

*Leave of Absence**Friday, November 22, 2002***HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES***Friday, November 22, 2002*

The House met at 1.30 p.m.

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

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I have received correspondence requesting leave of absence from the sitting of the House from the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre (Miss Gillian Lucky) for the period November 16—28, 2002 and the Member for Barataria/San Juan (Dr. Fuad Khan) from today's sitting. The leave of absence which Members requested is granted.

CHILDREN'S AUTHORITY (AMDT.) BILL

Bill to amend the Children's Authority Act, 2000 brought from the Senate [*The Minister of Legal Affairs*]; read the first time.

ADOPTION OF CHILDREN (AMDT.) BILL

Bill to amend the Adoption of Children Act, 2000 brought from the Senate [*The Minister of Legal Affairs*]; read the first time.

PAPERS LAID

1. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the financial statements of the University Students Guarantee Fund for the year ended December 31, 1997. [*The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley)*]
2. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the financial statements of the University Students Guarantee Fund for the year ended December 31, 1998. [*Hon. K. Valley*]
3. Annual audited financial statements of National Quarries Company Limited for the financial year ended September 30, 2001. [*Hon. K. Valley*]

Papers 1 and 2 to be referred to the Public Accounts Committee.

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

**DEFINITE URGENT MATTERS
(LEAVE)**

Inability to obtain goods and services from public institutions

Mr. Chandresh Sharma (Fyzabad): Mr. Speaker, in accordance with Standing Order 12 of the House of Representatives, I hereby seek your leave to move the adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing the following matter as a definite matter of urgent public importance: The Inability of citizens to obtain essential goods and services from public institutions such as medicines, x-rays, blood tests and necessary surgical procedures.

This matter is definite because it refers to specific areas of human life and the inability of citizens to obtain life- and limb-saving goods and services because of Government's failure to facilitate and supply the essential goods and services to health and other institutions, particularly where citizens are inmates. This failure of Government is causing permanent and irreparable damage with loss of life taking place.

The matter is urgent, because at this time, citizens are unable to obtain necessary medication and other life-saving services from public institutions. Persons are going into coma, there are unnecessary amputations, and blindness is taking place and, of course, significant increases in the loss of limbs and death.

It is a matter of public importance because the current situation that obtains is affecting citizens across Trinidad and Tobago. Many have been denied basic and essential goods and services which is leading to unnecessary blindness, amputation of limbs, the loss of ability to earn income and live normal lives, and basic denials of the provisions and protection of the enshrined rights of our Constitution.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the leave which the hon. Member for Fyzabad seeks is denied. And hon. Members, I suggest that you avail yourselves with the provisions of Standing Order 11.

Accident at Atlas Methanol Plant

Mr. Harry Partap (Nariva): Mr. Speaker, in accordance with Standing Order 12 of the House of Representatives, I hereby seek your leave to move the adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a definite matter of urgent public importance: the recent fatal accident at the Atlas Methanol Plant in Point Lisas, and other incidents which impact on the health, safety and welfare of workers in Trinidad and Tobago.

The matter is definite since it relates to specific instances of injury to, and death of workers in the workplace including the crushing death of Mr. Victor Samuel, an employee at the Atlas Methanol Plant site.

The matter is urgent because a worker lost his life as recent as three days ago when he was crushed while offloading materials from a container on the job site.

The matter is of public importance because thousands of workers are exposed to dangers and hazards in the workplace for which there is inadequate legislation to enforce protective measures.

Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the leave which the Member for Nariva seeks is denied. Again, may I refer you to Standing Order 11, perhaps you can use that Standing Order to bring your motion.

FREE TRADE AREA OF THE AMERICAS

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Mr. Speaker, I am directed by Cabinet to make the following statement.

Hon. Members may be aware that as Minister of Trade and Industry, I led the Trinidad and Tobago delegation consisting of public and private sector representation to the Seventh Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) Ministerial Meeting in Quito, Ecuador on November 01, 2002.

As Members of this House will recall, the FTAA will become the largest free trade bloc in the world integrating the economies of 34 countries with a population of approximately 800 million and combined gross domestic product of about US \$14 trillion.

The Trinidad and Tobago delegation participated in the meeting as part of the Caricom group in order to maximize our bargaining power as a bloc of 14 countries.

Mr. Speaker, the FTAA's negotiative process which began in 1994, is well into its last five-year phase. By July 15, 2003 the negotiating groups on market access, agriculture, services and investments are expected to end negotiations.

The main agenda item for the ministerial meeting was the preparation of the Quito Ministerial Declaration. This document provides a complete report of the decisions taken by the hemispheric Ministers. Mr. Speaker, I seek your leave and that of this honourable House to lay a copy of the Quito Ministerial Declaration on the Table of this honourable House.

During the meeting, trade ministers of the Western Hemisphere reaffirmed their political commitment to establish the FTAA in 2005. They acknowledged the fact that the meeting heralded the commencement of the final phase of the FTAA negotiations when actual offers and requests to reduce trade barriers would be tabled.

The Ministerial Declaration established a deadline for the conclusion of negotiations of no later than December, 2004 to ensure that the FTAA will be in force by December 2005. The declaration also reiterated a mandate for the negotiating groups on market access, agriculture, services, investment and government procurement to initiate the process of exchanging offers on December 15, 2002. The point to be noted here is that the actual bargaining process has begun.

Mr. Speaker, overall, the meeting was quite beneficial for Trinidad and Tobago. Two of our nationals were elected as vice-chairmen of negotiating groups: Dr. Taimoon Stewart, the vice-chairman of the negotiating group on Competition Policy and Dr. Anthony Gonzales acts in a similar capacity on the Consultative Group on Smaller Economies.

Mr. Speaker, a major achievement for smaller economies at the Quito Ministerial Meeting is the fact that the concept of special and differential treatment for smaller economies has finally been accepted as the fundamental principle of the negotiations. As a result, Trinidad and Tobago will benefit from the newly established Hemispheric Cooperation Programme, which is designed to eliminate the development gap between smaller economies and larger FTAA member states through a mix of technical assistance and financial grants.

Mr. Speaker, the United States has already committed the sum of US \$140 million towards the Hemispheric Cooperation Programme. Further, Trinidad and Tobago was designated to host one of the three Trade Negotiating Committee (TNC) meetings which was scheduled for 2003. Hosting the Trade Negotiating Committee meeting with trade officials from the entire hemisphere is a symbolic occasion and would serve to give Trinidad and Tobago the opportunity to showcase its culture, cuisine, entertainment and ability to manage large international conferences.

Finally, Trinidad and Tobago's bid to host the permanent FTAA Administrative Secretariat was launched at an official luncheon for all delegations. During this function, I made an address outlining Trinidad and Tobago's attractiveness as a potential site for the FTAA's headquarters. A video presentation of the attributes of Trinidad and Tobago was also presented. These events were well received by the Ministers and delegates.

Hon. Members should note that Trinidad and Tobago is the front-runner at this time for the secretariat as it has received the commitment of all member states of Caricom. This provides 15 votes in a contest in which 18 votes are needed for success.

If successful, Trinidad and Tobago will benefit from the enhanced international profile of being headquarters to the largest Free Trade Area in the world. Most significantly, Trinidad and Tobago will undoubtedly enjoy additional foreign exchange inflows based on rentals of residential and conference facilities, use of transportation and entertainment centres and employment of nationals in a number of support activities.

Based on this bid, a number of preparatory activities will have to be undertaken. These include:

- (i) Appropriate facilities to house the secretariat must be identified.
- (ii) The operations of the national airline and the international airport must be configured to ensure that delegates enjoy easy access to Trinidad and Tobago from Latin America; and in this connection, I am pleased to inform Members that the national airline is expected to commence flights to Havana, Cuba in January 2003, to Santo Domingo in February, and to Costa Rica by March, by which time the negotiations on the Caricom/Costa Rica trade agreement should be completed.
- (iii) In addition, based on the fact that 18 of the 34 countries in the FTAA are Spanish-speaking, work must begin in earnest to ensure that Port of Spain, in particular, becomes a bilingual city in the shortest possible time and establish Spanish as a second language generally in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, it is in this context that the Government has identified the following strategic initiatives to ensure the creation of a success environment for Trinidad and Tobago in its overall efforts in the FTAA:

1. The positioning of Piarco as an alternative hub to Miami for entry into and out of South America;
2. The aggressive pursuit of Spanish as a second language and Port of Spain as a bilingual city;
3. The implementation of a trade assistance programme to assist the business community and workers to adjust to and make a smooth transition into the FTAA;

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4. The development of the light industrial estate at Wallerfield to provide the infrastructure for further inward investment in the non-energy sectors of the economy; and
5. The restructuring of the port in Port of Spain to provide for increased efficiency in ocean transport to and from countries comprising the FTAA.

Mr. Speaker, these initiatives coupled with those already being implemented, such as:

- the conversion of the Small Business Development Company (SBDC) into the Business Development Company (BDC);
- the recapitalizing of the Exim Bank; and
- the refocusing of Tidco

are expected to position Trinidad and Tobago at a competitive advantage in the FTAA. We will continue to participate in the process as we strive to exploit the benefits of this large market. Our resolve is great. We know that there is no turning back.

Mr. Speaker, I congratulate in particular, the members of the private sector who were part of the delegation and the business community in general for the continuing support that is being provided to the Government as we prepare to navigate our way in a globalized world.

Thank you.

Mr. Sharma: Mr. Speaker, on a point of clarification would it be correct to say—

Mr. Speaker: What Standing Order is that?

Mr. Sharma: No clarification?

Mr. Speaker: No, it is a statement.

REGISTRAR GENERAL (AMDT.) BILL

Order for second reading read.

The Minister of Legal Affairs (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move,

That a Bill to amend the Registrar General Act, Chap. 19:03, be now read a second time.

Mr. Speaker, the Registrar General (Amdt.) Bill, 2002 seeks to amend the Registrar General Act, Chap. 19:03 to permit the Registrar General to receive cash from persons who are in the line and awaiting service in the Registrar General's Department after 3.00 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, in the year 2000, the then Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs, the leader of five, appointed a committee chaired by the Registrar General and comprising representatives of the ministry, eminent conveyancers, and other distinguished practitioners to advise on the computerization of the Registrar General's Department and the facilitation of registration and verification of titles to land.

In 1994, a Cabinet decision was taken to computerize the Registrar General's Department and to do all that was possible or necessary to ensure that the Registrar General's Department moved to a stage where titles for land, the registration of births, deaths, et cetera could take place as expeditiously as possible.

In fact, the committee that was set up in the year 2000 led eventually to a series of deliberations which resulted in legislation among which was the Registrar General (Amdt.) Act, 2000. This Act, among other provisions, repealed and substituted section 9 of the Registrar General Act, Chap. 19:03 in order to alter the office hours of the Registrar General's Department from 8.30 a.m.—4.00 p.m. to 8.30 a.m.—3.15 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, it was felt after deliberations with the conveyancers in particular, that in order for the computerization to be effective and to facilitate the completion of same day recording of instruments received for registration, that it was an imperative that the office of the Registrar General be closed earlier than normal offices of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

Furthermore, the amendment provided for the Registrar General, with the approval of the Minister, and where in the opinion of the Minister, time permits, and by notification published in the *Gazette*, or in at least one daily newspaper in circulation in Trinidad and Tobago, the office could in fact be closed for the transaction of business on any working day, or to reduce the office hours.

Mr. Speaker, the new proposed section 9 of the Registrar General Act also prevented—not the proposed section with which we are dealing today, but the new section of the 2000 amendment—the Registrar General from accepting cash for any transaction after 3.00 p.m. That provision is what, in fact, has prompted the Bill before the House today because what has happened, is that as the computerization has taken place, and as we are looking at what is happening with

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the public, we have found that there is in fact a need to be able to allow the Registrar General to accept cash from persons who are in line after that 3.00 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, what we have done today is not only to bring this amendment, but in order to be extremely specific in the amendment, we are proposing that we do a further amendment to the amendment that is before the House for deliberation, and that proposed amendment is being circulated. The intention on this side, is in fact, to propose that clause 2 which now exists in the proposed amendment that is before the House for deliberation be deleted and be substituted with the following clause which says:

“(2) The Registrar General Act is amended in section 9 by repealing subsection (2) and substituting the following subsection:

(2) Notwithstanding subsection (1), the Registrar General—

(a) shall not accept cash for any transaction after three o’clock in the afternoon except where a member of the public desirous of transacting such business was in the office at the said three clock;”

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: Thank you for giving way. Am I to understand the Minister is saying that the amendment now circulated replaces the Bill, or is it in addition to the Bill that is before the House?

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis: What I am saying is that in order to achieve a certain amount of specificity, we would need to make the amendment that I am proposing today. Well, except the first part of the Bill that is here for deliberation. That still stands, but in order to achieve further specificity it was felt that we needed to make further amendments so that clause 2 as it appears on the Bill for deliberation would be deleted and we are amending it.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: I want to understand what it is you are proposing. Clause 2 is in fact the substantive amendment?

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis: Yes. The substantive amendment.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: So you are deleting and replacing it with this clause?

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis: Yes, that is what I am saying.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: Thank you.

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis: I would repeat. What I am doing is amending the Bill that is before the House for deliberation. The intention is to achieve more specificity and I will continue to indicate what the amendment is, Mr. Speaker.

- “(b) may with the approval of the Minister by notification published in the Gazette and at least one daily newspaper in circulation in Trinidad and Tobago—
- (i) close the Office of the Registrar General for the transaction of business on any working day; or
 - (ii) alter the length of the period referred to in subsection (1) for the transaction of business on any working day.”

Mr. Speaker, in fact, we could have substituted words because basically it is the same thing but, we thought in an effort to ensure that the amendment is properly done we decided to delete what is before us for consideration. In fact, it is very similar to what is here but in order to ensure that the amendment is properly done, we on this side have opted to delete and replace it with this amendment.

The fact that the Registrar General is debarred by law from receiving cash after 3.00 p.m. has created a certain amount of hardship over the past two years because in many instances, long before 3 o'clock, persons would have been waiting in line to transact business having come from various parts of the country to ensure that their business is transacted by the end of the day and have had to be turned away. So in fact, the intention is to remove this, what some people have been seeing as a hardship, and once members of the public are in the line by 3 o'clock they can in fact transact the business with respect to their property. What had happened was that the Registrar General was not able to treat with them after 3.00 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, in order to improve the service the State offers to its citizens, we are therefore proposing to amend section 9 in the manner that I have outlined to remove what has been seen as an unnecessary tether on the Registrar General's functions and this would therefore permit the Registrar General to receive cash for transactions from persons who are already awaiting service at 3.00 p.m.

Additionally, whereas in the Registrar General (Amdt.) Act, 2000, as well as in the Bill before you, the power given to the Registrar General in relation to the closure of the office, and the reduction of the office hours on any given day is mandatory, we are now proposing to make this discretionary.

The Registrar General (Amdt.) Bill, 2002 and its lists of amendments would achieve the requisite changes.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move.

Question proposed.

Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar (*Siparia*): Mr. Speaker, I cannot believe what has happened here this afternoon. It is incredible! Today, as every other day that we have come to this Parliament for sittings of the Eighth Parliament of the Republic, we see demonstrated from the other side—a continued demonstration—of a total lack of vision, a total lack of any plan, any policy, any ideas of their own to take this country forward. A total lack of any plan whatsoever, Mr. Speaker.

Every time the other side has spoken in this place and elsewhere, they launch tirade after tirade against the UNC Members instead of doing what they were elected to do, instead of doing what they boastfully say they were put there to do, and that is to articulate and implement their plans and policies to take this country forward.

Mr. Speaker, you know very well that section 54 of our Constitution sets out for us the powers of the Parliament. And the power given in section 54 to the Parliament is the power to make laws for the peace, order, and good governance of Trinidad and Tobago. It is the same Constitution which entrusts in the hands of the Cabinet the power for the general direction and control of the Government, and so in section 75 of this Constitution we see where the responsibility lies. Section 75 reads:

- “75 (1) There shall be a Cabinet for Trinidad and Tobago which The Cabinet shall have the general direction and control of the government of Trinidad and Tobago and shall be collectively responsible therefor to Parliament.
- (2) The Cabinet shall consist of the Prime Minister and such number of other Ministers (of whom one shall be the Attorney General), appointed in accordance with the provisions of section 76, as the Prime Minister may consider appropriate.”

Mr. Speaker, since December 24th last year and continuing after the election of this year, there has been a PNM Cabinet in Government and that Cabinet has the responsibility to make the laws, to bring the proposals for laws to this Parliament for the peace, order and good governance of the country. That Cabinet therefore has the responsibility for the legislative agenda of this Parliament. And so, Mr. Speaker, when we look at that legislative agenda what do we see? When we pick up today's Order Paper what is in this Order Paper? Bill No. 1 which the Member is piloting, a Bill to amend the Registrar General Act, Chap. 19:03.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill was the bill of the UNC Government and it lapsed, but when they picked it up to bring it back to the Parliament, in the same words, in

the same thoughts, the same ideas and today come to say they are amending it, all the amendment is doing is changing the wording, but the substance is the same. Bill No. 1 on the legislative agenda, a minor amendment being made to the Registrar General Act. And I will return to it.

Bill No. 2, a Bill to validate the cancellation of certain postage stamps, a UNC bill, Mr. Speaker. Again, UNC government did nothing, but two bills are on the Order Paper drafted by the UNC. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker, the third bill on the Order Paper, a Bill to amend the Pilotage Act, Chap. 51:02, a UNC bill and on top of that, a bill they voted against.

Bill No. 4, and I am talking about legislative agenda, the power of the Parliament and the authority and responsibility that the PNM Executive has to bring legislation on its agenda for the governance of this country.

Bill No. 4, a Bill to amend the Freedom of Information Act, 1999, a UNC bill, Mr. Speaker.

Bill No. 5, Mr. Speaker, this is the only one that appears to be a little different; a Bill to amend the Income Tax Act, Chap. 75:01. A little different, it was not laid by the UNC, does not appear to have been laid, it might have been drafted, and you know what this one is for? What this is to do is to increase the number of commissioners from four to five. So they have hurried this one through because it is obviously to create, or may well be to create a job for somebody's wife or husband. [*Interruption*] I am on the legislative agenda of the Executive and the Cabinet. They have the direction and control of the Government.

Bills Nos. 6, 7 and 8 are all bills that have been laid by the UNC and I know the Member for San Fernando East has very good intentions, but I would like to warn him that the three bills of substance here are the last three. He wanted us to get it done in a great hurry and I was invited to attend a meeting of the committee set up to look into those three bills, but I understand the meeting was put off because he could not get a quorum of eight members to attend.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Mr. Speaker, I would really appreciate it if the Member for Siparia does not mislead—

Mr. Ramnath: What is the point of order?

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: I did not rise on a point of order, the good Member gave way and I thank her for that. I did not rise on a point of order.

Mr. Speaker: Member for Couva South, the hon. Member for Siparia has given way.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Mr. Speaker, if the Member for Siparia is honest, she would indicate that a request came based on the fact that the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre—

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar: I did not give way for her to accuse me of being dishonest. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Order! Order! Order!

Please continue with your contribution on the Bill.

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar: Mr. Speaker, she accuses me of dishonesty. She will have her chance to reply. I thank you. I am saying all eight bills on the Order Paper are bills that were drafted, and, all except one have been laid. This is the legislative agenda of the PNM.

Mr. Speaker, they say they wanted a honeymoon period, they say they are a new government—

Mr. Speaker: Could you address us on Bill No. 1 please?

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar: Yes, I will, Mr. Speaker. I will address the House on that and I will be guided. When one looks at that Bill, they have nothing new to bring, whether with that or the other bills. Or perhaps they did not have time to draft anything new because it is a new Government, but the truth is that they have been there for almost a year.

The Bill does not attempt to address the issues with which we are concerned, whether they are in the Registrar General's Department or elsewhere. The agenda does not address the issue of flooding, and we are inundated with flooding. The headlines are screaming about kidnapping, where is your Anti-kidnapping Bill? If the Attorney General did not have time to draft these bills to bring true change in the Registrar General's Department with legislation for more efficiency—perhaps she is too busy planning whom to give gifts and when to give them. Even if she did not have the time, there would have been other pieces of legislation, but if they wanted to take from the UNC package, they could have taken.

Mr. Speaker, several important pieces of legislation that have been passed in this House with respect to increasing the efficiency of the Registrar General's Department have not been proclaimed. One year later with a PNM Government, nothing has been done with respect to those bills and those pieces of legislation.

With respect to this Bill, I received a Bill when I arrived at the Parliament. All the Members on this side received a Bill that is the subject of the debate now. As

far as I understand it, these Bills are sent to us beforehand so that we know what the Bills are before debate, but what is worse, Mr. Speaker, is that when you open the Bill there is nothing in it. It is completely blank. The Bill is completely blank. I have spoken to other Members and the Bill is totally blank. There is nothing in it. The Bill is blank.

So we come to debate a measure [*Crosstalk*] that we do not have sight of. When we arrived here—Mr. Speaker, yours is blank too? So when we came here, no Bill; firstly, we should have got it before we came, when we did get it—because immediately I arrived, I asked for a copy. The Speaker's is also blank.

The Member is now saying she wants to be very specific about what this Bill is about, so I am going to wipe out whatever was on that Bill, and I am now going to put these new words. So we now throw away this blank Bill and we pick up the amendment, but in substance, it is the same.

