupt activities; which has led to a situation where the airport contract is under enquiry; which has led to a situation where they, each and every one of them, live in fear of hearing the doors of the jail cell clanging behind them. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Deputy Clerk, we on this side continue to be tired of that threat of civil disobedience from people who sat ostensibly to govern the people of Trinidad and Tobago. We are tired of persons who claim to love Trinidad and Tobago standing back and saying that they will nominate 10,000 people for Speaker. We are tired of persons who would sit in the Crowne Plaza and agree on certain issues, standing a few days later and stating, in the same voice in which they agreed, that they no longer agree to that accord.

Mr. Deputy Clerk, it is clear that they do not have the interest of the people of Trinidad and Tobago at heart. In fact, what they do have is their own self-interest uppermost in their minds. It is a fact, and widely accepted, that if the Member for Couva North had been chosen Prime Minister, today we would have sat on the Opposition side and a Speaker would have been elected. [*Desk thumping*]

It is another fact that the Member for Couva North has, by his very history, proved that he is a man who cannot be trusted. He demonstrated that whilst in Opposition and the current Member for Couva South can attest to that fact.

**Mr. Ramnath:** [*Inaudible*] [*Laughter*]

[*Madam Clerk in the Chair*]

**Hon. C. Robinson-Regis:** He demonstrated that whilst in Government when there was 17/17/2 and he discarded the two Members. He demonstrated that whilst in Government—throughout his time in Government. He has demonstrated

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[HON. C. ROBINSON-REGIS]

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that his word is definitely not his bond and, clearly, neither is his signature on a written document. [*Desk thumping*]

**7.00 p.m.**

Madam Clerk, indeed, we feel a sense of compassion for the disinherited. We feel that sense of compassion because we are not unfamiliar with disinheritance but when we faced that challenge we rose to it. We sat in Opposition as men and women of dignity, [*Desk thumping*] as men and women who stand on a proud history of a party that, as my friend from Laventille East/Morvant said, has been PNM from 1956, PNM in 1962, PNM in 1976, PNM in 1986, PNM in 1991, PNM in 1995, PNM in 2000, PNM in 2001 and we will continue to be PNM, PNM, PNM, PNM. [*Desk thumping*]

We do not know what it is to metamorphose in order to fit—[*Interruption*] We do not know what it is to metamorphose in order to fit a specific circumstance. So we do not know what it is to be ULF and then Club 88 and then DAC/DLP. We do not know what it is to be NAR/UNC. We do not know, and thank God we do not know, what it is to be UNC [*Desk thumping*] or, in fact, we ask the question, when with all those changes—[*Interruption*] With all those changes, we even ask the question, if Couva North knows his real name. Is it Basdeo Panday or is it Lloyd Chote? He is so accustomed to changing to suit the circumstances that perhaps the name Basdeo Panday or the person who signed really should have signed Lloyd Chote and then we would have been in different circumstances today.

As I talk about change, Madam Clerk—[*Interruption*] As I talk about change, I notice that the Member for St. Augustine has at last “woken up”. He is no longer coming to the Parliament in his pajamas. He is now in a suit and he has “woken up” to the reality that he sits on the Opposition Benches. Madam Clerk, as we talk about “waking up”, we ask those who sit opposite us to awaken their consciences to what is necessary for the progress of Trinidad and Tobago, what is necessary for the progress of Trinidad and Tobago. We must ensure that persons who, mere months ago, did so much to bring this country into disrepute, never again sit on this side of the House.

Trinidad and Tobago belong to all of us and it is unfortunate that you sit with your leader and agree that if you are not in government then your supporters are second-class citizens, [*Desk thumping*] because we on this side are of the firm view that all citizens of Trinidad and Tobago are first-class citizens. [*Desk thumping*] All citizens of Trinidad and Tobago are first-class citizens and you would not know about citizenship [*Laughter*] because you have, with the drop of a hat, given up your citizenship of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]



You do not know what citizenship is all about, what love of country is all about and why today you should sit and elect a Speaker, someone who can pull this Parliament together, someone who can sit in that Chair and re-introduce the dignity that once existed in this House of Representatives. You would not understand it. You would not understand it and that is unfortunate and I am reminded that really it is not your fault because your book bag was indeed empty. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Clerk, I invite you to examine some of the issues that have occurred over the period of time, issues where those who sit opposite us abused the power that was given to them. Today we are hearing that one Member who received a US \$50,000 cheque has said that the police have cleared him. We are yet to hear the police say that they have cleared him and we continue to hear the former treasurer say that he is looking for the money—a ludicrous situation, Madam Clerk.

We have seen several on the other side who have consistently been declaring their innocence of fraud and corruption and voter padding, yet we see secretaries of constituencies going down for voter padding. We are seeing cousins of former ministers being charged for voter padding, and ministers' employees and assistants being charged—[*Interruption*] Well, I know you would not understand that because apparently the gases from Biche are overtaking your brain cells. Charged is a different thing from convicted—charged with voter padding. Maybe you need to come out of Biche a little.

Madam Clerk, what are they afraid of? Are they afraid of the Prevention of Corruption Bill to which amendments are to be made? Are they afraid, and that is why they do not want a Speaker to be elected? Are they afraid of the Sentencing Commission Bill, which would ensure that those who are sentenced for corrupt acts are given the full weight of the law? Are they afraid of the plethora of legislation that is cleared to come and prevent corruption amongst, particularly, persons in high office?

Madam Clerk, it was only this week that, as Minister of Legal Affairs, we commissioned the population registration system in the Ministry of Legal Affairs in the Civil Registry. That is a system which will ensure that things like voter fraud and personation would no longer be able to take place because everyone—[*Interruption*] and I am hearing some cackling from Pointe-a-Pierre and Siparia where they are claiming that that was their plan. They were saying that started since 1994 and it is unfortunate that they did not bring it to fruition earlier, but perhaps they were afraid that, with voter padding, with personation and with all those flaws in the electoral system, such a system would have found them out earlier. That is unfortunate, Madam Clerk.

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What is particularly amazing is that they sit in this Parliament behaving like Philistines, unable to recognize the folly of their actions, unable to recognize that what they are doing today brings no glory to them and we will continue here during this first sitting in order to do what we have come here to do. Madam Clerk, we have seen before us a definite poverty of spirit in this country of Trinidad and Tobago but we on this side have, through the nominations of Max Richards, Barendra Sinanan, Marjorie Thorpe, and now, as I stand to nominate Madam Justice Monica Barnes, we have shown that we are of the Government's business. We are of the business of the people of Trinidad and Tobago with a genuineness that can never exist on the opposite side.

Madam Clerk, the Speaker is considered the guardian of the privileges of the Members of the House of Representatives. Hon. Madam Justice Monica Barnes stands tall in that requisite authority and impartiality. She has credentials beyond reproof, credentials in management, in administration and in administering justice in a way that will augur well for this honourable House. We on this side seek to add her name to the work of persons like Mortimer Duke, Arnold Thomasos and Matthew Ramcharan. These are but a few who understood and appreciated the augustness of this House, the hallowed portals in which the people of Trinidad and Tobago ask us to sit, the monument, the glory and the legacy that they have left us.

We nominate her because of the possibilities she would bring to the House of Representatives, to our people and in that the pledge for loyalty and support for the Office of Speaker. She has consented to that nomination unequivocally. We therefore, on this side, seek to nominate Madam Justice Monica Barnes for the position of Speaker of the House of Representatives of the Seventh Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago. Thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

**The Minister of Planning and Development (Hon. Dr. Keith Rowley):** Madam Clerk, if my colleague from Ortoire/Mayaro permits me to talk with my colleagues, I would want to make—[*Interruption*] Let me “start over”. If my colleague from Ortoire/Mayaro would permit me to talk with my colleagues—will you?

**Mr. Peters:** All right, go ahead.

**Hon. Dr. K. Rowley:** “Doh make them blame it on calypso.” Madam Clerk, we have been here since half past one today, fifth of April 2002. If my memory serves me right, I remember my colleagues on the other side have been making some very loud noises, since just after Christmas, demanding that the Parliament be convened—[*Interruption*]—so that we can conduct the business of Parliament, the first of such business being the election of a Speaker. One would have gotten

the impression that what they were saying is what they meant, but that would have misled those who did not know—I do not want to say “him”, because to say “him” is to personalize this discussion. I do not know why my colleagues on this side—I have not talked to them recently about this—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Peters:** “You stop talking again?” [*Laughter*]

**Hon. Dr. K. Rowley:**—but I do not know why my colleagues on this side are surprised by this whole Crowne Plaza thing because I went down to the Crowne Plaza with a sense of duty. I went down to the Crowne Plaza because I am always willing to try again. However, I was under no illusion whatsoever as to what was going to come out of the Crowne Plaza meeting, none whatsoever, because you see, unlike any of my colleagues in this House, Madam Clerk, I too had an earlier experience with my friend from Couva North.

There was a time in a different incarnation when he championed or proposed to champion the cause of sugar workers and there was this vexed question in this country for years about sugar workers’ back-pay and what to do with Caroni (1975) Limited and we said we would fix that. In early 1992 we brought all the stakeholders of Caroni (1975) Limited together around a table, including the head of the union, who is my friend from Couva North. We sat and negotiated what should become of Caroni (1975) Limited as we went into the then new millennium, which we are in now, and he signed it.

One of the terms we signed was that the back-pay, which had been outstanding for so long, would be paid in January of the following year when the crop started. Having signed that, you know he started to march for the back-pay from September of 1992? Even though he signed an agreement stating that the back-pay was due the following January, he organized his followers to march with him from Caroni to downtown to demand that what he signed be paid now. On the way he found a little boy in Laventille and he adopted him. The poor boy was blighted and today I do not know where he is. [*Interruption*] Sean? So that is the character of the man.

So when my friend from St. Augustine sits across the table from me and talks about power sharing, I said, “You understand what you are asking me to do? You are asking me to conduct a government and a Cabinet with a man of that character whose signature means nothing, whose position means nothing, and, if we are serious about the business of the people of Trinidad and Tobago, we must have some kind of approach that is workable.” Elect a Speaker. I want to make it very clear. I am not here of my own accord.

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I hear my friend from Nariva talking about election, election, election, seeking to give the impression that this has something to do with an election. It has nothing to do with an election. The behaviour of my colleagues on the other side in nominating people and voting them down has nothing to do with an election because we have made it very clear in private and in public that the situation of 18/18 can only be properly resolved by an election. That is the PNM's position. [Interruption] We did not say that either. What we have said, and put in writing, is July 2003 as an outside date, no later than that. It can be tomorrow, it can be December, but we are saying no later than July 2003. That is our public position.

Now, as we are hearing them talking about election, election, one gets the impression that the problem we are facing would be solved. They somehow have it in their head that an election will solve their dilemma. They somehow have it in their head that whatever they have become, whatever they seem to be, whatever they are guilty of, whatever they lie about, it is impressing the people of Trinidad and Tobago who are anxiously waiting to vote for them. You might have a problem with an election. We do not have a problem with an election because an election has been held in this country, an election—[Interruption] We do not have to call any election. If you want to call one, you call it and we might show up. [Interruption]

We recognize that we are 18 people out of a team of 36 whom the people of this country elected to govern their affairs, because we view activity in the Opposition as part of national governance. While we accept our responsibility—because I want to make it clear to you all, “we doh want no Speaker”. “You want a Speaker? I doh want any Speaker.” So let us make that clear. I do not want any Speaker. What I want to do is carry out the duties that I have sworn to carry out. [Desk thumping]

You all make it sound as though the PNM is afraid of something. You should have learned by now, we are not in this business of politics to learn to play golf with friends who “we cuss for we whole life”. We are in business—[Interruption] We are in the business of politics because we genuinely believe that our involvement and the management of our political organization is to redound to the benefit of all the people of Trinidad and Tobago. [Desk thumping] That is why, when we find ourselves in the Opposition, we are as comfortable as when we are in government, unlike—[Interruption]—we are as comfortable.

“You have a difficulty with your ears, you know.” “Something wrong with yuh left side?” We are as comfortable in the Opposition as we are in Government and when—[Interruption] We do not appoint ourselves to government, you

know. When we find ourselves selected for government, we are not going to listen to you telling us “Call elections now” with a voters list about which my friend from San Fernando West boasts. “He boast about it.” I do not boast about it. However, we have given our word and, unlike our friends on the other side, the word of the PNM means something in this country. [*Desk thumping*] It means something in this country and our position has been, election in the short-term and we explained why.

We think it will take a number of months—10, 12 months—to have an electors list in which the entire country can have confidence. Your position is, “We do not care if you doh have confidence in the list. We want to use it so we can win seats.” “We cyar have that.” Insofar as we can do anything to improve the national confidence in the voters list, we intend to do it. You could jump up and down as often as you like, unless you have some way of changing it, I do not know, but I want to draw your attention to something.

