

Leave of Absence

Friday, February 21, 2003

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, February 21, 2003

The House met at 1.30 p.m.

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER in the Chair]

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I have received communication from the Member for La Brea (Hon. Hedwige Bereaux) seeking leave of absence from today's sitting. The leave of absence which was requested has been granted.

COMPANIES (FORMER-ACT COMPANIES) (VALIDATION) BILL

Bill to validate certain acts of former-Act Companies, 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 Agricultural Development Bank of Trinidad and Tobago for the year ended December 31, 2001. [*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 Trinidad and Tobago Postal Corporation for the year ended June 30, 2001. [*Hon. K. Valley*]
3. Annual audited financial statements of National Helicopter Services Limited for the financial year ended September 30, 2001. [*Hon. K. Valley*]
4. Annual audited financial statements of Trinidad and Tobago Solid Waste Management Company Limited for the financial year ended December 31, 2001. [*Hon. K. Valley*]
5. Annual audited financial statements of Tourism and Industrial Development Company of Trinidad and Tobago Limited for the financial year ended September 30, 2000. [*Hon. K. Valley*]
6. Annual audited financial statements of Property and Industrial Development Company of Trinidad and Tobago Limited for the financial year ended September 30, 2000. [*Hon. K. Valley*]

7. Annual audited financial statements of Small Business Development Company Limited for the financial year ended September 30, 2001. [*Hon. K. Valley*]
8. Annual audited financial statements of National Enterprises Limited for the financial year ended March 31, 2001. [*Hon. K. Valley*]
9. Annual audited financial statements of National Enterprises Limited for the financial year ended March 31, 2002. [*Hon. K. Valley*]
10. Annual audited financial statements of Point Lisas Industrial Port Development Corporation Limited Group for the financial year ended December 31, 2001. [*Hon. K. Valley*]
11. Annual audited financial statements of Caroni (1975) Limited for the years ended December 31, 1991 to 1992. [*Hon. K. Valley*]
12. Annual audited financial statements of Caroni (1975) Limited for the years ended December 31, 1993 to 1995. [*Hon. K. Valley*]
13. Annual audited financial statements of Caroni (1975) Limited for the year ended December 31, 1996. [*Hon. K. Valley*]
14. Annual audited financial statements of Caroni (1975) Limited for the year ended December 31, 1997. [*Hon. K. Valley*]
15. Annual audited financial statements of Caroni (1975) Limited for the year ended December 31, 1998. [*Hon. K. Valley*]
16. Annual audited financial statements of Caroni (1975) Limited for the year ended June 30, 1999. [*Hon. K. Valley*]
17. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the Financial Statements of the Trinidad and Tobago Civil Aviation Authority for the period August 11, 2000 to September 30, 2001. [*Hon. K. Valley*]
18. Report of the Police Service Commission for the year 2001. [*Hon. K. Valley*]

Papers 1, 2 and 17 to be referred to the Public Accounts Committee.

Papers 3 to 16 to be referred to the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee.

**POLICE SERVICE REFORM BILLS
PRESENTATION**

The Attorney General (Sen. The Hon. Glenda Morean): Mr. Speaker, I beg to lay on the Table the report of the Joint Select Committee of the House appointed to consider and report on the Bills entitled:

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

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Mr. Speaker, there are 11 questions on the Order Paper today—we are getting some action at last—and of those 11 questions, the Government would be answering eight, and we are asking that questions Nos. 24, 32 and 33 be deferred for two weeks.

Mr. Singh: Mr. Speaker, there are nine written questions; at least four were due since February 15, 2003 and another three are due by today's date and we have not had any response by the Leader of Government Business on these written questions. Only one has been presented to us.

Hon. K. Valley: Mr. Speaker, I suggest that the Member reads the Standing Order very carefully with respect to written questions.

Mr. Singh: Mr. Speaker, there is a time period.

The following questions stood on the Order Paper:

**WASA Settlement
(Legal Matters)**

- 24.** Could the Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment:
- (a) Indicate whether any legal matters were settled by WASA during the period December 2001 to January 2003?
 - (b) If so, could he state the terms and conditions of each settlement? [Mr. G. Singh]

**Piparo Rehabilitation Centre
(Staff Vacancies)**

- 32.** Would the Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister state:
- (a) The names, addresses and job responsibilities of all staff selected for the Piparo Rehabilitation Centre?
 - (b) Would the Minister indicate the recruitment process used to select the staff referred in part (a) above, indicating the nature and dates of

advertisements for the job positions, dates of interviews, ranking of applicants and reasons for selection of the persons chosen?