Mr. Speaker, to understand what this is doing we have to look at what the Member is attempting to do. The parent legislation was amended by Act No. 70 of 2000 and the parent legislation—this one is not blank, is it? Sorry, Mr. Speaker, this one is not blank, but the Minister has removed this one off the Order Paper and put her own amendment. So we need to look at it in conjunction with Act No. 70 of 2000 to which the Member referred and the parent Act, the Registrar General Act.

Mr. Speaker, I do not want to bring you into the debate, but I know that you are very aware of all the matters, having contributed in the debate on Act No. 70 of 2000 and all the others related to the registries and the Registrar General's Department. So when we look at it we see that on the face of it, it appears to be a very innocuous amendment; it appears to be very humanitarian in that it is saying I do not want to turn away persons in the Registrar General's Department because they are waiting in the line and therefore, when the cash closes at 3.00 p.m. we have to turn these persons away causing hardship, so it seems to be a humanitarian measure.

Let us understand what this means in the context of the Registrar General's Department. What happens in that department is that the transactions conducted there touch every single citizen because they deal with records from the cradle to the grave. They deal with records responsible for the Land Registry; they deal with the Civil Registry; with the births, marriages and deaths; they deal with the registration of births; they deal with the Intellectual Property Registry; they deal with the Companies Registry. So it is a repository of all the vital records of the country.

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In another sense, from a legal point of view, the entire commerce of the country depends on what goes on in that Registrar General's Department because people who are buying property, people who are mortgaging property, people who are registering properties, all must use the Registrar General's Office. So unless there is a system that is run efficiently, there could be an effect of a slowing down of the economic activity in the country.

Mr. Speaker, I am sure you would remember or recognize those words and so, as I understand it, the way the Registrar General's Department works, almost every transaction in that department begins with a cash transaction. The first step in any of the transactions is a cash transaction and this is not necessarily cash in terms of the dollars and cents as we know it, but I remember during our time in office that we allowed for debit cards and swipe cards to be used, and to allow other forms of legal tender. So it is not just a question of cash in terms of dollars and cents, but also for credit cards and other forms of payment, but all of them have to go through the cashier, as I understand the system to work.

So if you want to register a conveyance, the first thing to do when you or the clerks who work with lawyers go there, is go to the cashier. If you want to search titles to lands, again, the first thing you do is to go into the line to the cashier. If you want to get a death certificate, a birth certificate, or a marriage certificate, the first thing that you do is stand in the line to the cashier. Every single transaction begins with that first step of lining up to go to the cashier and, therefore, in some circumstances it is vital that the administrative system in place for receiving cash must operate efficiently if everything else in that Registrar General's Department is to operate efficiently.

Mr. Speaker, how does the proposed amendment seek to improve the efficiency of that system? In the first place, the Explanatory Note and the words of the Minister tend to mislead us into believing that the cashier would accept payments from 3.00 p.m. or later and gives the impression that whoever is in the line would receive service. It says:

“This Bill seeks to amend the Registrar General Act to permit the Registrar General to receive cash from persons who are in line and awaiting service in the Registrar General's Department, at 3.00 p.m. and later on week days.”

So the impression is that once you are in the line, service would be given to you, but even with the amendment that the Minister proposes today, the effect of that amendment—as I said its substance is the same. When we look at Act No. 70 of 2000 which repeals section 9(2) which repeals parts of the paragraph, we find

out in section 9 that the opening and closing hours of the Registrar General's Department is as follows:

“9(1) The Office of the Registrar General shall be kept open for transaction of business by the public from the hour of eight thirty in the morning and three fifteen in the afternoon...”

And what you are seeking to do here is to remove section 2(a) which reads:

“(2) Notwithstanding subsection (1), the Registrar General shall—
(a) not accept cash for any transaction after three o'clock...”

That is what was there and you are taking it out.

So all this amendment seeks to do is to give you 15 minutes extra to receive cash. That is what demonstrates—as I say—a total lack of any vision, any ideas, any competence in terms of improving the efficiency of that department or elsewhere.

Mr. Speaker, let us take it further and see how this gets curiouser and curiouser, and how ludicrous it is. That is why we did not proceed with it and allowed it to lapse, but they copied it wholesale, they took it wholesale. They did not think whether it was necessary or not necessary. They just picked it up and say: “They had it, so we are bringing it, they must support it. They cannot get up and say anything about it.” But we allowed it to lapse, we did not pursue it because it just did not make sense for 15 minutes extra. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker, there are some who would want to know why I am spending time speaking about this, and they have spent time bringing it to the Parliament, then bringing it blank, wiping it out and bringing it again still meaning the same thing, to give 15 minutes for people standing in the line. Let us take it as I say, curiouser and curiouser because if every transaction in the Registrar General's Department is begun by that first step of the receipt of cash, then what is the point of giving people 15 minutes more to pay cash when all the other departments are going to be shut down at 3.15 p.m.? So after they pay the cash they cannot transact any other business because the office hours are from 8.30 a.m. to 3.15 p.m. What is the point? A complete lack of vision. So they picked it up—[*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker, I am hearing some rumblings saying that the last transaction is the payment. You have been in conveyance, Sir, a very efficient and competent conveyancing attorney and you know very well the first thing is to make that cash payment. Ask any lawyer in conveyancing or go for yourself if you are not a lawyer to the Registrar General's Department, that is the first step. You want a birth certificate, you line up and you pay cash; you go for a marriage certificate,

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you line up and pay cash; you want a search title, the search clerk goes and pays for a voucher.

Mr. Speaker, I am saying curiouser and curiouser, so you cannot conduct any other business. To get a certificate, you paid cash; you still cannot do anything because you have to come back on the next day. I ask the question: Is it really necessary? Why do you need to extend the time for taking cash by 15 minutes? What about all other Government departments? There are several departments of the Government that collect cash but they close off the time for the taking of cash before the closing hours, and there is a reason why you close cash before the closing hours of the office. Anybody having business to do with those departments will know there is a reason and the reason is simply that you need to reconcile and balance the cash. So why is it only the Registrar General's Department being given 15 minutes extra to pay cash? What about all the other Government departments where cash is paid? Do they need it? I ask that question of the Minister. Why is it peculiar to the Registrar General's Department that it should be given this extra 15 minutes?

Mr. Speaker, the question that really arises is whether the remedy being proposed in this Bill would really solve the problem; whether it is that the waiting in line which is what the good intention is about, to ease that pressure of time-wasting and the waiting in line. If that is really the problem, the waiting in line, in my respectful view, is really just a symptom; it is symptomatic of the deficiencies in the administration of that division. It is symptomatic of deficiencies that would continue to cause the line-up if you do not deal with it. In other words, you are treating the symptom which is the line, rather than curing or preventing the disease in the first place. Can this remedy of an extra 15 minutes really create that extra time you want to give people and to prevent people from wasting time and allow them to transact their business efficiently?

It is my respectful view that it has to do with administrative duties rather than a legislative change of 15 minutes because in any event, if I recall the Minister in her budget contribution, and I think the hon. Member for San Fernando East as well in his budget presentation, really being very proud of the fact that they will be giving free birth certificates.

So again, there is less cash to pay. You do not have to pay for birth certificates; you do not need more time; that is a whole body of transactions and a number of persons who will no longer be accessing cash payments at the Registrar General's Department. So I understand from the practice of the law that the problems there are administrative, that those who use the cashiers and access

the facilities of the Registrar General's Department are the real problem. It is not about extending the time it takes in the line to pay the cash, but it has to do with the unavailability of cashiers to service the persons who are there.

I am advised that even though there are four cashiers who look after all these registries, that at any given point in time, the four cashiers are not available at the booths to take the cash, so there is this problem of the line-up being created because of the administration. So administratively, that problem can be solved.

I am advised that the problem is compounded—and I believe that you had raised this problem in 2000 and it seems to have continued—by the fact that no cashiers remain in the booths at lunch time. So for that whole hour, the cash area is shut down.

Mr. Speaker, I know it is very familiar to you. That is what is happening. At lunch time it shuts down so you want the extra 15 minutes at the end of the day, when administratively you can make sure that the cashiers are there within the lunch hour to take the cash and, therefore, transact business on behalf of the public. If you want to expedite the work of that department, if you want to save the public's time, they are good intentions but this is not the answer. The answer has to be in the administration of that section of the department.

Mr. Speaker, if the intention is to increase the efficiency of the Registrar General's Department to service the public, then there are serious issues to be addressed in that particular department. There are problems that are being experienced by the search clerks. The problem is not new, but the Minister has had a year to show that she can run the department and I am sure that she is making her best efforts so to do.

The problem with respect to the search clerks is a serious one. All conveyancing activity in this country depends on the work of search clerks. Again, conveyancing, and as you know mortgages; purchase of lands; selling of lands; the searching of judgments registered against lands; all of these are done by search clerks. So none of that activity can take place without the search clerk bringing their search report about the title to any particular piece of property. Those proper title searches are vital for that economic activity in this country.

2.30 p.m.

What I understand is happening now, again, there are over 100 search clerks and there is no space for them to conduct their work. The books, as you know, are huge. It is like *déjà vu* because I remember these words coming from your very mouth, with due respect, Sir. So that when you are already crowded and the books are spread out, you need even more space and there is not sufficient space there.

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When this issue arose in the year 2000, the Members on the other side pointed out, as you yourself did, with due respect, that that building where the registries are housed is not adequate for the Registrar General's Department and at that time the proposal was that an entire building would be constructed to house such an important department as the Registrar General's Department. At that time, what had happened—we need to recall what was happening here in the Red House; we need to recall that this Red House was being shared by the Registrar General's Department downstairs and by the Parliament, and it was always the feeling that the Red House should be for the Parliament's business and not for any other department of the Government. But what was worse, was the appalling conditions under which the persons in the Registrar General's Department worked downstairs and the even more appalling conditions under which such vital records of the country were being kept.

I am sure you will recall, as many will recall, going into the vaults down here and seeing the condition of those books. At that time nothing could have been done with respect to putting up a building and so the interim measure was, let us house all the departments under one roof, and that is what was done. But the understanding was always that there would have to be a proper building for accommodation of that entire department. I would like to ask the Minister, in the year that she has served there, what steps have been taken with respect to improving the quality of the accommodation for the Registrar General's Department?

I was speaking about the space for the search clerks, but that is not the only problem there, in terms of service to the public and efficiency of that department, which is the intention of this amendment. I am advised by the search clerks that the books are still in an appalling condition; that nothing is being done in terms of their quality.

Mr. Speaker, you may ask me then, so what has happened with the computerization project. As far as I understand, the databases are all populated, so that they have scanned in all the deeds; they have scanned in the births and deaths, the marriages and so on. As far as I understand, that has been done. But what needs to be done is the quality control. The search clerks say, "Okay, we go to the computer and we do the searches but we cannot rely on what is in the database. That has to be verified and that has to be corrected."

So again I ask the Minister, what steps, if any, are being taken to ensure the integrity of the population of the databases with respect to the Registrar General's Department so that they would be something that would be more reliable for the search clerks? The intention was that you would not need to use all these huge

books because you would have been able to get it off the computer. So what steps have been taken in terms of improving the efficiency of that particular department?

I am advised, hon. Minister, through you, Mr. Speaker, that the search clerks have the difficulty that when they go to do their title searches and they need to get a printout, there is only one printer for all of them to use and, therefore, from that printer if they enter a print, the print job queues up so that they do not get that print by the evening; sometimes they do not get it until the next day because of the queuing up with the use of the one printer to print from the computer the searches that are taking place. Perhaps the hon. Minister may want to look at that again if we want to improve the efficiency of that particular department.

Those are some of the issues with respect to the title clerks, the search clerks and the difficulties that they are having. I really would like to know, through you, from the hon. Minister, what is happening with the whole project for the computerization. I have heard the hon. Minister say that she would be moving expeditiously with respect to the personal identification number. This was a project that was of utmost importance. But before you could do that, that personal identification number which could have been used by persons from various government departments, that there would be one number that could be used, whether it is by the Elections and Boundaries Commission, whether it is by income tax, whether it is by the passport office, and so on, that you could keep track of persons if they have this one identifying number.

It is a tremendous project and I really have to disagree with the Minister when she said that the UNC did not want that project to take place because we did not want the EBC to have it. They have been there one year and, with due respect, what has happened in that one year with respect to that project? Because it is a vital project. Before it could be done the first step was, as I said, to computerize the records; to have all those births and deaths scanned and to populate a database with respect to the records of the civil registry. That is the first step. From there you could then move on to actually assigning the specific personal identification number. What has happened with that project? Where has that gone?

You would recall as well there was a package of legislation passed in this House—three pieces of legislation—of vital importance, in terms of modernizing the whole business of land and land registration in this country. It was the Land Adjudication Bill, the Land Tribunals Bill and, I believe, the Registration of Titles Bill. In 2000, they were all passed in this House. Those are of tremendous value for anyone working in the Registrar General's Department and anyone accessing records from that department.

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As it is now we have lands under the common law system and therefore very unreliable titles, so the intention was to bring all the lands under the Real Property Ordinance where you could get a certified title to them. If that is implemented, many of these problems that we are experiencing with the common law lands and the search clerks, and so on, could be eradicated or ameliorated.

I am reminded, as I am sure you are, in 1981 there was a package on land law legislation that was introduced in this country, passed in the Parliament, but never proclaimed, so much so that when the UNC came into office, we brought consultants from Australia and they had devised this package, working together with the persons here—and the Minister mentioned this project—and this is what they had recommended and this is what is in place. But I understand that package has not been proclaimed and again I would ask the hon. Minister to tell us something about that and what steps are being taken for implementation of those three pieces of legislation that are so vital for that particular department and for the whole land business in this country.

Whilst we talk about what was in place and what is to happen with it, I would have really liked for the Minister—and this is her first legislative initiative, with due respect—to put forward legislative initiative in terms of what are her plans and what is her policy; what are her projects for this department that she has assumed control and direction over for the past year. I would have liked to hear the Minister tell us what are the plans and what are the projects.

The only other time I heard the Minister make a contribution in this Parliament, the eighth Parliament, or in fact since she became a Minister, was in the budget debate, and I looked at it to see if, within that, there would have been some outline of the plans, projects and policies that the Minister would have for her ministry and for the Registrar General's Department. Indeed, what I saw was that up to when the Minister's time ran out, she had not mentioned what was happening in the Ministry of Legal Affairs at all in her budget contribution. That is the time I know when Ministers used to talk about their achievements, plans and policies. But up to when the time ran out, all that was in there was ad nauseam, repeatedly—I have it here. Mr. Speaker, you can look at the *Hansard*, repeating ad nauseam—“we won the election.”

Yes, I agree they won the election and they are in Government, therefore, go into conduct mode. Whether they won it fairly, unfairly, legally or illegally, the fact is, they are in Government. Come off the election platform and go into Government mode.

In that budget debate there were no plans. Time ran out and time was extended for 30 minutes and it was only then that the Minister mentioned: "I will be dealing with giving free birth certificates." That is a project that she mentioned, of the Ministry of Legal Affairs. Other than that, that the UNC did nothing for the six years, which shows, in my respectful view, a contempt for the staff of the Registrar General's Department, because you are saying for six years under the UNC that staff did nothing, when, in effect, the staff of the Registrar General's Department—I want to pay tribute to them, to compliment them, because they worked under tremendously bad conditions in this building that we inherited when we came here in the Red House.

That Registrar General's Department, piece was here; piece was in the Singer building; they were all over the place. They moved out all the records that were waterlogged, damaged, torn and destroyed after the coup. They moved it! They took it over to that new house that is called Registration House; they started that ministry; got everything under one roof, and on top of that, they managed to put on computer—I remember when we were doing it; I remember when they said, you could not do that. We took them out of the Singer building, put everybody under one roof and we created like a factory in there for computerization of records. [*Interruption*] They would have their chance. Sometimes the truth offends and they do not want to hear it.

So I am saying for the Minister to say in her first major contribution which was in the budget debate, that in the Ministry of Legal Affairs, in the Registrar General's Department, "nothing was happening; I am going to do this; I am going to do that"—and do you know what is interesting, Mr. Speaker? Nowhere is there a specific plan or idea in terms of a programme as to what is to happen in that ministry. That was the budget debate.

Here we come today, the Minister's first major—I am sorry she appears to have left, but I am sure they will pass it on to her. Mr. Speaker, the first legislative foray, first legislative initiative, tell us what you are going to do; bring something here that could really make a change to improve the efficiency of your department. But instead, first a blank bill, then an amendment to that blank bill, just to give 15 minutes extra time to receive cash.

The Member has repeated over and over, the UNC did nothing. It was under the UNC government that the staff of the Companies Division managed to computerize all their records. You can go on line. I am saying, those were the things in place. That is where I was when I went off on this point. What about going forward? In the rest of the world you are not talking about standing in a line

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for 15 extra minutes to pay cash. You are going on line; you are staying in your office. You do not have to send clerks from your office in San Fernando or elsewhere to go and stand in a line. You go on line, on the computer. That was the plan; that was the project. What has happened to it?

In other countries of the world, as you would know, you are guaranteed a title. After the computerization you are guaranteed a title, and there is an insurance that if the title is not a proper one, you do not suffer; your client does not suffer; the public does not suffer; the citizens do not suffer. There are firms and companies which take that risk.

In the United Kingdom they issue the certificates of title. That was their plan, by computerizing all of this. What have they done with it? Do not tell me we had six years. During that UNC term we had first-generation reform and modernization and, therefore, we set the platform for second-generation reform. That is in their hands now. I am asking, what have they done for that second-generation reform?

It appears, from what I have seen happening there, the hon. Minister has taken it no further from where we left it. So do not blame the UNC. When the UNC came into office, as I said, there was no Registrar General's Department in the true sense of the word. There was nothing happening in that registry. We took it to that first phase. It is in their hands now to take it to the next stage.

I was very, very disappointed with the contribution from the hon. Minister, because I expected her to tell us what were her plans; what were her specific policies, and I trust in her reply that she would address her mind to some of these issues.

So whilst we come here and spend this evening on this 15-minute extra time, why is it that the Minister could not bring the Family Court Bill? The Minister misled others when she said the UNC did nothing for the Family Court Bill and was tinkering with making amendments to the Children's Act, when, in fact, there was a full comprehensive Family Court Bill on the Order Paper. That was something that they could have done, instead of now tinkering with and amending this.

The Minister spoke about corruption and fraud. What has been done during her one year in office with respect to that? What has happened at the Registrar General's Department with respect to that? There are still no monitors up, so people can rip off pages and take them away. What are the security measures? I understand the problem is still continuing. I understand the police had to be called in recently. These are vital documents in the Registrar General's Department. I am asking the Minister in her reply if she would kindly address the whole issue of security in the Registrar General's Department as well.

I have heard the Minister say elsewhere that the UNC government had promised to deal with the whole business of local content. It is a very important issue. I remember myself and the hon. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre meeting with all the local artistes and coming to a position of local content on the airwaves, getting a percentage of local content on the airwaves. Contrary to what has been reported in the newspapers, and the words of the Minister that the UNC did nothing about local content, I know for a fact that there was a Cabinet decision setting out the procedures, the steps and the plans with respect to ensuring local content on the airwaves. I would be very happy if the Minister would take it up, whether she wants to use that or to change it, but it is such a vital issue. Please tell us what are your plans for ensuring that there is local content.

I am not asking her to say, "Well, you did not do it, shut up." That is not the issue. They have been there for a year. I am asking in her capacity, having that control and direction of that ministry, what are her plans with respect to local content on the airwaves of Trinidad and Tobago? I remember all those artistes. We met time and time again.

With respect to the marriage legislation, there was a task force set up while I was there, as Minister of Legal Affairs. I cannot speak for the time when my colleague, the then Attorney General, took over the ministry. I see the Member for Arouca South wishes to speak for him. She is now saying he is the leader of five. Well I do not know of any five on this side that he could call his own. Maybe the Member for Arouca South has information that we do not have.

I know that we had set up an entire task force to look at all the marriage laws. There was the Hindu marriage law; the Muslim marriage law; civil marriage law, and there were many differences and discrepancies in the provisions, and we were saying, let us put these things together; let us harmonize them; rationalize them; let us level the playing field, in a sense, or lift the pond, as it were; let us put all of them on a footing that all the groups in the society, Hindu, Muslim or Christians, would accept. I have heard nothing further about that. Has it been thrown away? Has it gone on a blank page as well? I do not know. So I would again ask the Minister: What has happened with that harmonization of the marriage laws in that registry with respect to the Registrar General's Department?

Perhaps if we could pick that up, we can avoid the situation where you have a 12-year-old child making children legally, because that is what one of the marriage Acts allows. *[Interruption]* This is the Registrar General's Department. The intention is to increase the efficiency and service to the public of the

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Registrar General's Department. The marriage laws fall under the jurisdiction of the Registrar General's Department.

Mr. Speaker: Apply it to the Bill.

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar: I have given the relationship. The issues of which I speak all fall under the Registrar General's Department. I am just reminded by my colleagues, if you have to pay for your marriage licence and you need to get married in a hurry and it is 3 o'clock, you cannot pay the cashier. So we have to take note of that with respect to marriages. What has happened to the harmonization of those marriage laws? It is under the purview of the Registrar General and it is for the benefit of the public.

I think how ironic it is that last week Friday—and this is with no disrespect to the ruling that was made by the honourable Speaker—I raised the issue of honouring a teenager for her achievement in this country, and this week we are talking about mourning the loss of another teenager. I heard the hon. Minister—instead of saying, "I will help this child; I will protect her; yes, I am concerned about her; let me help her", she wants to "lock up" people and bring criminal charges against them.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Member has expired.