I want to draw my colleagues—[*Interruption*] The word “conscience” used by my friend from Barataria/San Juan and others—because he is not the only one talking about a conscience, you know—but insofar as they exist, a conscience among Members on the other side, I want you all to understand exactly what your conscience is doing to you because history will not absolve you. I know what I am talking about.

**Mr. B. Panday:** I am so sorry for you.

**Hon. Dr. K. Rowley:** Yes, very sorry; not for you. It is not the first time that I have had to stand in this place and speak to you like this. I remember sitting right there in that same chair, standing in that place and saying to the then Prime Minister, having brought evidence here about how money was being moved from the Chaguanas corporate borough to Tunapuna/Piarco and showing how public servants were being coerced into signing documents for material the Government was not receiving, “If you do not intervene and act as Prime Minister to stop this, you are to be held liable for what the outcome is.” [*Desk thumping*] If your Prime Minister acted then—[*Interruption*] It is my belief now that if the Prime Minister had acted then, as any decent Prime Minister should have, one of your friends would have been home with his wife tonight instead of being behind rusty locks. I distinctly recall standing in that place and saying to another colleague of mine over here, “I served with you in the Cabinet. I do not want to tell my children you went to jail.”

I am saying to you tonight, as you come here, I want to read for those of you with conscience, section 50 of our country’s Constitution because I understand

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that you are following your leader to come to this House to prevent the election of a Speaker. You are doing me no favour, you are doing me no harm. If tomorrow morning—if whatever you do today results in me not being in this place tomorrow, no problem. I do not have to be a government minister but I am saying to you, “Doh fool anybody.” [Interruption] Let me read for you—[Interruption] I am talking to persons with a conscience.

Section 50(1) of our country’s Constitution says:

“When the House...first meets after any general election and before it proceeds to the despatch of any other business, it shall elect a person to be Speaker of the House;...”

That is an order of the Constitution and it is my respectful submission that any person who organizes Members of the House to do other than to elect a Speaker of this House is undermining our Constitution. [Desk thumping] That is what you are doing, coming here and nominating people and voting down the same people you nominate so as to prevent the election of a Speaker. You are undermining the country’s Constitution. You might have a good reason. You might have a good reason, right, but let us understand what you are doing, right? The reason for doing so might be a very good one to you. However, I want you to make it very clear to the country that you understand that, in trying to advance your political position to keep you where you want to be or to take you where you want to go, you are, in effect, organizing to undermine the Constitution. [Desk thumping] You understand?

This farce in which you are engaging, coming here with how many ever names of “all kind ah persons” who you would not give the time of day for the post is a farce, a charade. It is an undermining of our Constitution [Desk thumping] and it is not his fault. It is not his fault. He is free to take that position because—you know why? He has found himself in the winter of his years exposed, the emperor with no clothes. Having led his political party to where it is today, he—it is not his fault. It is all of you who should know better—all of you, each and every one of you who should know better who now conspire with him to undermine the Constitution. You are the ones. [Interruption] You—[Interruption] You are—[Interruption] “Doh quote me no number, right?” I use the one I please.

Section 50 says when the House first meets it shall proceed to elect a Speaker. What you are doing there, what you are aiming to do, what you are pursuing as strategy, is in fact a deliberate attempt to undermine the Constitution and to prevent the country’s Parliament from functioning—[Interruption]—and you know—[Interruption] You want to talk? When I sit I will listen to any of you talk

but “you doh want to talk.” *[Interruption]* You know—*[Interruption]* and the reason for this charade, the reason for this farce, is that you have some grievance. You have a grievance, so you think that whatever grievance you have justifies you organizing to undermine the Constitution.

However, you know, when you had 17 seats and you went out like Nicodemus in the dead of night and, by whatever form, fashion or coercion you attracted two members of the PNM, encouraged them for \$3 to cross the floor, we did not have any grievance. *[Interruption]* We had no grievance. You understand? We had no grievance. I campaigned in Arima night and day asking the people of Arima to vote for the programme and the PNM candidate. I campaigned up and down Point Fortin asking the people of Point Fortin to vote for the symbol that is the balisier, the PNM manifesto and the PNM’s team of which I was a part. At the end of the day they voted for the PNM.

You caused two PNM members to cross into your government and keep you in office for four years but we had no grievance. *[Interruption]* We “doh” have any grievance. You know why? It is because we saw our duty as service to the people, not about office. *[Desk thumping]* So we sat there and waited for four years until you called the election. We went back to the people and we recovered our seats in Arima and Point Fortin but you have some great grievance now where you decide to organize, to conspire and to act in concert to undermine the Constitution, “You ain’ electing no Speaker.” While my colleague from Princes Town is shouting and waving at me, I want you to understand something. Whether a Speaker is elected or not elected holds no terror for us on this side. Understand that. It might be a salvation for you and your jaiibird friends but it is not a terror for us. *[Desk thumping]*

There are those of you in this country now who believe that the only salvation you have is to regain control of the Cabinet because the Cabinet of this country was used for wrongdoing, for protection, for organizing grand theft. You believe that your own personal security might lie in the recovery of the Cabinet and that is why you are carrying on with this story about “you want election now”. *[Interruption]*

Madam Clerk, there are three arms of state administration. There is the Judiciary, the Executive and this Legislature. I have no doubt whatsoever that if my colleagues on the other side had any influence over the Judiciary, as they sit there now, they would use it. They would use it. I have no doubt that if we had agreed with them to have a half-and-half Cabinet, equal the structures so that they could block everything that passed through the Cabinet, they would do it.

What we are seeing here today with the election of a Speaker, the country must take note of. If we had put God out of our thoughts and go into a Cabinet,

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equal PNM, equal UNC, this would have been the Cabinet. [*Desk thumping*] This would have been the Cabinet. Could you imagine a matter coming before the Cabinet, a matter of great import, as important as electing a Speaker is to this House today—you see how they treat the election of a Speaker, gang up to block the election of a Speaker, even though the Constitution mandates them as a duty to do what is right and legal.

They have a duty to elect a Speaker. They spend the whole day doing the opposite, nominating people and voting against the same people they nominate. Then these are the same people who come and tell us the Cabinet should be 18 people—nine PNM, nine UNC and we—[*Interruption*] yeah, and the Prime Minister must have no casting vote and only if there is agreement on a matter can the matter go forward in the Cabinet and we were supposed to agree to that and because we did not agree to that under the rubric of power-sharing, they have a grievance. You understand?

I hope the country is taking note because there were some persons who ought to have known better, who were advocating their talk about power-sharing and who were scolding us saying we are behaving as though “We win ah election” and “Winner take all and we must give them piece and we must gi’ dem half. Eighteen/eighteen means half the URP is yours and half is mine; half ah de country is yours and half is mine; half ah the boards yours and half mine.” We said “Nonsense!” We said, “The President elected us. The President chose a government out of those who were elected to Parliament and—” [*Interruption*]

All right, I want to ask you one question. You believe the President was wrong? “Get up from there and come and sit down here.” [*Laughter*] “Since he was so wrong, get up and come and sit down here.” I am your friend. [*Interruption*] I am your friend. [*Interruption*] Come, come—come and sit here. I am your friend. I am saying, if you all conspire to undermine the Constitution you are doing the PNM nothing. It is the people of Trinidad and Tobago’s business you are undermining. I want to give you the assurance—[*Interruption*] I want to give my friends on the other side the assurance that the same way you will use every sinew in your body to undermine the Constitution to get us out of government, we will use every muscle to remain here because we know that we were put here properly. [*Desk thumping*] You understand that? [*Desk thumping*]

We do not intend to submit to your blackmail because instead of wearing—[*Interruption*] I have “nutten” to hide. I have “nutten” to hide. [*Interruption*] I agreed to do a job and I intend to do the job and when I am not authorized to do the job—when I am no longer authorized to do the job, I walk away, unlike you.



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“You cyar walk away.” I will tell you all something, though. *[Interruption]* “You cyar walk away?” You know something? A people without shame is a people that is dangerous. I would expect that if you all were normal people, you would have come here with some sense of remorse, hanging your head in shame, for what has been revealed in the last three months; but look at you now. You are conspiring to do worse. *[Interruption]*

“Buh you know I doh get angry wit you. You know I doh get angry wit you.” You and I sit and talk like brothers. You know that. *[Interruption]* You understand? What I expected, if you all wanted to behave normally, you would have come here with some modicum of remorse. However, do you know why I am not surprised? My colleague from St. Augustine was on television, distancing himself from all the “kankatang” that transpired out of your term of governance saying to the country, “It has nothing to do with the UNC.” They could lock up the entire Cabinet; it has nothing to do with the UNC. They could lock up every board; it has nothing to do with the UNC. Every board member could have taken how much, “whatever they take, how much they take.” *[Interruption]* “How much dey take?” All the patients’ money for the patients’ drugs, “eh”, they could take all “ah” that; it has nothing to do with the UNC.

I ask you, “What has to do with the UNC?” Power. *[Interruption]* Election of the Speaker? I wonder why you believe that by not electing a Speaker you are changing the current situation that we are in? *[Interruption]* “I not talking to you.” You know why I am not talking to you? Because you “doh” understand English and English is the only language authorized in this Parliament, right. You—*[Interruption]* Anyway, another time, another time. There is no answer. In fact, not only no answer; there is “nutten” that you could give me that I want—no answer. *[Laughter]* *[Interruption]* You should know. *[Laughter]*

All we are prepared to do on this side is our duty. My colleague from Arouca South has presented the House with a most excellent nomination and we did so, having taken note to point out to the Clerk that we view the proceedings as irregular, because I do not know what kind of mathematics you all use but I know that when one person gets 18 votes and one gets zero, the one who got 18 is elected. You say, “No”. You “doh” want any Speaker under any circumstances. Even when 18 votes are cast for one Speaker and zero for the other; we say okay, fine, but we take part in the proceedings. You want nominations? We can give you high-calibre nominations all night, all of tomorrow and all of next week, because the PNM knows that in this country there are thousands of decent people who can serve. *[Desk thumping]*

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What has been demonstrated so far is that you have taken the position that if we bring the Angel Gabriel here, you would not vote for that person because you want no Speaker. *[Interruption]* You want no Speaker and the country has to ask why. Why are persons who are supposed to be reasonable—*[Interruption]* You know, it was only a matter of weeks ago, after we left Crowne Plaza, my friend from Couva North was so happy with the proceedings he was slapping my leader on his back—“Let's go home, kid. Let's go home kid.” I said, “What disrespect!” However, happiness has a way of—you know there is something called “malkadee”? Happiness brings on “malkadee”. He was so happy—“Let's go home, kid.” What has happened since then, kid? *[Interruption]*

**Mr. B. Panday:** He became a ram. *[Laughter]*

**Hon. Dr. K. Rowley:** What has happened between then and now to cause you to be so resolute that the people of Trinidad and Tobago—their Parliament must not function because you are saying, “I will not make it function because I will not do my duty and I will not elect any Speaker.” *[Interruption]* *[Crosstalk]* We have given you every opportunity to elect a Speaker, every opportunity. *[Interruption]* We have given you every opportunity. You even vote against your own nominees. *[Interruption]* *[Laughter]* If you think that by not electing a Speaker—*[Interruption]*—if you think that by not electing a Speaker it will get you an election next week, next month or the following month, more power to you, but expect that we will not assist you to undermine the country's Constitution. *[Desk thumping]* It would not assist you and, as long as we are here, all that we will be saying is that on this day we would have done our duty.

If you do not do your duty when—*[Interruption]* We do not have any duty to elect any Speaker. It is the House; it is all the Members of the House. *[Desk thumping]* We have one vote each. We have one vote each. *[Interruption]* As what? As Speaker? No, no, no. The President does not have to appoint me. The President has done his duty already and that is why there is a PNM government here doing its duty. If the Legislature is stymied by you, then I presume that you think you can extend that to the Judiciary and to the Executive. *[Interruption]* I presume so. *[Interruption]* Hello, hello, hello, you all are writing your own Constitution. *[Interruption]* You all are writing your own Constitution. I am not to be misled. I will tell you one thing. If I am to be misled, it will not be by him. *[Interruption]* With me? You will vote with me? The last man you voted with, do you know what happened to him? “You know what happened to him?”

You remember when you were voting with your partner down there? [Laughter] [Interruption] I want to hear your voice—when I told you that he was a good man. I interceded on his behalf.

