

1.30 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Madam Clerk: Good afternoon Members, I again call on you to elect a Speaker.

The Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment (Hon. Martin Joseph): Madam Clerk of the House of Representatives, hon. Members, I rise to nominate for the Speaker of the House, Mr. Andre Soverall of Grace Gardens, Lower Santa Cruz, a citizen of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Soverall has duly consented to be nominated as Speaker of this august body. Mr. Soverall was at one time the Deputy General Manager of the Public Transport Service Corporation, a position he held between 1986 and 1990. Prior to that he was the Traffic Manager of the same Public Transport Service Corporation between the period 1979—1986. He was the Deputy Traffic Manager between the period January 1966 to January 1973. Between 1965—1966 he was the Administrative Officer of the very same organization. Mr. Soverall was also a director of the Chaguaramas Development Authority between the period 1992 and 1996. Between 1976 and 1987 he was an adviser to the Priority Bus Route Management Committee and between 1976 and 1987 he was also an adviser to the School Bus Management Committee.

Mr. Soverall is a member of the Chartered Institute of Transport of the United Kingdom. He is an associate member of the Chartered Institute of Transport, again of the United Kingdom. He has a certificate in Economics of Transport from the London University, United Kingdom; a diploma in transport studies from North Western Polytechnic, London, United Kingdom. In 1982 Mr. Soverall was awarded a government fellowship to the United States of America, Germany and the United Kingdom to study and observe the working of other transport organizations with special reference to school bus systems and operations, mass transit operations; a seminar on current transport problems and policies in developing countries of Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean; general study of the organization structure and operations of a bus transport company. He was also awarded a grant by the British government under the technical assistance programme where he read for an associate membership degree of the Chartered Institute of Transport at the City of London College. This is the person whom we are nominating for the position of Speaker.

In doing so at this time—again, being reminded—still under protest, because while I am not a lawyer or a constitutional expert—just as a layman—I am baffled as to what happened yesterday where we had persons nominated from our side,

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and persons nominated from the other side receiving absolutely no votes whatsoever. After being nominated and seconded one would have expected that that person would at least get two votes—the person who nominated and the person who seconded. I am baffled to understand how being nominated, seconded and, in turn not voted for—We are considered to be very serious in terms of what it is, but I will come to that just now.

Mr. Peters: Rewrite the Constitution.

Hon. M. Joseph: I know I am not a constitutional expert as you are, Member for Ortoire/Mayaro, but I will come to that just now. I just indicated to you why I believe that Mr. Andre Soverall is suited to be the Speaker. When we look at the responsibilities of the Speaker, we recognize the important role that the Speaker is required to play, not just in this Chamber, but in terms of ensuring that one arm of the government, which is the Legislature, functions.

All of last night we kept hearing that it is our responsibility to elect a Speaker. Nothing could be further from the truth. It is the House's responsibility for us to elect someone who we want to manage our affairs here. [*Desk thumping*] We are doing the House and the society a disservice to the largest extent when we take on that type of behaviour, but I will come to that just now.

We are saying that the responsibility of the Speaker—permit me to use as my reference, *May's Parliamentary Practice* where at pages 181 to 184, the duties and responsibilities of the Speaker are clearly outlined. [*Interruption*] No, Member for Couva South, I will not read them out. I think I am just going to remind us of how important this function is. [*Interruption*] No, I am not going to filibuster. I do not know what that is, all I would do is to try to remind us, and by extension, the national population, about how important a Speaker is. To underscore how important a Speaker is, the Crowne Plaza accord—though when we are reminded of it people say “That again, that again”—which represents the most important document that at the end of the day—

Mr. Partap: It does not exist.

Hon. M. Joseph: The Member for Nariva is saying that it does not exist, but it does not exist conveniently, but there was a time when it formed the basis of the way forward, not just for the two political parties, but for the country as a whole. History is going to treat us very unkindly when it is being written, when it is asked: Who were the players during that period when Trinidad and Tobago required men and women of stature; men and women who were statespersons; men and women who were willing to put country before self? [*Desk thumping*] I

am not being self-righteous. I am not pontificating as my former friend from St. Joseph used to say. I passed him just now and he said, “Ah hope you ‘ain’t’ going to pontificate.” I am not pontificating. We are not doing that at all, but when the history of this country is written and they ask how did we rise to the occasion—*[Interruption]* Call the elections and then some will be able to say certain things.

Mr. Ramnath: We redrafted it at Crowne Plaza last night.

Hon. M. Joseph: You redrafted it, so I can sit now and we will see a new version?

Madam Clerk, as I said, using *May’s Parliamentary Practice*, where they outlined the duties and responsibilities of the Speaker, I think I have a responsibility—*[Interruption]* I did say pages, you were not listening or what? I said pages 179 to 184.

Hon. Member: Can I have a copy?

Hon. M. Joseph: I will copy it for you after. *[Interruption]* It is an old edition? Member for Princes Town, tell them what pages it corresponds to in the new edition. Thank you very much.

It says that:

“The chief function of the Speaker in relation to the House of Lords...”

in our case it would be the Upper House

“is to consider Bills brought from that House...”

the Senate, as we call it here,

“to see whether they infringe on the financial privileges of the...”

Lower House, what they call the Commons there.

“and if so to draw the attention of the House thereto, and, if necessary, to see that a special entry thereof is made in the Journal.

In relation to outside authorities. The Speaker communicates the resolutions of the House to those to whom they are directed, conveys its thanks and expresses its censure, its reprimands, and its admonitions. He issues warrants to execute the orders of the House for the commitment of offenders, for the attendances in custody...

Whenever it seems to him appropriate, he communicates to the House letters and documents addressed to him as Speaker...”

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Which we have witnessed, at least I have, over the period that I have had the opportunity to be here over the last six years.

“such as expressions of congratulation and condolences and other messages from foreign countries and legislatures, letters acknowledging a vote of thanks of the House, or relating to the rights and privileges of the House or of its Members, such as...”

and hopefully we would never have had to do this and we would never do that,

“communications announcing the arrest or imprisonment of a Member...”

Thank God we have not reached to that stage yet, where we have had to arrest a Member.

“The rank of the Speaker” is the next item and I think that is very important, Madam Clerk. According to our Table of Precedence for Trinidad and Tobago, the Speaker is the fifth person after the President, number one; the Prime Minister, number two; the Chief Justice, number three; the President of the Senate, number four and number five the Speaker of the House of Representatives. So that the person whom we are going to be electing as a Speaker cannot be, with all due respect—it is not a question of some John Doe or some file with 30,000 names from which you just pull out names in alphabetical order. That makes a mockery of the process, and of the whole Government. So, it has to be someone who, at the end of the day, not only commands the respect of us, Members of the House, but also in terms of the constitutional responsibility of that person. It has to be someone of whom, not just the country, but the international community can be proud. This is the reason why this is the fifth person that we on this side have nominated, and each one can stand that test, each one. [*Desk thumping*] With us unknowing, you just stand and say “John Doe” and then sit.

The other area speaks about the Speaker as the Presiding Officer. The person, Madam Clerk, as you are quite aware, is expected to be impartial, capable of managing the affairs of the House in a way in which all Members can have confidence.

As I said earlier on, I have been fortunate to represent the good people of St. Ann’s East in this august House. I have had the opportunity to experience at least two Speakers. We have heard one of the reasons why the first person, Prof. Max Richards, was identified as not being acceptable because it was said that he was seen on a platform of the PNM at some point in time. We have had the opportunity here—

Mr. Ramnath: We do not object to that.

Hon. M. Joseph: But that seems to be the reason why he was no longer acceptable. At least that was the reason given.

We have had the situation here—and no disrespect intended to any of the office holders, because then I would be committing the same sin about which I am saying that we ought not to in terms of how we behave here—where we have had persons who faced the polls, lost, and were made Speakers. We have, as a serious political party, objected because we felt that those things were not in the best interest of our parliamentary democracy. So, we have had a situation where we have seen persons occupy that chair who were less than partial, who were less than what was required in terms of the responsibility of Speaker of the House of Representatives. So that, in presiding over this House, the person is expected to be fair, impartial, not to participate in the debates but to preside over them; his authority in the chair, if I may be allowed to quote again from *May's Parliamentary Practice*:

“When he rises to preserve order or to give a ruling on a doubtful point, he must always be heard in silence and no Member shall stand when the speaker is on his feet...His action cannot be criticized incidentally in debate or upon any form of proceeding except as a substantive motion.”

Madam Clerk of the House, we are saying that the Speaker is someone who must possess certain characteristics, attributes and competencies. I am saying that the person who I have just nominated is suited to fit the bill.

Let me just shift gears a little and talk about the importance of the House in order to make sure that one arm of the government is allowed to function. We are required here to respond to questions raised to Ministers so that Members of this House, and by extension the national community, can have a clear idea as to what is happening in the various ministries, how the ministries are meeting their responsibilities to the citizens of this country. By not convening Parliament, by not electing a speaker, the country as a whole is robbed of that opportunity for ministers to answer questions posed to them on the functioning of their ministries.

The national community is also robbed of the opportunity for ministers to make statements in terms of how it is they are discharging their responsibilities. The national community, by extension, is also robbed of the opportunity to have the cut-and-thrust of debate with respect to policies and programmes that are designed to move the country in a particular direction.

Madam Clerk, how did we come to this pass? Those on the other side are claiming that the strategy is not to elect a Speaker. This represents, in my opinion, another side of this UNC party. When they came into office in 1995 they came to

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office, as we have been reminded by numerous Members yesterday, in a situation of 17/17/2. [*Interruption*] In 1995 it was a situation of 17/17/2. They got the two NAR and made 19. [*Interruption*] It did not make 19, it was a kind of coalition administration. Let me just continue because I think it is instructive and very important. They came, they formed the government and then they engaged in something that at the time there were those of us who felt something was wrong with that.