Motion made, That the hon. Member's speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [*Mr. G. Singh*]

Question put and agreed to.

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was saying last week we raised that issue of honouring this child. She has a talent; they could help her, protect her. If they say they do not want her to work and others are exploiting her, that is all well and good, but help her so that her talent can grow and blossom. I am saying they are fiddling and spending time on this 15-minute thing when the major issues are being ignored. Government has not said a word about the despair of that other teenager. It was a sort of Columbine High School bloodshed. I mean, this is so tragic. It really hurt me when I looked at this bloodshed at that school. I asked what was the Minister of Education doing to ensure something like that does not happen, and today I am reading in the newspaper that the Ministry of Education is cutting back on the grants to schools; withholding those grants. I am saying whilst there are serious issues that this Parliament could concern itself with, we are spending time on extending the taking of cash, by 15 minutes.

Let me congratulate the Minister of Legal Affairs for her stint as acting Attorney General. If it were me, I am sure she would have been the Attorney General. After all, she obtained the highest votes in the country for her party. She is a good lawyer and yet there is a selected person who has taken her job. Sometimes I wonder if that is why the bitterness and malice that I see sometimes—you know, she talks about locking up these people instead of helping the children—I wonder if there could be some kind of other political "tabanca" that is taking place. [*Crosstalk*]

I would tell the hon. Member, through you, that if she has to accuse anybody of being a thief, it must not be in this place under your watch. I ask for your protection. If the Member cannot stand and say it where she is supposed to—the Member has tried it already. You cannot attack the conduct of any Member on this side except by a substantive motion of this House. Mr. Speaker, that was your ruling.

Mr. Speaker: I did not hear what you are alluding to, but if it were said at all, I would have it expunged. You are relating to somebody saying something about stealing or thieving?

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar: Thief, yes, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I did not hear that, but if it were said and recorded I will have it expunged. Continue, please.

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar: Mr. Speaker, that is the hypocrisy of the other side, to sit there and throw allegations. I have to answer it. You have expunged it but it is out there that this is what they are saying. The Member has thrown it across the floor.

Mr. Speaker: I thought you said somebody across the floor.

Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar: Yes, Mr. Speaker. It is the hypocrisy of the other side that they condemn the UNC government, yet every bill on the Order Paper is from the same UNC government that they say did nothing. If you look at this newspaper today, the *Probe*, "Innocogen Fraud Probe Falls Flat". It is the same way that the charges against Tidco were thrown out. So they repeat and they repeat, but the truth shall always prevail.

With these words, I thank you for the time and again I ask the Member in her winding up to address some of the issues and questions that were raised. I thank you very much. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Subhas Panday (Princes Town): Mr. Speaker, I rise to make a short intervention, but having heard the contribution of my Friend, the Member for

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Siparia, there is very little I could say, except on some research that I was doing of the hon. Member for San Fernando West. Before I go on, it seems to me that this is the most serious case of incompetence by a Minister.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: You are not reading from the blank Bill?

Mr. S. Panday: I am reading from the blank one that you gave me. The hon. Member laid a Bill and it seems to me she did not understand what she did on the first occasion. If one looks at the Explanatory Note it says:

“The Bill seeks to amend the Registrar General Act to permit the Registrar General to receive cash from persons who are in line and awaiting service in the Registrar General’s Department, at 3:00 p.m. and later on week days.”

But when one looks at the amendment which she brought initially, one sees nothing about that in the amendment. All it says in the amendment is:

“The Register General Act is amended in section 9 by repealing subsection (2) and substituting the following subsection:

- (2) Notwithstanding subsection (1), the Registrar General—
 - (b) may with the approval of the Minister by notification published in the Gazette and at least one daily newspaper in circulation in Trinidad and Tobago—
 - (i) close the Office of the Registrar General for the transaction of business on any working day; or
 - (ii) reduce the hours (time) referred to in subsection (1).”

This was the amendment the Minister brought to the House, and look at the Explanatory Note. This Minister did not know if she was on her head or her feet. She did not know if she was going forward or backward. Apparently the Minister did not even read the document before it was laid. She laid in Parliament a document and she did not even read it. That is incompetence! [*Interruption*] That was the best amendment she made when she said she blanked it.

It is only after, she has come here with this amendment today, taking the two sections and merely adding another one and saying:

- “(2) Notwithstanding subsection (1), the Registrar General—
 - (a) shall not accept cash for any transaction after three o’clock in the afternoon except where a member of the public desirous of transacting such business was in the office at the said three o’clock;”

This was the amendment. This was the Explanatory Note that they were coming with, and in the original, there was nothing about it. That is why I say, and I am certain, being the good conveyancer you are, you would say, “this was incompetence”. If that person had been working in your office, she would have been fired immediately.

So having laid the Bill, they “catch” themselves and put in this clause. The Member for Siparia went through all the areas and indicated that much thought was not put into this matter and although it was laid by the former administration, they were looking at it with a view of making it more relevant. When one looks at this, one sees that there is no vision. One would have thought that if the Minister was looking to bring a piece of legislation before the Parliament to make things become more efficient, to make the practice and the procedure in the Registrar General’s Department more efficient with the view and the aim of reducing the time that people would have to spend getting their work done—what the hon. Minister did was merely take one small aspect and merely tinkered with it; copied it from the UNC; did not understand what she was copying; did not comprehend what it was about, and just bringing this before the Parliament.

One would have thought that they, having been in Government for so long, would have gone through every department that comes under the purview of the Ministry of Legal Affairs and seen how they could follow every aspect that pertains to the purpose for which we have come before the Parliament and come with a whole vision to deal with the issue on a general basis.

This, as she has indicated, would merely shorten the time. If you are in line, well you are sure to get to the cashier. That is only a minor aspect of it. People have greater problems, because you go in line to pay to have your deed registered; you go in line to the cashier to pay to have a certified copy, and that is only a very small area culminating in the registration of a deed.

You know, for example, if land is under the Real Property Ordinance and you want to have that land subdivided—sometimes you get a piece of land from your forefather and because of the law that you cannot make a deed subdividing under five-acre plots and you are trying to get planning permission to subdivide—when you are trying to save 15 minutes in the Registrar General’s office to pay, you are taking years to get this thing approved. First of all, you have to go to the Planning Department where you get a draft plan, then they will send it back in about two or three weeks to the surveyor; the surveyor will then draw his plans, and then it has to go to the Lands and Surveys Department.

I ask the Minister this evening: What is the state of the Lands and Surveys Department? What is the state of the staff at the Lands and Surveys Department? I

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know you can empathize with this situation where it takes almost a year or two to have a plan approved in order to make a memorandum of transfer, or a memorandum of exchange. One would have thought that a competent Minister, somebody who is interested in her work, would have been concerned about trying to work for her salary instead of insulting people and “mauvaise languing” the place. She would have said, “Look, I am the Minister; I am not going to look for 15 minutes where somebody would lose a 15 minutes; I want to look at the number of years.”

What happens is, sometimes the person who is supposed to give you the land or to exchange the land, dies and you have to go over the procedure. We are asking her to tell us today: how does she compare this 15 minutes which we are going to save at the cashier’s cage with the length of time we take to have a plan approved at the Lands and Surveys Department?

I do not know if the Member was in the House when you were here, Mr. Speaker, or if she was, she was not paying attention to what you were saying, because on November 15, 1999, just recently, you yourself, speaking on the Land Adjudication Bill as a Member of the Opposition, as a Member of the party to which that Minister belongs, lamented the fact that the situation at the Lands and Surveys Department needs to be looked at. You warned her, Mr. Speaker, the competent Member that you were, you brought to bear on these proceedings your academic training. That was the kind of representation that you were giving. I quote from 12.15 p.m., on Monday, November 15, 1999:

"Mr. B. Sinanan: The Lands and Surveys Department needs to be looked at. Then you have to look at different things. The office of the Director of Surveys..."

You were lamenting that position. Now, she, as a Minister who has been in Government for a year, even ignored the advice that you gave them.

Mr. Speaker: I wish Members would refer to hon. Members in the correct way instead of "she" and "he", please.

Mr. S. Panday: I apologize, Mr. Speaker. Where is the hon. Member? I want her to hear that because her behaviour—she should sure take a cue. The absent hon. Member should surely take a cue from the way the honourable Speaker has ruled.

Steps should be taken to have that time shortened, so that if we want to be competent, we must be competent from the beginning to the end of the transaction. That would indeed enhance economic activity where real estate is concerned.

The other area in the Registrar General's Department, as I said before, gaining 15 minutes yet you lose a lot of time. As you well know, there are two types of deeds: the common law deeds and the Real Property Ordinance certificates of title, and when you prepare your memorandum of transfer and pay at the cashier and you deposit your certificate of title with the Registrar General's office—and I am not casting any aspersions on individuals in the public service. As a matter of fact, like the hon. Member for Siparia, they have worked, but maybe the whole situation in the Registrar General's office needs to be reviewed, probably in terms of the training and adequacy of staff, because when one deposits that memorandum of transfer, one would have to wait sometimes—right now, the latest I heard is—almost one year to have one's memorandum endorsed and returned to him/her.

I would ask the hon. Member in her winding up of this debate to tell us what steps are being taken. Because if you save 15 minutes at the cashier but then you have to wait one year to have the memorandum endorsed, what is the point of the 15 minutes? This is really tinkering with the problem. The hon. Minister has not taken a holistic view of all the processes that occur at the Registrar General's Department.

When you employ a search clerk to do a search for you, usually after 20 to 25 years the books are in such a dilapidated condition; he goes back to the certificate of title and when the search comes to you, you see: "Book not available", "book in a dilapidated condition". So you have wasted more than the 15 minutes that you gained in the line to go through the books to do the 30-year search. Then when you get it, it does not give you what it should have given you.

So when one looks at the situation in a holistic manner, maybe the length of time for a title search should be reduced. If the length of time for a title search is reduced, then search clerks, having had to go back to a shorter period of time, would at least have the books with the pages in them dealing with the issue.

So I humbly submit that this should be dealt with in a holistic manner. *[Interruption]* No. I am not like the hon. Member for Arouca South who gave us a blank Bill and she did not understand what she did. I am not like her! The hon. Member came with a Bill and she did not understand the Bill; did not know it contained nothing. The Explanatory Note was totally different from what was in the body of the Bill.

Mr. Speaker, we need to make the system more efficient and have the data on computer where attorneys can do searches from their offices so they could advise clients immediately whether the title is good. So we should have all this information

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on line so attorneys could deal with it. Also, why can we not go to the banks like TSTT, if you want to pay? Why do we have to come and only save 15 minutes? People from San Fernando, Cedros, Point Fortin, Arima and Guayaguayare would have to spend so much time to come to Port of Spain, wasting three to four hours on the road to save 15 minutes. Why can we not modernize the system where you can go to the banks or TTPost or some area and pay there?

We come here to waste the Parliament's time to talk about saving 15 minutes when we could save hours down the line—manpower hours. We say further that payments could be made by card. Unless we look at this in a holistic way, I humbly submit that this is merely tinkering with the problem. They should not have just come with a UNC proposition which was laid in the Parliament and which they did not understand. They should have looked at the matter, taken a holistic approach to it so that at the end of the day the person who buys the land would save substantial time in the transaction.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

The Prime Minister and Minister of Finance (Hon. Patrick Manning):
[*Desk thumping*] Mr. Speaker, I just rise to make a brief intervention in this debate, particularly having regard to the contribution made by the very distinguished Member for Siparia, a minister emeritus in the government of Trinidad and Tobago.

The hon. Member, in making her contribution this evening, came to the conclusion that the Bill that is before us has come here because the Government of Trinidad and Tobago lacks vision. She came to that conclusion because in looking at the Order Paper she identified the Bill that is before us now, and several other pieces of legislation for debate in this honourable House, as items of legislation that were prepared by them when they were in government and, therefore, she concluded further that we had nothing to put on the Order Paper; we had no legislative agenda and that is because, of course, we have no vision. That was the thrust of her argument.

I would just like to remind hon. Members and I would like to remind the national community, through you, that if it is one thing for which the PNM is well known, it is having a clear vision of where it wishes to take Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] It is not a new development by any means.

In fact, in 1956 when the PNM burst on the domestic political scene, the instrument by which the population's attention was attracted and retained and the political support obtained, was a document called The People's Charter which, at the time, clearly outlined the vision that the then Prime Minister and leader of the

PNM and the party, Dr. Eric Williams, had for Trinidad and Tobago. I am merely responding to the comments of the hon. Member for Siparia, Mr. Speaker.

By 1970, the vision of The People's Charter was updated and it gave way to the Chaguaramas Declaration which came about as a consequence of Trinidad and Tobago and the PNM realizing the political agenda that we had set for ourselves which effectively took the country from a colonial status to internal self-government, to Independence, and we were well on the road to Republican status, which, as you know, came six years later in 1976.

The focus then, 14 years later, had changed and by that time the country was more concerned about its economic development and job-creation and a better way of life for the people, than we were concerned with the political agenda which had already largely been met. So by 1970 the PNM distinguished itself again, by putting to the national community the Chaguaramas Declaration which, among other things, concentrated on job-creation in the people's sector, identifying people at the centre of development, therefore setting the PNM and its vision apart and above all other political parties of the day, and causing us, as you know, to consistently retain the confidence and support of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. It is an approach for which the PNM is well known.

In 1987, when we lost a general election in the country for the first time and we were put into Opposition, we sat again, as a political party, and we identified a vision, and it was considered by a convention of the party and approved in November of that year, 1987. It was called: PNM's Perspective in the World of the '80s and Beyond.

Mr. Speaker, I am going through the historical perspective. Again, when we went into Opposition in the year 1995, we began to address our attention once again to a vision to see whether the PNM was as relevant to Trinidad and Tobago in the late '90s as, indeed, it was relevant in the '50s, '60s, '70s, '80's and early '90s.

Whenever the PNM finds itself in Opposition—because, you see, I am responding to the allegation of my good friend, the hon. Member for Siparia—one of the first things that it does, it reviews everything for which it ever stood. We have had to do it twice. Instead of hon. Members opposite condemning what we have to say and the PNM's approach to governance and to revitalizing itself, they would do well as they begin a very long period in Opposition, to get some idea of how the PNM did it.

So that in 1996 we began to look at it again. Suffice it to say that by the most democratic of processes whereby a team of experts did a document; the document

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was used as an interface with our Members of Parliament and honorary Members of Parliament; the document was used as a basis for discussion within the political party; we solicited comments of persons outside the political party, and at the end of the day, three and a half years later, on the occasion of the 44th Anniversary of the founding of the PNM, January 24, 2000, we unveiled a draft document for the consideration of a special convention of the People's National Movement.

The party looked at it again, commented again; we updated it again and finally on April 30 we adopted a new vision, 2020, that the PNM sees Trinidad and Tobago achieving by the year 2020, to make Trinidad and Tobago a developed country by the year 2020. In the face of that, and in the face of that very proud record of our political party, the hon. Member for Siparia gets up and accuses us of not having a vision and therefore that is why this legislation is before us today.

Whenever Members speak in this honourable House, one of the things that we expect them to subscribe to is truth. It is a quality on which Parliament is based. What I could not understand is why the hon. Member for Siparia in her exuberance, would lay an allegation like that against the PNM, an allegation that is very easy to disprove and one that obviously provides us with an opportunity to once again advise the national community and this Parliament of the vision of the People's National Movement for Trinidad and Tobago. Why would she want to do that?

We are proud of the fact that a general election was held in this country on October 07. A Prime Minister was appointed in this country on October 09, two days later. The Government was finally appointed—the last tranche of Ministers—on October 15, which is just about a week after, or less than a week after the Prime Minister was appointed. Two days later the Parliament met, on Thursday, October 17. On the day the Parliament met we laid a number of documents in the House—the first sitting of the first session of the eighth Parliament—that put us in a position to present a budget to this honourable House four days later. Four days later the Parliament was considering the budget for Trinidad and Tobago.

May I remind you that that was on October 21, which was two weeks after an election was held and less than two weeks after a Prime Minister was appointed. Consider that for expedition. [*Desk thumping*] What, in fact, has been happening, was that the country was dealing with a group of people who had done their homework and therefore were in a position to move expeditiously in the conduct of the country's business.

Therefore, when the Member for Siparia says that we have no vision and therefore we have no plan, the Member is entirely incorrect. I want to remind the

hon. Member for Siparia that when the Parliament met in its first sitting on October 17, I think it was, and we laid documents in Parliament, among the documents laid was a document called the Social and Economic Policy Framework. This, in fact, was a five-year development plan for Trinidad and Tobago. For a long time in this country we have not had any document like this available to any group of parliamentarians or, indeed, available to any group of people from the national community.

The Social and Economic Policy Framework was a five-year plan, and we are able to have a five-year plan because we had a clear vision of where we were going and what was expected of us, what we had to do for Trinidad and Tobago.

On the very first page of this document on which anything is written, this is what it says:

“Social and Economic Policy Framework

The Social and Economic Policy Framework marks the beginning of a process of setting the policy agenda to take Trinidad and Tobago to developed country status by the year 2020.”

I do not know if hon. Members opposite have heard it.

“The Social and Economic Policy Framework marks the beginning of a process of setting the policy agenda to take Trinidad and Tobago to developed country status by the year 2020.”

It goes on to say:

“In the upcoming months, this document will be reviewed in consultation with stakeholders.”

The document is set against the background of a clear vision for Trinidad and Tobago, that we are taking the country to developed country status by 2020 or before, and for the next five years in pursuance of this vision which the hon. Member says that the PNM does not have, and the Government does not have, but in pursuance of this vision, a vision arrived at on the basis of widespread consultation and approved by our political party, we are able to set a policy agenda for the first five years of our governance.

The Member for Siparia says the PNM has no vision. It goes further than that, because it is not an esoteric document; it is not a document written by people sitting in an ivory tower completely removed from the realities of life in Trinidad and Tobago at this time. No such thing! It is a very practical document that takes

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into consideration the environment in which we are being called upon to operate and to begin the drafting of the road map that we want to get to point "A" and we will get to point "A" by passing through this point, and that point, or whatever series of steps we have to make, but at the end of the day we must be able to achieve the objectives that we set for ourselves.

This document's vision, page one is "Introduction".

Page 3 is "Developed country status by 2020".

It talks about the vision. I am merely responding to the contribution of the hon. Member for Siparia, and what she would now understand is when you make your contributions in this House, you are well advised to keep the thing tight. If you open up the debate then we have a responsibility to respond. The Table of Contents shows:

"Developed Country Status By 2020
The Challenges of the Global Economy
Review of Domestic Conditions
The Policy Objectives for 2003—2005
The 2003—2005 Policy Agenda
Facilitating the Policy Agenda."

It is all here.

"Human Capital Development."

This is now "The Human Development Agenda". It goes on:

"Wellness and Healthy Lifestyles
Living Conditions
Poverty Alleviation
People Empowerment
Personal Safety and Security
Social Integration
Economic Growth and Diversification
Environmental Management."

And there is an "Implementation Matrix" that forms an essential part of the document.

3.30 p.m.

This document was prepared in the Ministry of Finance. The technocrats were able to prepare a document like this because they were given very clear policy guidelines, directives and a vision against which our policy agenda was to be drafted and implemented. We are accused by the hon. Member for Siparia of having no vision.

Today is November 22. I would like to remind Members of this honourable House that the budget was passed on October 31, 2002, less than one month after an election was held and they lost. A time frame that suggests that the Government had to know what it was about to be able to move as expeditiously as that. Incidentally, prior to the general election of October 2002, we had advised the national community that an approved budget would be in place by October 31, 2002. A budget was in place by that date. We promised and we delivered. Now, 22 days later, we are before Parliament with a piece of legislation. As the budget is passed and we have our policy framework document, we are now in a position to identify our legislative agenda. That is how government works. If the Member for Siparia does not understand that after all these years, then it becomes clearer to me, why they are there and we are here.

It is also very normal that as a government settles down and begins to draft legislation that is consistent with its own policy position, it brings onto the Order Paper of Parliament, legislation that it would have found on the shelf when it got into office. Legislation in inventory, as we call it. It is normal for a new government such as we are, less than two months in office, to bring before Parliament items of legislation which we would have found on the shelf and which would be consistent to some extent with our own policy position and legislative agenda. What is not usual, is that an item of legislation comes before Parliament which was moved by a group of people when they were in government and who today sit in Opposition and who passionately argued in favour of that and now they sit on the other side of the fence, we get a total about-face. It moves from this to that. It was their legislation. Today, all of a sudden they take all Parliament's time this evening to tell you why we should not approve the piece of legislation that they put on the Table. The Member for Siparia advised this House that they allowed the Bill to lapse deliberately. Is that not correct? She further went on to say that they did that because they did not want to agree to it.

Hon. Member: You are misquoting that.

Hon. P. Manning: The *Hansard* is available. When people elect people to Parliament, they expect a certain amount of honesty in the way they conduct their

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political affairs. I talk about intellectual honesty. They cannot lay a Bill in Parliament when they were on this side and come a couple months later, merely because they are on another side of the House, and find that everything is wrong with the Bill and it should not be before the House. When politicians behave in this way, they bring the profession of politics into disrepute. If the profession of politics today does not have the position in the minds of the public that we would like it to have, then politicians have nobody to blame but themselves.