**Mr. Peters:** “How you know that?”

**Hon. Dr. K. Rowley:** I talk to him all the time. He is my partner, you know. I talk to him.

**Mr. Peters:** “No, how you know he is a good man?”

**Hon. Dr. K. Rowley:** I told him so because he and I talk all the time. So when I told him that, he said, “Tell Mr. Ramnath that the political graveyard is littered with the bones of those who cross me.” [Laughter] I would have done my duty. Behold the resurrection at Easter. [Laughter] [Desk thumping] [Interruption] You can reply today. “Nothing wrong with that. We jus’ talking.” “We talking” and I am seconding the nomination of a distinguished daughter of Trinidad and Tobago. [Desk thumping] I believe that if my colleagues on the other side, having made their point, if they now decide to do their duty, we have made you a most excellent offering of Justice Monica Barnes. I second the nomination. [Desk thumping]

**Mr. Ganga Singh (Caroni East):** Madam Clerk, I propose Ms. Lynnette Abraham of Laventille Road, Febeau Village, San Juan do take the Chair of this honourable House as Speaker.

**Miss Gillian Lucky (Pointe-a-Pierre):** Madam Clerk, I beg to second the nomination of Ms. Lynnette Abraham.

**Mr. Hinds:** Could you tell us a bit about Lynnette Abraham? Madam Clerk, could the proposer tell us who is Lynnette Abraham? Tell us a little about Lynnette Abraham if you are proposing her. [Interruption] Well, I want to know about her.

**Mr. Imbert:** Is she real?

**Hon. Member:** Yes.

**Mr. Imbert:** Is she a real person?

**Madam Clerk:** Are there any other nominations? There being no further nominations, the question is that Madam Justice Monica Barnes do take the Chair of this House as Speaker. All in favour say “Aye”?

**Government Members:** Aye.

**Madam Clerk:** Any against?

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**UNC Members:** No.

**Madam Clerk:** The voices appear equally divided. I must take a division.

Ayes 18      Noes 18

AYES

Valley, Hon. K.

Manning, Hon. P.

Rowley, Hon. Dr. K.

Imbert, Hon. C.

Robinson-Regis, Hon. C.

Narine, Hon. J.

Joseph, Hon. M.

Williams, Hon. E.

Bereaux, Hon. H.

Boynes, Hon. R.

Achong, Hon. L.

Beckles, Hon. P.

Rahael, Hon. J.

Job-Davis, Hon. E.

Hart, Hon. E.

James, Hon. E.

Hinds, Hon. F.

Calendar, Hon. S.

NOES

Singh, G.

Lucky, Miss G.

Panday, B.

Persad-Bissessar, Mrs. K.

Panday, S.

Peters, W.

Yetming, G.

Baksh, S.

John, C.

Ramnath, K.

Khan, Dr. F.

Nanan, Dr. A.

Rafeeq, Dr. H.

Ramsaran, M.

Partap, H.

Baksh, N.

Sharma, C.

Moonilal, Dr. R.

**Madam Clerk:** Hon. Members, 18 Members voted for, 18 Members voted against. The proposal is declared lost. I must therefore put the question that—*[Interruption]*

**Hon. K. Valley:** Madam Clerk, could you just, for my edification, tell me whether the proposal was negated as required in the Standing Orders? Was it?

**Madam Clerk:** Hon. Members, you are all very aware that I am not empowered to make a ruling.

**Hon. K. Valley:** Because you see, Madam Clerk, according to the Standing Orders, if it is not negated—and I am asking you whether it is negated, because, unless it is negated, I do not know how we are going on to the next one in accordance with the Standing Orders. That is my difficulty.

**Madam Clerk:** Hon. Member, you know very well that Standing Order 44 says that where the votes are equally divided, a Motion is declared lost. I therefore put the question—*[Interruption]*

**Hon. K. Valley:** Madam Clerk, please, just for—I understand Standing Order 44 and I understand in the case of a Motion. What I am saying, and this is specific and it says that it must be negated before one can move to the next nomination and I am asking whether it was negated.

**Madam Clerk:** You are therefore raising a point of order and asking me to rule on a point of order. I cannot do that. I have no voice in this House.

**Hon. K. Valley:** Thank you, Madam Clerk.

**Madam Clerk:** I therefore put the question that Ms. Lynnette Abraham do take the Chair of this House as Speaker. All in favour say "Aye"? Any against?

**Hon. Members:** No.

**Mr. Boynes:** Madam Clerk, if I may just ask one question, pursuant to the Constitution, section 50(3) states quite clearly that a person who is not a Member of either House shall not be elected as Speaker where he or she is not a citizen of Trinidad and Tobago or he or she is disqualified. Who is this person? Tell us something about this person. Is she or he disqualified? Let us know who he is or who she is as the case may be.

**Mr. S. Panday:** A person who is qualified.

**Hon. K. Valley:** Madam Clerk, a requirement is also that the person consented. Has the person consented to this nomination?

**Mr. Singh:** Yes.

**Madam Clerk:** Hon. Members, the question is that Ms. Lynnette Abraham do take the Chair of this House as Speaker. All in favour say "Aye".

*[No response from Members]*

**Madam Clerk:** Any against?

**Hon. Members:** No.

**Madam Clerk:** The noes appear to have it.

*[Calls for a division]*

Noes 36

NOES

Valley, Hon. K.

Manning, Hon. P.

Rowley, Hon. Dr. K.

Imbert, Hon. C.

Robinson-Regis, Hon. C.

*Election of Speaker*

*Friday, April 05, 2002*

Narine, Hon. J.  
Joseph, Hon. M.  
Williams, Hon. E.  
Bereaux, Hon. H.  
Boynes, Hon. R.  
Achong, Hon. L.  
Beckles, Hon. P.  
Rahael, Hon. J.  
Job-Davis, Hon. E.  
Hart, Hon. E.  
James, Hon. E.  
Hinds, Hon. F.  
Calendar, Hon. S.  
Singh, G.  
Lucky, Miss G.  
Panday, B.  
Persad-Bissessar, Mrs. K.  
Panday, S.  
Peters, W.  
Yetming, G.  
Baksh, S.  
John, C.  
Ramnath, K.  
Khan, Dr. F.  
Nanan, Dr. A.  
Rafeeq, Dr. H.  
Ramsaran, M.

*Election of Speaker*

*Friday, April 05, 2002*

Partap, H.

Baksh, N.

Sharma, C.

Moonilal, Dr. R.

**Madam Clerk:** Hon. Members, no Member voted for and 36 members voted against. The Motion is declared negatived. I therefore must—[*Interruption*]

**Hon. K. Valley:** Madam Clerk, please, I have just been informed that that nominee in fact is at present in the United States—[*Interruption*] At present. Now, Madam Clerk, the Standing Orders require consent of the person. Therefore, I am asking that consent of the person be delivered to you so that one can be assured that this person who the Constitution requires—and unless the Opposition Chief Whip can provide consent, Madam Clerk, [*Interruption*] you know—therefore the nomination before us is that of Monica Barnes—and we can provide a letter of consent from Ms. Barnes, and this to me is a very serious issue.

There is a person in the public gallery prepared to say that the person is in the United States at present—[*Interruption*]—has been the issue of consent. [*Interruption*]

**8.00 p.m.**

**Madam Clerk:** Hon. Members, I am required to once again call upon the House to elect a Speaker.

**Hon. K. Valley:** Madam Clerk, we would really like to see the consent of that nominee, otherwise, we feel that, or we are of the opinion that Miss Barnes is duly elected Speaker of the House.

**Madam Clerk:** Hon. Members, I have to repeat again. You know very well that I have no power to rule in this House. I also have no power to require what you are asking. All I am required to do is receive nominations for the Office of Speaker and I call upon the House once again to elect a Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon. K. Valley:** Madam Clerk, as the retiring officer for the election of the Speaker, one must assume that one has an obligation to satisfy oneself that the nominations are proper. That seems very basic as the returning officer for the election.

**Mr. Imbert:** Madam Clerk, the Constitution requires that the person who is to be elected Speaker must meet certain requirements. It cannot be that any Tom, Dick or Jailal is nominated. We do not know whether the people meet the



qualifications in the Constitution. Suppose a non-citizen of Trinidad and Tobago has been nominated here? The whole procedure would be invalid.

**Madam Clerk:** Hon. Members, again I call upon the House to elect a Speaker.

**Hon. Dr. K. Rowley:** Madam Clerk, I just want to appeal to my colleagues on the other side, now that we have raised the issue of qualification of their nominee, would Members on the other side facilitate us with the courtesy of providing us with proof of the consent of their last nominee?

**Mr. Ramnath:** Bring Marjorie Thorpe's consent.

**Hon. Dr. K. Rowley:** Why did you not raise it then? Madam Clerk, you understand the difficulty that we have. We made it quite clear that we would be taking part in the process of casting our votes to elect a Speaker. We are put at a great disadvantage if, in fact, a person is nominated in opposition to our nominee and our nominee is, in fact, elected by virtue of the fact that the counter offering from the other side did not qualify. We are asking now, or we are saying now that what we are being asked to do is to move forward to elect somebody else when, in fact, the circumstances appear to be that the nominee of this side has, in fact, been properly elected by virtue of the fact that the nominee for the other side did not qualify.

All we are asking—*[Interruption]* Do not shout me down! All we are asking our colleagues is to provide the Clerk with proof that the nominee which went up against our nominee, in fact, qualified according to the Constitution. Is that too much to ask? Because we might very well find that we are moving on to elect a third, fourth and fifth Speaker when, in fact, the very first Speaker, as we said earlier on, had been properly elected. Here we have again another situation where we are saying that we are of the view that our nominee has been properly elected, unopposed, by virtue of the fact that the other nominee did not qualify. The onus falls on our colleagues on the other side to say it is not so.

**Mr. Imbert:** Madam Clerk, for the benefit of the hon. Members opposite and the public, a person is not qualified to be elected Speaker if that person is a citizen of another country other than Trinidad and Tobago, having become such a citizen voluntarily. So, if any of your nominees are dual citizens, having become citizens voluntarily, they are not qualified to be Speaker. Also if they are mentally ill, if they have any responsibility for the conduct of any election or any electoral register, if they have been convicted of any offence relating to elections, if they belong to any of the armed forces of the state, any police force. There are a number of qualifications. Go and read them! We want to know, are your nominees qualified?

**Mr. Hinds:** Madam Clerk, in order to demonstrate agreement with the previous speakers on that side, this is the reason why earlier this evening I rose on my legs and I was asking the nominator or the person making the proposal from the other side, to tell us something about their nominee so that we can think of it, contemplate the issue.

In every case where we nominated someone, we found it necessary, prudent, commonsensical to say something about the person we proposed for the benefit of Members, not only to demonstrate their prowess and their capacity for the honourable position of Speaker, but also to demonstrate that they are qualified in respect of the issues raised by my friend from Diego Martin East. Therefore, short of that, this entire thing is a farce. I do not know why we must persist in traumatizing the population that is Trinidad and Tobago with this kind of conduct.

Before I resume my seat, Madam Clerk, I want to say, in particular, to the Member for St. Joseph and the Member for St. Augustine, that they should think this thing over carefully; that they should call their political leader together. They should use the influence that they would have had, they should use the influence of all those who supported them to be elected to this honourable House, go in some little room someplace and let good sense prevail.

This situation is scandalous. The people of Trinidad and Tobago, in my humble view, do not deserve this. They are looking, they are listening and, as the Member for Diego Martin West correctly pointed out, the mandatory element in the position at section 50(2) of the Constitution, "shall", is being quite flippantly overlooked by those on that side, undermining the Constitution, as he correctly pointed out, and that could possibly be treasonous conduct.

They are undermining the Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago, and deliberately so, and telling us we should appoint a Speaker when the responsibility is that of all 36 Members of this House and not only the people on this side.

Madam Clerk, I am asking again, that particularly the Member for St. Joseph and the Member for St. Augustine; the Member for Barataria/San Juan who spoke about conscience, but I know he is not serious; the Member for Couva North, a senior person in this society in years and in political experience; he has the responsibility, Madam Clerk, of leading the way for those on his side.

On his side there are some young persons, young Members of Parliament, like the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre, the Member for Oropouche, possibly the Member for Caroni East. What kind of example are you setting those young people who have come into our Parliament?

**Mr. Ramnath:** Madam Clerk, he is wasting the time of the House. Let us proceed.

**Mr. Hinds:** Madam Clerk, the floor is here for all of us to speak. I know you cannot give effect to the Standing Orders, but you will observe, Madam Clerk, that we have observed them to the letter, notwithstanding, because we are not only guided by regulations and rules, but by morality. If he wants to speak, when I take my seat, he is free to get up and say what he wants.

**Mr. Ramnath:** Sit down and let me speak.

**Mr. Hinds:** So, Madam Clerk, I am saying again, before I resume my seat, I am asking the Members on the other side to consider that 1.3 million people in Trinidad and Tobago are expecting better of us all. I rest my case.