What “that” I am talking about is when they enticed two Members, the then Member for Point Fortin and the Member for Arima, to cross the floor. Commentators at the time said that was good strategy. We said something was wrong with that. [*Desk thumping*] We said something as to why that was wrong; why that, I cannot recall which one of my colleagues raised the point yesterday; they went to the electorate on a platform—ah, it was my colleague from Diego Martin West—that said, “I am in support of the PNM’s programme, I am in support of the PNM’s manifesto, I am the PNM candidate, vote for me.” The people of Arima and the people of Point Fortin responded in a particular way. Then they took that mandate given to them as PNM candidates and decided to put it on another side. Then the scurrilous argument is about, “As a candidate I do not know how many votes I got.” That was immoral at the time and it is amazing that our politics have now reached to the point where you do not have right-thinking people who could take a particular position. Everything is now clouded, either in terms of whether you support UNC or you do not support UNC. The thing was wrong then, nobody said anything. The thing was wrong then. I said some commentators said, “Good strategy, look at how the UNC was able to entice people.” That was the beginning of a certain slide that we as a society started to engage in. [*Desk thumping*]

When we criticized and objected to a candidate who faced the polls and lost and was made Speaker, we said that was frustrating the will of the people. If the people wanted him in the House they had an opportunity to adjudicate. They decided to adjudicate on somebody else and yet that person was put in the Chair with precedence over the person who defeated him at the polls. We said something was wrong with that, but that was UNC politics. [*Desk thumping*] And some members of the society seem not to have any problems with it. They said that was supposed to have been strategy. That, to me, represented the beginning, as I said, of a slide. That became the beginning of the rot.

Hon. Member: The slide started with the voting machine.

Hon. M. Joseph: But it did not stop there. It did not stop there. There was another language that started to enter into our dictionary that should not have been

tolerated. Do you know what that was? We time now! You started to hear people talking about “we time now”, and you ask: “Who we?” What is meant by “we time now”? Then you heard people start talking about correcting some imbalance. And we say: What imbalance? All those were coded languages for a certain direction and a certain action that that UNC government started to take.

Hon. Member: That is called paranoia.

Hon. M. Joseph: Paranoia? Let me finish, I will get to your paranoia just now. Let me finish. So, that happened. We saw that happening. We saw it develop and all sorts of things started to happen: attack on the media, then the strategy was that PNM-controlled constituencies must get nothing. They came and gave all the nice talk, you spoke to the ministers and they said “Yeh, yeh, yeh, what you want?” Then, they would deliberately—the Member for Couva North said here is what you must do, you must starve PNM-controlled constituencies so that they would get fed up of their representatives. I can find the quote where he said that; so they would get fed up of the PNM representatives and they would come to us. The strategy did not work. Thank God it did not work.

Mr. Partap: Mischief.

Hon. M. Joseph: Mischief? PNM-controlled regional corporations were starved of funds so that you had a situation—

Mr. John: Martin, Martin.

Hon. M. Joseph: Martin? Martin? So, you had a situation between 1995 and 2000—[*Interruption*] Just like Imbert, the facts get you all upset because the facts speak for themselves. So, you had a situation where you started to see government unlike governments of the past. Somebody was making the point—Ortoire/Mayaro—that PNM behaves as if they own the country. It is not that we behave as if we own the country, we are grounded in a philosophy where we are committed to the people of Trinidad and Tobago from since 1956. [*Desk thumping*] From since 1956. PNM ruled for 30 continuous years in this country, at a time where in other places people were making the countries one-party states and doing all kinds of things. PNM resisted doing that. You had a situation in 1971 when there was a no vote, we won every seat and then the PNM got worried because they said that was a recipe for disaster. Let me tell you something, do you know what I cannot understand? If with 17/17 you all have so much to interfere with the Constitution, if you all were in a situation in 1971 where you all had all 36 seats, well then, “crapaud smoke we pipe”. What would have happened to this country?

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Madam Clerk of the House, I am saying that you have a political party that is grounded in belief of the people of Trinidad and Tobago and service to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. I am sure the country is watching what is taking place now. They are going to have an opportunity because, let me tell you something, if PNM had found itself in the situation where we were on that side, a Speaker would have been elected a long time ago. [*Desk thumping*] We would not have been frustrating the efforts of this administration. We would not have been doing that, because that is not what we are about. You see power as an opportunity for personal aggrandizement. That is a fact. [*Desk thumping*] That is why you all are behaving like that. [*Desk thumping*] That is the reason you all are behaving like that. There is no question about that. None whatsoever.

I will tell you why. Let me confirm what I am saying. I recall talking to one of your colleagues early in 1995. I will not call his name because I do not want to embarrass him here. I said to him that he used to say that PNM ‘tief’ and now he is a minister what is he saying now? He said, “All yuh stupid.” I said, “What you mean by that?” He said, “You know why? Where the cow tie it must graze.” You heard what he told me. He said, “Where the cow tie, it must graze.” So, it is a mindset on how government is seen, not as an opportunity to improve the quality of life and standard of living of all our citizens, it is one group or one set of people.

So, I am saying all of this because it is relevant and we are where we are now because of some attitudes taken by certain politicians. My hon. Prime Minister, and leader, says when the profession of politics gets into disrepute, we have to be taking responsibility. I recall talking to my hon. friend who used to represent Pointe-a-Pierre then—I will tell you about the incident. I remember Dole Chadee being seen in a merino and a shorts coming out of prison. I remember talking to this colleague and saying to him, just like that, “Listen nah, let’s hope the same situation does not visit you.” As it turned out—I have not seen him in a merino and shorts as yet, because I understand it is when you become a ward of the State that is when that happens. I was saying that to the person to remind him about some things that you were hearing that he was involved in; behaving just like them just to remind him because at the end of the day if something happens to you as a politician, we all get painted with the same brush. People tend to say “all the politicians”. So, we have to be defending your behaviour sometimes.

Let me continue, Madam Clerk of the House. So, we went through 1995—2000, notwithstanding all of the various allegations; notwithstanding the activities you saw that the UNC administration at the time engaged in, went after the media, ensured that local government was starved, especially PNM-controlled administrations, and CEOs

dismissed; then did a whole host of things, but then we went to the polls in 2000. We went to the polls in 2000 raising—my colleague from Diego Martin West—issues with respect to the airport. We talked about all the other allegations; more than allegations, we brought evidence to this House about corrupt practices. We were dismissed every time. The Member for Couva North used to jump up, “Bring the evidence, bring the evidence!” Then, when he was tired with “bring the evidence” he started with, “Take it to the police, take it to the police.” Then, what happened? We went to the polls in 2000.

Madam Clerk, I think most of us seem to forget that you had a party that went to the polls and won the elections in December, 2000 and it lasted less than 11 months.

Hon. Member: Why?

Hon. M. Joseph: Why? Because of corruption. Your own Members who could take it no more were forced to ensure that we went to the polls. Let me say something, and I think this is the point I am coming to. I think this is what is critical. Let me tell you what is critical, Madam Clerk of the House. *[Interruption]* They will not disrupt me. Instead of the UNC taking stock of the comments made by their former colleagues—one who was the second most important minister in an administration—instead of taking stock, because he—Ralph, Trevor and Ramesh—claimed that they could not get that administration to take stock and do something about the corruption.

Hear what the Member for Couva North keeps telling his supporters: they must never forget who have them where they are now. Instead of saying that we, and the way in which we manage the affairs, are responsible for where we are, hear what he tells his followers: “All yuh must never forget Ramesh, Ralph and Trevor because it is ‘dem’ have we here in Opposition.” It is not “dem” who have you all in Opposition, it is your behaviour and your lack of behaviour! *[Desk thumping]*

So that we are here today and I just said all those things to get us to understand—*[Interruption]* You should not say anything, Member for Couva South, you are only here by default. You know that. I am not being insulting or anything; you know you are here by default. If the former Member for Couva South was only concerned about power, he would have been here. I do not want to say the word and I do not want to seem stupid *[Interruption]* He could not “soorhaway”.

Madam Clerk of the House, I know that all I have said will not make a difference because they are in a particular mindset. I am sure that the rest of the

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country understands what is happening. Somebody said that we are trying to give the Members for St. Augustine and St. Joseph basket, but I have a mother who is going to be 80 years this year. This morning she called me and she asked, “What did Mr. Panday do to dem fellas and dem?” She asked, “What about St. Joseph and St. Augustine, dem fellas and dem are good men.” I wonder if it is unparliamentary to say what she said. I do not want to be disrespectful to her, but she said, “Ah wonder if Panday pee in dey mouth?” I do not understand what that means. I do not understand what that means because I do not know what is a real PNM—[*Interruption*] In other words she believes that there is something that the Member for Couva South has done, because she believes that while the others may have no leg to stand on, at least these persons are people who will come to the rescue of our country and save Trinidad and Tobago.

Madam Clerk of the House—[*Interruption*] It is not Panday, well I do not know who it is. With these few words, I nominate Mr. Andre Soverall as Speaker of the House of Representatives.

The Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources (Hon. John Rahael): Madam Clerk of the House, hon. Members, it is said, in the beginning was the word and the word was God. [*Desk thumping*] That is from the Gospel of St. John, Chap. I verse 1. [*Interruption*] I want you to understand what that means. Whether it is the spoken word or the written word, the fact of the matter is that what makes us different from others is who we are and what we stand for. When we make a commitment, that commitment is what should be honoured. So, when, in fact, we sign an agreement, we come out from that room, we are interviewed and are told what happened, what happens if you do not keep that agreement? This was a question posed to the hon. Member for Couva North by the journalists of our country. He responded that you must keep your word because if you do not you will pay a price and he went on to say, a political price.

What I want to tell you is that you have already begun to pay that price because the 20,000 supporters that you wanted to bring into Port of Spain, we certainly did not see them. You talk about elections, if there is an election today you will lose more seats than you did in the last election.

Hon. Member: Call the election.

Hon. J. Rahael: We will call it, but we are the ones who will call it, not you. We are the ones who will call the election, not you. [*Desk thumping*]

In 1995 when the results were 17/17/2 we did not hear about 17 is greater than 17. There was no such statement coming from the PNM. You joined with the NAR,

formed a coalition and you got 19 seats and the PNM accepted it and went into opposition gracefully. We did not make any innuendoes about the two persons that joined the UNC and formed the government, but we went on afterwards. We talk about honour and dignity in this place. What are we talking about when only yesterday, again, the Member for Couva North talked about buying three PNMs for three dollars, referring to the former Members of Parliament for Point Fortin and Arima. The defeated candidate for San Fernando East, whom the hon. Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, put a good licking on in the last election, was the third guy. Look at him sitting over there. That was the third guy that they bought for one dollar.

So, three PNmites he bought for three dollars but, thank God—*[Interruption]* They were paid one dollar each, that is what they are worth. Thank God, this time around, the 18 Members on your side and the 18 Members on this side would have conducted themselves and carried themselves in an honourable, decent and straightforward manner. So far no Member from that side has defected and no Member from this side has defected. What does that say? Is it that each person is now more committed in respect to their offering themselves as candidates? *[Interruption]* I will do what I have to do. You already got some picong about your hair yesterday, it looks like you dyed it last night. Mr. Partap, last night you were playing cards with 51 cards in the deck, you “tief” while playing with your own colleagues, so let us not get into that.