I thought I should take the opportunity to set the record straight and to advise this country, that the Government's legislative agenda is now being drafted against the background of a document laid in Parliament, less than a month ago, and a budget that was approved by the Parliament about three weeks ago. We now have an approved policy framework that would form the basis of the agenda that the Parliament pursues.

I conclude by reminding my good Friend and all hon. Members opposite, that all this has come about because the PNM has a vision for this country.

Mr. Chandresh Sharma (Fyzabad): Mr. Speaker, it is clear that the Member for San Fernando East has confirmed to the national community, that the PNM and by extension the Government, lacks vision. Trying to hide behind that policy and economic framework brings to the forefront the Government's high level of discrimination. The hon. Prime Minister said they are there because of some reason. They are there because they had stolen the election.

In presenting the Bill, the Minister of Legal Affairs indicated that it is the intention of the Government to reduce hardship and obtain services at the Registrar General's Department. The Member for Siparia indicated that they came here unprepared. I confirm that. After so many years, there are persons who cannot obtain these services as they should be. For a Hindu or Muslim marriage, if the marriage party leaves Fyzabad to go to Port of Spain to register that marriage, there is great economic cost. Much time is wasted to register that marriage. It takes almost one month to obtain the marriage certificate. If the Minister is talking about reducing hardship, that must be a consideration. It is the same thing with death certificates. At the San Fernando General Hospital, the resident registrar works from Monday to Friday. If someone dies over the weekend, the family cannot obtain the death certificate. It is the same for members of the Islamic community who are required to have the funeral services almost immediately based on their religious practices. There is no reduction of hardship. When the registrar is absent the service must be obtained. That family would have to put up with this death for more days. They would have to pay more

for keeping that body. The Minister must demonstrate very clearly, how they intend to treat with these hardships.

In addition to that, one would have thought that the Minister would have indicated a reduction in the land and building taxes. There is a need for more citizens in Trinidad and Tobago to obtain houses. That would be a good area to demonstrate to the national community, the intention to increase home ownership. In many instances, the registrars in different areas still use the old method of entering information on the books instead of by computers. A person who has to register a marriage in Penal or Cedros, if that wedding took place in the north, that person would be able to go to the local office to conduct business. It would save time and reduce hardship. The Minister has not demonstrated any of that.

The Member for San Fernando East made reference to the social and economic framework. He went on to advance that they could not arrive at a legislative and policy framework until the budget was passed. That is highly unusual. One would think that the legislative and policy framework would be established and then indicate the money that would be spent for it. They are saying that they would make the money available and then decide where they would spend it. That is not how business is run. They must identify the goods and services they want to obtain and the living conditions they want to improve.

The Member for San Fernando East indicated that the profession of politics is now challenged. That is correct. On the last occasion they did not win the election and they went into government. It is highly unusual. It never obtained in any part of the world. We also observed the high level of discrimination. We saw during the last two or three months that millions of dollars were spent all over the place and citizens of Trinidad and Tobago were discriminated against in obtaining employment in government programmes. The social and economic framework is designed to treat with one sector of the community and discriminate against another sector. We have seen the provision of work in the Community Enhancement and Regeneration Programme. The national community does not know how to obtain employment there. It is evident, based on all the information that obtains today, that it is only for PNM people or those who appear to support the PNM. We also see this under the Unemployment Relief Programme. There are no public advertisements and interviews. They are all PNM appointed. It was brought to my attention yesterday at a certain URP office, that a former PNM candidate who contested the election on the last occasion had a meeting with what appears to be underworld characters. The revolver of the security guard on duty was stolen. This is a very frightening situation.

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The hon. Prime Minister talked about living conditions and the safety of people. We have seen in the last ten months of PNM rule, a high incidence of kidnapping, murder and discrimination. Is this PNM policy? There is absolutely no vision. It is to remain in power at any cost.

With regard to the conduct of people's business, what people is he talking about? Is he only talking about PNM people? We have looked at the provisions in the document and there is a high level of discrimination. The Member for Diego Martin Central is asking which area? Look at the soup kitchens. They are largely in PNM areas. When you look at URP employment, there are maximum gangs only in PNM areas. During the last nine months, of the 30,000 or 40,000 people who were employed, more than 85 per cent were employed through PNM parliamentarians. When the hon. Prime Minister talks about people who elect members for Parliament, hope to obtain honesty in representation and in the distribution of resources, there is absolutely no evidence of that.

When the Minister of Legal Affairs indicated that the intention of the Bill is to reduce hardship and the Prime Minister joins the debate, it is very clear from both presentations, that there is absolutely no sincere effort to reduce hardship. The Prime Minister made reference to improving the living conditions of Trinidad and Tobago. Who are these nationals of Trinidad and Tobago? We have seen in the conduct of WASA where domestic connections were done at the homes of only PNM people. We saw it was done in Ortoire/Mayaro and Tunapuna in trying to win the election, but it was not done in Fyzabad, Siparia and Oropouche. They use State resources to treat themselves. The Prime Minister has not impressed upon this House and by extension, the national community, that the social economic framework has anything that allows citizens equal access.

At the public hospitals simple things are not available. Through a government to government arrangement which was entered into by the United National Congress administration, we were purchasing tablets for persons suffering from diabetes at five cents. In many instances that medication is not available. It is a concerted effort of the PNM Government not to improve living conditions at public hospitals. Surgery is not available. On a previous occasion, the Minister of Health indicated that a patient had to wait until 2006 to get an operation. I am seeing a headline on a newspaper about a diabetic drug shortage at Chaguanas. In recent times many persons have gone blind because medication is not available at the public institutions. Simple procedures are not available and we are seeing the amputation of limbs. This is highly unusual.

The Bill that has come to the House clearly indicates to us and the national community that the Government is not ready to govern Trinidad and Tobago. If there is any small degree of governance, it is only for those who appear to support the PNM. There is a high level of discrimination, one that is becoming a concern not only for us in Trinidad and Tobago, but also for nationals who live abroad. We have seen that many nationals are packing their bags and going. Why is this happening? Is it because of the policy of the PNM? Is this the condition that the Prime Minister referred to about improving living conditions, personal safety and empowering people? Who is the PNM empowering? Only PNM people? Why are the training programmes not available across Trinidad and Tobago?

This foolishness that the Prime Minister talks about rural communities versus urban communities, it means that persons in Port of Spain must be fed, versus those in south, no food for them. Go on the land and eat grass. No drinking water for those in south. Those in Port of Spain must get because the town areas have to be treated differently. The national purse cannot be used for that.

When the hon. Prime Minister talks about equal access, it does not obtain. At the previous sitting we saw the proposed drainage programme. It was very instructive to note that the document that was circulated to the House indicated that the rivers to be treated in north, the PNM areas were printed in common letters and those in the south, in the UNC areas, in rural communities, were printed in bold capital letters. There is discrimination even in the distribution of literature in the House.

At this point in time, we have seen inequality in the transportation of students. Rural communities are not accessing public transport which obtained under the UNC administration. You are seeing it elsewhere. It seems as though the PNM Government is only for a sector of the society. It does not treat with the national community. This reference the Prime Minister made about the social and economic framework seems to be endangering the lives of citizens.

In the prisons, inmates cannot obtain simple basic requirements. The preamble of the Constitution, page 11, paragraph (b) states:

“Whereas the People of Trinidad and Tobago—

- (b) respect the principles of social justice and therefore believe that the operation of the economic system should result in the material resources of the community being so distributed as to subserve the common good, that there should be adequate means of livelihood for all, that labour should not be exploited or forced by economic

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necessity to operate in inhumane conditions but that there should be opportunity for advancement on the basis of recognition of merit, ability and integrity;"

Based on what was presented by both the hon. Prime Minister and the Minister of Legal Affairs, it seems to be a concerted effort to bring hardship on citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. We see discrimination in the distribution of state resources at WASA, Petrotrin, T&TEC, MTS and elsewhere. From the Bills that have come to the House this far, it seems very clear that there is no sincere effort on the part of the Government to improve the quality of life and make sure the resources of the State seem to be distributed fairly.

The other point as it relates to the Bill is the question of how people obtain relief to reduce that level of hardship. By that I mean persons who meet untimely deaths because of accidents. There appears to be no provision to lend assistance. Today we saw a house fire in which three persons lost their lives. I do not know if there are any survivors. How are we going to treat with those persons? Would money be made available to that family to assist with funeral costs? Would counselling be made available to the family? From what obtains the answer is no. The social and economic framework does not apply.

We have to be careful with how we treat with legislation that comes from the PNM for debate in this Parliament. What is the intention? Is it to satisfy the national community that the Government called Parliament and sat on a Friday and brought two or three Bills that added no value to the national community, or that the Government lacks vision? Vision here, means the way forward and to direct the national community that there is no hope. Every contribution made by the Government clearly demonstrates that there is absolutely no hope for Trinidad and Tobago.

The Prime Minister made reference to the budget. We know that the budget requires a simple majority to be passed. Whether Members on this side support it or not makes no difference in terms of it being passed in the House. We would go back to what the PNM did in the last three months. They used \$200 or \$300 million to win the election. They did not care what they were paying for or whom they employed. Are we going to see a continuation of that? It seems that we are going in that direction. We are seeing persons being removed from office and demotions. It seems to be a personal attack by just removing people regardless of performance and qualification. That is no longer a consideration. When a budget is passed in this House, it is not only for the PNM people. It is not a free-for-all for the PNM to decide that they would spend \$100 million here or \$25 million there. That is not good enough.

Recently, we saw the Government's failure that led to the flooding of many houses of citizens. We saw absolutely no assistance. One cannot go on national TV and say you will give \$20 million and then there is no follow-up. Water-borne diseases because of the flooding are very high. When they go to public institutions the ambulance service is not available. The fire department is short-staffed both by appliance and manpower. The budget that was passed 22 days ago is not treating with the lives of the national community.

Today, the schools are complaining that there is less money for minor equipment purchases and maintenance. Our school children are at risk because of PNM's vision 2020. Children cannot obtain public transport. Under the UNC administration, we gave large sums of money. It was a total of \$50 million, but that has been reduced significantly. How is the budget increasing the quality of life?

I have raised the matter that when persons go to the registrar general's office to obtain assistance there are no facilities for those who are physically challenged. I hope that the Minister would indicate that some courtesy would be extended to those persons. Sometimes they go to the cashier and there is no change. They have to leave the office and go outside to change a bill.

I want to revisit personal safety. Let us see what obtains at this time. From the police records that are available, there is now the highest incidence of crimes against the person. What has happened to personal safety that the Prime Minister said the budget would treat? We are still being told by victims of crime, that they cannot access the service of the police. Because some people have cell phones they can report crimes faster.

Mr. Speaker: I thought that the debate was opened up, but I think you need to answer the Prime Minister. You are straying too far.

Mr. C. Sharma: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Prime Minister introduced the document of the social and economic framework. He zeroed into a few areas, one of them being the personal safety of citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. I am making the point that citizens who are victims of crime cannot obtain assistance. The very safety is now being threatened because every day for the last eight or nine months, persons are being shot, stabbed and beaten in their homes. Personal safety is no longer obtainable. The Government is failing to deliver that level of safety to the national community.

We are seeing more and more people whose living conditions are affected. Since the PNM returned to office many areas are complaining that they are no longer obtaining pipe-borne water. Areas that obtained pipe-borne water under the

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UNC administration suddenly are now being denied pipe-borne water. It must be a concerted effort of the PNM Government not to treat those areas. It must be discrimination. The equality that the Prime Minister spoke about does not obtain.

When matters of discrimination are raised in this House, there is a tendency on the other side to ask where? It is almost in every area such as employment, government agencies and RHAs. Ministers on the other side send letters of recommendation and those are the persons who are employed. We are not seeing any relevance in the area of equality and adding value to people's life. In PNM areas WASA would connect pipe-borne water to citizens of Trinidad and Tobago who do not even make applications.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, are you sure that you are responding to the hon. Prime Minister? I am lost in it.

Mr. C. Sharma: I would be guided, Mr. Speaker.

I was making the point that the Prime Minister, in response to the Member for Siparia, read from the social and economic framework which is now a public document. WASA is funded by taxpayers to a large extent. They are going into areas and connecting pipes to dwelling houses. That is very good. In the PNM areas, they do not need to make an application. In the area that I represent, that same thing does not obtain. You have to go through a long process. When the Prime Minister talks about vision, is it a vision only for PNM people? The answer seems very clear.

If you look at the employment practices of the Government and State agencies, there is a high level of discrimination. I made reference to persons who obtained one-year contracts. Those positions were never advertised. Citizens who may have been interested had no opportunity to go through a process. They were done strictly through PNM connections. They are being paid large sums of money. Nothing is wrong with paying because if they work they have to be paid. There is no clear indication what the work is intended to achieve at the end of the day. Some think that the work of that group may have contributed in some small measure to some of the flooding because they are removing the topsoil in some areas.

When matters come to this House, we on this side must draw to the Government's attention any area of shortcoming, as I have attempted to do. There must be no fear in raising these matters. I remember on one occasion in this House the hon. Prime Minister indicated that he would not be so charitable when matters of discrimination were raised. That is not important. The vision must be for all.

The Prime Minister spoke about a higher standard of living. We have to look at the school system. In many schools they are unable to obtain goods and services. The Government has a responsibility to make sure children of the national community attend school. We must start with public transport. There must be no discrimination. We would not be able to provide transport for all children at any given time, but whatever transport obtains must go for those most in need and not only for those in the PNM areas.

The training programmes must be extended to nationals regardless of where they live. Persons in the rural communities must obtain God sent water, collect it in barrels or drums and those in the urban areas must get pipe-borne water. This is not how a government should treat the national community. We on this side would not allow it. We would raise it as it comes to our attention. Oftentimes when any attempt is made by this side to present the facts, the PNM tries to use muscle power. This is one Member of Parliament who intends not to be scared by that approach.

The Prime Minister made reference to making sure that persons are treated with fairness and equality. We know that housing is a major concern in many countries. The intention of the Government is not to treat with the national community. We have seen that persons are discriminated against in obtaining forms to apply for houses. It is always through a PNM party group. Nothing is wrong with making a recommendation, but it seems as if those persons who are employed are only those who get those recommendations. When constituents go to any parliamentary representative's office they should be treated fairly. The PNM has the tendency to create fears even in those who are paid to discharge their duties. When you call from the office of an Opposition Member of Parliament, public servants are scared to talk to you. In many areas under the UNC administration, we made provision for persons to obtain computer training.

Mr. Valley: Mr. Speaker, I wonder whether the hon. Member could give way. I want to ask him, how come there was none in Diego Martin Central, Diego Martin West or Diego Martin East for the UNC period?

Mr. C. Sharma: That is a very intelligent question. The Member for Diego Martin Central is a useless Member of Parliament. Ask the Member for San Fernando East. Among the PNM Members they do not network; they do not share information.

Recently, as part of the PNM political propaganda, during the observation of Independence, you saw the widest degree of discrimination. State agencies were

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instructed to send any amount of money because that would lead to PNM's victory. A section of the national community celebrated Ramleela and those groups only obtained \$5,000.

Mr. Speaker: Again, hon. Member, I have given you latitude, but you are not responding to what the Prime Minister said. You are going all over.

Hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Member has expired.

Motion made, That the hon. Member's speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [*Mr. S. Panday*]

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. C. Sharma: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Prime Minister indicated that there is a vision because the Member for Siparia indicated that the Government lacks vision. I was making the point that during the Independence celebration, millions of dollars were spent by the Government. In the last UNC budget there was provision for that money. The PNM did not treat with those groups that celebrated Ramleela. The Ramleela groups could not obtain assistance from the regional corporations. Simple things as tents and washroom facilities were not made available to groups.

In recent times when citizens are attacked in their homes which seems common these days, there is very little assistance. There is no evidence of reducing hardship. When these victims receive gunshot wounds they must go somewhere to get further treatment. You have seen in today's newspapers that there is a shortage of all kinds of service available and in the print and electronic media, an 18-month old baby fell from the fourth floor. I understand that baby died today. We on this side extend sympathy to that family. The grandmother of that baby said that they could not obtain a simple cat scan X-ray. The information I have is that in the last nine months more that 500 persons are becoming blind. This is because they cannot obtain medication at the hospital. Simple surgery is not available.

One newspaper talks about a diabetic drug shortage at Chaguanas. Do not shoot the messenger. The message is important. The head of the institution, Dr. Ragbir, is calling on the Ministry of Health, Central Stores Department to increase the amount of medicine it allocates to the facility. This is discrimination. This is not human error. If this cannot be obtained it is discrimination. If a diabetic is denied medication chances are he can go blind, not be able to work, have amputation or die early. A simple provision of a 25 cents tablet can avoid all

these. When this person ends up in hospital, the cost of recovery is higher. We have to be certain that provisions of the budget are reaching the people.

At both major hospitals in San Fernando and Port of Spain a number of persons die, but some cases may have been avoided if those persons were able to obtain surgery and medication. If you say there were 100 deaths, maybe 25 of those could have been avoided by making sure the provision of medicine was obtained. If the Government indicates that the social and economic framework would address those things and it is not addressing it, we have a responsibility to bring it to the attention of this House.

I want to go to what the national community should expect in terms of legislation. What is the intent of legislation? It must be to add value to people's lives. How would this measure add value? There was a failure today by the Minister of Legal Affairs. The Government announced a policy that there would be free birth certificates.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the sitting is suspended for tea.

4.30 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.00 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Mr. C. Sharma: Mr. Speaker, before we took the tea break we were discussing the question of vision based on the presentation made by the Minister of Legal Affairs and the contribution of the hon. Prime Minister. Having demonstrated that the policy of the Government appears, or there is some evidence that it lacks, vision in many areas, I would like to advance some of the thinking on this side, as it relates to vision, and what the national community and the constituents that we represent, would hope would obtain from the document the hon. Prime Minister referred to, that is the Social & Economic Policy Framework.

The policy document the Prime Minister referred to should demonstrate to the national community the question of sustainable growth and we should be able to measure it. It must demonstrate to the wider community how the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago are going to be part of this growth, how they are going to benefit from it and what kind of vision would arise from it.

In addition to that, we would like to see, based on what the hon. Prime Minister said, that some more effort—and by this I mean measurable effort, in terms of resources, fairness and equality—would lend support to obtaining an intelligent nation. Mr. Speaker, by that I mean citizens, regardless of where they may be located, or any other consideration, should be able to access any opportunity to add value to their lives so that they could obtain a higher quality of life.

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The development the Prime Minister spoke about should also find itself across the twin-island Republic and while it may be the Government's policy to treat with certain areas, for whatever reasons, it must not be at the cost of ill-treating other areas.

The hon. Prime Minister and others on that side have oftentimes raised the question that urban communities have to be treated differently from those in the rural communities. What that boils down to is that the resources of the State are used to foster one side more than the other side, and that cannot be correct. There should be a better effort to make sure that citizens, regardless of where they live, by reason of choice or by design, could feel comfortable that they belong to this country and that the resources reach many of them more oftentimes.

The Prime Minister also made reference to the quality of life. That is something that has almost become the brand of governments; to improve the quality of lives. Again, there must be some clear demonstration of what that means. How do the offerings in the budget treat with those areas?

Of course, very important—and the hon. Prime Minister made reference to it and the hon. Minister of Legal Affairs spoke about it in her presentation—is the question of equity in the society. The provisions in the budget, again, the policies, the legislative framework and all the doings of the Government must demonstrate to the national community where all our citizens feel a degree of justice is obtainable: a degree of equality; the right to apply for jobs; the right to apply for any resources that the State may make available in terms of housing and public utilities; have their areas cleaned after floods; have medicine in the public institutions. Those provisions must be demonstrated very clearly to the national community. This, I suspect, would lend support to the quest of the Prime Minister and the Government and by extension, for Trinidad and Tobago to obtain peace, security and harmony. Mr. Speaker, based on what we have seen in recent months, there seems to be the clear direction that all citizens cannot access this peace, security and harmony. More citizens must, however, be made to feel that they could, in fact, access it and this could only come from the Government demonstrating this very clearly.

We saw, for instance, the removal of the URP from a large part of Trinidad and Tobago, in the area of Chaguanas. Those on the other side argued that it was a request of the mayor or someone in the Chaguanas area. Again, it was convenient for those on that side to communicate that message. What was requested was that the office be moved from one building to another to allow for better management of the programme. The Government, however, took it to mean that the request to

remove the URP was made by the mayor and others. Mr. Speaker, we see that even in Fyzabad the URP has been reduced by a large amount.

Again, as I indicated, the programme has begun but very few persons are working—and we are very happy for those who have obtained employment—but again no due process; persons are appointed through PNM connections. So how does the national community feel? How do citizens; young men and women, feel when they are treated almost like appliances? There are no interviews, no responses from public advertisements, and no engagement of qualifications, strictly PNM connections. That is very dangerous, Mr. Speaker, because what it leads to is the community at some point saying, enough is enough. We must do everything in our power to make sure that we lend support to all the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago; that we live in a fair and just society; that the Government of the day, whether it is the PNM or any other government, must appear to treat with all of the people.

The Prime Minister also indicated in the Social & Economic Policy Framework—and since he made reference to it in the budget that was passed 22 days ago—that a fairshop bill shall obtain in Trinidad and Tobago where small business persons shall be able to obtain not less than 10 per cent off all goods and services that the State purchases. To date there is no indication or demonstration of that. That was a very noble objective; it was an objective of the UNC as well. So I want to encourage those on the other side to ensure that particular area that the Prime Minister referred to could be treated with.