**Madam Clerk:** Hon. Members, the Table is awaiting nominations for the Office of Speaker.

[Pause]

Hon. Members, my staff and I have been here since 8.00 o'clock this morning and we would love to be able to continue to serve you. Therefore, it is necessary for us to interrupt the proceedings for a short while so that we can have some sustenance. The Assistant Clerk and I would return to the Table at 9.30 p.m.

**8.15 p.m.:** *Sitting suspended.*

**10.20 p.m.:** *Sitting resumed.*

**Madam Clerk:** Hon. Members, once again I call upon the House to elect a Speaker.

**The Minister of Health (Hon. Colm Imbert):** Mr. Deputy Clerk, are you in charge, Sir? Mr. Deputy Clerk, I think it is necessary to put some of the Standing Orders into the record, because I am getting the impression that certain Standing Orders are usable and others are not. I see 44 being used to interpret 3, but other Standing Orders apparently are not relevant and, really, I am afraid I do not understand any of this.

I think it is necessary to read Standing Order 3 into the record. In particular, Standing Order 3(2) which is the election of a Speaker says:

“A Member, having first ascertained that the Member, or other person to be proposed is willing to serve...”

And this is where the concept of consent comes in.

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“...may, rising in his place and addressing the Clerk, propose any other Member...or any person who is not a Member of either chamber...to the House as Speaker...and if that proposal be seconded, the Clerk, if no other such Member or person be proposed...shall declare the Member or the person so proposed and seconded to be Speaker of the House.”

Then Standing Order 3(3) says:

“If another such Member or person, willing to serve if elected...”

Again, the concept of consent comes in.

“...be proposed and seconded, the Clerk shall propose the question that the Member who was first proposed should be the Speaker. If that proposal be agreed to, the Member or other person so chosen shall be Speaker, but if the proposal be negatived, the Clerk shall propose a like question in respect of any other such Member or person...”

Now, I notice Madam Clerk is using Standing Order 44 which speaks about if there is an equal number of votes, the Motion is lost, but this is not a Motion. This is the election of a Speaker. The words are very specific. The word used is negatived. This is not a motion. This is a proposal. It is a proposal, and I think the framers of these Standing Orders were very, very clear in what they were seeking to do. I do not believe that Standing Order 44 applies at all, and my understanding of the legal definition of negatived is that you have to have a majority of votes that are negatived, otherwise, the proposal is not negatived.

**Mr. Ramnath:** What about a tie?

**Hon. C. Imbert:** A tie is not a negative. I am not certain why we are proceeding and I want to put on the record again that as far as we are concerned, Max Richards is the Speaker of this House. The continuation of these proceedings is a mockery. It is a mockery of this entire system.

The other mockery of the system is the fact that the other side cannot tell us whether the persons that they are proposing have consented; whether the persons they are proposing meet the qualifications of section 50(3) of the Constitution and section 48 of the Constitution. There are at least 10 conditions in section 48; two conditions in section 50.

The whole concept of dual citizenship which has been raised in this Parliament before and, in fact, there were matters before the courts—the Member opposite was the subject of that. I cannot see how we can just proceed in a vacuum but, be that as it may, I will nominate someone just to demonstrate that

whereas the other side is coming with persons and they have no interest in informing the national community of the qualifications of these people, and whether these people are suitable as Speaker, and whether these people consented and qualified, they obviously think this is a joke and that is why they are just coming with arbitrary names.

I understand that they have about 10 or 20 binders there with the names of all the registered members of the UNC. Some 20,000 names of URP workers and various other people. You know, the person who sits in that Chair must be able to interpret our Standing Orders; must be able to interpret our Constitution; must command the respect of this Chamber and the country; must have some legal knowledge or at least some form of education. They must be able to read and write and understand and comprehend things; not just be a name.

I cannot imagine there is any other country in the world where persons are being proposed for the august office of Speaker. We do not even know whether these people have a School Leaving Certificate or not. Some of them probably do not, and yet, this is all right as far as the UNC is concerned. They make a big joke, but they have been doing that. They have done it for the last several occasions. They made a joke of the office of Speaker. They put a floor crosser on the last occasion. A big joke.

I was just reading the *Newsday*. I mean, certainly, the last occupant of the office of Speaker did not command the respect of the country. That is for sure. I wish to nominate a distinguished Trinidadian by the name of Eustace Edward Seignoret and I will give particulars. His academic qualifications are as follows. *[Interruption]* We could guarantee that, unlike you.

He attended Howard University between 1944 and 1948, graduating with a Bachelor of Science degree. *[Interruption]* His book bag was full. After doing his premedical, he switched disciplines and went to the University of Wales which he attended between the years 1949 and 1953, graduating with a Bachelor of Science degree in Agricultural Chemistry.

He returned to Trinidad in 1953 and took up employment with the Department of Agriculture under the Colonial Government. In 1958, with the formation of the Federal Government, he was sent as one of the two Trinidadians to work with the Federal Government from 1958—1962. During that period he was sent for diplomatic training at the London School of Economics from 1960—1961.

He returned to Trinidad in 1962 on the occasion of our country's independence and took up a job with the Ministry of External Affairs. He was

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appointed First Secretary to the Trinidad and Tobago Mission to the United Nations under the then ambassador, Sir Ellis Clarke. He subsequently opened the Trinidad and Tobago Mission in Geneva in 1965. *[Interruption]* Yes, he is alive. I spoke to him today, and yes he has consented.

He served as Deputy High Commissioner for Trinidad and Tobago to London from 1968—1971 and as Ambassador to the United Nations from 1971—1975. He returned to Trinidad in 1975 and was appointed Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of External Affairs where he served from 1975—1977. He then took up another diplomatic posting, served as our country's High Commissioner to London from 1977—1982 and ended his ambassadorial career as our High Commissioner to Guyana from 1982—1983. Subsequently, he served as the distinguished Chairman of the St. George West County Council from 1987—1991.

So, you can see we are serious. We have brought a man who is highly qualified academically, has served as this country's ambassador over a period spanning from the 60s to the 80s, and has also served as the chairman of one of the largest local government authorities in the country for several years. You know, I saw some of them collecting envelopes today. I understand it has back-pay in it. I saw them signing for it. I think the country needs to know. They come here and they refuse to elect a Speaker, but they are signing for their back-pay and they are taking it home. *[Interruption]*

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar:** Lies!

**Hon. C. Imbert:** Lie? At least one of you has collected a cheque for back-pay today. It is interesting. Look at where we have reached. They are taking the back-pay but they are refusing to do their duty to this country.

I really look at all of them. Look at you. That group of people over there signed an agreement in December four days before the general election for new salaries, new terms and conditions for doctors in Regional Health Authorities. Four days before the general election. No money in the budget! The Member for St. Augustine put no money in the budget to pay the doctors. That incurred a liability on the State in the sum of \$60 million for this fiscal year alone. Them! That is what they did four days before the general election. Now we have come into office, and the doctors are not interested in whether the UNC did what they were supposed to do and made the proper allocation in the budget to make sure they get their new salaries and their back-pay, to which they are entitled.

That was in the budget. That was there. Your back-pay that you all collected today was appropriated by that hon. Member! Let him get up and say it is not so.

[*Interruption*] He put your back-pay into the budget. The one you collected today. You know, you would prefer that doctors take sick-out action. That is what you want, and shut down the health sector and people will die in the hospitals! That is what you want, because you did not put the budgetary allocation for that wage agreement that you signed in the middle of the night just three or four days before the general election. This is why I find this is just a travesty. It is a disgrace. There are so many other things like that that we have to do in this Parliament. So many other things that are required to get this country moving along. You refuse to do your duty.

I also have to wonder—when we do that investigation, we will find out why you wanted to poison those poor children up there. I sincerely hope that you will not be implicated, because I understand that you knew exactly what was going on! That is my understanding. I understand that there are Members on that side who knew exactly what was going on, but they withheld information from the rest of the Cabinet. Two or three of you. A little cabal! You, the Minister of Education, you all knew exactly what was going on with that school, but you did not want the rest of your Cabinet colleagues to know. So you withheld the information. You see, you were peddling performance, like docile sheep. Peddling performance. Performance beats ol' talk.

You know, the other thing I believe is that you all are a bit scared, because you see at present there are persons under investigation. I was reading the newspapers a couple of weeks ago. A whole set of you were interviewed. The Member for St. Joseph was interviewed. The Member for Couva North was interviewed about a certain telecommunications licence. What went on with that?

**Mr. Hinds:** Interviewed by whom?

**Hon. C. Imbert:** By the police! They feel people in this country are stupid. You know what is the talk on the street? They want to scuttle this whole thing because they do not want these criminal investigations to continue. Because one of you might find yourself in trouble.

**Mr. Hinds:** One?

**Hon. C. Imbert:** Well at least one. But, as my colleague from Diego Martin West has said, we are the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

**Mr. Peters:** So elect the Speaker!

**Hon. C. Imbert:** To run the country, we need to elect a Speaker? Show me where that is inside here. Which clause? You know what I find so interesting?

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The Member for Princes Town keeps bawling section 76(1). Let us go to 76(1) of the Constitution:

“Where there is occasion for the appointment of a Prime Minister, the President shall appoint as Prime Minister—

- (b) where it appears to him that that party does not have an undisputed leader in that House or that no party commands the support of such a majority, the Member...who, in his judgment, is most likely to command...the majority...” [*Interruption*]

Listen to the idiocy of the other side. The idiotic arguments of the other side. They wanted the Member for Couva North to be Prime Minister, but the Member does not command the majority in this House.

What is good for the goose is good for the gander. So if the Member for Couva North had been appointed Prime Minister— which is what they wanted, and which is what they were hoping for, and which is what they expected the President to do, he would not have had the majority. So, in the same way that you are saying that section 76(1) has not been applied properly, how could the Member for Couva North have been Prime Minister, if your argument is correct?

You know, if the President had appointed the Member for Couva North as Prime Minister, you would have come here and asked us to elect a Speaker. That is what you would have done. And you would have talked about the Crowne Plaza accord and pull it here and say, “Look! Signed by Basdeo Panday and Hon. Patrick Manning.” And you would have run up and down the country screaming and shouting and saying how we are violating the Constitution and we would not do our duty, and we are breaking the Crowne Plaza accord, and we have no shame, and we have no conscience.

That is what that Member would have been doing. He would have been frothing at the mouth and screaming and carrying on that, “We had an agreement. We went to Crowne Plaza and we signed an agreement and look at them! They do not want to honour the agreement just because I am Prime Minister.” That is what he would have done. He would have gone screaming all over the place. He would have said discrimination, victimization, race! “It is because of race the PNM does not want to elect a Speaker.” That is what he would have done. “Alienation!” All kinds of things.

Furthermore, you know what the Members on the other side would have done? They would have tried their best to run this country for five years without having an election. That is exactly what they would have done. You gave a hint of



it when you said you wanted to wait until constitutional reform. It is in the Crowne Plaza Agreement. That you do not want an election before constitutional reform, which could take three or four years. And, of course, the fox, the silver fox, would have stretched three or four to five, so that if the President had appointed Mr. Basdeo Panday—which is what they wanted him to do—the hypocrisy would have been reeking all over this Chamber.

You are not fooling anybody. You have come here to elect a Speaker, you put up candidates, you nominate candidates and then you vote against them. The school children are watching all of you and saying, “Look at these people. They are desecrating this Chamber.” Little school children are looking at you because you are making everything a joke! Listen, you could do what you want, we are still running this country. Tomorrow morning we will still be on this side and you on that side. You could say what you want. You could do what you want. [*Desk thumping*] We do not need a Speaker to run this country. We have come here and we have put up distinguished citizens of Trinidad and Tobago

**Mr. Peters:** So have we.

**Hon. C. Imbert:** So have you? Ken Emrith? Hamlin Jailal? Lynette Abraham? [*Steups*] Give me a chance! Robin Montano? Give me a chance! You want to put people in that Chair who cannot put two sentences together? That is what you want to do? My goodness. You think you are scoring points?

**Mr. Peters:** I do not want to score points.

**Hon. C. Imbert:** I do not think you are scoring points. You are achieving nothing. They will find out what is the meaning of negative. We are going to find out if your candidates meet the qualifications. The way you are getting on, the way you are jumpy and nervous, edgy on the seat there, I have a feeling that at least one of your nominees is in trouble. That is why the Member for Couva North run and want to have an agreement to come back and talk and all kinds of things.

I look over there at the Member for Couva North. You know I have never seen such political "tabanca". Look at him. Cannot handle opposition. None of you can handle it. We were in Opposition for six years. We took it; we handled it. Look at all of you! Political "tabanca". Any of you servicing your constituencies? Any of you coming to ask Ministers questions in Parliament? Any of you coming here with Motions to ask for things to be done in your constituency?