How am I to explain that Dr. Roodal Monilal and Gillian Lucky sharing the same room to my granddaughter? I did not know how to explain that this morning in the newspapers. They wanted to know if you were husband and wife. Again, in this morning’s newspapers, how could I explain how a photographer from the *Express* entered the hon. Member for Siparia’s room to get a photograph of her in a nightgown? How can I explain that? How could a photographer get into your own bedroom? Look at it here. How did they get there? And, we had the Member for St. Augustine, look at the sexy legs on the Member for St. Augustine. *[Interruption]* I am not sure, but do not ask about the Member for St. Joseph. Carlos, you sleep with your shirt, or what?

Madam Clerk: Hon. Members, you all know I have no power to maintain order—*[Interruption]* You all know I have no power to maintain order, you have to maintain your own order, please.

Hon. J. Rahael: You receive an Order Paper to attend Parliament. On that Order Paper it clearly states what is expected of you and you came here not to fulfil the requirements of the Order Paper. You have a responsibility to your

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constituents and to Trinidad and Tobago, all the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. That is why the Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago, the Preamble—
[*Interruption*] Why not go to that? You do not believe in the Preamble of the Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago? I am going to read just part of it because I really do not intend to stand on my feet for too long because it does not make sense. It says—

“...have asserted their belief...”

meaning hon. Members

“in a democratic society in which all persons may, to the extent of their capacity, play some part in the institutions of the national life and thus develop and maintain due respect for lawfully constituted authority;”

That is what this Parliament is all about.

When you make a commitment and you decide that you have an agreement you should honour that agreement. I am very pleased to stand in support of Mr. Andre Soverall as the nominee for the PNM as Speaker of the House.
[*Interruption*] Well, if you do not know the name, if you are not hearing well, I cannot help you.

I ask you, Members, really, to understand the purpose of being here. We are here to elect a Speaker and to get on with the work of the nation. We are not here to call an election. An election will be called, and we have already given a commitment of an outside date. So, I really do not understand why it is we are prolonging this session. I urge you to consider the nominee of our side.

Thank you.

Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar (*Siparia*): I wish to nominate Mr. Fazal Karim to take the Chair of the House.

Miss Gillian Lucky seconded.

Madam Clerk: Are there any further nominations? [*Pause*]

Mr. Bereaux: Madam Clerk, before you proceed, I noted that we did not, at the beginning of the session, say prayers and that was because it was lower down on the Order Paper. Having regard to the conduct I have been observing, and I do not want to point fingers at anybody, I want to take this opportunity, before you take any of the nominations, to read the prayer of the House of Representatives—
[*Desk thumping*] [*Members stood*]

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“Almighty God, we give thanks to You the Creator of the Universe; and humbly beseech You to direct and prosper the deliberations of the Members of this House here assembled for the advancement of Your Glory and the trust and welfare of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. Grant that peace and happiness, truth and justice may be established among us for all generations.

Amen”

Madam Clerk: Hon. Members, the question before you is that Mr. Andre Soverall do take the Chair of the 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.

Boynes, Hon. R.

Achong, Hon. L.

Beckles, Hon. P.

Rahael, Hon. J.

Job-Davis, Hon. E.

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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 and 18 Members voted against. The proposal is lost.

I therefore put the question that Mr. Fazal Karim do take the Chair of this House as Speaker. All in favour say "aye".

[No response from Members.]

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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.

Callender, Hon. S.

Singh, G.

Lucky, Miss G.

Panday, B.

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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. That proposal is negatived. I therefore must call upon the House, once again, to elect a Speaker.

The Minister of Local Government (Hon. Jarette Narine): Thank you very much, Madam Clerk of the House. I stand to propose for Speaker of the House of Representatives, Mr. Alvin Cecil Pascall, Attorney at Law of 55 Tumpuna Heights, Riverway Road, Arima, Trinidad, West Indies.

Mr. Alvin Pascall is qualified by law to be Speaker of the House of Representatives and he has also given me consent to propose his name to be the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

Mr. Pascall's education started in Trinidad and he took his Bachelor of Law Degree at the University of London, his Solicitor's Finals at Manchester Metropolitan University. He has Post Fellowship Diploma of the Institute of Legal Executives, Probate Practice, Criminal Litigation, Family Practice, Elements of Banking, Land

Law, Law and Practice Relating to Local Government and Conveyancing; International Trade Specialist, University of the West Indies and the World Trade Centre.

Mr. Pascall's professional designation is as follows: Fellow of the University of Legal Executives of England, licensed conveyancer, solicitor of the Supreme Court of England and Wales; Member of the Institute of Public Administrators of England; Member of the Association of Personal Injury Lawyers of England.

His relevant work experience: 1974—1976, Conveyancing Clerk, Ralph Armorer, Barrister, 34-36 Abercromby Street, Port of Spain; 1976—1978, Conveyancing Clerk, Jack Arthur Procope and Company, Solicitors of 34-36 Abercromby Street, Port of Spain; 1978—1982, Securities Officer, Mortgage Loan Officer and Credit Administration Officer at Workers' Bank of Trinidad and Tobago and Workers' Bank Trust Company Limited, Port of Spain; 1986—1987, Trainee Solicitor, Adams and Company, Solicitors, 103B Dalston Lane, Hackney, London, E8 England. In 1987—1989, Trainer of Solicitor, Sylvester Small and Company, 32 Shrowd Green Road, London, N4, England; 1989—1990, qualified Legal Executive, Tom Kharran and Company, Solicitors, 15, High Road, Woodgreen, London N22, England; 1990—1993, Principal Officer, III, Senior Legal Advisor to the Director of Finance and Property Services, The London Borough of Hounslow, Legal Services Department; 1993—1996, Legal Advisor, Ministry of Local Government and the Municipal Corporations of Trinidad; 1996—2002, Senior State Counsel, Office of the Leader of the Opposition, Chepstow House, No. 56, Frederick Street, Port of Spain.

Mr. Deputy Clerk, yet another person who is nominated by the People's National Movement and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, to sit in the Speaker's chair; one whom I have known for a number of years. I know him to be a very fair person, articulate and one who understands the legal part of his job that he may assume here if elected.

I am saying that in 1983 I was elected to the local government authorities at St. George East County Council and at that time there was an alliance and I was placed in the opposition, although the PNM had the majority of seats. There was a coalition and I was placed in opposition. I remained in that corporation for eight years after two elections, in opposition, because 1987 was a period when the NAR was in office and all the parties came together. Of course, we know what happened in 1988; the party which controls the opposition today, because of using strategies at that time went into something called "Club 88". The chairman of that corporation was removed and at that time I was offered the chairmanship and I did not accept.

Mr. Partap: You are going to be the next speaker?

Hon. J. Narine: You are lucky to be in here. Remember Sumairsingh, I say no more. [*Desk thumping*] You are lucky to be inside here. You are very fortunate to be in here and can only sit in your chair and speak. Get up, it is not too late.

Madam Clerk, I have had the experience of removing a chairman in St. George East County Council and at that time we thought it best that someone from Club 88 should assume that chairmanship role. I say this because I belong to a political organization from 1963 and I admire this organization because we have a constitution. We have a general council that will act on behalf of the party. We have a leader of whom we are proud and is not slipping in benches and getting on like animal farm boxer who is almost ready to go for glue. My experiences at local government elevated me to be a Member of Parliament in the year 1991. Why? Because the People's National Movement recognizes hard work and no tricks and someone who wants to represent people. [*Desk thumping*] I have sat here for the last 11 years and many persons on our side have reiterated the history of 1995, 2000 and 2001. I do not want to go back to those times.

Coming from local government I had the opportunity at that time to be part of a new movement for local government during the NAR's time when this Act 21 of 1990 was introduced. We came into office in 1991, the hon. Kenneth Valley became the Minister of Local Government, because we do recognize that local government had a place in Trinidad and Tobago; 124 councillors were elected and we have aldermen in all 14 regional corporations that the PNM recognizes that there is a place for budding politicians from local government so that they would not come in the House and get on like some of you have done over the last 24 or 36 hours.

2.30 p.m.

There were some amendments between 1991 and 1995—no implementation—and from 1995 to the present time, all that was done at the Ministry of Local Government was to get various parts of the Act assented to. Now that it is totally assented to, and now that we have brought back the Ministry of Local Government to its rightful position as a ministry, I am happy and my staff very happy to note that the PNM has recognized that the Ministry of Local Government has an important role to play in the everyday life of citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. You will remember—this ministry was under the Ministry of Infrastructure during the last year or so—the chaos that took place in that Ministry of Infrastructure, with the road paving, wastage and corrupt practices that were used to pave roads throughout Trinidad and Tobago.

While we are here and the Act is in place, we do recognize [*Interruption*] The time will come, have no fear. I will make my statements as I go along. My grandmother used to tell me, “What ain’t meeting you, ain’t pass you yet.” Have no fear, it is coming. [*Interruption*] I have one person spending holidays in my constituency. I do not need more. They are coming fast and furious and a new facility to keep them well hidden away from the public.

Local government practitioners, over the years, have recognized that Act No. 21 of 1990 needs to be amended in order to bring more empowerment to the communities and the areas in which we live. There are many areas I can go into, but today is not the time for that. I feel that it is important that we have a Parliament sitting so that this Minister of Local Government, after a seminar which we will have some time this month when the Association of Local Government will be bringing their amendments to the Ministry, and the technical staff at the Ministry, looking at these amendments, would be able to come to Parliament to have Act No. 21 of 1991 further amended to make sure that the people of Trinidad and Tobago benefit. If you sit there until next year, you will be talking the same language and your people will continue to suffer as they did when you were in government.

I have had the opportunity to visit all 14 corporations during the last three months and I am saying [*Interruption*] Fire which people? [*Interruption*] I did not fire your son whom you took away from Samaroo Village to lead your programme in Ortoire/Mayaro. He is not from there. Andy is from our village. Send him back, I will employ him. He is from my village. It is nepotism you are speaking about. Take your son and carry him up there. I could say plenty more. [*Cross talk*] I will say nothing more. Talk on your own.

Hon. Member: Are you saying you employ people?