Mr. Speaker, having said those few words, I thank you very much.

Mr. Manohar Ramsaran (*Chaguanas*): Mr. Speaker, the Bill says something about:

“shall not accept cash for any transaction after three o’clock in the afternoon except where a member of the public who desirous of transacting such business was in the office at the said three o'clock;”

When I walked in the Parliament this afternoon and listened to the hon. Prime Minister talking about vision 2020, I wondered, whether this debate was about opening or closing an office, whether it was about opening up a debate or whether it was about “di-vision” or “the vision”.

I want to tell the Prime Minister about an experience I had this afternoon before I came to this honourable House, and this is to talk about the vision of the hon. Prime Minister and the Government in office. As we all know there was flooding in my constituency. This afternoon on my way to Parliament I noticed a

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gathering not too far from my house on Munroe Road. I also saw cameras from the Information Division so I decided to stop and see what was taking place. Mr. Speaker, as you all know UNC got 16,000 votes in Chaguanas and in this particular district the Member of Parliament received 1,000 votes. [*Desk thumping*] As I walked into the building someone told me that there was a function to deliver SHARE hampers to some of the flood victims and I was not welcome.

I walked in and said “You cannot stop me from coming here because that is the temple I attend”. I took the seat that was then offered to me and I was asked to speak first. Mr. Speaker, I want to put it on record in this honourable House that in my short history as Minister of Social Development and in charge of the SHARE programme, this Member of Parliament for Chaguanas never handed out a hamper in public to score cheap political points. Our vision was to deal with poverty on the basis so as to alleviate the poor living conditions of our people. And I will repeat that I never, at any time, used my office to gain cheap political points.

I remember the hon. Member for Toco/Manzanilla in one newspaper giving out SHARE hampers—and I was glad for the people—I was the Minister in charge at the time, and the hon. Member for Toco/Manzanilla could attest to the fact that when those hampers were given I was not present. It was in a political season. Worse than that, the hon. Prime Minister would know that when we opened the community centre in his constituency, he attended and was given time to speak and was welcomed by the Members of Government. In the recent campaign when I was minister my friend from Toco/Manzanilla attended a function in his constituency and he was given the red carpet treatment, so to speak.

Mr. Speaker, what happened to me today is another breakdown in the parliamentary democracy in Trinidad and Tobago where an elected parliamentarian is debarred from his constituency. [*Desk thumping*] I am asking the hon. Prime Minister to speak to his colleagues and to let them know what is happening in his Government.

There is an article in today’s *Probe*, which I would like to read.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: That is the only paper you are allowed to read.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: No, we could read any newspaper. [*Interruption*] The article is about Mr. Manning and his Ministers. On page 4 it says:

“Will the real Prime Minister please stand? This is what confused citizens are asking, after getting conflicting stories from Prime Minister Patrick Manning and his Ministers on national issues. Manning who recently formed his second Cabinet in less than one year has been leaving his Ministers not

just red in the face but looking incompetent to a suspicious Trinidad and Tobago population.”

Of course he spoke about complaints that were heard coming from public servants about payment of the promised back pay.

Mr. Speaker, this is another issue, how could the hon. Prime Minister come to this honourable House and talk about issues and vision, without even being informed by public servants, announces that public servants would want to get their back pay next year? I want somebody on the other side to tell me what is happening about that. The question in this article is: What is the truth about public servants back pay?

What is even worse than that—and I heard this myself—there was a meeting to discuss URP and the Minister of Local Government was not invited.

Hon. Member: Serious?

Mr. M. Ramsaran: Mr. Speaker, what is happening in our country? Is this the vision of the PNM? If this is so, let us hear it because they talk about vision. I want to read into the record what a real vision is from the UNC manifesto which says:

“Getting the politics right is needed for achieving good government. This must be one of the mantras of the UNC Election Campaign. The politics of the UNC must be based upon a philosophical underpinning that we need to nurture a strong society. A society in which individuals, families and communities act in a responsible manner. Yes, the state needs to be able to offer to the less fortunate straightforward, reliable help when times are bad. But our able bodied citizens should not become dependent on the state when times are good.

The PNM is recreating a welfare state; they are shirking the responsibility of creating a modern society. If we are to develop a stronger society we must encourage our citizens to take responsibility for themselves and define a smaller more efficient government.

Professor Peter Taylor-Goody of the University of Kent, ‘The well established welfare states of Germany and Sweden clearly understand that the welfare state might not be able to avoid radical change much longer.’”

Dr. Rowley: Who wrote that?

Mr. M. Ramsaran: Peter Taylor-Goody of the University of Kent. This is our manifesto. [*Interruption*] Well, of course, it could not be a better writer. I continue to quote:

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“Bernd Marin, Vienna’s European Centre for Social Welfare Policy, ‘Complete collapse of the system will occur between 2012 and 2015 - if nothing is done’ - Newsweek September 16 - September 23, 2002.

The next UNC government will build a stronger society. We will provide support for individuals and families when they need it.

We will encourage people to take responsibility for themselves and their families.

We need to create a strong society built on respect for all people - whatever their race, colour, class, religion, gender and age. For when a state cannot keep order throughout its territory, for all practical purposes, it becomes a failed state.”

Mr. Speaker, the truth about this is that it is about our vision 2020 for Trinidad and Tobago. Our vision was outlined this afternoon by the Prime Minister in a simple Bill to deal with the opening and closing of an office. I feel we have to really ask the question again: what is the real vision to deal with poverty in this country? Poverty, in my mind, cannot be solved by willy-nilly handouts. Poverty would be solved only when there is sustainable development and that was the vision of the United National Congress. We knew about development.

Mr. Speaker, I want to go back now to the URP in Chaguanas. I want to remind the hon. Member for San Fernando East that he promised in the last debate that the URP office in Chaguanas would be opened—it is there in the *Hansard*. Today, five days after the Unemployment Relief Programme has started, there is no sign of an office for the URP in Chaguanas. This is an underpinning piece of vision for which the people of Chaguanas are clamoring. When we talk about vision we have to base it on something. I will keep quoting from this document until somebody gets fed up of me.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: You could stop now; we are fed up, fed up. [*Laughter*]

Mr. M. Ramsaran: This is the Fourth Report of the Elections and Boundaries Commission, under the Municipal Corporations Act, 1990 and the Elections and Boundaries Commission (Local Government) Act, Chap. 25:50 for the Purpose of Local Government Election. I want to read the accurate figures into the record, not estimate them as I did on the last occasion. Again, when we talk about vision something must drive that vision. The hon. Prime Minister told us last week in this Parliament that what would drive the URP is some sociological underpinnings—trying to tell us something that I do not understand.

Mr. Speaker, they claim poverty to be 40 per cent in this country and when we look at what is happening: Is the 40 per cent being attended to? Is a vision

encouraging the growth of our people? In every society we have poverty. I know the constituency of my friend from Nariva has the highest rate of poverty in Trinidad and Tobago—35.9 per cent. Does the URP or any of their other programmes address that constituency? The answer is no.

I am going to read this into the record because I want the country to know that the discrimination, as was practised by the Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister against the MP for Chaguanas, would not be tolerated by Members from this side of the House. We are going to stand up against discrimination, if it would cost us—as the Member said—our lives because our people depend on us. [*Desk thumping*]

I want to ask the hon. Minister about their vision for flooding.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, you all are using this word “vision” to its widest extreme. I think when the Prime Minister spoke about vision; it was in relation to bills, because the Member for Siparia spoke about bills. [*Interruption*] Please, if you are talking about vision relate it to what the Prime Minister said. Members are going way outside.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: I am sorry, Mr. Speaker, I take your guidance. Mr. Speaker, when we look at that vision for—I hope I get it correct this time—Trinidad and Tobago and you read from the Macro Planners Social and Economic Policy Framework of Trinidad and Tobago which was written by some bureaucrat—I am sure nobody on that side wrote that—it would encompass—in my humble opinion—and it would deal with the socially challenged in our country. When you talk about socio economic impact, I, as the former Minister of Social Development must take that to mean the suffering of our people and we must highlight that.

Mr. Speaker, to alleviate poverty you have to get the resources, the caring, and the guidance to deal with that. When you talk about people being flooded out in Chaguanas—let me quickly read into the records, and this will, of course, determine the vision of the Member as he deals with flooding in my constituency. I want to ask the hon. Prime Minister, when he awakes, [*Laughter*] how is the \$20 million going to be spent. You talk about a problem in the country—I know with due respect to your good self, you were at the receiving end of a lot of bashing and I want to apologize on behalf of my constituents for that. But the Government has to tell the country how it is going to spend the \$20 million. We have people out there who are suffering. Let me read these areas into the record quickly: Endeavour Village Chaguanas, 30 households were affected, \$127,262; Bejucal, 46 households affected, \$282,215.63; Caroni Village, 160 households, \$522,456;

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Frederick Settlement, which is the hardest hit, four feet of water for two days. Mr. Speaker you have to see that to believe it, you have to see it to understand it; you have to experience that to understand what flooding is, four feet of water, the highest before was about 18 inches in 1993, so you understand. Frederick Settlement, 244 households affected \$1,883,943.

Dr. Rowley: What, you cannot even read the figure.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: Well, you could go right down the road you know. Well let me read it so you could understand, Uncle Tom. [*Laughter*] \$1,883,943. Is that better? [*Interruption*] I was talking about million. [*Interruption*] Uncle Tom you have this—

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, you cannot refer to the hon. Member as Uncle Tom.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: He could understand what is Uncle Tom. Mr. Speaker, I am guided again; you know that I am a very obedient boy, I will listen to you. In the Guayamare area five houses affected, \$35,445. A total of two—so that the Member for Diego Martin West will understand—\$2,851,315.

Mr. Speaker, I hear Members on that side expressing what happened and I want to explain it to this honourable House. When they sit to plan their vision, and how they are going to open offices in Central Trinidad to deal with our problem, they have to understand that when you have four feet of water, that is about this height. Mr. Speaker, every piece of furniture was damaged. Members are saying to put it higher but the ceiling of a house is eight feet; you cannot put a refrigerator on a table. Mr. Speaker, it was impossible to retrieve anything. Carpets in two days of water were destroyed, television sets, computers—because we have computer literate people there. Everything was destroyed.

Mr. Speaker, I will continue and read into the record the figures that should inform the hon. Prime Minister when he deals with policy and vision. Vision 2020 must not be something like a pie in the sky, it must be based on the facts of the day and the facts of the day would tell you that there is a population shift in Trinidad and Tobago, whether we like it or not. The city of Port of Spain, electorate, 27/12/2001 31,928; city of San Fernando 42,458; Arima, 21,625; borough of Point Fortin, 13,601; borough of Chaguanas, 46,532.

Dr. Rowley: What about Tobago? Read Tobago!

Mr. M. Ramsaran: Tobago is not listed here. [*Interruption*] I will read it in due course.

Mr. Speaker: Order! Order!

Mr. M. Ramsaran: This is to inform; we have five boroughs in Trinidad and Tobago. I am not talking about discriminating on our part; I am talking about discrimination on their part. How could you tell me that the borough of Point Fortin with 13,000 electors would have a URP budget with its full complement and Chaguanas with 42,000 electors would have no URP available?

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, we do have a Bill before us and I find that hon. Members are just going in circles and referring to “vision”. Please, let us address the Bill. If you want to be specific about what the Prime Minister has said, then be specific. [*Interruption*]

Mr. M. Ramsaran: Mr. Speaker, as I said before, when we are debating a bill in this Parliament—and I am not challenging your ruling at all—and we have our Prime Minister getting up to talk about a vision that he discovered three weeks ago when he presented the budget and he comes back this afternoon and talks about a vision, I am saying that for a vision to be in order, we, as elected Members of this honourable Chamber, must get the opportunity to find out from the Government what they are doing; how the statistics and the needs of our people would affect their vision. I do not want to sit here for five years and have a 2020 vision by the hon. Prime Minister and we do not—whenever I get that opportunity or whenever the word “vision” is raised in this House by anybody, I want to have my say into where we go.

Let me come back to this Bill—I read a part before where it says we are going to look at the hours, that reminds me of other things but I do not want to disrespect you, Mr. Speaker, but when we talk about vision, we talk about flood in Chaguanas; what is the truth about public servants back pay. These things would always give us cause for concern because as former ministers and Members of Parliament we know how the Cabinet operates. Last week when I talked about some gift I received from the Social Welfare Division somebody asked me if I declared it. Mr. Speaker, I would not ask them if they declared any gift because that is their business but I want to ask you, Mr. Speaker, what is their vision? This is a very serious issue because here we are talking about that Registrar General’s Department, and the keepers of our property and our record, and I want to ask the hon. Prime Minister and Members opposite, what is their vision to deal with “Bakr under Al Quaeda watch” and this is not the *Probe*, this is the *Mirror*.

Mr. Speaker, this is a dangerous issue and it is not being addressed by the House. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: I would ask the Member to deal with the issue of the Bill that is before us.

Hon. Member: He is just being irrelevant.

Mr. M Ramsaran: I was not being irrelevant at all. Mr. Speaker, I do not want to be distracted. We, as hon. Members of this House, could have replied to the hon. Prime Minister; we could have gone to the *Hansard* taken out what he said and dissected it piece by piece, but that is a waste of time, Mr. Speaker. What we remember on this side is the word “vision”. I am not challenging your ruling, Mr. Speaker. But the fact is that there is a simple Bill before this House to deal with the opening and closing hours of the Registrar General’s office but the hon. Prime Minister opened up the debate about vision. Had he kept it tight he would not have been in the trouble he is in at this moment.

Maybe I, and other Members of this House misunderstood, but the Prime Minister talked about the vision of this country and he accused the Member for Siparia—he told her that she cannot say the Government does not have a vision. He said the Government does have a vision and it is taking this country forward in 2020. That is why I could read this entire document into the debate because this is a vision that would have taken this country forward in 2010. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Valley: The people rejected you.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: Do not talk about rejection because we know why we are on this side and you are on that side. The facts would come out. *[Interruption]* Mr. Speaker, “Pledges to the People”, this is the vision, and I want the Member for Diego Martin West to listen to me because he was not here when the Member for San Fernando East spoke about a vision to take Trinidad and Tobago forward. *[Interruption]* Are you speaking to the Member for San Fernando East?

We were talking about how we would take this country forward. The population of Trinidad and Tobago—I want to repeat in this House—will not be conned. I want Members on the other side of the House to understand that they must not only try to blow their trumpets about what they want to do and where they are taking this country and expect us on this side of the House to sit and be quiet. We must have them articulate to us and to the nation how they are going to take the country forward. How do we go to 2020? How could the hon. Prime Minister tell us how to reach 2020 when we have youth programmes and they discriminate against people from different areas? You cannot move this country forward with whatever vision you have without first treating people with equity.

Mr. Speaker, I have read about many youth programmes in this country—and to carry this country forward we need youth programmes—but none is under the Ministry of Youth Affairs. We have YAPA and other “PAS”, in the Cabinet wherever but nothing has been entrusted to the care of the Minister of Youth Affairs, and I have a problem with that. I was the former Minister of Youth Affairs and I would have felt left out or discriminated against had my Ministry not been given the provisions to do the work of the Ministry. Maybe the Minister could get up and agree or disagree with me.

Mr. Speaker, this is what I call a government that is trying to hoodwink this country. I have a problem any time the Members of Parliament talk about vision for Trinidad and Tobago. *[Interruption]* How could we accept that as being meaningful? I remember sitting in this honourable House—you were sitting opposite—when one of the former colleagues was accused of lying to this nation. Today I want to make the same accusation—that happened in the Parliament last week. The hon. Prime Minister told us that URP would be returned to Chaguanas. *[Interruption]* If you feel I am fighting for the URP workers it is because they deserve that assistance. Today, seven days later—five days from the start of the URP—nothing has happened in the constituency of Chaguanas.

We could talk all afternoon about the vision but I would like to advise the hon. Members opposite. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker: Order!

Mr. M. Ramsaran: I would like to advise Members that when they come to this House and bring a bill— Mr. Speaker, I am coming back to the Bill, as you can see I have it in my hand now—they should tell us why this was done; why was this particular Bill introduced in this House; what it intends to achieve. Mr. Speaker, I walked in here pretty late and I apologized for that. The fact is that when I came into this honourable House prepared to speak on a couple issues, the opening and closing of the office, maybe two or three minutes, for the most, I heard—*[Interruption]* and the *Hansard* would be able to provide it for us. We are not supposed to come and use this Parliament if we do not want people to respond. My advice to Members opposite is that when they come to this House with a bill; stick to the Bill; keep it tight and we will make sure that we respond accordingly on this side. *[Laughter]* The Government Members cannot come and open up the debate and not expect people to speak the truth.

Again we have a headline—I want to stick with this URP issue—

Dr. Rowley: The *Probe* again.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: No, this is an article in your newspaper now. *[Interruption]* “PMO support URP unrest” I have people in my constituency, and you have to understand the cry coming from the Member for Chaguanas, and again I am asking the hon. Members opposite, let us build Trinidad and Tobago together; let us not discriminate against one another, because if we continue to do that our country will be divided.

I could talk about what happened to Seeratan, a deranged youngster in our country, acting the way he did. He was shot and we could raise that in this Parliament. Mr. Speaker, this probably happened because of what is happening in this country; the disquiet that is taking place, when we have racist slurs, divisive slurs, condemning each other. When we do this, the Prime Minister could talk about all the vision he wants; he could open the Registrar General’s office for how long he wants, but if we do not come together, put our resources together, treat everybody with equity, we are not going to move forward. *[Interruption]* Maybe I could be quiet for the next five years if the hon. Member could stand and say, yes, URP will return to Chaguanas on Monday.

Mr. Speaker, when we have vision that will carry our country forward—*[Interruption]* I am hearing noises, Mr. Speaker, are you hearing some noises there?

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the Member for Chaguanas has asked for protection, please let him make his contribution in peace.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: I could give way, but he will say nothing, as usual. The fact is that—and this is a plea to the Members opposite—we want to push Trinidad and Tobago forward. Our vision was for 2010 to make this country a quality nation; a first world nation. They said 2020, okay we agree with them. Mr. Speaker, you know why they say 2020 because when we come back in 2006 we will have to spend the next 14 years to make it a first world nation. *[Interruption]* But that is political. I want now to see how the Members opposite could get this country—and I mentioned young Mr. Seeratan because we do not want more like him in Trinidad and Tobago. *[Interruption]* We do not want to have more frustrated youths in our country. That is why I spoke about the youth programmes. You see when you discriminate against people, when you corner people—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker: Please, hon. Members. Hon. Member, perhaps if you really come back to the Bill we would not have all these interruptions.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: Mr. Speaker, you open a Registrar General’s office, I am sure the Members on this side would have no problem in supporting that Bill. The poor and, as my colleague said, the disabled would come from distances across

the land—and I am surprised that this treatment was meted out to our people; callously sending them back home, maybe that is the law and we have to change it. We support all the people in this country getting treatment that is fair and as somebody mentioned equitable but that word “equitable” must not be used conveniently. It must be used to treat all our people in this country equally.

Mr. Speaker, when persons go to the Registrar General’s office, if they are disabled, we are supposed to have ramps built so that they could get into the office. This is one area that we are calling on the Government to deal with. When we talk about equity of treatment in this country—the reason that I am going on and on—*[Interruption]* No, I am talking about the Registrar General’s office, you have to have ramps; the physically disabled have to be able to access these offices.

When you bring legislation to this House it must be thought out. When you come to this House to tell us what you are going to do—put a clause in and take a clause out—you have to tell us your policy, your intent and how you want to treat with people in this country. We have to start with every little piece of legislation that is introduced in this House. We must not come here willy-nilly and just say it is a simple Bill and we want it passed. Tell us the intent of this Bill. Tell us what you want to achieve. Tell us how you are going to help the people of this country. If they had done that, Mr. Speaker, maybe we would have been out of here long ago because this Bill has one clause.

Mr. Speaker, I want to tell the hon. Members opposite, when we come before Parliament, the country is listening to us; we have to come here and talk about our people's problems and to let them understand what is happening. We cannot continue governing this country as we did before. We have to have a fair share of all the resources and make sure that when a bill like this one—*[Interruption]* Had the Member for San Fernando East not opened up his debate I would have been finished a long time ago. I want to read section 9 of the original Bill into the record; Chap. 19:03, section 2 says:

“The office of the Registrar General shall be kept open for the transaction of business by the public from the hour of eight thirty until the hour of four in the afternoon of every day...except...Saturdays, Sundays and...public holidays.”

What we have come here to do this afternoon is to simply—because (b)(i) and (ii) was already done by our government when we were in office.

Mr. Speaker, before I take my seat, I want to remind this honourable House and the Prime Minister and the Member for Laventille East/Morvant who came in

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late, that this Bill seeks to amend the Registrar General Act to permit the Registrar General to receive cash from persons who are in line and are awaiting service in the Registrar General's Department at 3.00 p.m. or later on week days. We have no problem with that.