I have been Minister of Health now for over three months. Only one Member of Parliament has asked me to deal with a matter in his constituency, and that is the Member for St. Augustine and I give him credit for that. Only one! He had

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some problem with mosquitoes, and so on. He called me. [*Laughter*] And he asked for our Insect Vector Division to go somewhere on the Southern Main Road by Kay Donna Drive-in, Spring Village, and I sent my officers to eradicate the mosquitoes. [*Laughter*] Not to eradicate the Member.

You know what I find amazing? There are 18 of them. You are trying to tell me you have no problems in the health sector that you need assistance from this Minister? None? It just proves to me that you are not servicing your constituencies. You do not care about your constituents. You do not care about representation because you have "tabanca". You are shell-shocked. You are in a state of denial.

I saw these meetings at Rienzi Complex. I saw one of them sitting down and saying "Yes, my Prime Minister". Another one saying "Yes, my Attorney General". "Yes, my Minister". I never see "pappy-show" so! [*Laughter*] They have more mad people outside than in. [*Laughter*] They are having Cabinet meetings, playing dolly house and making decisions. They have Cabinet Minute, and all kinds of things.

I understand all of you were under house arrest in Crowne Plaza like little children, because your leader is afraid of defection in his ranks; that one of you will break; one of you will have a conscience. They locked up all of you in the hotel under armed guard. Look where you have reached! Big men like them, like Mr. Yetming who used to run a bank, locked up in a room with a police guard outside. [*Laughter*] And put him in a bus and bring him up here. They are making a laughing stock of representation. It is a joke. The nation is laughing at you. I understand there is a rumour we wanted to kidnap one of you. [*Laughter*] Who wants to kidnap you? We do not want you.

More importantly, all 18 of you went before the electorate, you signed a form, a statutory declaration that you are willing to serve your country. You put your name on a ballot paper, asked people to vote for you, asked people to give you the opportunity to serve them, to represent them faithfully. People voted for you. You were elected as Members of Parliament. Your seats were declared. You are Members of Parliament. That was December 10, almost four months ago.

What are you doing? I have not seen a single one of you in your constituencies doing anything. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre, did you see anybody? Do you have office days? Do you walk in your constituency? Not one of you is representing a single one of the persons that you have been elected to serve. I can say, I am sure that none of my colleagues have received any requests from any of you to deal with infrastructure.

You are disgraceful. Rainy season is coming. What are you going to do if your constituents need assistance? You are going to sit there and say, "I am not playing this game. I am not a Member of Parliament. I am not the Leader of the Opposition. I am not doing it!" So you are not going to represent your constituents. You will continue with this charade; this Mickey Mouse thing you are doing?

You do not understand the damage you are doing to this country. The citizens of this country do not want an election. We had one in 2000, we had election in 2001. Elections are serious business. They cost a lot of money. They take up a lot of energy. They cause a lot of stress and frustration to the country. They cause problems for businesses. They cause problems for investments. You really think the people of this country want three elections in less than two years? They do not want it. They do not want it, and that is why we on this side have said there should be a reasonable time before the next general election. That is why we have said July, 2003 as the outside date which gives up to 18 months for the people of this country to settle down with the spectre of an election coming at them every month; every two months, which is what all of you want.

You want the people of this country to be in turmoil!

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar:** That is democracy.

**Hon. C. Imbert:** That is democracy? To have an election every six months? That is your definition of democracy? To just put the people of this country under stress every six months? That is what you want? No wonder you want to poison the children in Biche! You are an irresponsible and undisciplined person. Just for your own self-interest, for your own greed! You want to just have election after election after election. Because you do not want to play the game.

**Mr. Ramnath:** What does that have to do with Seignoret?

**Mr. C. Imbert:** What does that have to do with Seignoret? Seignoret is a good man. Seignoret should be Speaker so that we can bring legislation to this Parliament. For example, the former Minister of Health had drafted legislation for quality standards in the health sector. I have seen it. I am ready to run with it. I give him credit for whatever work he did to prepare that piece of legislation.

You know, without that legislation which will establish standards for health care in this country so that citizens, poor people will know for the first time the level and quality and standard of health care that they are entitled to as citizens of this country—that is what that is all about, so there will be a definition of what quality health care is. So that people will no longer be subjected to malpractice and be subjected to inadequate health care, and so on. It is a very important piece

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of legislation. You are blocking that. You are refusing to allow standards to be established for health care in this country.

**Mr. Peters:** What is preventing you from nominating a Speaker?

**Hon. C. Imbert:** You. You nominate somebody and vote against the person! You make a joke out of this whole thing. It is all right. You could sit there and vote no. You could vote no until you are blue in the face. You could vote no, no, no. You could vote no tomorrow, you could vote no Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday until you fall down. But we will continue to run this country for the benefit of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago and with or without you! [*Desk thumping*]

We are going to improve the quality of life for the people of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] We do not have you to study. If you feel that we are going to allow you to prevent us from carrying out our duties and responsibilities as the Government of this country, so that people will get their old age pension, their new \$1,000 old age pension which is the manifestation of a commitment that the PNM gave in the last general election; if you feel you will stop people from getting their old age pension, if you feel you will stop us from fulfilling the commitments we gave to this country in our manifesto, in our Agenda 24, you are living in dreamland.

If you want to make a mockery of this whole thing, go ahead. If you want to nominate people who have no formal education, if you want to nominate people who are unsuitable, if you want to nominate people—[*Interruption*] That is an absurdity. The Speaker of the House has to be able to cast an educated mind on these Standing Orders. What happen? You want to be Speaker? Your book bag was empty. You want to be Speaker?

**Mr. Peters:** The Speaker is speaking here!

**11.05 p.m.**

**Hon. C. Imbert:** “I really doh have time for all yuh any more, yuh know.” [*Crosstalk*] I do not have any time for you all. I want to let you know, by the way, that as the Minister of Health I have ensured [*Crosstalk*] that when one of you drop down—because it seems like you want to stay here 24 hours for the next seven days—I have the emergency health service on standby. I just want to let you know that I have a team of doctors on standby. I have a bed in the Intensive Care Unit on standby. [*Crosstalk*] I have a team of nurses on standby. [*Crosstalk*] I just want to let you know that.

So if you want to fall down “bra dap”, we will summon the ambulance. I have spoken to the Minister of National Security and the ambulance would be allowed free entry into the precincts of the Parliament. The doctors can come in without any hindrance and they will cart you off to the hospital. I just want to let you know that I am thinking of you; I have your welfare at heart. I just want to let you know that. [*Crosstalk*] I am reserving my right to speak again on every single nomination in this House. “Leh we see what all yuh go do.”

I have nominated Eustace Seignoret; an educated man, a diplomat and a former local government chairman. [*Interruption*] Oh, “yuh” against old people now? I always knew there was something wrong with you. [*Laughter*] You against old people now; no problem. I like old people. I have recommended Eustace Seignoret; I think he will be an excellent Speaker. I call upon Members opposite to support his nomination. [*Crosstalk*]

**Hon. Members:** I thought you said you do not need us. [*Crosstalk*] [*Desk thumping*]

**The Minister in the Ministry of Public Administration and Information (Hon. Fitzgerald Hinds):** Madam Clerk, I want to make a short intervention to support my friend from Diego Martin East in his proposal of Mr. Eustace Seignoret, to hold the office of Speaker in this honourable Chamber.

Before specifically doing so, Madam Clerk, I also continue to record my personal disgust and dissatisfaction with what politics have come to in Trinidad and Tobago. It is quite obvious that we are, perhaps, running the risk of forgetting that the people of Trinidad and Tobago are looking and listening. We will not forget on this side.

We came here from 1.30 p.m. and we have offered you serious candidates, as we have been doing since 1956 through 1961, 1966, 1971 and 1976. We have been doing it all through the years, because as I said in an earlier contribution this afternoon, there was a time in Trinidad and Tobago where honesty and nobility were everywhere for us to see and experience.

Since the coming of the United National Congress—[*Interruption*] I do not need your help; this is not to be taken personally; I have nothing personal in this. In fact, we make personal sacrifices to represent the people of this country as we did. It is nothing personal. So in that sense, I do not need your help. I am simply calling on you to cooperate to help the people who elected us here to represent them. I am past the stage of trying to persuade you to do it, because it is obvious that your minds are locked in; your minds are made up and you demonstrate what

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I would want to call a “pit bull philosophy”. You are locked in and nothing could rearrange you, except the intervention of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

**Mr. S. Panday:** And that by election! [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon. F. Hinds:** But before you are ready to offer yourself to the people again and to impose yourself on the people again—because the Member for Diego Martin East correctly said a while ago that elections are costly, traumatic and burdensome. To offer yourselves as candidates after what happened here today must be traumatic on the people who you asked to vote for you.

**Hon. Members:** “Doh feel so.”

**Hon. F. Hinds:** It has to be. We are at a point in Trinidad and Tobago where a lot of what is happening is misconstrued by many and it is commonplace in Trinidad and Tobago for everyone to give the explanation that all of the problems we now face have to do with the vexed question of race.

I have often said that we can discuss that subject without becoming racist or racial, because we know that it is ungodly; we know that it is wrong; we know that it is unconstitutional. This is a multiracial, multicultural and multireligious society; but we can discuss those issues.

I was looking at the pages of this very informative book, *Inward Hunger: The Education of a Prime Minister*, written by the late, great Dr. Eric Williams, our founding father. [*Interruption*] I read this book on two occasions and on page 283, in the chapter that deals with Independence, Trinidad and Tobago was locked in a kind of situation at that time; there was a gridlock. Not like the one we have today dealing with 18 seats on the one hand and 18 seats on the other, but the mentality was one of siege, fear and concern for the future; just like you are concerned today.

I have heard some of your speakers, including the Member for Couva North, misleading the people of this country and saying to them in order to justify your dastardly, uncaring and unconstitutional way, that you will not support the election of a Speaker to facilitate the Parliament and to facilitate the establishment of the triumvirate of the Government, the Judiciary and the Parliament or the Legislature. In order to attempt to justify your wanton carelessness, recklessness, uncaring and selfishness, what you did was to try to mislead the people and to tell them that if you allow the PNM to elect a Speaker in the Parliament, they would run the country for five years.

I want to tell the people, who you are supposed to be representing, and the national community, that that is not the truth. Hear how easy it is to demonstrate the untruthfulness of that. I go back to Crowne Plaza, where it was clearly stated and signed by both sides that there would have been an outside date for the elections and as soon as the election process was sorted out we would have been going to election. We signed to that, so that alone is testimony to the fact that we have no intention of governing this country for five years in the circumstances of 18/18.

Secondly, we know as well as you do—and you are demonstrating it today—the fact that there are 18 seats on your side and 18 on this side makes it impracticable to pass legislation. That is the reason we sought to find common ground in Crowne Plaza where we had a limited agreement: an agreement for a limited time in government and an agreement to bring pre-arranged, pre-discussed and pre-settled legislation for the benefit of the people. That was the common ground we found at Crowne Plaza.

So we know that it is not practicable to appoint a Speaker without your support. We always knew that, [*Crosstalk*] but we also know that the Constitution points out in section 50 that a Speaker shall be elected. So it is with this in view and in view of the reality of 18/18 that we went to Crowne Plaza in good faith with some of you, on your behalf and on behalf of the people who supported you, and tried to settle an arrangement. [*Interruption*] I know.

Dignity, nobility and honour does not exist again either, so I am past the stage of trying to persuade you about anything; but there are some issues of which I want to remind you. When it was time to find a way to independence, Dr. Eric Williams, as leader of the PNM and Premier, was finding some objections from those who were opposed to him politically, led by Dr. Capildeo. Some of it is documented here and you must bear me out and listen. I want you to listen.

I am not dealing with the race question. The race question arises here, but only in passing. I am making another point and I will show you the point I am making in a little while, but bear with me while I read a chapter. [*Crosstalk*] Not a chapter, a paragraph; some of a chapter.

The paragraph states:

“Before proceeding to London, we held the usual mass meeting in the University. I there gave the country the slogan for the age of Independence, ‘discipline, production and tolerance’. I dealt again with the allegations of discrimination against Indians in the public service. I showed how Indians represented 40 per cent of the teachers in primary schools, received over 60 per cent of the loans

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from the Agricultural Credit Bank, at that time, were 66 per cent of the population in Caroni and had 84 per cent of the daily paid jobs, were 56 per cent of the population in Victoria and had 73 per cent of the daily paid jobs, were 38 per cent of the population in St. Patrick and had 77 % of the daily paid jobs, and received 41 per cent of all government contracts in 1962.”

I am not dealing with the race question; that is in passing. I will come to the point I want to make momentarily.

The paragraph continues:

“The next stage was Marlborough House where the Independent Conference began on May 28, 1962. I had very little to say at the Conference, leaving the issues to be presented by the Attorney-General, Senator George Richards and the Constitutional Adviser to the Cabinet, Ellis Clarke.”