- (c) (i) Would the Minister state whether there are any staffing positions to be created or existing staff vacancies to be filled?
- (ii) Would the Minister list the selection criteria to be used for the filling of vacancies? [Dr. A. Nanan]

**Interchange Project
(Status of)**

33. Would the Minister of Works and Transport indicate the status of the Interchange Project at the junction of the Uriah Butler and Churchill Roosevelt Highways? [Mr. G. Singh]

Questions, by leave, deferred

Princes Town Health Facility

18. **Mr. Subhas Panday** asked the Minister of Health:

- (a) Would the Minister state the date on which the Princes Town Health Facility will become operational?
- (b) The extent and nature of the services which will be available at the said facility?
- (c) How many doctors and nurses will be attached to it?

The Minister of Health (Hon. Colm Imbert): Mr. Speaker, as a result of his concern for irregularities and mismanagement in the Regional Health Authorities, a stop Order was issued by the then Minister in the Ministry of Health, Dr. Fuad Khan, on May 08, 2001, instructing all Regional Health Authorities to cease procurement. As a result, the procurement process for the equipment for the Princes Town Health Facility was held in abeyance. I wish to repeat. As a result of the concern by the then Minister in the Ministry of Health, Dr. Fuad Khan, regarding mismanagement and irregularities in the Regional Health Authorities under the former UNC administration, a stop Order was issued. This stop Order was removed by the new administration on May 10, 2002. As a consequence, I am pleased to report that most of the equipment for the Princes Town District Health Facility has since been procured and is now in place. [*Desk thumping*]

Several design modifications were requested by the proposed users of the facility over the period 2000 to 2001. This included the air-conditioning of the

main reception and the accident and emergency areas, as well as the telephone PBX system and the X-Ray booth shield. There were also problems from that period relating to the securing of a connection for an adequate water supply. This has since been rectified by the new administration.

The Princes Town Health Centre was transferred to the Princes Town District Health Facility Compound on September 09, 2002, where it is now fully staffed and functional. The Accident and Emergency and Diagnostic Services at the Princes Town District Health Facility are expected to be fully operational by April 30, 2003. The requisite professional and support staff is estimated to cost \$3,173,713 per year, and this funding is now being sourced.

The projected medical and nursing staff for the Princes Town District Health Facility other than the health sector, which is already in operation, is as follows: eight House Officers; one primary-care Physician I; one primary-care Physician II; twelve Registered Nurses and eight enrolled Nursing Assistants.

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

Dr. Rafeeq: Supplemental. Mr. Speaker, could the Minister inform this honourable House when was construction of the DHF completed?

Hon. C. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, I am advised that the construction of the DHF was partially completed some time in 2001, but there were numerous design and construction issues which were left unattended by the previous administration which the new administration has corrected. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Rafeeq: Mr. Speaker, could the hon. Minister inform this honourable House whether the staff—the doctors and nurses particularly—have already been recruited or identified?

Hon. C. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated in my answer, the Accident and Emergency and Diagnostic Services at the Princes Town District Health Facility will be fully operational on April 30, 2003, which, obviously, indicates that the staff would be on site at that time.

Dr. Rafeeq: Mr. Speaker, seeing that the hon. Minister knew that this health facility was coming on stream shortly, could the Minister inform us whether the funding for the staff at the DHF has been provided in the 2002/2003 budget of the South West Regional Health Authority?

Hon. C. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, funding would be provided for the operation of the facility. The health budget is in excess of \$1 million, and we are very

innovative in the new administration and we would allocate funds where they are required, and funding would be provided for that facility.

Thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Rafeeq: Mr. Speaker, I wonder whether the Minister can tell us why the air-conditioning units of the Accident and Emergency Department of the DHF—

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, that is not a supplemental arising out of the main question.

Dr. Rafeeq: Mr. Speaker, I am asking about the DHF itself.

Mr. Speaker: No.