I am asking that from now on when we have bills delivered to us, they come, they keep it tight, they tell us the intent of the bill, they deal with us as professionals. But as I said, they cannot come with this Bill and talk about vision 2020 and preach to this nation, catch the eyes of their friends in the media, and politicize this House. This House is for all 36 parliamentarians and we must ensure that what is debated here is for the benefit of the people of this country. If from now on Members opposite would come and debate what is before them, I am sure we would be home earlier.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

The Minister of Local Government (Hon. Jarrette Narine): Mr. Speaker, I sat for the entire afternoon and listened to persons who were supposed to be in government for six years and who now come here and speak about equity and so forth. I want to remind the Member for Chaguanas that the lady in Arouca still did not get the wheelchair, maybe it is because she is from Arouca—this is six years going on seven years. I remember when he replaced the last Member of Parliament for Chaguanas, his political leader sent out a squad to find someone who was a doubles vendor to go up against her and they found him. I do not know where they found him.

Hon. Member: What is wrong with a doubles vendor, Mr. Minister?

Hon. J. Narine: Well he is not a doubles vendor; they were looking for someone who was a doubles vendor, to disgrace the former Member of Parliament, Miss Hulsie Bhaggan. Do you know her? The political leader sent for one, they could not find a good one so they found him.

The Member for Fyzabad spoke about some matter of a gun which was stolen in Fyzabad. I want to put it in the *Hansard* record that it was a private security company which was hired by the Government to do the work. It is not a government institution.

Mr. Sharma: What is the point? Was the gun stolen?

Hon. J. Narine: The gun was stolen from a private company.

Mr. Sharma: Where?

Hon. J. Narine: From a private security guard in Fyzabad. The way he mentioned it was as if it was a URP guard. It was not a URP guard; it was a private security guard whose company was paid for him to be there with the gun. That is their business.

Mr. Speaker, I am sorry that the Member for Princes Town is not here because when one speaks about discrimination, I came across a document this week in the Ministry of Local Government and I would like to put it in the record.

“Ministry of Infrastructure and Development and Local Government
August 6th, 2001

Re: Princes Town Infrastructure Works.”

And I would like the Member for Caroni East to listen to this because he sits there and enjoys what is being said on that side and the propaganda that is being raised without any document. So I am reading into the record this document, which will probably be read on many other occasions.

“Dear Sir,

The following is an invitation to tender for Selective Ministerial Special Project tendering for procedures in the above-mentioned project. You are hereby invited to tender by this letter for the following contracts:

1. Lengua Road
2. Mandingo Road
3. Sahadath Trace
4. Sahadath Trace Extended Contract
5. HardBargain, Sister’s Road
6. Nivet Trace Bridge”

N i v e t, I do not know if it was meant to be Navet

“A site visit for the contracts has been set for August 10th 2001 and closing date for the contracts is August 20th 2001. Tenders are to be sealed and placed in the tender box at Project Implementation Unit, Ministry of Local Government, Kent House, Maraval no later than 1:00 p.m.

/s/ Hon. Subash Panday

Member of Parliament”

Dr. Rowley: He invited tenders? *[Interruption]*

Hon. J. Narine: Yes. He invited tenders for his constituency and the letterhead is from the Ministry of Infrastructure Development and Local Government. *[Interruption]* The next signature is:

“Casimir Joseph”

Below is written:

“Special Project Engineer to Hon. Minister Carlos John.”

All the contractors, Mr. Speakers, you will hear; I have plenty more, I could take you through the whole night. I continue to read:

“Princes Town Constituency

Date: August 28, 2001

To all Contractors in the project area for Princes Town Constituency

Re: Infrastructure work in Princes Town Constituency

To whom it may concern.

With regards to Infrastructure work in Princes Town Constituency, to be done by the Special Projects under the Minister of Infrastructure Development and Local Government, Minister Carlos John. Permission has been given to proceed with all works from Minister’s Carlos John office.”

I repeat.

“Permission has been given to proceed with all works from Minister Carlos John’s office.

Authority of all projects named in the work area of the Infrastructure work in Princes Town Constituency, has been given to the Parliamentary Representative for the area, Minister Subash Panday from the Minister of Infrastructure Development and Local Government, Minister Carlos John. Project Engineer assigned to the project will be Mr. Casimir Joseph attached to Special Projects.”

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Repeat that part about Minister something Panday.

Hon. J. Narine: I repeat:

“Authority of all projects named in the work area of the Infrastructure work in Princes Town Constituency, has been given to the Parliamentary Representative for the area...

For any information about this letter, please call the Princes Town Constituency Office at 652-1117.

/s/ Hon. Minister Subash Panday

Minister for Princes Town Constituency”

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Honourable who?

Hon. J. Narine: Minister for Princes Town Constituency.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Minister, Subash Panday. [*Interruption*] These are the records of the Ministry; this is not my record, Mr. Speaker.

Dr. Rowley: Call the police! [*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: If they call the police they will lock up Jarrette.

Hon. J. Narine: When I am ready for you, you would know who would get locked up. Mr. Speaker, the ETP has been placed in the Ministry of Local Government, Sir, “Yuh eh get away yet, yuh feel so.”

The next letter which was sent by the contractor was addressed:

“Ministry of Infrastructure Development & Local Government
Special Projects
Project Proposal
For
Hon. Minister Subash Panday
For Infrastructure Works in the Princes Town Constituency
Project Area
Lengua Road, Mandingo Road & Sahadath Trace”

And it goes on to talk about the projects and attached to that was a scope of works, estimates and there is also a map placed on this document. The estimate was for \$4-odd million, if I remember correctly. [*Interruption*]

Dr. Rowley: “All Yuh eh fraid jail?”

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: They like jail. [*Interruption*]

Hon. J. Narine: The fact about this matter is that the very people were given the contract for Sahadath Trace. They are now claiming approximately \$4.1

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million for this contract. [*Interruption*] That is what you get already; you get more than that already for the election. That is why they were given this contract. And this is for only one constituency. If I really go deep into the records, I would probably find the same thing for every constituency. I am saying that and I am going to do that. I have five years to do that, Mr. Speaker. From time to time I will be here reporting to the people of Trinidad and Tobago of the regime that should not even sit in this Parliament. [*Desk thumping*] They should be ashamed to come in this Parliament and sit among honest people. I say that today and I mean it.

When you send your contractors to threaten Jarrette Narine let them come good, especially from the Member for Fyzabad. I will tell you something, Mr. Speaker, I have much more to speak about but from time to time I am going to keep the record and I am going to come here and report to you, Mr. Speaker of Trinidad and Tobago in the House of Representatives.

What I have here is:

“Special Projects Unemployment Relief Programme

The following is a list of the status of our Special Projects Payment as of 27/3/2000.”

I will just mention some of these projects listed and signed by the Special Projects coordinator for \$6,891,203.79. They have a Dow Village Culvert 2, completed, nothing was paid, balance owing, \$400,000. [*Interruption*] This was marked \$400,000.

Mr. Sharma: How much was paid?

Hon. J. Narine: I am saying nothing was paid. I am now meeting in the Ministry; \$52 million out of—probably other Ministries have the same problem. I understand it is about \$800,000 million, which we owe because of their mismanagement and the corruption that they did over the last six years. I am saying that and I mean that.

Mungal Pattasar Cultural Centre, this is the second one. On another contract they had done some work for \$150,000. This one is saying completed for \$333,000 and nothing was paid so it is left now to be paid. Cedar Hill Culvert and someone told me that work—\$259,000 for a culvert

Mr. Imbert: Are you sure it exists?

Hon. J. Narine: What has been paid is \$226,000 and they are still owed \$32,803. Talk about discrimination, when a Member of Parliament has to give out

contracts—I am certain he is hearing me down in the tearoom, he would never come back here. If he is someone who has a little shame he would not sit in that chair for the Member for Princes Town. *[Interruption]* He was awarding contracts as a Deputy Speaker of this House!

Mr. Imbert: What?

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: He was pretending to be a Minister.

Dr. Rowley: What is the penalty for impersonating a Minister?

Hon. J. Narine: I really do not know; we probably need to call in the fraud squad. Mr. Speaker, I am saying that this is just the tip of the iceberg; you would hear much more of this over the next five years. Every time they get up there and talk about discrimination I will get up here and talk. *[Desk thumping]* I want to tell you if you want to hear about discrimination check Caroni (1975) Limited. When you divide the employment in Caroni (1975) Limited to the people of Trinidad and Tobago, come and talk to me about discrimination. When you get the jobs of Couva/Talparo/Tabaquite Regional Corporation equitably distributed, come and talk to me about discrimination. When you look at Chaguanas Regional Corporation, the same people who are fighting for a “ten-days” every fortnight would never get a job in Chaguanas Borough Corporation. The people of Enterprise or other areas will never get a job in Chaguanas. I will tell you why, because you are the people who have been sending people there to work all the time.

I have the records; it came up in the Chaguanas monthly meetings, which records have been sent to the ministry—the minutes of the meetings—which says that the Member for Chaguanas, Manohar Ramsaran send this person to work. *[Interruption]* I will say that another time, I do not want to deal with that today. I have authentic records from the corporation. *[Interruption]* Like you were not listening to the Piarco Airport Enquiry for the last few weeks. All letters that you wrote to the corporation, I have copies of them. One fella is 65 years old and he is working as a monthly paid watchman in the market in Chaguanas—a Mr. Fiaz Ali. I will bring it here and lay it in the records of this Parliament. *[Interruption]* The letter will come here. I continue to quote:

“Permanent Secretary

Chief Executive Officer

Chaguanas Corporation,

Dated 4th September 2002.”

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This was a request for approval for his Worship the Mayor to attend a Commonwealth event for Senior Local Government Policy Makers.

“Reference is made to your memorandum dated 21st August on the captioned text. Please be advised that Trinidad and Tobago will not be represented at the Commonwealth Local Forum for Senior Local Government Policy Makers to be held in London, England during the period 12th to 14th September, 2000.”

What is reported to me on this is that the Minister at the time refused—
[*Interruption*] The Minister at the time refused. He did not know what bill it was, but he is asking me what bill it was? [*Interruption*]

6.00 p.m.

I am talking about the whole 90 minutes or three hours talking about equitable distribution. I will have my 75 minutes to talk about equity this afternoon. The Minister said no, but the former Prime Minister eventually sent the mayor. That is what I am talking about. That will never ever happen in the People’s National Movement. It has to come to Cabinet. That is the time they were going all over the world travelling and getting things “chacao” all about. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Kelvin Ramkissoon, Attorney at Law, wrote to the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Local Government, Kent House, Maraval. The letter is dated September 04, 2000. Now, you will hear about equity. Where is the Member for Chaguanas?

“Re: Award of Contracts by the Chaguanas Borough Corporation

I act on behalf of Messrs. Moonilal Ramhit & Company Limited, a company registered under the laws of Trinidad and Tobago with its registered office situate at L.P. 328 Southern Main Road, Cunupia.

My client has been a long standing registered contractor with the Chaguanas Borough Corporation and its predecessor, the Caroni County Council, for the past 40 years, performing *inter alia*, works on recreation grounds, parks and savannahs as well as construction works.

My client has during the past few years, failed to be considered for the award of contracts by the Corporation...”

You talk about discrimination! This is it! A man who has performed for 40 years in your constituency, Caroni East, was discriminated against by your corporation in the Chaguanas Borough, on instruction.

“...and even when it was considered, it has not been the recipient of awards except on few occasions, for minor works.

Indeed, certain issues were ventilated in the High Court by H.C.A. No. 493 of 1999, Moonilal Ramhit & Company Limited –v- The Mayor, Aldermen, Councillors and Burgesses of the Chaguanas Borough Corporation. By this action, my client sought certain redress from the High Court for Judicial Review. The matter was determined on terms as endorsed on Counsel’s brief and my client was promised letters of invitations, which were complied with.

Subsequent to this, my client wishes to draw to your attention certain areas of apparent impropriety on the Corporation’s part in the award of recent contracts. In particular, I refer to the award of contracts by the Corporation on or around July-August 2000, for the construction of box drains and outfall drains in the jurisdiction of the Corporation.

By tender submitted on or around July 2000, my client submitted the following quotations for the following jobs:

JOBS	PRICE (VAT Inc.)
Neilson Street	\$18,975.00
Ramdeen Outfall Drain	\$16,100.00
Dam Road	\$ 3,450.00
Chrissie Terrace Extension	
Box Drain	\$21,275.00
Layne Street Drain	\$ 9,200.00
Enterprise Street Box Drain	\$18,975.00
Church Street Outfall Drain	\$20,500.00
Fernando Land Outfall Drain	\$ 8,740.00

My client was awarded one contract out of these. The following were the awardees of the contracts at the prices herein:

Names of Jobs	Price (VAT Inc.)	Contractors’ Names
Neilson Street	\$22,899.00	Khayoura Hosein
Layne Street	\$ 9,200.00	M. Ramhit

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Fernando Lane	\$22,195.00	M.C.C. Ltd.
Enterprise Street	\$19,000.00	Goolcharan Balroop
Dam Road	\$ 8,000.00	Lutchman Ranga
Chrissie Terrace	\$24,575.00	Ramroop & Sons Contractors
Ramdeen Outfall	\$21,000.00	Sharon Bansee (No VAT)”

When there are brackets and “No VAT”, that means that the person was not a registered contractor

“Church Street	\$40,000.00	Rohan Saisbhan
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From the foregoing, the Corporation chose to award contracts, in each and every instance, in excess of the bids quoted by my client. In particular, one contract, to wit, the Church Street Outfall Drain, exceeds my client’s quotation, two to one, yet, it was not awarded to Moonilal Ramhit & Company Limited. Further, you would appreciate that the power of the Chief Executive Officer of the Corporation to award contracts is to a maximum of under \$25,000.00. This contract was awarded in the sum of \$40,000.00, in breach of the provisions of the Municipal Corporations Act and the relevant regulations made thereunder.

In the circumstances, my client considers this situation as unfair and/or irrational and/or illegal and unreasonable which may be subject to Judicial Review.

My client therefore wishes to draw the foregoing situations to your attention, and as a responsible corporate citizen, calls for an investigation into the award of these contracts by the Corporation.”

I am certain you all are aware of this attorney, Mr. Ramkissoon, so you can ask him. The letter was never responded to. *[Interruption]* Let me say that this was passed by the Corporation at a statutory meeting. *[Interruption]* Ask Mr. Ramkissoon, the attorney who sent this.

Mr. Sharma: These lawyers write anything.

Hon. J. Narine: These lawyers write anything? From the top there come down.

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I am going to read into the records another letter.

“Technical Institute

Southern End

Solomon Hochoy Highway

San Fernando”

Tell me this is wrong too. [*Interruption*] Of course it is wrong because you have been bleating all day and now you are getting the jamming. Sit there and take it, Mr. Couva South.

“November 16, 1999

The Programme Manager

Unemployment Relief Programme

Couva Tabaquite Talparo

Regional Corporation

Dear Sir

You are kindly asked to make the necessary arrangements to pay to San Fernando Technical Institute the sum of four thousand dollars (\$4,000.00) for the participation of your employees:

Mr. Haimnarine Dube

Ms. Listra Lawrence

on the short course ‘Computerized Accounting’ now in progress on Thursdays from 5.00 p.m. to 8.00 p.m. at the institute.”

The Urban Redevelopment Programme was paying for persons—this was Mr. Dubai’s son, the CEO of Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo—\$4,000. This money should have gone to poor people.

“/s/ Shaheed Mohammed

Vice Principal

San Fernando Technical Institute”

Do you think this is the North West Regional Authority where you got payment for doing no work? This is not like that. I have boxes of letters like these. When they talk about discrimination, they must be very particular—

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, it is very difficult for the *Hansard* reporter to take down what the Member is saying, so please listen to the Member in silence. We have to facilitate the reporter.

Hon. J. Narine: Mr. Speaker, I am afraid they cannot stay quiet because they are now being paid back in their own coins. They have tried to make people in Trinidad and Tobago feel that they are high and mighty and very clean. When these facts come out, they are very embarrassing. I can well imagine sitting on that side and listening to this.

I also have a letter dated July 04, 2002.

“Mr. Jaret Narine,
Minister of Local Government,
Kent House,
Maraval Road.

Dear Sir,

My name is Marie Ragoonath. I am seeking employment for Ms. Cecelia Ragoonath and Ms. Rosie Deonarine. I am an employee with the Princes Town Regional Corporation. Ms. Ragoonath and Ms. Deonarine have 15 days service as Female Labourers. I would greatly appreciate Mr. Narine if you can assist Mrs. Ragoonath and Mrs. Deonarine as Checkers. They are very well qualified. There are two (2) vacancies with the Princes Town Regional Corporation as Checkers.”

May I explain, Mr. Speaker, that according to Act No. 21 of 1990, this Minister does not ask or send any letters to anybody to get employment because there is a personnel committee to deal with that. Those letters that I have found, I have in safe keeping. I continue.

“Mr. Narine the Councillors have brought in their relatives without any service and are permanently employed.”

[*Interruption*] He got the job by application, and interview. I have a son two years employed, so you can say what you want. He is well employed.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, not more than two minutes ago, I appealed to you to be quiet while the Member is making his contribution and also to facilitate the *Hansard* reporter. Please!

Hon. J. Narine: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I continue. [*Interruption*]

I have three sons and two daughters, Sir. I have a son who is doing his Masters. He is an engineer. You want to know where he is working?

“Mr. Narine the Councillors have brought their relatives without any services and are permanently employed.”

Do they know what that means? When they bring their relatives who have no service, they bypass the casual workers, the regular workers with two or more effective years service and place them at the head of the list, bypassing all the workers who have been working for years trying to get a regular job. That is discrimination.

“Their names are as follows:”

I will read it into the records. I do not like doing it, but I heard too much this afternoon, so I could not stay quiet.

“Sultan Khan (Councillor)	Clarence Lallan (Labourer)
	Sharazed S. Khan (Son)
	T.M.A.
Alderman Ramdhan	Ronnie Ramdhan (Brother)
	Cecil Ali (Neighbour)
	Carpenter
C.E.O. Mr. Espinoza	Kevin Luke (Nephew)
	Checker
	Korie Espinoza (Daughter)
	Checker
	Maria Subero (Female
	Labourer)
	Hileron Subero (Labourer)
Alderman Mohammed	Lisa Mohammed (Niece)
	Checker
	Tazmool Mohammed
	(Nephew) Labourer
	Manzool Mohammed

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	Mechanic
	Zafelah Khan (Uncle)—
	Labourer
Tara Orié Councillor	Daveand Narine (Cousin)
	Labourer
	Savitri Maharaj (Sister-in-Law)
	Checker
Bhim Saugh Councillor	Bhagwandass Boodram (Labourer)
Krishna Rampersad Councillor	Jagdeo Rampersad (Brother)
	Labourer
	Anthony Beersa (Nephew)
	Checker
	Joan Kumar (Checker)
	Arnold Pundit (Brother in Law)
	Sign Painter”

All these are UNC Councillors who have discriminated against people in the Princes Town Regional Corporation. They want equity. That is why when I said bring equity for me, bring Caroni, bring Couva/Talparo/Tabaquite, bring Chaguanas Regional Corporation—equitable treatment—then we will talk about equity, not fighting for the few URP jobs at \$65 a day when your jobs in the Corporation is \$126 for a labourer and none of them to get one single job there. And they are talking about equity.

“Radhay Dass Councillor	Ishwar Dass (Son) Labourer
	Rudy Dass (Son) T.M.A.
	Eniath Ali Hosein (Nephew)
	Labourer
Devon Sudan Councillor	Albetha Hamilton (Friend)
	Checker

There are many employees who are working but did not have any service. Ms. Ragoonath is a single parent and unemployed, Ms. Deonarine is unemployed and her husband also and has children attending school.

Any assistance will be greatly appreciated.”

When I get letters like these, I send them to the HR Department of the Ministry. The discrimination continues in all the Corporations. I said here recently that when the Ministry of Local Government placed a board for the New City Mall and the Charlotte Street Mall, one of these Councillors from Princes Town was on the board. They brought two UNC Councillors from Couva/Talparo/Tabaquite to run Port of Spain. The people on the board were persons from outside—Couva, Talparo, Tabaquite, Chaguanas, Princes Town—telling Port of Spain City Corporation how to run a mall in Port of Spain.

They bought tickets to go cricket and football. They took contracts from all over and when a famous calypsonian, who is manager of the mall, complained, she almost got fired—Lady Wonder—because of the discrimination displayed by them. *[Interruption]* I know what he did in the Ministry of Labour. I am not ready for him yet.

When they gave out verbal contracts, with jobs for the boys and their party stalwarts and friends, all projects were handled by the Couva/Talparo/Tabaquite Regional Corporation. They had a whole team of persons giving out contracts and spending money like mad. The contract documents were not prepared in accordance with any known standard or format. In some cases, none worth seeing could be found up to this point in time. Contractors are begging for their money. Those who performed have no way to ascertain they did anything. Those who did not perform were paid before the election to give them back money to fight the election. Up to now they have not gotten paid and they are begging us. *[Interruption]* You go ahead. I bet you will have to answer to the Fraud Squad.

Mr. Speaker: You should address me.

Hon. J. Narine: Thank you. When we came to this House, there were certain persons on that side that we had some respect for but, in a short space of time, we have lost it. I have been a Member of Parliament for 11 years. I have been in politics elected since 1983 as a local government representative. I won seven elections. It is 19 years and nobody has ever accused me of being dishonest. Now because of the UNC and their fraudulent activities, people are coming there and talking about dishonesty. Some of these people who never had a home, in two years built a house worth \$2 million and have four cars parked under their house.