**Hon. Member:** That is Max’ father.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** “Maudling...”

That is the British Maudling.

“told me that Macmillan had made it clear that Trinidad and Tobago must be represented in its own right at the Commonwealth Prime Ministers’ Conference on the European Common Market scheduled for September...I decided to write a letter inviting Maudling to intervene to see what he could do to abate racial tensions. The letter read as follows:”

Of course, he dictated the letter here.

“It went against the grain.”

He was saying that writing such a letter went against the grain, “having to involve the metropolitan power in a domestic matter, but there was no alternative.”

“At least so it seemed. It was my intention to present the letter to Maudling at the final sitting. On the last day of the conference, I decided to settle the matter face to face with Dr. Capildeo, Leader of the Opposition. I drew him...”  
[*Interruption*]

You just keep quiet “nah” man. [*Crosstalk*]

“I drew him aside during the tea interval, and told him of my original intention, indicated that I had abandoned it, and explained that I would make a statement to the Conference on the resumption.



I made the statement, to the effect that I intended on my return to Trinidad to raise with the opposition the general question of national integration and national unity with specific reference to:

- a) Nehru's Integration Committee in India
- b) the promotion of national culture
- c) the working out of a campaign code on elections; and
- d) fair employment practices without discrimination on grounds of race, political affiliation..."

I am coming to the essence of it now:

"Capildeo thanked me and withdrew all opposition to the date of independence. The conference ended, catching the British flatfooted, without the reporters and television being on hand. The British never knew what hit them, and I never presented my letter to Maudling.

Before leaving London our top party people had preliminary discussions with some of the Opposition members clarifying procedure, *modus operandi* etc., and that helped too."

Having read this, I want to make the point that it was a time of crisis in the nation. We were working our way towards independence. All the people wanted it, but there were some sections led by Dr. Capildeo that had serious concerns about the future. There were racial tensions too, according to what he was saying. What did Dr. Eric Williams do? He spoke face to face with Dr. Capildeo and won his support. Capildeo yielded to the moment, responded positively to it. A solution was found; independence came and the fears that Dr. Capildeo and others had, now we know, were not realized.

I am asking the question: Could we not, in this hour of trauma and moral crisis, act with the same measure of nobility and honour that I have just described in this text? I am embarrassed as a man and as a young parliamentarian. I am here six years now; that is young. There are those here 30 years now. But I am absolutely and sincerely embarrassed at what politics have come to in Trinidad and Tobago today.

**Mr. S. Panday:** It was worse with the time of the voting machines.

**Hon. Members:** Call election now!

**Hon. F. Hinds:** I am absolutely embarrassed.

**Mr. Partap:** Eighteen/Eighteen, call elections now!

**Hon. F. Hinds:** I am not playing about this; I am deadly serious about this. I am absolutely embarrassed. As I said twice before, it is not my business, as I second this Motion, to attempt to convince you to change your ways, because it is obvious by now to all the national community, that you are not serious. You want elections now yet before, you wanted it in four years.

**Mr. Ramnath:** We have changed our minds.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** Yes, you have changed your minds. You change everything. The only thing is that you are getting progressively worse. If it were not affecting Trinidad and Tobago, it would not be so bad. Again, I am looking at the Members for St. Joseph and St. Augustine. I know that they did not come here to play this kind of politics. They came here with other things in mind.

**Mr. Ramnath:** Why are you picking on them?

**Hon. F. Hinds:** I have good reason for doing that. I am sure that they are not going to be as comfortable as we were. I sat here in Opposition for six years and served my constituents, asked a million questions and raised Motions on the Adjournment. I fought in Opposition; I became attuned to it. I was toughened up by it. Opposition prepared me for the beauty of the three months we have had in Government so far. I understand it.

I know my friends from St. Augustine and St. Joseph did not come for that. They came with a crew of investors. They have not come for this hard work. They are in the same ilk as the Jack Warners of this world and the Lindsay Gillettes. [Interruption] They did not come here to do any real work in the service of the people. They came here to be in Government and now they are out, the last three months must have been the most uncomfortable for you. I know how it is. Let me tell you something further. [Crosstalk]

**Mr. Partap:** Get moving to call elections now.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** I am responsible and proudly so, as Junior Minister to Dr. Lenny Saith in the Ministry of Public Administration and Information. He is my senior Minister and I have no trouble with that. I am absolutely proud of that.

**Mr. S. Panday:** Toting his empty briefcase. [Crosstalk] [Laughter]

**Hon. F. Hinds:** My business as a minister in that ministry is to do whatever I can. You are talking about carrying briefcase, but when I was a young man growing up in my community, it was quite natural. If I saw an elder walking up

the road with a bag or gas tank, [*Laughter*] out of good-naturedness I would help him or her. So I have no trouble with that. If I saw the hon. Member needing a glass of water later today, as abominable as his conduct has been, I would share my water with him; that is only human, no problem.

But I will tell you something: I will never carry any briefcase for any of you, because the police might come to arrest me for something that I know nothing about. [*Crosstalk*] I will never carry a briefcase for one of you, because I understand that there are some briefcases that may con—[*Interruption*] Boy, look leave me alone. I had spoken about the Members for St. Augustine and St. Joseph. I “ain’t” talk about the Member for San Fernando West and others as yet. Stop talking briefcase talk to me.

Madam Clerk, I was saying that I am absolutely ashamed at what politics have come to in this country and the last six years have been the worst we have ever seen. The more I reflect on your fleeting objections to our first nomination here this afternoon, the more sad I become, because it was you who had a former Speaker contest the election and lose. [*Crosstalk*] I know, but I must say it again, because it ought to be repeated.

We on this side will struggle to maintain some decorum, dignity and standards. The UNC has been single-handedly responsible for the destruction of most of the institutions in this country. I remember the years and the months when the Judiciary of this country came under sustained attack from the government of the country. [*Crosstalk*] [*Interruption*] When it was your duty to protect the independence of the Judiciary, for years you put it under sustained attack.

I heard Dr. Rowley, the Member for Diego Martin West, say today that all you want is Cabinet; I beg to disagree. What you wanted was access to the Treasury. Cabinet was a means to that end and the results are well known to people up and down this country. You have corrupted every institution in this country, even the media. The media for years operated in this country enjoying their constitutional rights under the Constitution as enshrined in sections 4 and 5. I remember the *Newsday* about two years ago having to publish on the front page a little logo asserting its constitutional right to publish, after a sustained attack from the United National Congress as a government.

I remember the *Express* newspaper having to embark on a very costly campaign, printing some red *Express* stickers, putting them all over the country asserting its right to publish at the hands of the UNC and the then government.

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Look at the Member for Siparia. I heard her shouting about the Biche school today. She is responsible, single-handedly for, at least, the waste of \$64 million in this country; \$34 million on Sackville Street in a little coop, a little jail and it is now a white elephant.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar:** They are still out of school. Where have you put them?

**Hon. F. Hinds:** The so-called “Model School”. And if that was not good enough, she went to Biche and created another disaster costing \$30 million, a total of \$64 million. I hear about the \$60 million man, you are the \$64 million woman.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar:** Where are the children? On the platform you said you had a place to put them. Where are they? [*Crosstalk*]

**Hon. F. Hinds:** I do not know why you want early elections; you should take a long rest.

**Hon. Member:** That is why you should call it.

**Mr. Partap:** “Yuh fraid” elections.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** You should be ashamed to offer yourselves in public service to the people of this country again, especially after this evening. You should be doubly ashamed, but you just have no shame and immediately I remember a little story that was told to me some time ago.

A frog was at the end of a river beside the riverbank and a scorpion was close by him. [*Laughter*] [*Crosstalk*] The scorpion wanted to get over and asked the frog for a ride on his back. The frog, knowing the scorpion, said to him, “No, I couldn't do that, if I did it you would sting me and we will both perish.” The scorpion said to him, “No, I would never do that; I'm not so stupid, I don't want to die.” So the frog allowed the scorpion onto his back and they began the journey across. As they got to the middle, the scorpion “rest” it on him and they both drowned. The scorpion could not help it; it was the nature of the beast. [*Crosstalk*]

**Hon. Members:** What is the moral of the story?

**Hon. F. Hinds:** The moral of the story is very, very simple. Look we had a little effort here. Do you know how happy the country felt for the few moments that they saw that there was the possibility of some kind of discussion to resolve this nasty situation in our Parliament and country? [*Crosstalk*] [*Interruption*] Do you know how? But a few moments later we are back to square one, wasting the people's time, wasting the people's money, wearing down the people's patience

and you are just there saying that the people of Trinidad and Tobago will not get a Speaker. So says the UNC. [*Crosstalk*]

It is you who are saying that we would not have a Speaker. We have proposed credible, qualified and able candidates and on every occasion you have voted against them. You do not want the Speaker and then you are proposing people who are absolutely unknown and in one case we verily believe out of the country, nowhere to be found, a non-existent nomination.

**Mr. S. Panday:** They are Trinidadians and Tobagonians. [*Crosstalk*]

**Hon. F. Hinds:** And that is where we are. So to continue to suggest that we do not want a Speaker and we must do it, is like--

**Mr. Ramnath:** How could you treat Montano like that?

**Hon. F. Hinds:** Madam Clerk, it is obvious, according to the Member for Diego Martin East, that what really troubles the UNC and Members of the Opposition is that they are suffering from some kind of "tabanca". They are all drunk with power and the thirst for it. They are punch drunk from what transpired from the last election and thereafter and they are stale drunk. [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. S. Panday:** We stale drunk so we cannot vote.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** They are simply unable to accept their new reality. I can start from the Back Bench and work my way through, beginning with the Member for Barataria/San Juan.

I was very saddened a couple mornings ago to see him on TV6 like a cat on a hot tin roof, trying to sound intelligent with foolishness. He began to tell the people of this country that he would be voting today with his conscience. Well, everybody knows, every sensible person would understand that his presence in the UNC, for as long as he has remained there, says a lot about his conscience in the first place. But he remained there trying to impress us that he has this new found conscience with which to vote. From the moment I heard him I heard the deceit and deception in his tone and I was not taken in. So the newspapers reported that Fuad Khan was going to vote according to conscience and naturally, curious as the media personalities are, they summoned him to TV6 and he sat there on national television.

Now, here he is; the moment of truth had come. He is trying to maintain his foolish position that he would vote according to conscience, lending the impression that he would do the honourable thing but, at the same time, UNC supporters are becoming concerned that he might have behaved like one Griffith

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and one Lasse, so he is now trying to sound smart with stupidity. I felt sorry for him. He needs psychiatric and psychological care. He has come here today to make my expectations of him realized. There he is; he has voted against all of the people who were better qualified than him to be Speaker, he being a former Deputy Speaker in this House.

**Mr. Peters:** If he voted for PNM he would have been good?

**Hon. F. Hinds:** My friend, the Member for Tabaquite; I am not surprised that he has allowed himself to be led by the Member for Couva North, because he needs leading 25 hours a day. I do not know how on God's earth he remained Minister of Education in this country for three and a half years. [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Peters:** At least he better than you. Manning make you shadow for all these years. [*Crosstalk*]

**Hon. F. Hinds:** It is, perhaps, the single reason why education delivery plummeted under him. I told you already, I spent six years in this Parliament as a Member of the Opposition; it did not trouble me. My business was to call you to account and the records will show that I did it. [*Desk thumping*] You are now abdicating your responsibility in Opposition, because you feel you could only operate if your hands are in the Treasury. You feel that there is nothing else but to have your hands in the Treasury and once your hands are not in the Treasury, all fall down.

But my friend from Tabaquite, of "paradigm" fame, [*Laughter*] is like "Christopher Columbus". He does not know east from west. He does not know where he is coming from or where he is going, but he was our Minister of Education for four years in this country. [*Interruption*]

**Hon. Member:** He did a very good job.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** Look, right now he is sitting there looking nonplussed. He does not have a clue even what I am speaking about now. [*Laughter*] He is at a complete loss, even in this hour of moral crisis.

The Member for Caroni Central, I always assumed that he was an honourable man, perhaps he is, but he does not have the strength and fortitude to tell his Prime Minister no, so on the eve of the election he signed a \$60 million back-pay agreement with doctors knowing that there was no money allocated in the budget for it. That is the essence of irresponsibility. Binding the incoming government to an arrangement with no money to do it. Now, if that is not imprudence, mismanagement, squandermania and madness, tell me what else is? That is the record of that Minister of Health.

Bearing in mind that in 1994 for the first time in 10 years, Trinidad and Tobago experienced economic growth. From 1986—1994 we had economic growth in that year and when you came into office you met a growing and strengthening economy, if I may say so, and with all of that, if you went to the Port of Spain General Hospital now, poor people cannot get some penicillin or Panadol; old people go there and when they get a prescription they do not even bother to go to the dispensary. That is the record of the last Minister of Health and that government.