Hon. J. Narine: [*Interruption*] Who is sitting? Like you do not understand what has been happening since yesterday? Are you so dumb? We have no Standing Orders. We have no Speaker. You want to get up for I to sit. I am not sitting down. If you want to stand up, you walk. Go to the toilet! Your head needs something. I do not know what fell on it last night, but you had better check it.

I have had the opportunity to visit 14 corporations—seven PNM corporations and seven UNC corporations. Some of the problems that we are having in local government, I left in 1991 and we are still having those same problems. As a matter of fact, I feel it is important to have a Speaker in this Parliament so that the people of Trinidad and Tobago can benefit. I have met a lot of problems. I have visited some regions that work well; some others for which I need to put things in

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place to streamline their activities. As a matter of fact, when you speak about equity, I will tell you what took place with the Road Improvement Programme, if you want to know.

During our time the Mayor of Chaguanas closed the office down by a motion of the corporation. They wanted back the office at Chaguanas to put in the Municipal Police Service. I have the Minutes for that statutory meeting. You do not even know what is taking place in your constituency, much more the Regional Corporation of Chaguanas. I am just telling you the facts. You wrote me to get some things done in the Chaguanas Regional Corporation. You should have known, after being in Parliament for six years, especially as a minister, that the Chaguanas Regional Corporation has the responsibility for what you are writing the Minister for. If you are stupid, it is not my fault. It is your fault.

Funding is given to the corporations. If you do not understand that your corporation, run by UNC activists, is mismanaging funds of Trinidad and Tobago taxpayers, then I am going to straighten that out very soon. We have started to do that.

Under the Road Improvement Programme, \$50 million per year from the 5 per cent road tax—the Bill which was brought to Parliament and made law by the present hon. Minister of Health, the then Minister of Works and Transport—was supposed to be one used by the Ministry of Works for roads, not to pave on mud, on roads with no foundation and on roads with no drainage, this Minister will not allow that. Anyone who is going to get the funding of taxpayers and people who pay 5 per cent road tax, will have to prepare roads before they get them paved. That Minister paved roads that are totally washed away. They have cracked in certain areas. They have landslips and all that because they were not properly prepared for paving.

We came to Parliament according to that Act, every six months, and informed the Parliament how much money was available and what roads would be done. After 1995, that did not happen and, when they realized they were going contrary to the Act, they came to Parliament and divided the 5 per cent road fund and gave half to local government. I am happy that we have that money there and that your minister, at that time, did not utilize it because the cost and the bonded contractors were lower than the high levels that he took materials to pay his colleagues, friends and so on to build and pave roads in Trinidad.

Hon. Member: Are you accusing Mr. John of being corrupt?

Hon. J. Narine: Who Mr. John?

We took this \$25 million when we went to the ministry and, at present, because the 5 per cent road tax is being collected over a 12-month period, we had available to us, last month, \$9.5million. Immediately I went to all the corporations and asked them to provide a list of the roads that they need to have paved, in order of priority. I received from each a list of those roads. I can tell you the amount requested as against the amount, which was equitably distributed— Member for Ortoire/Mayaro, this is PNM style. This is not “we time” now. This is Trinidad and Tobago time.

Arouca North got nothing for the last six years. One minister was so ashamed he went to cut the ribbon on a box culvert in Lopinot. This is all that was done for the six years—nothing. Your colleagues came in here last night from Arouca to advise you. They could not advise Arouca people how to go forward. They took the land and turned sod. The then Prime Minister came about 20 times to Arouca and said, “I am going to win Arouca”. Anytime he comes to Arouca and says that, we get more votes. The people of Arouca are not stupid. They know you have come there to fool them and they are not going to sit by and be fooled by any person that people like to call “fox”. He is foxless. Yesterday, he was outfoxed. *[Interruption]* You are fortunate to get rid of Ramesh to get his seat to fight. *[Interruption]*

The Member for Couva South has missed this House for a number of years and we will have some time here. Fear not? We are going for a very long time in this sitting. You will have no fear. While you are saying, ‘Call elections now!’ we will call it when the time is appropriate.

I have here the \$9.493 million. *[Interruption]* A former attorney general of the PNM was your tutor, you should talk to him. I have something here—the corporations’ requests and the allocations that were given to them. The time will come for me to go through that.

Of the \$9.5 million available to the ministry at this time for local roads, not main roads—and may I say that local roads are 10 times the length you have for main roads—the Ministry of Works will normally get the brunt of the money. I am making a case for local government. Of the 14 regional corporations, I am proud to announce today, that the Diego Martin Regional Corporation got \$674,000 out of the first release.

Siparia Regional Corporation	\$625,000
Debe/Penal Regional Corporation	\$500,000
Couva/Talparo/Tabaquite Regional Corporation	\$674,000

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[*Interruption*] Make sure that they put in your roads next time if your councillors will listen to you. They have to put the roads in.

Point Fortin Regional Corporation	\$650,000
Sangre Grande Regional Corporation	\$645,000
San Juan/Laventille Regional Corporation	\$661,000
Arima Borough Corporation	\$590,000

These are approximate figures.

Port of Spain City Corporation	\$889,000
Chaguanas Borough Corporation	\$676,000
Mayaro/Rio Claro Regional Corporation	\$800,000

You never got money like that before from your regional corporation. They took it and spent it where they wanted.

Princes Town Regional Corporation	\$646,000
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What happened to Princes Town? They came on time to say that some of the roads they had submitted were paved and that we changed those areas. The first two roads to be paved in the Princes Town Regional Corporation—and I met with the corporation—will be Titus Road and Friendship Road. Am I correct?

You are one who, in the UNC for six years, stood on this side and made a report like this—fair and equitably distributed to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. Not one. Was “we time now” and they took and they stole and they plundered for six years. The people of Trinidad and Tobago have seen the light.

You are licking your lips because you hear that we have a boom in the next few years and you want to be in government. The people of Trinidad and Tobago will keep you in Opposition because of your unfair practice, because of the corrupt mode you were in for six years. I am very sorry for the Member for Ortoire/Mayaro. He was misled to join a political party that has no welfare.
[*Interruption*]

If you had turned your back on the people of Trinidad and Tobago and were a citizen of the United States, who did that? You did that. You did that on your own. You went and served the army in America instead of serving the army in Trinidad and Tobago and today you are playing you love the people of Trinidad and Tobago. You only love the people of Trinidad and Tobago when you can get out of them, not when you have to give. You have given nothing. We have given

you; paid to see you sing, and we love to hear you sing. Now it is different. We may love to hear you sing, but we do not like to see your face anywhere singing. That is the problem.

Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation	\$821,000
San Fernando City Corporation	\$667,000

[*Interruption*] I am saying I stopped paying to see a man sing “Little Black Boy” and then sit down and say, “We time now” and give black people pressure. I cannot take that. You understand?

Of the rest of money available to the Ministry of Local Government, we will continue to be equitable and to distribute the funding of the people of Trinidad and Tobago with equity. [*Interruption*] You will hold me out? I have four roads here that your region submitted—\$200,000 each for the first phase of the programme. [*Interruption*] I never said I am doing you a favour. I said that I am putting money there so that the people you represent will be well taken care of. Although you are not doing that, the Ministry of Local Government will do it.

Why did you not open Bucket Corner? You know why? Because a chairman was making noise about \$1.3 million. You know Bucket Corner. The sum of \$200,000 would have done that work. They paid \$1.3 million to do it. The present chairman of that corporation is ashamed to take Bucket Corner. Not paying the electricity bill—we are going to pay it. We are going to hand it over to the corporation. If they do not want it, I am going to give it to community development and the people will get to use it. Why did you not make representation on their behalf? Bucket Corner was there. It is not being used. You care about young people and at night there are no lights for them. [*Interruption*] You are living in Guave somewhere. You are not living in your area.

You came here yesterday to ask me about Saint Mary/Emmanuel Road. Your councillor did not put up the road for paving. [*Interruption*] Because I have lands and family inside there? I am not going to do it the way you administrated Trinidad and Tobago over the last six years. A UNC councillor must put it up first before that road is paved. You tell them I say so. Jarrette Narine is not going to use his office for personal gain, as you have done over the last six years. [*Interruption*]

Your people do not see you. They see you every five years, but they vote for you. They keep a puja for the Prime Minister. They blessed him; that is why he is out there today. [*Interruption*] My cousin blessed him. When they called me to get blessed, I said if you could bless a bandit, do not bless me. I do not want any blessing from you.

Hon. Member: You have a problem with puja?

Hon. J. Narine: I have no problem with puja. I have a problem with whom the puja was done for. *[Interruption]* I decide that because I know the characters. You know that. I would have to have a ramayan and invite you and then you will see decency. *[Interruption]* That is not our business. You will sing the first doha? All right. I will explain it when you sing it. *[Interruption]* I do not know if he can understand.

Madam Clerk, I went to the Couva/Talparo/Tabaquite Regional Corporation, the amount of corruption that went down there and they put up three pavilions—I see that the chairman is here today—and they could not even pay the people. Do not talk about that! Some of the payments I am seeing, we will talk about on another occasion. I have some documents here—factual. Facts that I would like to deal with—how contracts were given out—Fyzabad. You know what I am talking about. I am talking about the office in Siparia. It is written here. That time will come.

In the next five years, when we go to the public, or even before that. *[Interruption]* I do not want you to take me away from what I am here for today. I am just saying I have the documents and I will continue to get documents, although they have been hidden by some people in the Ministry who have affiliations to you. I do not have to have privilege to give facts. These are facts. *[Interruption]*

A little shed I saw inside this document. Not Ramesh, UNC Ramesh office; not Team Unity Ramesh office. When Ramesh was in UNC he did that. It is here, do not be afraid! Maybe it is the corporation down there who was running the whole URP Programme and giving work all over Trinidad.

Couva/Talparo/Tabaquite was head office for local government at one point in time—and these are facts. These facts will come out from the moneys paid. *[Interruption]* I am not frightening anybody. I can defend myself because my hands are clean, not like yours. Let me not say this. I want to keep it for another time when there are more people here.

I have been appalled by some of the things that were done. Of the 14 corporations, I was pleased with some of the UNC corporations and some of the PNM. They have worked well, and as a matter of fact— *[Interruption]* How could you who were in local government, for poor people in Siparia, allow the corporation to privatize the cemetery and to get authority to open a hole was \$825? This Minister will stop that, so that the poor people who cannot afford to do it, will bury their dead.