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Now they are coming here accusing us of discrimination and other things. These are people who could not buy a battery for their car and were owing nine months' rent who are now telling me about policy and discrimination. It is amazing! *[Interruption]*

He knows whom I am speaking about. I heard him answer me. I never saw the house except when TSTT went to demonstrate. That is when I saw the famous Robocop, the bodyguard, standing in front—their friend from long time. *[Interruption]* I did not see anything blue. He saw something blue shaped like this. *[Shakes his fist]*

I spoke on the last occasion about the inequitable treatment handed out over the last six years to our Corporation. I reiterate that Arima Borough Corporation received no money for six years for road improvement. Diego Martin, San Fernando, Port of Spain received none and the Couva/Talparo/Tabaquite Regional Corporation: in 1998, \$6.056 million; in 1998/1999, \$9.843 million; 1999/2000, \$17.1676 million and in 2000/2001, \$8.249 million dollars—and they are speaking about equity. They have no right to come here and talk about equity. They had six years and they have discriminated against the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

In Arouca North, we had not a single project, although it was on record as paying for 25 or 30 projects. Nothing happened in Tunapuna. Why do you think Mr. Hart won the election? *[Interruption]* Not at all! They had a Member of Parliament whose nose was up in the air. If a shower of rain had caught him, he was sure to drown. Now, he is fighting your leader saying that he is getting old and it is time for him to go.

When we speak about equity, we have to know what we are speaking about. *[Interruption]* I am still replying to what he has said because he is a real racist. He talks here about discrimination and race. *[Interruption]* I am speaking from observing him for the last six years. I have a lot more to say but I feel that it is enough for today and we will continue on another occasion when I will have more information.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Dr. Adesh Nanan (*Tabaquite*): Mr. Speaker, I join the debate on a bill to amend the Registrar General Act, Chap. 19:03. On page 2 of the Registrar General (Amdt.) Bill, 2002, I read the explanatory note for the Member for Arouca North:

“This Bill seeks to amend the Registrar General Act to permit the Registrar General to receive cash from persons who are in line and awaiting service in the Registrar General's Department, at 3:00 p.m. and later on week days.”

I know that the amendment was circulated, Mr. Speaker, but I am sure that when the hon. Attorney General was in this House, it was quite clear that she was not aware that this Bill would have been before the House. I wonder if when the Bill was being brought she was too busy dealing with lands or was out of the country.

We have before us today an incompetent Minister who has brought a bill before this House that she probably never read. In the debate this afternoon, we heard from colleagues on this side of the House on the situation at the Registrar General's Department and what was left by the capable UNC government in terms of a vision for Trinidad and Tobago.

We also heard from the hon. Prime Minister in terms of the PNM's vision for Trinidad and Tobago and we continue to hear about equity from the Member for Arouca North. It is unfortunate that he has left this honourable Chamber because I wanted to deal with him with respect to equity. He only spoke about Arouca North and he mentioned Tunapuna. I do not want to go into that section of the debate, but it has been opened up by the hon. Member for San Fernando East. The Member for Tunapuna is quite aware of the equity distribution in terms of the education Ministry and the St. Michael's Home for Boys. He is quite aware of what is happening in that constituency.

The Member for Arouca North spoke about equity. We talk about discrimination. They say there is no discrimination. They say there is restructuring and refocusing of Tidco. I ask the hon. Member for San Fernando East why a senior Tidco official was fired from the job. I will not call his name. He is well aware of the person, who served loyally and was aware of the vision for Tidco. I ask: What is the policy of the Member for San Fernando East, who is the Prime Minister, with respect to job creation and jobs that have not been advertised? We know it has happened in WASA. A job was created for an hon. Member's husband.

I also make reference to what is happening at Petrotrin. The hon. Member for San Fernando East must be aware of what is happening at Petrotrin. Why are they subsidizing contractors at Petrotrin? Why does the Government continue to subsidize those contractors who are not capable with millions of dollars? We will not tolerate that in this House. The national community must be aware of the PNM's plan. Their supporters are being given the Treasury and we will not let that happen. That is why we are a responsible Opposition and we will continue to debate every time we are in this House.

I get back to the Bill before the House. Mr. Speaker, as an hon. Member, you spoke in this House on the Land Adjudication (No. 2) Bill. I want to get some

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leeway in terms of the history of the land situation in this country. You are quite aware that this is a massive problem. I do not want to bring this into the debate, but as it heads into this direction, you may be brought in, so I hope that you give me some leeway.

Mr. Speaker, all lands in Trinidad and Tobago [*Interruption*] all lands because I am speaking about lands in terms of the Real Property Ordinance. When we speak about the Registrar General, Member for Diego Martin Central, I am coming to you because you spoke in this House today about the Free Trade Area of the Americas. The Member for Diego Martin West is aware that the project for the conference centre—do you remember the Conference Centre and Tourism Complex that would have taken this country to a new dimension in terms of tourism—I will come back to that. Let me stay on the matter of lands. You know that I am dealing with the Bill and the people who are waiting in line to pay for deeds and birth and marriage certificates.

I take you back in terms of the history of land in this country—the Real Property Ordinance and the common law with respect to land. I am going back to 1962, although the Member for San Fernando East went back to 1956. To register lands in Trinidad and Tobago, there is the Real Property Ordinance and the common law. You are well aware, Mr. Speaker, under the common law, registration takes place by virtue of deeds that you file at the registry.

I come back to the registry because when you visualize you will see people waiting in line trying to pay after 3.00 p.m. and being facilitated. They are filing their deeds at the registry under the common law and we also have indexing. I want the Member for Arouca South to listen understand very carefully because she needs to understand her Ministry. What we have seen here this afternoon is a lack of understanding by the Member for Arouca South of her Ministry. Apparently, she was throwing too much salt in the Ministry trying to exorcise, I do not know whom, from that Ministry.

It is a very important Ministry and I want the Member for San Fernando East to understand. He talked about vision and a legislative agenda. If the Member for Arouca South looks at the Order Paper, she will see a situation with postage stamps. That is another bill I will bring into the debate. [*Interruption*] I am not anticipating, I am telling you because people are in line and they are going to pay money for stamp duty. It is true they are not going to be using stamps, but we are here to validate the stamps that have already gone, so it is not as the Member for Diego Martin West points out.

Persons file deeds at the Registry and indexing takes place in terms of wards and cities and boroughs. The larger deeds are bound and there is protocol. As I speak of protocol, I speak of the country books. Mr. Speaker, you pointed out at that time—and that is very correct—about a missing country book, No. 3 of 1993. I wonder if the Member for Arouca South is aware of that. She should read your contribution on that Land Adjudication (No. 2) Bill.

The index is for the purchaser and the buyer. Searching for title is a time-consuming exercise. I take Members back to a certain area—the Title Clerks. The Member for Arouca South should be aware that almost 99 per cent of these Title Clerks would become obsolete, being absorbed in the Registrar General's Department because they are scattered in various ministries. There must be a plan in place. That is why the Member for San Fernando East, when he talked about his vision, I hope that his vision will include that. We did not hear that from the Member for Arouca South because people like the Title Clerk would be displaced. That is part of the policy statement that should have come from her.

I spoke about Title Clerks and the difficulty they have right now, as my colleague, the Member for Princes Town, mentioned in his contribution. I want to go back in history because the Member for San Fernando East went there. I will go back to the British government, which he is well aware of.

The British government offered indentured labourers the opportunity of free passage back to India or, alternatively, a parcel of land. [*Interruption*] Mr. Speaker, you will tell me if I am way off, not the Member for Diego Martin Central. If he wants to be Deputy Speaker, he could be Deputy Speaker, but I will listen to you, Mr. Speaker. [*Interruption*] I wrote it, not a technocrat.

I want to speak to the Member for Diego Martin West because I am coming to the town planners section with respect to town planning. I will not come to your conference. I will tell you why, Mr. Speaker. I will come to Town and Country Planning Division just now. I want to go back to history because it is important we understand the history. The Registrar General's Department has a lot of history in terms of the colony and how we are moving forward with respect to the distribution of parcels of land. We have town grants and royal grants.

Mr. Speaker, you know that under the Real Property Ordinance, they were introduced with a survey plan and then you had independence of 1962 and certificates of title, since we were no longer a colony. Mr. Speaker, I am glad you gave me that latitude, so that I can demonstrate the history behind the Real Property Ordinance and the common law aspect in terms of land distribution.

In terms of the situation with estate duties, because there will be people in that line at the Registrar General's Department paying estate duty, you will recall that from 1981 there was no more estate duty certificate, but before 1981, there had to be estate duty. It was abolished or zero rated since 1981, the debts not subject to payments of estates in succession. For people to pay estate duty is a cumbersome experience. You are well aware, Mr. Speaker, and I am sure the Member for Arouca South, by now, should be aware of a staffing problem at the Board of Inland Revenue. That is why it is cumbersome to pay estate duty. I am sure the Member for Diego Martin West knows what is estate duty.

Mr. Speaker: If I may assist you, I think estate duty has been abolished.

Dr. A. Nanan: I said it was abolished in 1981, but before 1981 people paid estate duty. It was a very cumbersome situation because of the understaffing at the Board of Inland Revenue.

For estate duty, a person needed a valuation report, copies of the deed, a death certificate of the deceased. Those went to the Board of Inland Revenue and from there they went to the Commissioner of Valuations and then a value was put on it. This facility or cumbersome activity kept back progress. There was a delay in construction, delay in employment and a slow down in the economy.

I also ask the Member for Arouca South if she is aware that there is a Registry of Compulsory Acquisition set up. To register a deed is \$50; to register a company mortgage property, \$300 and all those people stand in line to pay, probably after 3.00 o'clock. As you talk about land and the certificate of title, we cannot forget the Lands and Surveys Division and the Town and Country Planning Division. It is very important when you are applying to survey the land, to make your application to the Lands and Surveys Division, which has to be checked and then sent to the Town and Country Planning. We are very well aware that in November 1999 there was a shortage of land surveyors and, if I remember correctly, you also said that there was a shortage of dentists at that time and that hon. Members, myself, would be going back into practice so that will be a void to be filled quite quickly. I am sure you recall that, Mr. Speaker.

In terms of the shortage of surveyors, I want the Member for Arouca South, in her contribution to say what the Ministry is doing to attract more surveyors in the Lands and Surveys Division. There is a shortage of Town Planners in the Town and Country Planning Division, probably that is why there is such a myopic vision for the Vision 2020. Probably if we had enough Town Planners we would see that the ACS Complex—the Conference Centre and Hotel Complex would be the vision for 2020.

Mr. Speaker, you would see also, in terms of the people who are lining up there, birth, marriage certificates will have a fee to be paid, except when the Member for Arouca South gives free birth certificates.

I shift a little to discrimination. The Member for Arouca North talked about contractors, using a lot of figures and giving *Hansard* lots of problems. I do not know why he did not circulate it. There is, on the outside, talk—I do not know how true it is; the Member must say if it is true or not—that the Minister will not pay these contractors this \$400-odd million worth of contracts outstanding unless he gets a 10 per cent cut. I do not know how true that is. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Narine: Mr. Speaker.

Dr. A. Nanan: I am not giving way. He had his say.

Mr. Narine: Mr. Speaker, the Member is using assertions against me.

Mr. Speaker: You have to stand on a point of order.

Mr. Narine: Mr. Speaker, I stood on a point of order, Standing Order No. 36(5), imputing improper motives.

Dr. A. Nanan: I never called your name.

Mr. Narine: I am the Member for Arouca North.

Mr. Speaker: It says:

“No Member shall impute improper motives to any other Member of either Chamber.”

You were in fact accusing the hon. Minister in the form of an allegation. Please withdraw it. I have ruled.

Dr. A. Nanan: I withdraw it. That is the double standard of the Member for Arouca North. The Member comes with that double standard. He accuses this side of discrimination. He went to the Couva/Talparo/Tabaquite Regional Corporation, spoke untruths in this Parliament and when I raised the matter on the adjournment, he said that there was no garbage on Cedar Hill, Claxton Bay. I have a thousand names on a petition that on Samba Hill there is garbage. There is garbage there and mud on the road and he comes and tells this House and says no and comes quietly and tells me in the tea room that on the 14th they met and are going to deal with the matter. I want to let him know that they will come from Cedar Hill Road straight to his Ministry because we recognize the plight of the people in Tortuga.

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In terms of discrimination and equity, the UNC government did not discriminate against anyone. We built the Beetham Government Primary School and all the childhood centres in the constituency of the Member for Laventille East/Morvant. I can name every single constituency and what we did for them.
[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker, I am focusing on you. I also want to talk of hiring practices and job creation. We have seen, in the last budget debate, recurrent expenditure skyrocketing. In terms of the budget, recurrent expenditure, once it climbs there is a slowdown in the economy. As recurrent expenditure grows, there will be less money for development. I advise the Member for Diego Martin Central, the Minister of Trade and Industry, in terms of the economy. I am sure he is well aware of the slowdown in the US market. He would have seen the US market drop from 3.25 to 2.3 per cent and he must know that that will have a ripple effect in this country because we export in terms of the US market.

I signal to the Minister of Trade and Industry as he talks about business expansion and goes about with our Costa Rican alliance that he says he formed when he spoke about Costa Rica and the gateway to South America. Of course, we remember that famous quote, “the best deal, the BWIA deal”. I want him to take a good look at Tidco again and recognize that what they have done is total discrimination because that gentleman gave his service to the country. I would not call his name in the House.

Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's East is not here. The Member for San Fernando East spoke about Vision 2020 and the PNM charter from 1956. All political parties have their manifestos. When you look at the document that the Member for San Fernando was reading—a social policy framework document, you would see in almost every single area, it is a carbon copy of the UNC's medium term plan. That is a fact. Go ahead and read the document. It is our vision coming forward. We know of the PNM implementation plan.

I do not know if the Member for Arouca North and the Minister of Agriculture are aware, but in the 2002 development programme \$21 million was allocated for agricultural access roads. Do you know how much that Ministry spent, Mr. Speaker? They spent \$27,503, just over 1 per cent. That is the implementation rate from the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources. How much did they put into the budget? The sum of \$5 million for this year.

I inform the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West of the importance of agricultural access roads in the agricultural development thrust of the country.

They say that Vision 2020 is for the agricultural sector to grow, but if they do not put the money into it for access roads and bridges, how could they get access to crops? *[Interruption]* That was the vision that was being highlighted by the Member for San Fernando East. I just went further in terms of bringing in the allocation in the development programme.

I come back to the Bill and would like to let the Member for Arouca South know that a building for the records must include air-conditioning and infrastructure. We had an allocation in terms of parking and there is going to be a vault, but we want the Member for Arouca South to tell the honourable House of the development and further advances in the Registrar General's Department. We want to know how far they have reached in the computerization of the records because that is an important area in terms of the title search for deeds.

We also want to know about training of staff of the Registrar General's Department because that is very important. I do not know if the Member for Arouca South is aware of the staffing problems. A number of persons have retired from that Department and there must be a proper programme to train people for efficiency. You heard about the 15 minutes the Bill is seeking to give and you are talking about three, four and five years. You yourself spoke about reducing the years in terms of the bureaucracy.

That is why I have brought in the Registrar General's Department and the question of staffing in the holistic approach. Members on our side spoke about a holistic approach and not a piecemeal approach. I would have thought that as a lawyer in the Ministry of Legal Affairs, we would have heard a more substantial contribution from the Member for Arouca South on this particular Bill. It is unfortunate that we had such a short contribution so lacking in depth. I want her to understand that we know the importance of the Registrar General's Department.

I want her to consider, if a baby is born in, say St. Clair Medical Centre, why should that birth certificate be issued in that particular area? That is something to consider in terms of the time. Why can it not be done in various areas like they propose to do the stamp duty? That was one of your suggestions, Mr. Speaker. I do not claim fame for your suggestion. It is something the Member for Arouca South can consider. *[Interruption]* That is the diatribe coming from the Member for Arouca South. I am totally shocked that a Taurean could make a remark like that, Mr. Speaker, but it does not surprise me. I am totally amazed. We recognize that the kind of activity that is taking place in WASA has that Member very jittery when matters are brought up in terms of the WASA situation.

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I move on to another situation. I spoke about the vault and the importance of the building and the computerization of records. I see the hon. Attorney General walking into the House. I know that she is a guest and I do not want to say anything about her, but, as I said before, she was not present when this Bill was brought to the Parliament. She would not have allowed this piece of legislation to come before the Parliament. We will excuse her.

I am speaking about the National Solid Waste Management System because it is very important in terms of visioning. That is the holistic vision for the country, not this piecemeal approach of fixing this road, fixing that road and as soon as the dry season comes about we will see the Member for Arouca North, “fires from the grand fill”.

I spoke about tourism, but I am not going there because the Members for Diego Martin Central and Diego Martin West are not here.

I was talking about the various areas and the situation with the Registry. I do not want to stray. I also want to say that the people, who are waiting in line for payment of fees for marriage and death certificates and deeds, when you look at the holistic picture you have to take into consideration the various areas, like the various bills. That is why the Land Adjudication (No. 2) Bill—Mr. Speaker, you will be familiar with that because you made a significant contribution to that particular Bill and you also made many suggestions at the committee stage, which we took on board. That is why we have this policy on land matters, which is a significant part of the Ministry of Legal Affairs. When we heard from that Minister in the debate, we only heard about consumer affairs, like she just alienated the legal affairs aspect because she was not familiar, after one year, with the Ministry. I am sure that as she gets more familiar with the Ministry, she will recognize the importance of the Registrar General’s Department.

7.00 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, the Vision 2020 about which the Prime Minister spoke in terms of the legislative agenda—what should be on this legislative agenda is a National Parks and Wildlife Bill. That Bill has already been drafted and is sitting in the Attorney General’s Office to come to Parliament so they do not have to change a single line, they could bring it wholesale to Parliament.

In terms of the solid waste management plan for the country—and I raised that in my contribution the last time as a matter on the adjournment—I want the Member for Arouca North to pursue that matter because he said he has all the players involved in the Forres Park land fill project. Even if the road on Samba

Hill is paved, there would still be a lot of crime in that area. I will bring a matter on the adjournment dealing with crime because crime—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker, I am hearing some asides from the Member for Tunapuna. I am sure he will have his time to speak. He wants me to speak on culture and tourism because he wants to respond, but unfortunately I am not going there. I am speaking on national solid waste management. As soon as the dry season comes, the Member for Arouca North will see fires from the landfill, and the Member for Couva South's constituency would be bombarded with acrid smoke.

I want to caution the Member on that particular issue. I do not want to expand the vision anymore, but it is under the national solid waste management umbrella which is in the document dealing with policy and framework. It affects a very large area, and a large number of constituents are affected by that particular landfill and that is why the solid waste management structure or system takes into consideration these open landfills.

Mr. Speaker, as I speak of open landfills, there are several contractors who have not been paid, and the Member for Arouca North is well aware of that so I am sure he will remedy it. Remember I did not make any mention of 10 per cent of that particular situation because the contractors are not being paid, I do not know for what reason and millions of dollars are being piled up there in that particular matter with the Forres Park landfill.

Generally, if you travel throughout this country you will see the amount of litter all over the roadways, and I want to make a special plea here in terms of the dumping that is taking place in the rural constituencies on deserted roads. Part of the vision of this country is a tourism thrust, to attract more tourists to this country, and we have that situation with litter.

Mr. Speaker, I know they have these gangs working in the various recreational places day after day. They have to restructure that particular programme and they also have to deal with equity. Member for Arouca North, you cannot have it in certain constituencies and not in others. Equity is important and this kind of discrimination must stop because the Member for San Fernando East always talks about equal distribution, and then he gives us an explanation why there cannot be equal distributions between rural and urban constituencies. Total doublespeak coming from the Member for San Fernando East, the hon. Prime Minister. I hope he takes the advice given to him by the advisers and sends a message to the country that there is going to be equal distribution.

I want the Member for Arouca North to be aware that when the Prime Minister comes in this House and says there must be equity, he cannot go behind

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his back and discriminate. I also want to remind him that when he said he never visited the Couva/Talparo/Tabaquite Regional Corporation, he was speaking a falsehood.

Mr. Narine: So why do you not do something about it?

Dr. A. Nanan: Because it does not matter.

Mr. Speaker, that is the situation with respect to a vision for the solid waste management system and we went even further. We did all the work in the Ministry; it is just a document preparation and everything is there. All they have to do is go to the Central Tenders Board and invite tenders. That is all they have to do to improve the solid waste management system in this country.

So that is part of the vision and as I speak about visioning, I speak about the situation of flooding because it affects my constituency, and we know flooding is an act of nature in terms of the large rainfall accumulation, but we cannot have a situation where floods have wiped out almost an entire community in terms of the economic situation of communities. I am sure I am not the only one with a constituency where floods have ravaged the entire crops of the people in the area. We must have an immediate response. We cannot have farmers being abandoned by the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources.

Mr. Speaker, I am informed that when I am going to raise a matter on the adjournment—the people in the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources do not even know where the bridge is. How can we have such irresponsible people working there? The Minister must be able to have that kind of information coming in. I see you are pointing to the Bill, Mr. Speaker, but I am talking about flooding because you must have a vision for people in the rural communities, people who depend on farming for their livelihood and it is not simply to say we will give hampers.

People have lost crops, the entire economy in a community has been eroded because the farming builds the community, and when hundreds of thousands of dollars are lost in flooding you will see it in the economic downturn in the various rural constituencies. So I urge the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West to act more speedily in dealing with these farmers whose crops have been ravaged by floods.