I have noticed my friend from Chaguanas. I must say that he has aged significantly since I last saw him in this House. [*Laughter*] He looks a pitiful sight. [*Crosstalk*] You can see that he has a hot head; it is reddening.

I am looking along your Benches and I am trying to find one of you who has the strength to tell the Member for Couva North, this is time to put an end to this foolish game; it is time to stop it now. [*Desk thumping*] I am searching, but the more I look the more despicable the picture becomes. [*Crosstalk*]

My friend from Nariva; what is his record? He brought a single Bill to Parliament in six years and it failed.

**Mr. Partap:** Apparently you were sleeping.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** One Bill he brought here, the Occupational Health and Safety Bill, and he had to go back with it; it never went anywhere, so incompetent he is. When he was a so-called journalist in the Southern Bureau for the *Express*, he was writing letters, pretending to be an independent-minded journalist—a bad example even to the media people here. He was pretending. He could not rise above his own base instincts and he was attacking the PNM; all the time he was doing it, pretending to be an independent minded journalist and two weeks after he appeared here as a parliamentarian for the UNC; unprincipled.

Well my friend from Naparima, I know little of him. My friend from Fyzabad; what can I say of you?

**Mr. Sharma:** I know you robbed the Treasury. Make up something quick.

**Hon. Member:** He is still owing on his NHA house.

**Mr. Sharma:** Substance abuse.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** Just like the Members for Ortoire/Mayaro and Fyzabad, he spent six years in this House and probably spoke twice. The only time the Member for Ortoire/Mayaro spoke was when they sent him in to speak in a debate

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about the Elections and Boundaries Commission, to make a mockery of himself. [Crosstalk] The Member for Fyzabad made no contribution to the deliberations of this House. I really do feel sorry. You are incapable of a contribution. [Interruption]

**Mr. Peters:** There are people on that side who never spoke.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** I look down the Back Benches and I could find none who could restrain the excesses of the Member for Couva North; not one of you. This is why I come back to my friends from St. Augustine and St. Joseph, because, in part, they pull the strings. They exert some influence; they bring some of the support. [Crosstalk]

I do not think that they have done so for nothing. I think if there are two people on your side who might be able to bridle the Member for Couva North, it would be those two gentlemen. I told the Member for St. Joseph privately, now I will tell him publicly that he should make contact with his superiors in a building not too far from here. They have invested significantly in the operations of the party.

I remember as well in 1995 when the UNC won 17 seats, the Member for Couva North clasping his hands at Rienzi Complex and before thanking Mother Lakshmi or Shiva, I heard him thanking Ish, Brian and Steve. He never had time to say thank God. I saw him. He wiggled himself with joy and champagne and thanked Ish, Brian and Steve. Where is Ish today? Where is Brian today?

I remember him celebrating a previous Member for Pointe-a-Pierre in this House. Where is that Member today? Let me call his name: Dhanraj Singh. To me, the UNC represents a history of destabilization of the institutions and peacefulness of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. The UNC is a bad omen and tonight at 11.47 p.m. they have reinforced their reputation. I just went through to demonstrate some of their ways.

Imagine I had to live in this country to see the police knocking almost daily on the door of a former Prime Minister. You think I ever thought I would see that? I never thought I would see that. If it is not about a cheque, it is about—[Crosstalk] I mean, it is just an embarrassment. And you present yourselves here today obstructing the Parliament, undermining the Constitution. Where have nobility, honour and integrity gone? Where have they gone?

The Member for Couva South, as I said earlier, advanced in years, way ahead in terms of parliamentary experience.

**Mr. Ramnath:** You are watching a young man like me and talking about advanced in years! [Laughter]



**Hon. F. Hinds:** I apologize; it was a mistake. I meant the Member for Couva North, the one who has consigned you to the political graveyard. For you, we celebrate your rebirth and resurrection this evening. We know that you are not overly concerned about government immediately, you are just quite happy to be here. [*Laughter*] Welcome.

**Mr. Ramnath:** You will get a taste of me.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** I know, but I hope that the taste I get is not the taste that others got when you sat here last, because I understand that your conduct was beyond expectations. [*Crosstalk*] I know because you do not know any bounds and when I say you, I use it in the pluralistic sense. You do not know any limits; you do not have any class; let me put it flatly. You do not know where to stop; you will do anything and you will do it with a smile. [*Interruption*] And you would probably get 18 seats the next time you go to the polls too; and you know that. You see, we are trying to find the higher elements of the human beings of Trinidad and Tobago. We want to reinforce concepts of dignity, morality and honesty again. We owe it to the children of this country and I will be unrelenting in my quest for those qualities.

I am telling you personally that I am prepared, if you would only show me a better face, to forgive you, heavily and reluctantly, of all your past misdemeanors. But your behaviour tonight only reinforces that which I know of you and you are threatening again to give me a taste of what you used to do in this Parliament. You are on record as calling a certain Member, if I remember correctly, a slut. I hope that you never revisit that behaviour in this session in this Parliament again, because if you do, the response would be different.

**Mr. Ramnath:** You could never intimidate me.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** But I should really be welcoming you—let me welcome you to this honourable House.

**Mr. Ramnath:** You must deal with your own problems with your leader. [*Crosstalk*]

**Hon. F. Hinds:** I am saying that the Member for Couva North, [*Interruption*] not you—the Member for Couva North found himself in a position where he could have been a better example to younger Members of his team, but he has opted out. [*Interruption*] Well, you can make your criminal allegations but I would wish if you would go outside the door and say it. The back-pay you got today, I would be quite happy to spend some of it on my children's education. I want you to go outside the door and say that. [*Crosstalk*]

*Election of Speaker*  
[HON. F. HINDS]

*Friday, April 05, 2002*

I know we failed to elect a Speaker, Member for Siparia, although you have been very cooperative. As was said to you on diverse occasions this afternoon, we are trying to satisfy the requirements of our Constitution, which we honour and respect. We are also saying that we have governed in this country for the last three months and there was no Parliament. You delayed the calling of this Parliament because of your conduct. [*Crosstalk*] Now that we have come here trying to meet the requirements of the Constitution and we have presented to you worthwhile candidates, you are the ones who have obstructed the movement and, therefore, we can have no Speaker. But when we leave here, whether it is today or tomorrow or next week, we will go back to our ministries and we will continue to do the wonderful work we have started.

In respect of the Ministry of Public Administration and Information let me tell you this: You will remember that as far back as the 1980s public servants lost some of their entitlements, they lost their COLA and took a 10 per cent cut in salary. From that time it was promised them on different occasions.

**Mr. Peters:** Including your good selves.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** Between 1991 and 1995, though this Government had the will, it had not the financial way because we had the task of rebuilding a crashed economy; the record will show that. We rebuilt the economy and put it on a growth path again for the first time in 1994 after 10 years. So the Government of the PNM between 1991 and 1995 must only be applauded for wonderful work done during those years. We did a number of things during those years.

**Mr. Peters:** Who crashed the economy for the NAR after you wasted the country's resources?

**Hon. F. Hinds:** You might have been in some bar singing in New York; you would not have known what was happening here. [*Laughter*]

**Mr. Peters:** I was sending my money back home.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** I have no problem with that, the only trouble I have with that is that, unfortunately, Member for Ortoire/Mayaro, as an ambassador in part for the culture that we have given birth to in this country—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Peters:** Since you know how I got my money, tell me.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** I just heard the American accent; I was right. [*Laughter*] Tell them. But Member for Ortoire/Mayaro I was saying to you that what troubles me about your circumstance is that from now on you will only be singing in New

York, nobody in Trinidad wants to hear you anymore. You have given up your audience in Trinidad and Tobago because of your political and other folly, but that is a price you have to pay.

**Mr. Peters:** Trinidad belongs to the PNM. I will sing in Trinidad until the day I die.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** And you will get boo until you die. [*Laughter*]

**Mr. S. Panday:** PNM orchestrated it.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** And as long as God gives me strength, I will restrain the lady of whom I told you earlier, until I die. I told you earlier I had to restrain a lady from tossing a bottle at you that night in the Clash and I will do it again. [*Crosstalk*]

Having rebuilt the economy during those years, we could not honour the Government's obligation to the public servants. A previous government had incurred it. What we did between 1991 and 1995 was to stop the accumulation of the debt; in other words we reinstated what they had lost and the accumulation of the debt was stopped.

Then it was your Member for Couva North who told public servants that a debt is a debt and it would be paid in cash. Some unwary souls were motivated by that untruth. He knew it was not true before. He knew he would not do it and he ended up with 18 seats; he negotiated his way through the NAR; ended up in government and he still never settled the debt.

I will tell you what we have been doing in the Ministry of Public Administration and Information in the last three months. We had promised public servants that when we came into office, the first thing we would do in the month of December was to pay one month's salary as an advance on the money that the Government had owed to them. [*Crosstalk*] [*Interruption*]

**Hon. Members:** You said you were going to pay a month's salary.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** You can barely speak. Let me speak for myself. We said to the population, and we directed it to the public servants in particular, 65,000 of them, that to those who were entitled we would pay to them, as a demonstration of goodwill, as soon as we came into office, one month's salary in advance on the moneys that was owed to them by the Government.

**Mr. Peters:** You are a liar! You never said that.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** As soon as we got into office we honoured that commitment and paid one month's salary to those who were owed money. The public servants

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are absolutely comfortable and happy with the fact that we have kept that promise. [*Desk thumping*]

We have already engaged them in serious negotiations and I can assure you, we are very close to finalizing arrangements with the public servants represented by the Public Services Association.

There were those who had accepted buyouts beforehand; that included the police, the prisons and the teachers. We said to them that since they accepted less than that which was due to them, we were prepared, on the principle of equity, to entertain their concerns for parity with those who were coming after. We are engaged in negotiations on that too. We told the retirees in this country that we would increase their pension to \$1,000 and as soon as we came into office we did it.

**Mr. Peters:** A good thing we taught you how to do that.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** We told the people of this country that their National Housing Authority flats and buildings that we built—[*Interruption*] The NAR government did not build a single public house between 1986 and 1991. The UNC built a few, the Aranguéz flats. I see them as I drive past. They are a hotbed of confusion. They gave them to their friends. One member of the UNC who sat in this Chamber occupies two of the flats next door to each other, broke the inner wall and converted two flats into one. That is the greed and selfishness that was manifest by you—very expensive public villas in Aranguéz. Everybody, all the board members and the key players in the UNC took themselves one and we are having some trouble getting them to understand that it could not have been a gift.

We built government flats all over this country. We built public houses up and down this country, from Milford Court in Tobago to Embacadere in San Fernando, by me in Laventille. All over this country we built and allowed people to enjoy accommodation in low cost housing like that, at \$8, \$12 and \$15 a month, 25 years ago.

**Mr. Peters:** That is why black people cannot get out of it. Up to now they still cannot teach themselves to be independent. That is what you did, so you could keep them subservient.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** Recognizing that the buildings had become a little dilapidated over the years, we told the people that we would repair, repaint and refurbish them. If you go anywhere in the country now, from Cocorite to Old St. Joseph Road in the constituency of my friend from Port of Spain South, you will actually see work in progress. Buildings are being repainted; houses are being repaired.

We are making the little people feel the benefit of the wealth that passed through Trinidad and Tobago for the last six years like a purge and only an elite few, who had their slimy hands in the Treasury, benefited. We put a stop to that, from State boards to URP, in my constituency as well. The Member for San Fernando West would know well about this. I sat in Laventille East/Morvant for six years and I never saw a URP gang anywhere and every fortnight, thousands of dollars, hundreds of thousands were being paid for work that was never done.

**Mr. Partap:** You used to walk with your eyes closed.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** You all have corrupted everything. In the last three months, I took a brave stand, under the threat of death in some cases, I told them as long as Fitzgerald Hinds and the PNM in this constituency and in Government it cannot have any corruption in the UNC, no ghost gangs, I cut it out [*Desk thumping*] and that is my pledge. I am telling you. So we are honouring our pledge to the people of this country.

We are doing the business and we are doing it well. We allocated \$67 million about three weeks ago for the repair and refurbishment programme for housing and to build 3,000 new houses by the end of this year. Sen. Montano has set out like a bullet to get it done. We have already begun to break ground; 3,000 houses are going to be constructed in this country to relieve the plight of those who need them. [*Desk thumping*] So we are heading somewhere; as I like to say, the ship of State has left port three months ago.

There are those of you who like to stand up on the shoreline and scream and make noise. As we proceed, your voices recede in the background; you could stay there. As we proceed, all the mutineers, all those who tried to overthrow the ship and interfere with things that they should not, we are causing the authorities to have their way to deal with them. We would not interfere in that.