Your regime was a wicked one and we never want to see you on this side again. They privatize the cemetery and to open a gravesite, which cost \$75 the last time we voted here in Parliament, cost poor people \$825. It is about to stop because you are a wicked regime. You are a wicked set of people. It has to stop some time and it will stop. The people of Trinidad and Tobago will stop that.

Hon. Member: Do remind us of the person you are nominating?

Hon. J. Narine: Madam Clerk, Mr. Alvin Pascall. I told you I knew him personally. I do not have to look for his name. He is probably in the gallery today. *[Interruption]* Why? I was never accustomed to the high style of living that you all inherited over the last six years. I am a poor and humble person and I will remain a poor and humble person because I have to face the people after politics. You cannot go into Water Pajaro because your car is too new to go there. *[Interruption]* I have a foreign-used car, for your information. I have no intention of changing it. *[Interruption]* Do not take him on? He is supposed to be a reverend and come into this Parliament and one lie after another. I want to know if you have a congregation in your church.

Today, Madam Clerk, I—

Hon. Member: I was surprised to hear you call Madam Clerk. You were talking to everybody— *[Inaudible]*

Hon. J. Narine: You forgot her. You have not even called her name since yesterday. You sat there and talked more than anybody else on this side. Get up and speak! We want to hear you on your feet. *[Interruption]* We know you are capable; that is why I am asking you to make a contribution. Say who is handling Jailal; say who is Emrit—if he has dual citizenship. Tell me! I would like to hear you: a douen or a La Diabliesse from down by you. Ask your colleague on the side of you.

Madam Clerk, it is my pleasure to make a small contribution in proposing the name of Alvin Pascall to be Speaker of this House. I so move.

The Minister of Trade & Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Madam Clerk, I rise to second the nomination of Mr. Alvin Pascall to take the Chair of this honourable House. I want, once more, to impress on my colleagues opposite to understand the purpose for which we are here today. I can understand the fact that those on the other side seem to be biting at the bit. They are saying call the election. They want a date of the election. I want to assure them

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[HON. K. VALLEY]

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that they will get the election as soon as the Elections and Boundaries Commission is finished with its work. We have said that time and time again. [Interruption] That is not so. The Prime Minister is on record stating that the outside date is July of next year.

There seems to be some misunderstanding with respect to the Constitution. We are hearing from the other side as though the Government has an obligation to elect a Speaker. Section 50 of the Constitution is clear. It is a responsibility of the House of Representatives. It is a constitutional responsibility, after the election of the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker, that every hon. Member be required to take an oath of office and in taking that oath, he is required—and I am using it in a general sense—to swear to uphold the Constitution.

The Constitution mandates the House at section 51, at its first meeting after a general election [Interruption] so that you can break it now. You cannot uphold the Constitution just before you take the vote. That is what I am hearing from the other side. They have a difficulty when people talk about the upholding of moral and spiritual values. It is important that we understand that the election of a Speaker is the mandate of the Constitution on the House of Representatives as at section 51.

I make the second point. I go to section 77. [Interruption] When you speak, you quote what you want. When I speak, let me quote what I want. If you want to call an election, the test of whether a government commands a majority in the House is outlined in the Constitution at section 77. It states quite clearly that “Where the House of Representatives passes a resolution, supported by the votes of a majority of all the members of the House, declaring that it has no confidence in the Prime Minister...” [Interruption] That is a requirement of the Constitution. That is the test. We must first have a Speaker. You must come with a motion of no confidence and, only if it succeeds, then the Prime Minister must resign within seven days. [Interruption]

Nobody will lock you up. I am making the valid point that my friends opposite seem to be misunderstanding their purpose here today. It is not the Government’s responsibility to elect a Speaker. It is the House’s responsibility to do. It is our constitutional responsibility as Members: all 36 of us.

Madam Clerk, you would know that in the home of our democratic parliament, the House of Commons and other parliaments, the Speaker would come from any side of the House—from the Opposition or from a third party. The tradition is to look for someone impartial, who can command the authority of the House.

What I consider extremely important is that we in Trinidad and Tobago as a young independent country should concentrate on building our institutions and traditions. I ask my colleagues whether they are happy when they look at the opinion pages. We look at the *Newsday*, “That day in the House”. We look at the *Guardian*, “Making a mockery of the Parliament”. I am asking—and I am talking to all of us—you may say I am filibustering, but I am asking you to consider the opportunity of 18/18 for yet another time.

We are placed at the crossroads here in 2002 and either we are going to take the high ground or the low ground. [*Interruption*] I do not have it. Look at the opinion page! We have the opportunity to go one way or the other. Understand that. You can continue making fun of it. I told you yesterday that history will record this day and history would opine on our actions here today.

I want to assure my friends on the other side that they will get elections. The PNM has been fighting elections since 1956. We are not afraid of elections. Our history is that of winning many more than we have lost. If they check our records, I am sure that we are badging at least 80 per cent. What is your history? We are not afraid of you: never were, never will be. Understand that! We have a responsibility as hon. Members, all 36 of us, to elect a Speaker of the House—a constitutional responsibility as outlined in section 50 of the Constitution.

I ask my friends to understand—coming from our background of Crown Colony into independence, into republicanism, not yet being a nation—that the historic juncture that we are at today with 18/18 and the fact that it provides us with the opportunity, on the same power-sharing concept, here in the public forum, so that the public can see our parliamentarians dealing with their business and policy issues in the interest of all of Trinidad and Tobago. I appeal to you once more. You are not going to get another opportunity. This is an important period in our history. I am asking you to grab the moment.

Madam Clerk, I second the Motion.

Mr. Ganga Singh (*Caroni East*): Madam Clerk, I beg to propose Mr. Lester Matadeen of St. Margaret’s Old Road, Claxton Bay to take the Chair of this honourable House as Speaker.

Miss Gillian Lucky (*Pointe-a-Pierre*): Madam Clerk, I beg to second the nomination of Mr. Lester Matadeen.

Madam Clerk: Are there any further nominations? Hon. Members, there being no further nominations, the question before you is that Mr. Alvin Pascall 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.

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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 lost. The question, therefore, is that Mr. Lester Matadeen 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.

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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 voted against. The proposal is negatived. I, therefore, must, once again call upon this House to elect a Speaker.

The Minister of Culture and Tourism (Hon. Eudine Job-Davis): Madam Clerk:

“When the righteous are in authority, the people will always rejoice: but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn.” Proverbs 29:2.

Madam Clerk, I was privileged to be in Point Fortin on December 24, 2001 when the President of the Republic named the hon. Patrick Manning Prime Minister of this country. I can tell you. There was dancing in the streets, all over the streets. When I came to Port of Spain that evening, there was dancing in the streets and when I called Tobago, there was even more dancing in the streets.

I started, over the past day and some hours now, observing the behaviour of those on the other side. Unfortunately, I have observed that they, with sadistic pleasure, sit there and shout 18/18—no Speaker; 18/18, do not nominate a Speaker. These are the people who were at the helm of this country for the past six or more years.

We on this side, when we put ourselves out for public office, we know that we have a responsibility to the people of this country. It is because of that responsibility I am standing here this afternoon to do what we are supposed to do, and that is, nominate a Speaker. Though we are still under protest, I am about to nominate Dr. Wilbert Hilton Winchester, who lives at 39, The Park, La Horquette, Glencoe and who, I may add, has given me his full consent to nominate him as Speaker of the House.

I want to say a bit about Dr. Winchester. He attended the Osmond High School, Port of Spain, where he obtained his Cambridge School Certificate, Grade I. That was in the year 1949. In 1955, he entered the University of Toronto to read

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economics and political science and obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree in economics. He then pursued the study of law at the University of Toronto Law School, where he obtained the Bachelor of Law degree, LLB. Hons., in 1962. After attending Osgard Hall Law School Bar Admission Course for 18 months, he obtained the Certificate of Legal Practice to practise law in Ontario, Canada, in 1964. He then attended the Hugh Wooding Law School and obtained the Certificate of Legal Education in 1986. He is still a member of the British Institute of Management and, I daresay, he is also an accredited Methodist local preacher.

That is the calibre of people we are putting forward today, not in any jokey way, but in a serious way because we understand that the country must go forward in a meaningful way.

Dr. Winchester joined the public service of Trinidad and Tobago in 1950. After he practised law in Toronto for a while, he worked with the International Labour Office in Geneva, Switzerland as a member of the International Legal Division in 1964. He resigned from the ILO and took up the position of Director of Cipriani Labour College in Trinidad, in July 1968. Since there is precedent in this House, Dr. Wilbert Winchester was a Member of Parliament, representing Tobago East and was appointed a member of the Cabinet with responsibility for the Ministry of Tobago Affairs. He served in this capacity until 1976. Subsequent to this period, he served as a temporary Senator from time to time.

Dr. Wilbert Winchester established the management consultancy firm of WW Micron Limited in 1977, where he remains as chairman and majority shareholder up to today.

In 1980, he was elected chairman of the GTM Life Insurance Company Limited, now called MEGA, a position he still holds. He is also the owner of the law firm Wilbert H. Winchester & Company, where he practises law as an attorney-at-law before the Supreme Court of Trinidad and Tobago.

Over the past day and a half, I have heard names put forward in this Parliament for Speaker of the House—Prof. Max Richards, Dr. Marjorie Thorpe, Barendra Sinanan, Monica Barnes, Eustace Seignoret, Andrés Soverall, now Wilbert Winchester. We have witnessed the derision of the other side of these worthy people. I am saying that in a time when I was growing up, it used to be a pleasure to look at the happenings and goings on in the Parliament of this country. Over the past six years, we have witnessed the denigration of this august House. We have witnessed the behaviour of this august House going down the road of

immorality and I want to apologize publicly today because I was not a part of that fateful decision in 1995. I was not a part, but I want to apologize publicly today to the people of Trinidad and Tobago for foisting the UNC on this country.

We have put forward good people—what Martin Luther King calls “good men and women”. He said that when evil men plot, good men and women plan; and when evil men burn and bomb, good men must build and bind. We are here today to build and bind this nation of which we are a part, so that when we all would have left here, we would have left a legacy for our children, our children's children and their great grandchildren. Unfortunately, if the other side does not understand that, it is no fault of ours.

We have heard Members on the other side talk about calling elections. This is not about elections, it is about contributing to the development of our society. We, the members of government, in our ministries, have been working over the past three months to advance the cause of Trinidadians and Tobagonians. We have over the past three months tried to bind and to rebuild the broken relationships that have been a legacy of the UNC. We have tried to bind and to build relationships with our cultural fraternity and we have heard so-called responsible persons talk about people being victimized and dying first before you take whatever it is. What an unfortunate statement by leaders of this society!