The vision is very important especially in the rainy season and it must also include the catchment areas. The catchment areas are the forested areas and we must recognize the importance of forestry in our water resources. If there are more trees planted in the catchment area, the leaves would trap the rainfall and

there will be more equal percolation into the soil and less run-off. Here is where I come to that programme SITA, you must restructure that programme. You cannot have people going with weed whackers and cutting all the grass on the hillside and causing erosion on the roadways. You are defeating the purpose. So a vision must include how you manage your small programmes and that is why the Member for Arouca North must see the vision of his Prime Minister and not move contrary to it, because the vision is supposed to be building the people and you cannot abandon people in rural constituencies because they did not vote for the PNM. In fact almost half the people voted for the PNM so there cannot be discrimination in the various parts.

I want to tell the Member for Arouca North that the Unemployment Relief Programme helps the poor people in the constituency.

Hon. Member: Get back to the Bill.

Dr. A. Nanan: I am coming to the Bill. I am seeing the vision in terms of the forestry and in putting more trees in catchment areas to control the water run-off. We are looking at the Northern Range where there is a lot of private land and the owners—there are laws concerning slash and burn on the Northern Range and that is why there is this massive flooding taking place year after year. So you are not only dealing with the situation of flooding as the Member for Chaguanas rightly said, you must take a holistic view.

Mr. Speaker, I am very happy for the opportunity to contribute in this debate and as I said before, I want the Member for Diego Martin West to reconsider the tourism complex. As the Member for Diego Martin Central said, Free Trade Area of the Americas is very important to the country and the gateway to the South American hub would be Trinidad and Tobago.

So I have shown the link in the various areas with respect to this particular Bill and I hope I have made suggestions to the Member for Arouca South, the hon. Minister of Legal Affairs, and the Minister of Consumer Affairs to be taken on board.

The Minister of Legal Affairs (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis): Mr. Speaker, I am very happy that this amendment has been able to generate such debate, especially in circumstances where those opposite were in government for the last six years and they did absolutely nothing about the issues they are raising.

Mr. Speaker, we are hearing about flooding, about buses, about persons who were not invited to things in their own constituencies. We are hearing about persons pretending to be Ministers; we are hearing about land bills that are on the

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statute books; we are hearing about marriage task forces; we are hearing about young people who should be law abiding; we are hearing about election being stolen; we are hearing about technology and we are hearing about remaining in power at any cost.

I would like to go through each of these matters as part of my response, and I would start with the buses. Mr. Speaker, I am sure that you would recall that rural buses, as they were called, were brought into this country ostensibly for the use of the people in the rural areas. They were foreign-used English Mercedes Benz buses that had been discarded. They had no ventilation, they were smoking, and today they cannot be used and over \$20 million was spent on those buses that gave absolutely no service to the people of Trinidad and Tobago, and they are talking about buses for the people of Trinidad and Tobago. That is the story of the buses about which they are talking. \$20 million spent and absolutely no service to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, we are hearing about persons pretending to be Ministers of Government, and we on this side believe every word of what was read into—

Mr. S. Panday: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order.

Mr. Speaker: What is the point of order?

Mr. S. Panday: The point of order is that she is misleading—

Mr. Speaker: No, no argument, you have to name it.

Mr. S. Panday: She is misleading the Parliament.

Mr. Speaker: You have to name it.

Mr. S. Panday: Standing Order 36, Mr. Speaker. She is misleading the Parliament. I never pretended to be a Minister. I—

Mr. Speaker: Sit, I have to rule. [*Crosstalk*] The objection is overruled. Please continue.

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I said, we on this side believe every word that was read into the *Hansard* record and as my colleague said—

Mr. S. Panday: Go outside and say that!

Mr. Speaker: Please continue.

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And as my colleague said, the requisite investigations will in fact be done in the same way that the

Commission of Enquiry into the Airport has also revealed that there was pretence as to the chairmanship of a Cabinet committee. Pretence by an actual Minister who said that he was the Chairman of a Cabinet-appointed committee. The Cabinet records show that absolutely no such committee existed, and consequently, there could have been no such chairmanship, but that is how they operated.

Mr. Speaker, if they are saying that we have stolen the Cabinet records, let me say that if that is how they did their business that is not how the People's National Movement Government is doing its business. So do not put that on our doorstep. If that is what you used to do, we are law-abiding Members of the public—and as I talk about abiding by the law, it is unfortunate that those on the other side teach one thing and do something completely different. The laws of Trinidad and Tobago say that a person who is 15 years old should not be given a licence to box. And, in keeping with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, it indicates quite clearly what should take place in relation to such a child, and it is unfortunate that instead, that child is being exploited.

Those on the other side should have done what is in her best interest instead of encouraging her to do what is lawless.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister responsible for Sport and Youth Affairs has indicated quite clearly the plan of action to assist this young person. In circumstances where those on the other side seem to want to encourage this young person, let me indicate to them what happens when someone receives a blow to the head. [*Interruption*] Yes, the Member for Siparia raised that issue, you were not here.

Hon. Member: On a motion for the adjournment.

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis: Let me indicate: A blow to the head can cause severe damage to the brain which is essentially floating in a fluid inside the skull. When a boxer is hit—[*Interruption*] You on that side do not talk about the experience of hitting someone to the head. You do not talk about that. Do not talk about that.

Mr. Speaker: Member for Nariva, please, you had the whole afternoon to make a contribution to the House.

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis: Do not talk about that. [*Crosstalk*] Yes, talk about it, and I will respond.

I continue. When a boxer is hit, the brain spins around inside the head and is flung against the inside of the skull causing pressure on the brain. A 15-year-old

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child can suffer such severe damage from blows to the head from boxing that by the time he/she is 18 years old, they may have irreparable brain damage. That is why it is illegal and that is why we were totally disgusted to see the Member for Siparia encouraging that child in that act.

Hon. Member: No regard for the health of the child.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. Imputing improper motives 36(5). [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Order! Order! Order please! Your point of order is overruled. Please continue Minister.

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am hearing so much about who should help the child and who should not help the child. I just want to remind Members opposite of the Member for Couva North's adoption of Sean. I do not know if that was not to help that child who ended up being killed in the La Basse by a garbage truck. He was adopted by the Member for Couva North and absolutely nothing was done by anyone on that side to assist that child. It is in the same way that they are now giving \$10,000 for this child to continue to receive severe damage to her head and to break the law.

Mr. Speaker, on the package of land bills—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: Mr. Speaker, again on 36(5), that I gave the child \$10,000 to break the law. It is again imputing improper motives to this Member. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Please hon. Members, please.

Did you say that the hon. Member gave \$10,000 to the child to break the law?

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis: Yes I did.

Mr. Speaker: And the Member for Siparia is denying it?

Please withdraw it and stick to the Bill. If we stick to the Bill we would not have all these problems.

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis: I apologize. Mr. Speaker, I will withdraw. I am not sure what aspect I am withdrawing, but the \$10,000 was in fact given to the child in celebration of her boxing career.

Mr. Imbert: To get killed.

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis: Mr. Speaker, if I am quoting, I am doing so from the newspaper where I saw the Member for Siparia holding the child with the belt—

Mr. Imbert: Yes, encouraging her.

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis: —and I understood it to mean congratulations on the fight. If I am incorrect, then I would withdraw that.

Mr. Speaker, I move on to the package of land legislation that was passed in 2000. Let me indicate that what we have found having come into Government is that almost all, or a great majority of the legislation that was passed cannot be proclaimed and cannot be moved forward because they need amendment and that is exactly what we are doing.

We were told that we are coming here with legislation because we have no plan, we have no vision, we do not know where we are going. But let me put on the record of *Hansard* that what we found was a set of legislation that cannot be implemented because they need amendment and we are now cleaning up the mess that was left by the last administration.

Mr. Speaker, if you do not believe what I am saying I am sure you will recall that the Proceeds of Crime Bill has been found to be severely defective by the courts of Trinidad and Tobago and no matter what they say—[*Interruption*] The leader of the five independents piloted that Proceeds of Crime Bill and they sat there and agreed despite the fact that while we were on the other side we requested several amendments to that legislation, but because they felt they were all powerful, whenever we asked for an amendment it was shut down because they thought they were all powerful and would never again sit on the other side. We are doing the right thing by cleaning up all the legislation and then we will be able to implement them.

For six years they sat there and brought defective legislation even though every Friday we would ask for amendments, and ask for their policy and how it could be implemented. And because they thought they were all powerful, they did nothing.

Mr. Speaker, our plan is to stay here until we achieve Vision 2020—18 years—and after that to stay here for another 18 years and another 18 years on top of that and make sure that we do what is right for the people of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

I will talk a little about the Marriage Task Force. I find it very strange that someone who served as Attorney General for three months and then served as Minister of Legal Affairs for a few years, and then served as Attorney General for a month could come to this House and talk about the Bill being useless and about

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symptoms of deficiencies, and talk about the Ministry of Legal Affairs being in a bad situation. In circumstances where they sat and did nothing, but what they did was purchase a building—

Mr. Imbert: An asbestos building.

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis:—that initially was \$2 million and purchased it for \$10 million, and then attempted to refurbish it at a cost of \$20 million. Just in case you are mistaken, I am not talking about the Ibis High School, I am in fact talking about Registration House, the place where— [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker, I do not know if now they are separating themselves from that transaction, but as far as I am concerned it happened under the UNC administration. I know that now they are in a state of disarray, but I am sure they knew that it happened under the UNC administration and to this day that building still suffers from flooding. We have had to raise the floor in order to assist with that flooding problem, and they did absolutely nothing about it.

Mr. Speaker, we consistently have breakdowns in the elevator service. They did nothing about that, and we are now attempting to solve that problem. We are still trying to solve all the problems of that building because the vault is not properly situated, the myriad number of problems that exist there would take me a whole new debate to talk about them. The building is a disgrace and it is unfortunate that they felt they should put public servants in that building, and what we are trying to do is alleviate those problems that they did absolutely nothing about while trying to give their friends and family money.

Mr. Speaker, let me also point out that for years while they were in that building people had to stand for hours with no seating accommodation provided. We put seating accommodation to assist the public when they had to wait for any length of time. It is unfortunate that they stood here today and pretended that they were not the administration that sat in office and allowed problems to exist whilst they gave their friends and family millions of dollars. [*Crosstalk*]

WASA. My husband is in WASA and doing quite well; doing very, very well.

Mr. Imbert: And he is alive.

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis: And he continues to live. He is alive, he is not dead. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker, I now go to the issue of the databases, the verification, the back filing. In 1994, the then Government of Trinidad and Tobago, through Cabinet, decided on the computerization of the Registrar General's Department in

circumstances where the vision for the people of Trinidad and Tobago was to have a more efficient service from that department, and also to ensure that the records were properly and safely kept.

Mr. Speaker, you will recall that the PNM left office in 1995 and for almost four years that administration did absolutely nothing to ensure that this Cabinet decision was put in place. I do not know if it is a similar situation with the Member for St. Augustine who said in the budget debate that for five years he collected information and did absolutely nothing. I think it is symptomatic of the UNC administration because for four years after a Cabinet decision was made they did practically nothing to get the computerization project off the ground. Nothing.

So when the Member for Siparia talks about verification, back filing and all of that, so much more could have been done if their focus was really on helping the people of Trinidad and Tobago. That was not their focus and consequently, we are now in a process of verifying information of making sure that the country books, about which the Member for Tabaquite and the Member for Princes Town spoke, which are in a state of disrepair are being preserved. The difficulty is that the building is not the proper kind of building to ensure that those fragile documents can properly be stored and that is the situation in which they put the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

So when they come here and talk about symptoms of deficiencies and ask what is happening with the Land Bill and what is happening with the building, and with the staff, I want to inform them that anything positive that is happening now is only because of the People's National Movement. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, the question was asked about the situation with local content and there was a Cabinet decision that requested that a committee be formed to deal with the issue of local content, and a policy was put in place which said that local content would be dealt with only by legislation and that has boxed the committee into a situation where it cannot in fact function. As a consequence of that, they have had very few meetings. We have said that the legislative alternative is in fact the last thing we would look at. Our intention is to bring the parties together to ensure that when local content is improved, it is something that the people of Trinidad and Tobago would really want after informed discussion.

The Member for Siparia talked about the bringing together of the marriage legislation, but I am sure she will recall that in relation particularly to the Hindu marriages, there were some concerns expressed by the pundits who felt that they were not in favour of raising the age. They wanted to keep the Hindu marriage

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legislation as it was separate from the other pieces of legislation. I am not saying that it is scrapped, but the only way that you can put all the legislation together is by agreement. So the Member should not pretend that she does not know what is the situation.

Mr. Speaker, we heard about a request from the Member for Fyzabad for a reduction in land and building taxes and we also heard the Member talk about cost as it relates to certificates, and cost generally as it relates to documents. Let me remind the Member for Fyzabad that for years, the cost of documents, particularly court documents, was very minimal. It was Members on that side who, in their budget about two years ago, raised the cost to the citizenry of practically every simple document that they would need to pay for: deeds, certificates, documents in relation to court proceedings, et cetera.

Mr. Speaker, they were taking so much money from the Treasury, but imposing those kinds of increases on the ordinary citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. Increases of over 100 per cent, 200 per cent, sometimes 500 per cent, sometimes 1000 per cent placed on the people of Trinidad and Tobago and now the Member for Fyzabad is telling us about reducing land and building taxes.

That is why in the budget, which talks about people—our priority is to do a series of things to ensure that the people of Trinidad and Tobago no longer have to endure the kinds of hardships that they put them through. We do not act lawlessly, so I cannot stand here and reduce the cost of the land and building taxes by a whim. We do not act by whim and the People's National Movement Government does not act vaille-que-vaille.

Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that perhaps every speaker on that side appears to be inebriated by the exuberance of their own verbosity. It is clear that they are still punch drunk and, if they were here in the interest of the people of Trinidad and Tobago, the Member for Siparia would not have said that the first thing that one does is pay. It is not the first thing that you do when you go to the registry.

In relation to the civil registry, documents must be ordered then you pay. In relation to the Companies Registry—do not say “oh gosh” because the lies must not be allowed, or the inaccurate information must not be allowed to stay on the *Hansard* record. Just as your talk of discrimination will be challenged on every occasion that we on this side speak.

In relation to the Companies Registry, the documents must be checked at the counter, then you pay. In relation to the land registry, the documents must be checked first then you pay. In relation to the free birth certificate that will come

on board in the month of January, although it will not be a cash transaction, you will still have to get a receipt in order to indicate that a transaction took place.

Mr. Speaker, let me also say that it is painfully clear that they did not understand the Bill that was before us for debate today, because the objective of the amendment is to facilitate members of the public who are doing cash transactions and where the member of the public is in the line at 3.00 p.m., the cashier will now by law be required to treat with that person if the transaction takes up to 6 o'clock. They did not even understand the significance of what the amendment was trying to do.

Mr. Speaker, section 9(2) without the further amendment would require the cashier to close at 3.00 p.m. and no further cash could be collected. By the amendment that we are making, the cashier must accept cash once the member of the public is physically within the office of the Registrar General at 3.00 p.m.

Section 9(1) must be distinguished and what that section says is that the office must remain open until 3.15 p.m. This provision relates to non-cash transactions. So title searches and the like can continue up to 3.15 p.m. However, where a cash transaction is to be undertaken and a person is in line at 3.00 p.m., the cashier must remain open until the last person in the line has been dealt with and that could extend beyond 3.15 p.m.

I wish to emphasize that the amendment to the Registrar General Act has more to do with preserving the validity and the legality on cash transactions.

PROCEDURAL MOTION

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the House continue to sit until the completion of the matter before us.

Question put and agreed to.

REGISTRAR GENERAL (AMDT.) BILL

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis: Mr. Speaker, let me re-emphasize that the amendment has to do with preserving the validity and legality of cash transactions occurring after 3.00 p.m. and if this was not done, any such transactions would be *ultra vires* the Act rather than as had been said quite correctly by those on the other side. That all this was meant to do was allow people to take cash for 15 more minutes, totally misinterpreting the legislation before this House, but that is in fact the intention of those on the other side, totally missing the point, totally misinforming the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

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Mr. Speaker, I repeat this legislation is again to clean up the mess that was left and nobody will tell us how to set our legislative agenda. We know what we want to achieve and we will set our agenda. In the meantime, and in an effort to ensure that we can implement some of the legislation that is on the statute books, we must go through the process of cleaning up what is imperfect legislation which cannot be proclaimed or implemented, and because the systems have not been put in place. We will not be putting the people of Trinidad and Tobago through that with legislation on the books only for numbers and absolutely nothing can be done either to proclaim it, or to implement it and as a consequence of that, we will continue to bring legislation here to clean up their mess and we will move this country into 2020 as a developed country in this region of the Caribbean.

As I talk about that, I would like to say that we on this side would continue to look after the interest of all the people of Trinidad and Tobago, even their interest.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a second time.

Bill committed to a committee of the whole House.

House in committee.

Clause 1 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 2.

Question proposed, That clause 2 stand part of the Bill.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Mr. Chairman, I beg to move that the amendment as circulated form part of the Bill.

2 Delete. Substitute the following clause:

Section 9

Amended

Chap. 19:03

(2) The Registrar General Act is amended in section 9 by repealing subsection (2) and substituting the following subsection:

(2) Notwithstanding subsection (1), the registrar General—

(a) shall not accept cash for any transaction after three o'clock in the afternoon

except where a member of the public desirous of transacting such business was in the office at the said three o'clock;

- (b) may with the approval of the Minister by notification published in the Gazette and at least one daily newspaper in circulation in Trinidad and Tobago—
 - (i) close the Office of the Registrar General for the transaction of business on any working day; or
 - (ii) alter the length of the period referred to in subsection (1) for the transaction of business on any working day.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 2, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

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

House resumed.

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

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this House do now adjourn to Friday, November 29, 2002 at 1.30 p.m.

In adjourning the House, Mr. Speaker, there was agreement and discussion and having regard to some issues with respect to the Standing Orders, we have agreed that the matters on the adjournment would be taken at the next sitting of the Parliament.

JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE (APPOINTMENT OF)

Mr. Speaker: Before I put the question for the adjournment, hon. Members, I would like to indicate that I received correspondence from the other place and I wish to inform the House accordingly.

Joint Select Committee
[MR. SPEAKER]

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With respect to the appointment of Senators, the Senate has resolved that the following five Members be appointed to sit with an equal number in the House as a Joint Select Committee to consider and report on the undermentioned Bills:

- The Constitution (Amdt.) Bill, 2002;
- The Police Service Bill, 2002;
- The Police Complaints Authority Bill, 2002.

The Members are:

- Mrs. Glenda Morean-Phillip
- Ms. Christine Kangaloo
- Mr. Rennie Dumas
- Mr. Wade Mark
- Prof. Ramesh Deosaran

**SESSIONAL SELECT COMMITTEES
(APPOINTMENT OF)**

Public Accounts Committee

Mr. Speaker: Also, I received further correspondence from the other place appointing the following Members to sit with an equal number of Members from this House on the Public Accounts Committee:

- Ms. Christine Kangaloo
- Mr. Satish Ramroop
- Mr. Conrad Enill
- Mrs. Carolyn Seepersad-Bachan
- Amb. Christopher Thomas

Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee

Mr. Speaker: The following Members have also been appointed from the other place to sit with an equal number of Members from this House on the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee:

- Ms. Christine Kangaloo
- Pundit Maniedeo Persad
- Mr. Mustapha Abdul-Hamid

Mr. Wade Mark

Mrs. Mary King

**JOINT SELECT COMMITTEES
(APPOINTMENT OF)**

Mr. Speaker: On the Joint Select Committee established under section 66A of the Constitution to consider and report on the operations of municipal corporations and service commissions, with the exception of the legal service commission, the following Members of the Senate have been appointed to sit with an equal number of this House:

Mr. Mustapha Abdul-Hamid

Ms. Christine Kangaloo

Pundit Maniedeo Persad

Mr. Arnim Smith

Mr. Robin Montano

Mrs. Parvatee Anmolsingh-Mahabir

The Joint Select Committee established under section 66A of the Constitution to consider and report on the operations of Government Ministries with responsibility areas as set out in Part I of the Appendix and on statutory authorities and state enterprises which fall within the purview of such Ministries is to sit with an equal number of Members from this House.

The following Members of the Senate have been appointed:

Mr. Rawle Titus

Mr. Conrad Enill

Mr. Satish Ramroop

Mr. Wade Mark

Mr. Sadiq Baksh

Mrs. Mary King

The following Members have been appointed from the other place to sit with an equal number of Members of this House on the Joint Select Committee established under section 66A of the Constitution to consider and report on the operations of Government ministries with responsibility areas as set out in Part II

of the Appendix and on statutory authorities and state enterprises which fall within the purview of such Ministries:

Mr. Rawle Titus

Mr. Mustapha Abdul-Hamid

Pundit Maniedeo Persad

Mrs. Carolyn Seepersad-Bachan

Dr. Jennifer Kernahan

Prof. Ramesh Deosaran

Hon. Members, I wish to point out that Standing Order 79B(5) of the House stipulates:

“(5) Within ten days following the appointment of Members to serve on Joint Select Committees, the Speaker of the House shall summon a Meeting of each Committee and the first business to be transacted thereat shall be the election of a Chairman and a Vice-Chairman and the determination of a quorum. If at such meeting a Chairman is not elected, the Speaker shall appoint a Member of the Committee to be the Chairman.”

In this regard, I am giving notice that the first meeting of these committees will be held on, or before, Friday, November 29, 2002 at 11.30 a.m. in the Chamber of this Parliament.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 8.00 p.m.