I was on a radio programme recently, 90.5, an Indian radio station, so-called, not Indian because the management is Indian or because the commentators were Indian, I call it Indian because the format on the station is largely Indian culture and music, which sometimes, when I could understand it, I thoroughly enjoy.

**12.05 a.m.**

I was on that programme recently and I had to endure the absurdity of a frontline UNC speaker, a lawyer. He called in to that programme—and I have the tape—and he said to me on radio—to show you how reckless, careless and dangerous the UNC is and the kinds of mentalities and personalities it spawns. He said that when the Government allocated \$67 million to repair, refurbish and build

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NHA houses, that was taking Indian people money to support African people in NHA house on the corridor. *[Interruption]*

Well, there is no Speaker here so you are free to say what you want, it does not trouble me. I know that I could undergo any test now from lie test, to AIDS test, to drug test, to thief test and I passing all 10 out of 10, so you could say what you want. *[Interruption]* I know, I know, I know. The person who cussed you recently in Rienzi Complex “dem brain ain’t fried.”

**Mr. S. Panday:** “That’s wha ah saying, yuh still have cocaine in yuh blood.”

**Hon. F. Hinds:** But when the person hear you say—you nastiness man, God is great. All praise is due to the Creator, you say your nastiness, I will continue my work.

When the caller called in the programme—*[Interruption]* You all are just sick and spew sickness; I would not listen to you. When the caller called in and said that, I was absolutely shocked, I could not believe that that would come from the mouth of a lawyer who was trained at the Hugh Wooding Law School, who had the benefit of taxpayers’ education like you and I, a frontline speaker for the UNC. I was shocked and I simply told him, well, low-cost high-rise housing is a phenomena you would find in any city with urban populations and limited land space. This is a norm. So you will typically find NHA houses in that kind of area as opposed to the opened land spaces of south and central Trinidad. So he listened to that.

I also told him that we all pay taxes in this country: PAYE, VAT, corporation tax and other taxes, and there is no distinction between what one people pay and the other people pay; everybody pays tax. So his argument was also stupid and wrong. But that is the sort of thing that is encouraged from the Rienzi Complex and he would be applauded.

I asked my colleagues here today when we were in the tea room: Assuming that the PNM had come to this Parliament as an Opposition and had done the same thing that you all are doing today how tolerant would our supporters have been? You know we are judged by entirely different standards. The things you can do with impunity, our supporters would have none of it. Every time I have to raise a question in this Parliament, or file a motion, or even to make a speech, I have to consult with my colleagues and we have to come to terms on what I must say. That is the kind of responsibility we practise here, checks and balances inside here, but in the UNC, everything goes, anything goes. *[Interruption]*

Everything goes and this is what is frightening and this is why as long as God gives me strength, I will continue to speak because the people who gave you 18

seats I am sure they do not know everything they ought to know about you, and this is why I will continue to go on 90.5 and 103.1 and 101.1. I go on all stations when I have to. I am saying I will continue to go on those that represent and that produce a format that would largely be listened to by the people in the country districts not along the corridor. That is what I am saying. There is nothing wrong with that and I make no apology for that. I listen and enjoy it tremendously. A lot of nice talk shows, wonderful programmes. *[Interruption]* I know, you are looking to twist like socks, that is how your mind goes.

**Mr. Ramnath:** You are characterizing.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** I will continue to go out there and to let them know what you are doing, because I am sure when they are made to see the light and the next election eventually comes you will not be getting anything close to 18 seats to make a nuisance of yourselves as you have done yesterday, you might get 12.

**Hon. Member:** Call an election you will see.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** I know you want an election, and we want an election too, but we want an election on a footing and process that everybody could have confidence in.

**Hon. Member:** That is right.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** We complained about the voter padding problem and irregularities with the list. I do not want to say too much on that. We complained for six years and not one complaint came from the UNC; only we had problems. By similar token, I am hearing people saying now that the people before the court have nothing to do with UNC but the Opposition Leader, the Member for Couva North. As soon as people were arrested he was the first to say that they want a speedy trial, an early trial. What is his interest in that? What interest does he have in an early trial for them? *[Interruption]* I know, but he never called for an early trial for the young “fellas” from everywhere else in the country who have been locked up for months now, some of them unable to access \$5,000 worth of bail. No business with that. I never hear him call for an early trial for them.

**Mr. Ramnath:** Those are not political crimes.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** I know. Oh, I see. I see. I see. I understand. I am being directed to an article in today’s *Daily Express*, a commentary and analysis on page 11 written by Indira Maharaj and the caption is: “Panday, the Judas of Indos”. I have not yet read the article so I do not know what is contained therein, but I am directed to a particular paragraph and I want to quote it.

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“If they want to come back

From the cemetery

Do like Kelvin Ramnath

Bow down and soorhaway”

S-o-o-r-h-a-w-a-y. I do not know what that means.

**Mr. Ramnath:** Try to understand the culture.

**Mr. Bereaux:** It means bow down and kiss his foot.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** How to pronounce it? Anyway, I think this advice is late, it appears as though you have already taken it.

**Mr. Ramnath:** Not yet. You will hear from me. Do not worry.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** Hon. Members, we on this side want to achieve a number of things. We want to persuade the national community that we have acted in accordance with the dictates of our Constitution. We have acted in good faith. We came here today, we took this business quite seriously, we did all that was constitutionally, humanly and reasonably necessary and possible to be done to allow the people of this country to have their Parliament. We want the nation to understand that right now the obstruction to that is the United National Congress and its recklessness. We want to assure the national community that as the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, we will first of all keep our promises to the national community and that we would manage their affairs including the economy prudently and in the best traditions that we know.

We want to let you know that notwithstanding your feeble efforts today you will not interrupt the workings of the Government. We will do what we have to do and we want you to do what you have to do. So as I support my friend, the Member for Diego Martin East who had asked this honourable House to find favour with his nomination for Speaker, Mr. Eustace Seignoret, may say that I absolutely and fully support that commendation for Speaker. Like all the others we have put before, Mr. Seignoret is a sound, qualified and worthwhile prospect for that position and, therefore, I ask you, hon. Members, in finding faith—

**Hon. Member:** Oh really. [*Interruption*]

**Hon. F. Hinds:** When I said hon. Members, I meant hon. Members. When I said honourable, I meant honourable.

**Mr. Ramnath:** Get down on your knees and beg. Go down.



**Hon. F. Hinds:** That is obviously an ad that you have perfected. [*Laughter*] And it would not surprise me when shortly the little red rag that is so horrible in your mouth will become the colour of your shirt from being a good “soorhaway”. But in any event, I commend Mr. Eustace Seignoret to us hon. Members for election to the exalted Office of Speaker in this honourable House.

Thank you.

**Mr. Ganga Singh** (*Caroni East*): Madam Clerk, I beg to propose Jack Austin Warner— [*Desk thumping*] of Howell Settlement, Five Rivers, Arouca do take the Chair of this honourable House as Speaker.

**Miss Gillian Lucky** (*Pointe-a-Pierre*): Madam Clerk, it is truly my honour and privilege to beg to second the nomination of Jack Austin Warner as Speaker.

**Madam Clerk:** Are there any further nominations? [*Interruption*] Hon. Members, there being no further nominations, the question is that Mr. Eustace Howard Seignoret do take the Chair of this House as Speaker. All in favour say “Aye”.

**Government Members:** Aye.

**Madam Clerk:** Any against?

**UNC Members:** No.

**Madam Clerk:** The voices appear equally divided. I must take a division.

Ayes 18                      Noes 18

AYES

Valley, Hon. K.

Manning, Hon. P.

Rowley, Hon. Dr. K.

Imbert, Hon. C.

Robinson-Regis, Hon. C.

Narine, Hon. J.

Joseph, Hon. M.

Williams, Hon. E.

Bereaux, Hon. H.

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Boynes, Hon. R.  
Achong, Hon. L.  
Beckles, Hon. P.  
Rahael, Hon. J.  
Job-Davis, Hon. E.  
Hart, Hon. E.  
James, Hon. E.  
Hinds, Hon. F.  
Callender, Hon. S.  
NOES  
Singh, G.  
Lucky, Miss G.  
Panday, B.  
Persad-Bissessar, Mrs. K.  
Panday, S.  
Peters, W.  
Yetming, G.  
Baksh, S.  
John, C.  
Ramnath, K.  
Khan, Dr. F.  
Nanan, Dr. A.  
Rafeeq, Dr. H.  
Ramsaran, M.  
Partap, H.  
Baksh, N.  
Sharma, C.  
Moonilal, Dr. R.

**Madam Clerk:** Hon. Members, 18 Members voted for, 18 Members voted against. The proposal is declared lost.

Hon. Members, the question therefore is that Mr. Jack Austin Warner do take the Chair of this House as Speaker. All in favour say “Aye”. Any against?

**Hon. K. Valley:** Madam Clerk, could we ask whether Mr. Warner has consented to the nomination?

**Mr. B. Panday:** Could you repeat that?

**Hon. K. Valley:** Could we ask whether Mr. Warner—I notice Mr. Warner is in the Public Gallery and perhaps we can find out from him whether he has accepted the nomination. [*Interruption*] And I draw attention again, Madam Clerk, to the requirement of the Standing Order. The individual is here and I think that the least we can do is find out from Mr. Warner whether he has consented.

**Mr. B. Panday:** Did you find out from Seignoret?

**Madam Clerk:** Hon. Members, the onus is on the Member making the nomination to ascertain that the nominee is willing to serve. I cannot require a Member to confirm that.

**Hon. K. Valley:** Madam Clerk, could we ask the Member whether Mr. Warner has consented?

**Mr. Ramnath:** You want to vote for Jack, say so “nah”. [*Interruption*] Why “yuh” think we put him up? [*Crosstalk*]

**Madam Clerk:** Hon. Members, the question is that Mr. Jack Austin Warner do take the Chair of this House as Speaker. All in favour say “Aye”.

[*No response from Members*]

**Madam Clerk:** Any against?

**Hon. Members:** No.

**Madam Clerk:** The noes appear to have it.

**Hon. Member:** Division.

Noes 36

NOES

Valley, Hon. K.

Manning, Hon. P.

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Rowley, Hon. Dr. K.  
Imbert, Hon. C.  
Robinson-Regis, Hon. C.  
Narine, Hon. J.  
Joseph, Hon. M.  
Williams, Hon. E.  
Bereaux, Hon. H.  
Boynes, Hon. R.  
Achong, Hon. L.  
Beckles, Hon. P.  
Rahael, Hon. J.  
Job-Davis, Hon. E.  
Hart, Hon. E.  
James, Hon. E.  
Hinds, Hon. F.  
Callender, Hon. S.  
Singh, G.  
Lucky, Miss G.  
Panday, B.  
Persad-Bissessar, Mrs. K.  
Panday, S.  
Peters, W.  
Yetming, G.  
Baksh, S.  
John, C.  
Ramnath, K.  
Khan, Dr. F.

Nanan, Dr. A.

Rafeeq, Dr. H.

Ramsaran, M.

Partap, H.

Baksh, N.

Sharma, C.

Moonilal, Dr. R.

**Madam Clerk:** Hon. Members, no Member voted for, 36 Members voted against. The proposal has been negatived. [*Desk thumping*]

Once again, I call upon the House to elect a Speaker.

**Hon. K. Valley:** Madam Clerk, we believe that the procedure may be flawed and we need the direction of the court before we go any further. Accordingly, we propose that the sitting be suspended so that we can obtain the direction of the court.

Madam Clerk, as you are aware, you are unable to give rulings on critical matters and it seems that it makes absolutely no sense going further. As a matter of fact, we are of the opinion that Prof. Richards has been elected long ago [*Desk thumping*] and we would need to have that tested in the court before we continue with this procedure.

**Mr. Ramnath:** “Yuh cyar take yuh jamming anymore?”

**Hon. K. Valley:** My jamming?

**Madam Clerk:** I am not in a position to put—is it a question you propose? I am not in a position to put that question to the House.

**Hon. K. Valley:** I am saying, Madam Clerk, that it should be suspended.

**Madam Clerk:** I am in the hands of the House, as you know.

**Hon. K. Valley:** In the circumstances, Madam Clerk, we are in your hands, we are not proposing any further nomination at this time.

**Hon. Member:** We will wait on the Government.

**Madam Clerk:** Hon. Members, I am only empowered to call upon the House to elect a Speaker. Is it that hon. Members wish to continue with this procedure?

**Hon. Member:** Yes.

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**Madam Clerk:** Due to the constraints of staff, we do not operate a shift system in the Parliament, and the staff and I have been here since 8.00 a.m., yesterday morning. We would like very much to take a much-needed rest at this time, but my role is to continue receiving nominations from all of you. In the circumstances, since no further nominations are forthcoming at this time, the Assistant Clerk and I would return to this Chamber at 1.30 this afternoon.

**12.30 a.m.:** *Sitting suspended.*