This Government and the Ministry of Culture and Tourism see the culture of this nation as the binding force to bring our peoples together. When we look at the faces of the people in this country, we do not see Indians, Africans and Chinese. We see one face. We see the face of future generations and if the Member for Ortoire/Mayaro would only shut his mouth, he may learn something. Unfortunately, he does not want to learn.

We have heard over the past two weeks about crisis in tourism. I have heard the hon. Member for St. Augustine taking his pot-shots. What the hon. Member did not tell Tobagonians and Trinidadians was that the \$30 million he allocated to the industry, he gave with one hand and took back with two—unfortunately. I would not say more.

Madam Clerk, I know that this country is crying out for serious leadership that is why I am proposing a man like Wilbert Winchester, who stands out as a role model in this society.

3.30 p.m.

Madam Clerk, we have 36 Members of Parliament in this House.

Mr. Peters: We know that, we want a Speaker now.

Hon. E. Job-Davis: What boggles my mind and what pains me is when people who purport to be leaders disregard the basic rule, that honesty is the best policy; when people who purport to be leaders could sit together in one place and strategize to hold a country to ransom; when people who purport to be leaders, could sacrifice truth, morality and spirituality on the altar of self-interest; when people who purport to be leaders could incite a nation to violence for no other cause than to put forward their own selfish interests, then it begs the question, Madam Clerk, where is this country going? The answer comes back loud and clear; we are going down the road of immorality and unspirituality.

When people who aspire to be leaders talk—[*Interruption*] It is all right; empty barrels make the most noise. If you notice the empty barrel that has been making the most noise, you would understand. When people who purport to be leaders could talk about: they have a shocker coming for them; the shocker is not for us in the Parliament, the shocker is for the people of this nation who put their trust, who put their faith in the people in this Parliament, and you on the other side, have violated the sacred trust of the citizens of this country. [*Desk thumping*] [*Interruption*]

Mr. Peters: You are violating the Standing Orders by making a contribution and I could talk; today is free, everybody is a speaker, everybody could talk. [*Laughter*]

Hon. E. Job-Davis: Dr. Eric Williams told us, Madam Clerk, that the future of this country was in the book bags of the children and I understand the Member for Ortoire/Mayaro did not have any books, so that is all right, we understand that and we forgive you for your behaviour. [*Interruption*]

Madam Clerk, when we look for people to put as leaders in this country, we look to them as role models. Our young children look to them as role models and what do they see? They see a bunch of people in the Parliament who are just “kicksing, kicksing,” all the time. [*Interruption*]

Madam Clerk, I left a son in Tobago and he called me this morning, and said: “Mummy, what is wrong with those people? Do you think that the Member for Barataria/San Juan is going to deal with his conscience?” I said: “Son, I do not know.” He said: “Do you think that the Member for St. Augustine and the Member for St. Joseph would deal with their conscience?” I said: “I do not know.” But I just want to tell you three gentlemen this afternoon that:

“BLESSED IS the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.”

I want to ask the Member for Baratavia/San Juan, if your conscience allowed you to sleep last night. I want to ask you that! Do not shake your head, you have to answer me, say it loud and clear, yes or no.

Yesterday my hon. colleague said that the hon. Member for St. Augustine had woken up but he found himself on the other side; when reality hit the Member for St. Augustine he is back here in his pajamas today because he cannot face reality. We want the Member, as the hon. Gentleman that he is, or that we think he is, to stand up for what is right and let your conscience be your guide, because you, Member for St. Augustine, were the one and the only person in all of this, that the people of Trinidad and Tobago looked to for leadership. Instead of that he is contributing in taking the society down the road of moral decay. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Yetming: I am providing leadership right now.

Hon. E. Job-Davis: I am saying that very clearly. Member for St. Joseph, who I know quite well, hon. Gentleman, [*Interruption*] And who I believe, would wake probably today or tomorrow and realize that he is sitting on the wrong side of the House. I am hoping my good friend—who used to be my boss—the Member for Joseph, would let good sense prevail.

Gentlemen, I just want to say to the three of you, that you hold this country; you are the ones who have the future of this country in the palm of your hands at this time. If God, or who you worship, Allah, Yahweh—however you call him—if he does not prick your consciences to deal with what is happening in our country today, then something has to be radically wrong. I am begging, I am pleading, that the people on that side, the three gentlemen—not you, Gypsy—the three gentlemen, would listen to their conscience.

[*Madam Clerk leaves the Chamber*]

You know, I sat here and I heard the hon. Member for Couva North say: “Today is ‘D’ day”, he was referring to yesterday and I want to say, yes, it was ‘D’ day, it was ‘D’ for desperation; desperate people looking for solutions to what you have caused in this society. It is ‘D’ for deprivation; depriving the people of their rights in this country. Your constituents who voted for you, you are depriving them of their constitutional rights. ‘D’ for destruction, for taking this country down the road of moral and spiritual decay and for destroying the very fabric of our society. I also want to say the ‘D’ is for decision and the people of this country would decide—[*Interruption*] They would decide that this Government is here to stay. They would also decide that you on the other side would pay the political price for disregarding the Crowne Plaza Agreement that was made. [*Interruption*] We have

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to repeat it for all and sundry and all of us here have to repeat that forever and ever because that is what it is all about. The people will decide that the Government of this land will not be in the hands of the UNC; not now and not for the next 50 years because, as I said, you have violated the sacred trust of the people of this country.

I am therefore, at this time, Mr. Deputy Clerk, proposing that the hon. Members on the other side, including those three gentlemen I have named, rethink their position and allow this country to move forward by electing a Speaker here this afternoon. By doing that, I can assure you that you will allow the people of this country to get out of this crisis, unscathed.

Mr. Deputy Clerk, I, therefore, have the greatest pleasure in proposing for Speaker of this honourable House for the Seventh Parliament, Dr. Wilbert Winchester.

Thank you.

The Minister of Planning and Development (Hon. Dr. Keith Rowley): Mr. Deputy Clerk, I really crave the indulgence of my colleagues to second the nomination of Dr. Wilbert Winchester, and in so doing to make a few observations for the benefit of those of my colleagues and probably members of the media, who might be labouring under some misunderstanding of the situation. Unfortunately, they would have been led to that path by my colleague for Princes Town, and others who have been making statements. I think this is a good time to draw the attention of our colleagues to what we are doing, and how, in fact, the Standing Orders apply.

My friend from Ortoire/Mayaro is saying since we do not have Standing Orders we could do what we want. In fact, this is a situation very much like when the red light is not working, that is when you have to be more careful in crossing the junction. [*Desk thumping*] Mr. Deputy Clerk, for the benefit of my colleagues and those on the other side who wish to listen as I talk to my colleagues in the House—and I am quoting here from *A First Report From The Select Committee On Procedure From The House of Commons* dated January 26, 1972. I go to the section on Procedure for the Election of a Speaker, because we are not the first country to have difficulty in electing a Speaker. There was a problem in the House of Commons, which resulted in this Committee's report and I quote:

“Part III

PROCEDURE FOR ELECTION OF A SPEAKER,

14. The proceedings in the House during the election of a Speaker are governed by ancient usage. For at least three centuries it has been the practice

for the Clerk of the House to preside, the chair itself being empty and the Mace beneath the Table.”

As we have here.

“An important consequence of the fact that a Member does not occupy the chair is that the Standing Orders of the House do not apply to the proceedings.”

[Madam Clerk returns to the Chamber]

That then does not give you—*[Interruption]* Wait a minute, wait a minute—that is why you learnt nothing in school; you did not listen to your teachers. *[Laughter]* Give me a few minutes. The point I am making is, I saw an article in the newspaper, which said that the Prime Minister in his support for a nomination yesterday violated the Standing Orders. That is not correct. *[Interruption]* The Standing Orders—*[Crosstalk]* Oh God, why all “yuh” head so hard? We tell “yuh doh tief, yuh tief.” We tell “yuh” listen; “yuh” would not keep quiet. *[Laughter]* *[Interruption]* I am saying that from the Standing Orders from the Mother of Parliaments—*[Interruption]* the bottom line is—*[Crosstalk]* I did not write this. I am just asking you not to mislead the media and the public. *[Crosstalk]* An important consequence of the fact that a Member of the House is not in the Chair is that the Standing Orders do not apply. *[Crosstalk]* Do you know how that was changed in the Parliament of Britain, to prevent exactly what you are doing? They have changed it and it is now that a Member of the House, the most senior back-bencher in a proceeding like this, would take the Chair so as to allow the Standing Orders to be enforced. *[Interruption]* You ever win a fowl cock case in the courthouse?

Mr. S. Panday: “Ah” better than your wife!

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Do you understand why the children have you all, and all of us—You are taking us down with you.

Hon. Member: Subhas, that is inappropriate and you know that.

Hon. Member: Apologize, man.

Mr. Manning: You encouraging that?

Mr. S. Panday: His wife is a lawyer, I am a lawyer and I am protecting my professional dignity. *[Interruption]*

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Anyhow I just made that point for those who will understand that those statements about violating Standing Orders is not correct.

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What, in effect, we are doing here, we are gathered as Members in the House and we are simply talking. That is why, for almost two days, no person has got up here and talked about how long we may speak or our time being up. We, as Members, have to behave in a way that is becoming of Members of Parliament and I am appealing to you, my colleagues, to restrain yourselves; control yourselves [*Crosstalk and shouting*] Okay, you can say I am wrong in a dignified way. I do not have to be right all the time.

Mr. Peters: If we are telling you that you are wrong and nobody is taking you on, what would you do?

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Then I move on. I move on to the point. It was yesterday during the proceedings that my colleague for Diego Martin East—your colleague too—raised the question, when your nominees were put up, as to whether such a nominee had qualified to be a Speaker. In fact, that was within the context of the requirement of the Constitution; that a nominee has to qualify. If you were of the view—
[*Interruption*]

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: [*Inaudible*]

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: You have a difficulty when you are in a vertical position, you know, just listen to me. [*Laughter*] What I am saying, when we—[*Crosstalk and shouting*] If you get up to speak, I will sit and listen to you. I am saying, if we put a nomination forward and you think the nominee does not qualify, we will have no difficulty if you get up and ask that question, because it is a valid question. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. S. Panday: You could tell us what to do?

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: If you wanted to ask for a form of consent, you were free to do so and you are still free to do so. With respect to any of our nominees, at any stage in the proceedings, you were, and you still are free to ask for that. We asked for it when we thought it was relevant.

Madam Clerk, I want to draw to your attention an article in today's *Guardian* to bring out the relevance of why my colleague asked for the qualification, and to ask whether, in fact, a person that was put forward by the other side had qualified. I want to quote from page three of the *Guardian*—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: I could read. All right, all right, we will listen to you.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: If after I have said what I have to say you want to get up and say anything—

Hon. Member: We give you the assurance that we will sit and listen to you.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: I simply want to read for you, Madam Clerk, what is in the *Guardian*. An article written by Lisa Allen-Agostini, who I presume was in the House and followed the proceedings. The article says:

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“At least one of the ‘over 3,000’ persons the UNC propose to nominate as Speaker...”

Mr. Partap: He was never nominated! [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Colleagues, I asked you for a hearing. [*Interruption*] If you do not want to give me a hearing—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: No!

Mr. Partap: Read the *Express*!

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: I do not want to read the *Express*, I want to read the *Guardian*, is that all right?

Hon. Member: No!

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: I will read the *Guardian* anyway. [*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: No!

[*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: It says:

“At least one of the over...”

[*Interruption*]

Hon. Members: Read the *Express* not the *Guardian*.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: I wonder why you are so keen for me not to read this. Leader, you want me to read it, right? [*Interruption*] I have noticed a great reluctance on your part not to read.

“At least one of ‘over 3,000’ people the UNC propose to nominate...”

I never said—

Mr. Partap: He was proposed, he was not nominated.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Oh God, I did not say you nominated the person. The article says:

“One of the ‘over 3,000’ people the UNC propose to nominate as Speaker...”

[*Interruption*]

“At least one of the ‘over 3,000’ people the UNC propose to nominate as Speaker never gave knowing consent to be nominated.”

Mr. Ramnath: Read the whole thing, “nah”. [*Crosstalk*] Well, I have only read the first paragraph; let me go on “nah”. I will follow your instructions. I will read the whole thing.

“David Abbott, a mason of Diaz Road, Tabaquite, said he had never heard of the UNC’s plan to flood Parliament with nominations for the post of Speaker of the House.”

Mr. Partap: He was not proposed.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: You did not propose him?

Mr. Partap: No.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: I ask you, you did not propose him?

Mr. Partap: No.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: His name appears at the top of the list of people from the Tabaquite constituency, which UNC MP Ganga Singh showed UNC supporters yesterday at Crowne Plaza. [*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: And the *Express* says what?

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Get up and read the *Express*.

“Singh also showed reporters a consent form bearing Abbott’s name, address and telephone number, with a signature supposed to be Abbott’s.

However, reached at that number late yesterday evening, Abbott said he never signed the form.”

I am quoting Abbott here.

“‘No. I now hearing about this,’ he said.”

[*Laughter*] I am reading everything “eh”.

“There were several hundred names in each binder in a tall stack in Singh’s possession yesterday.

He quickly flipped through the pages...for reporters...

Abbott seemed confused by the whole thing.”

And Abbott says this:

“‘I really don’t know what it is,’...

I had gone to a few (UNC) campaigns and thing, but I was never no member, really.’

Abbott said he had been approached at the start of the year by an ETP foreman, whose name he did not know, to sign a form ‘to bring UNC back in power’.

He did not read the document but signed it anyway.

‘A few of we sign, but I don’t know what it is, really.’”

The last paragraph says:

“The UNC papers are dated January 15. They are in the form of declarations that the nominees ‘give consent to be proposed’ to the post and, if elected,…”

Now, you might want to shout me down but the point in there is this: I am not saying that Abbott's name was proposed here. What the reporter, Lisa Allen-Agostini is saying, is that a Member of Parliament showed the media a form. They took information from that showed to them by Singh. Singh had in his possession a form, as a declaration with Abbott's signature, saying that Abbott signed that declaration. If your colleague did not show Lisa Allen-Agostini that form with Abbott’s signature, she could never have written this article. [*Crosstalk*] And the question is—[*Interruption*] I will tell you what the question is.

Mr. Peters: Did the man sign the form?

Mr. Partap: The man says he signed it.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Oh my God, is there any hope for this country?

Mr. Peters: Yes. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Here is a man whose name is on its way to the Parliament to become the Speaker of the Parliament. The man is saying that he is a mason. The man might not be able to read and write. The man is also saying that he was duped into signing a form. He does not know what he signed the form for. And they see nothing wrong with that! [*Crosstalk and shouting*] They see nothing wrong with that! [*Crosstalk and shouting*] My colleagues, here is a simple man from Tabaquite telling a reporter—[*Interruption*] When the reporter asked the man: “Are you aware that your name is on its way to the Parliament to be considered for the post of Speaker because you have signed a declaration? The man says: “No, I don’t know anything about that.”

Mr. Ramnath: These reporters write what they want.

Mr. Partap: They write what they want.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: If what you are saying is that the reporter is not speaking the truth, then let us say so and move on.

Hon. Member: Move on!

Mr. Partap: Hold on, what does the *Express* say?

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: I have not read the *Express* as yet. [*Crosstalk*] What does it say? Pass it, let me read it.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: You do not have one?

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: No, lend me yours. There is no question we cannot answer.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: Ken has one.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Tell me the page.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: Page 3.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Which part of the article you want?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: [*Inaudible*]

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Oh, that! What about it?

Hon. Members: Read it!

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Okay. [*Interruption*] You asked me to read the article, let me read it.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: Loudly.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: It says:

“Thorpe refused House post.”

Article by Prior Beharry.

“PNM MP for Diego Martin West, Dr. Keith Rowley, admitted yesterday that Dr. Marjorie Thorpe had told him that she did not want to be nominated as Speaker of the House of Representatives.

Thorpe was the PNM’s second nominee for Speaker yesterday in the hung Parliament. She was originally suggested as a possible candidate for Speaker by the UNC during discussions with PNM at the now infamous Crowne Plaza talks.

Rowley told the *Express* just before the session resumed after the tea-break at 5.30 p.m. that Thorpe had told him not to raise her name as a nominee for Speaker. He said he did not put her name forward nor did he tell anyone what she told him.

He added that her name had been placed in the system by the UNC.

Thorpe's name was nominated by the PNM's Port of Spain South MP Eric Williams. In nominating Thorpe, Williams said he was doing it under 'duress and protest' since the UNC had voted against their first nominee, Robin Montano.

He said Prof. Max Richards should have been nominated Speaker since he was also agreed to by the UNC.

According to the Standing Orders, which govern the proceedings in the Lower House, the nominator must find out first whether the person proposed was willing to serve as Speaker before making the nomination."

Mr. Boynes: So, Max Richards is the Speaker. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: All right, there are a number of issues here and I could deal with every one of them.

I had a conversation with the goodly lady and I told her if her name comes up in the Parliament—because I knew that she was a choice as a nominee—I would support it. I did not tell her I was putting her name up and I did not put her name up. Every one of my colleagues, all 18 of us, our position was—and I will point out something to you, every one of us, if you will not have a Speaker of our choice—that we will support a Speaker of your choice, once that person met the criteria to be Speaker. [*Desk thumping*] You understand! I did not nominate her. [*Crosstalk*] I did not go down the line. As a matter of fact, my conversation with her was minutes before I came in here. [*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: [*Inaudible*] Why what?

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: I am under no obligation to control [*Crosstalk*] but the bottom line is—

Mr. Ramnath: One of your colleagues nominated her without her consent.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: I do not know. And you know something? If you had not been playing games when you put up your nominee, if you had voted for your nominee, because she did not qualify you would have elected a Speaker. [*Laughter*] But you do not want any Speaker elected. [*Desk thumping*] In fact, given the mix-up that happened on this side, I have no difficulty—[*Crosstalk*] Well listen to me! I have no difficulty putting in *Hansard* here our apologies, from the PNM side, to Dr. Thorpe for having her name go forward. [*Desk thumping*] I have

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no difficulty with that! If I had gone down the line and told every single one of my colleagues what I knew, none of them would have put up her name. [*Crosstalk and shouting*] Do not tell me what I could have done. We know what happened and I am now apologizing to Dr. Thorpe. And I am saying to you, if you were not playing games [*Crosstalk and shouting*] our disqualified nominee would have meant that you would have had the only valid nominee on that round of voting, and that would have been the Speaker. I want to get back to the point about Mr. Abbott. [*Crosstalk and shouting*]

Hon. Members: We have passed Abbott.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: No, you might have passed it but I have not passed it.

Mr. Peters: Nobody brought Mr. Abbott's name in Parliament.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: I have brought it here because it may very well be—I believe that this story is accurate.

Mr. Peters: Have a commission of enquiry.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: You think everything is a calypso, that is your problem.

Mr. Peters: I think everything for all “yuh” is a commission of enquiry.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: You think everything is a calypso and you think you could “extempo” your way through life. But I will tell you something; there are moments in life when one has to get serious.

Mr. Peters: I am always serious.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: All of us in this Parliament are here to elect a Speaker as mandated by the Constitution. You are free to take the position that you are not going to elect a Speaker.

Mr. Peters: We said that!

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: What you are not free to do is to go out there and dupe people like Mr. Abbott. Mr. Abbott is telling the media: “I do not know about that.” In fact, it might very well be—

Mr. Peters: What you are not free to do is bring people like Thorpe's name in here without her consent. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: In fact, it might very well be—Gentlemen and Lady, if we happen to nominate somebody and an error was made, we have no difficulty with that. [*Crosstalk and shouting*]

Mr. Peters: You “eh” make no error. By your own admission you said you did not tell your colleagues what you knew. You withheld information from your colleagues.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: If it were you, you would have lied about it! That is the difference between us!

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: That is the difference.

Hon. Members: You lied.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: I do not have to get up here—

Mr. Peters: You lied.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: You can interpret it however you want to—[*Crosstalk and shouting*] The bottom line is you have gone out there, innocent people, like Mr. Abbott—

Mr. S. Panday: He signed the form.

Mr. Peters: When I signed a form ‘all yuh’ tried to put me in jail!

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: And you should have gone there! You should have gone right away to jail. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Peters: Mr. Abbott signed this form so he consented but Dr. Thorpe did not. You brought her name here.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: We never said to you we had a consent form from her. [*Crosstalk and shouting*] We have put before you, Dr. Winchester, you are not asking for a consent form for him? Maybe we have none? It is for you to ask for it! You could ask for it if you wish.

Mr. Ramnath: [*Inaudible*]

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: And I am saying, when we thought it was relevant to the proceeding we raised it. When we raised it, you dismissed it. And here we have—The bottom line is, you are not going to distract me from making the observation that a mason in Tabaquite is telling the country that his name is going forward to becoming Speaker, having signed a form—[*Crosstalk and shouting*] It may very well be—and I am not making this up.

Mr. Peters: Is a mason not qualified to be a Speaker?

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: No.

Mr. Peters: Why?

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Because it may very well be that—*[Interruption]* Your position and mine are different. You believe that every citizen qualifies to be Speaker of this House. I do not agree. There are certain requirements of competence—*[Interruption]*

Hon. Member: What are the laws relating to that?

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: You know, *[Crosstalk and shouting]* deteriorating to the theatre of the absurd. You are taking it there every minute. *[Interruption]* The point I am making—Could my friend for Nariva tell me where and when I lied to the House? Stand up and say it!

Mr. Peters: I could tell you lied to the House!

Hon. Members: Sit down.

Mr. Peters: I want to tell him when he lied. *[Laughter]* You lied to the House when you came here and you make them propose somebody who you know did not want their name there. That is when you lied. And you seconded the lie. *[Desk thumping]*

Mr. Boynes: So you are involved in the debate now?

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: My colleague from Ortoire/Mayaro, that is not a lie. What you are trying to do is give the country the impression that you do not know what is a lie; something that has characterized your behaviour for six years. *[Desk thumping]*

Mr. Peters: It is not a lie, it is dishonesty. I take back that. It is not a lie; it is dishonesty.

Hon. Member: *[Inaudible]* no credibility.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: But hear who is talking about credibility.

Mr. Peters: On behalf of the lady, I hope she accepts your apology for lying.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: All this carrying on does not change the underlying fact here today that 18 Members of this House said: “We will do whatever we have to do to prevent a Speaker from being elected.”

Mr. Peters: And you said you would do whatever you have to do to elect one.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: I have never said that.

Mr. Peters: Your Leader said that. *[Crosstalk and shouting]*

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: I am not the Leader. [*Crosstalk and shouting*] I did not say that. You have just said, that I said, that I would do what I have to do. In fact, I have said the opposite. I have said that if you do not want to have a Speaker, we on this side—It is not that we want a Speaker; it is the House that is required to elect a Speaker. All we are intending to do here is our duty to put a nominee up and to support that nominee in keeping with the mandate of the Constitution to elect a Speaker in the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago. You see, what the country must take note of is your determination to achieve your end, at whatever cost.

Mr. Peters: What the country must take note of is your inability to prove that you command a majority in Parliament. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: This is not a singular occasion. The country must notice the pattern. It means you have taken the position—and this has been the hallmark of your governance for the six years you have been in office—that whenever something affects your interest, you will do whatever you have to do to improve your position. The loud noise coming from my friend for Siparia, it is precisely because of this make-up of your character and your position why you had to come and tell the country that you never saw the Burgess Report because you believe that the report was embarrassing. You were the Minister responsible for a portfolio; a school was in trouble; \$30 million up in the air; a report was done; you received a copy, personally; four copies came to the Government and you took the position to tell the country you never saw the report because the report was embarrassing. [*Interruption*] Until I spoke to the JCC on March 05, it is that on March 06 is the first time she said she saw the report.

Mr. Peters: You are shirking your responsibility.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: She wants us to believe that. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Peters: What you have to do is to—None of that is going to help here. This is not a debate here. This is not a time for that debate.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Four copies went to the Government: a copy went to the Minister of Finance, one went to the Ministry of Education, one went to the Permanent Secretary and one went to her, in her personal capacity, and because the report contained material that was embarrassing to the Government she comes and tells the country she never saw the report.

Mr. Peters: You just came to the House and admitted that you lied.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: That is your style! If you believe it is embarrassing you hide it! If you believe it is embarrassing you lie about it! If you believe it is valuable, you thief it! That is your style! [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Peters: You just came to the House and admitted that you lied; lied so much that you had to apologize for lying.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: That is the same reason why the MTS Report, which shows the embarrassing behaviour of the board of MTS, you had the report many, many months ago and because it contained embarrassing statements, you chose to hide it.

It is the same reason why only, today, we are finding out that appointees of your Government have been down in San Fernando in the hospital. While patients are suffering, you have your appointees paying themselves for meetings that they never attended. [*Desk thumping*] And when you ask for the Minutes, they say the meetings never had Minutes, but they are paying themselves for meetings that they never attended, using the money that the Parliament appropriated to buy medication for patients! Your style is to hide that! If the Government had not been changed, by the wisdom of the President, we would never have known that MTS board members were doing what they were doing! [*Desk thumping*] If the Government had not changed we would never have known that money earmarked for medication for the San Fernando Hospital was being used to pay meeting fees for your appointees! [*Desk thumping*]

[*Crosstalk and shouting*]

Mr. S. Panday: You should be talking to your—

Mr. Peters: Tell us the truth this time about Winchester, and second the man.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: I want all of you; every one of you who want to shout at me here, any comment you are making here, to come and make it on Knox Street.

Mr. Peters: Why we must make it on Knox Street when we could make it here?

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: It sounds better.

Mr. Peters: Why did you not go out there and lie? [*Interruption*]

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: You do not even know what colour grease to put in your hair. You all have to understand something—that the pattern of behaviour that you are demonstrating here on this matter of Speaker election, is consistent with how you have governed the country. [*Desk thumping*] You have information—which in any Parliament, should be made available to the population—you choose to hide it. All of you.

Mr. Peters: You had information and you hid it from everybody here yesterday.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: All of you know who got the \$10 million for OCIC at the airport. [*Crosstalk and shouting*]

Mr. Peters: We want a Speaker! We want a Speaker! We want a Speaker but we want you to prove you command the majority!

Mr. S. Panday: [*Inaudible*]

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: You do not want a Speaker. You do not want the Parliament to function. And all this is because of your not wanting a Speaker. The reason why you do not want a Speaker is that you do not want the Parliament to function. [*Desk thumping*] If the Parliament is functioning, every Friday Members of the PNM Cabinet will come here and inform the country of what is taking place in the various ministries. [*Desk thumping*] You do not want the Parliament to function because you believe if you can block the Parliament from functioning—

Mr. Peters: The Parliament cannot function because you cannot prove that you command the majority!

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: And you believe that is your only hope because if you get back into Cabinet you can use the authority of the Cabinet to block all the investigations and continue to hide and cover up. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Peters: Your party cannot prove that you command the majority!

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: You believe that your only defence now is the Cabinet of Trinidad and Tobago! [*Crosstalk and shouting*]

Mr. Peters: Your party cannot prove—

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: You desperately need the Cabinet! You used the Cabinet to facilitate massive fraud and corruption in the country. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Peters: Your party cannot prove that you command a majority.

[*Crosstalk and shouting*]

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: And now you desperately want the Cabinet, again, to cover up what you think is detrimental [*Crosstalk*] to your well-being and that is why we are going through this farce of you nominating people and voting against the same people that you nominate. [*Desk thumping*]

Before we convened the Parliament you were out on the streets: convene the Parliament, convene the Parliament, as if we have—

Madam Clerk: Hon. Members, perhaps you all would like a little break at this time until 5.50 p.m., please? We have some light refreshments.

Assent indicated.

4.17 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.32 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Madam Clerk, before we took the tea break, I was on my legs in support of the nomination—*[Interruption]* We agreed that there would be silence as I wind up. You agreed to that. I was supporting the nomination made by my distinguished colleague from Tobago East of the candidacy of Dr. Wilbert Winchester who has been put forward to hold the position of Speaker of this honourable House.

Madam Clerk, there have been many issues raised around the election of a clerk, the selection of a clerk, the qualification of a clerk. I think a lot—*[Interruption]* Madam Clerk, a Speaker, sorry. In fact, before I sit, I want to take the opportunity of putting on *Hansard*, on behalf of my colleagues on both sides, the excellent way in which you have conducted these proceedings on behalf of Members of this House. *[Desk thumping]* Your competence in handling these very difficult proceedings has demonstrated in full national view that you are a credit to the public service and *[Desk thumping]* I look forward to the day when you sit in a chair other than the one in which you sit now, Madam Clerk.

Having said that, I strongly support the nomination of Wilbert Winchester and ask all Members of this House who are required to elect a Speaker to give consideration, serious consideration, to that excellent nominee. *[Desk thumping]*

Mr. Ganga Singh (Caroni East): Madam Clerk, I beg to propose that Christine Nunez of Sou-Sou Lands, Carlsen Field do take the Chair of this House as Speaker.

Miss Gillian Lucky (Pointe-a-Pierre): Madam Clerk, I beg to second the nomination of Miss Christine Nunez.

Mr. Imbert: Who is Christine Nunez? Where is she from? Who is she? Is she a citizen of Trinidad and Tobago?

Mr. Peters: She is a citizen of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Imbert: Does she have dual citizenship? Is she bankrupt?

Madam Clerk: Are there any further nominations? There being no further nominations, hon. Members, the question before you is that Dr. Wilbert Hilton Winchester do take the Chair of this House as Speaker. All in favour say “Aye”.

Election of Speaker

Saturday, April 06, 2002

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.

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.

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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 lost.

The question therefore is that Ms. Christine Nunez 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.

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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.

Election of Speaker

Saturday, April 06, 2002

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 is negatived. I must therefore call upon the House to elect a Speaker.

[*Pause*]

Madam Clerk: Hon. Members, the Clerk's duty during these proceedings is to put nominations to the House for the Office of Speaker and this is what I am willing and prepared to do. Now, despite the fact that Members from both sides have indicated to me that they intend to propose persons for the Office of Speaker, none appear to be forthcoming at this time. I understand or rather appreciate that you all may need some time to make up your minds. How long do you suggest that I wait? Or, would you prefer that we return—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Valley: Monday. Monday at 1.30.

Hon. Member: Tomorrow.

Hon. Member: Friday.

Mr. Valley: Monday at 1.30.

Madam Clerk: Well, I am hearing different dates and times. Can I appeal to Members to consult with each other on this and advise me?

Mr. Valley: Tomorrow.

Madam Clerk: Well, hon. Members, since you all have agreed, the Assistant Clerk and I, therefore, will return to the Table to continue receiving your nominations tomorrow, at?

Mr. Valley: One-thirty.

Madam Clerk: One-thirty p.m. Thank you.

5.44 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*