Yolande Pompey Recreation Ground (Budgetary Allocation)

19. Mr. Subhas Panday (*Princes Town*) asked the Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs:

- (a) Would the Minister inform this House whether there is a budgetary allocation for rehabilitative works on the Yolande Pompey Recreation Ground for the financial year 2001/2002?
- (b) If the answer to (a) is in the affirmative, could the Minister state the reason for the stoppage of work on the said recreation ground?
- (c) Would the Minister inform this House:
 - (i) the date on which work will be recommenced; and
 - (ii) the projected date of completion of the work?

The Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs (Hon. Roger Boynes): Mr. Speaker, there is a budgetary allocation of \$1,870,000 identified in the draft estimates of the development programme for the financial year 2003, in connection with the rehabilitative works for the Yolande Pompey Recreation Ground.

There were difficulties between NIPDEC and the contractor with respect to the claims for payment and, as a result, work was temporarily suspended. These difficulties have now been resolved, and work is expected to resume by the end of February 2003, and the project is expected to be completed by the end of 2003.

**Criminal Matters
(Reform in Sentencing)**

20. Mr. Subhas Panday asked the hon. Attorney General:

Would the Attorney General inform this House what steps are being taken to address the issue of reform in sentencing in criminal matters?

The Attorney General (Sen. The Hon. Glenda Morean): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Act No. 80 of 2000, a Sentencing Commission was appointed by the former government on December 08, 2000. This Commission is unable to function since no arrangements were made for the necessary machinery including staff. The sections of the Act governing staff and funding cannot be implemented because they are in conflict with the current regulations in the public service.

The Government considers the Sentencing Commission to be a high priority matter, and we are moving swiftly to amend the necessary legislation to make the Commission effective.

**WASA Housing Quarters
(Ownership Disposition)**

23. Mr. Ganga Singh (Caroni East) asked the hon. Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment:

- (a) Would the Minister inform this House of the number of housing quarters owned by WASA as at December 2001 and indicate the location of each?
- (b) Could the Minister also inform this House whether a decision was made by WASA to dispose of such housing quarters to employees and, if so, could he state the market value of the properties offered for sale?

The Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment (Sen. The Hon. Rennie Dumas): Mr. Speaker, the Water and Sewerage Authority has advised that their records indicate as at December 2001, the authority owned 76 houses. Details regarding the location of these houses have been lodged with the Clerk of the House for examination as considered necessary.

The Board of Commissioners of the Water and Sewerage Authority at its 560th Meeting held on February 22, 2001, took a decision to dispose of all the houses owned by the authority that were not considered strategic to its operations. This policy decision must be viewed in the context of a number of factors: improvement in transportation and communication infrastructure; automation of WASA plants and installations; the rising cost of repairs and maintenance to buildings.

Oral Answers to Questions
[SEN. THE HON. R. DUMAS]

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The Board of Commissioners of the authority at its 572nd Meeting of 14th May, 2002, took a decision, inter alia, to dispose of 19 of its houses to the employees who had been in occupation of these properties. The location and valuation of the properties are as follows:

Address of Properties	Value	Date of Valuation
Lot 54 Calcutta Road, Freeport	\$100,000	June 21, 2000
Lot. 4 Glen Lane, San Juan	\$90,000	May 29, 2000
Lot 83 Coromandel Road, Granville	\$60,000	June 21, 2000
Southern Main Road, Point Fortin	\$50,000	February 02, 2001
Lot 54 Pierreville Road, Mayaro	\$70,000	February 12, 2001
Lot 80 Coromandel Road, Granville	\$90,000	June 21, 2000
Lot 82 Coromandel Road, Granville	\$70,000	June 21, 2000
Lot 54 Robinson Street, Montrose, Chaguanas	\$220,000	June 06, 2001
Exchange Road, Couva	\$125,000	May 15, 2001
Lot 2 Glen Lane, El Socorro, San Juan	\$145,000	June 11, 2001
Lot 3 Glen Lane, El Socorro, San Juan	\$125,000	June 11, 2001
Lot 51 Calcutta Road, Freeport	\$230,000	June 6, 2001
Lot 52 Calcutta Road, Freeport	\$165,000	June 6, 2001
Lot 53 Calcutta Road, Freeport	\$135,000	June 6, 2001
Lot 26 Seukeran Street, San Fernando	\$160,000	May 15, 2001
Lot 7 Rapsey Street, St. Clair, Port of Spain	\$610,000	June 20, 2001
Charlotte Street, St. Joseph	\$370,000	June 11, 2001
Ottley Street, Scarborough, Tobago	\$380,400	June 2001
Kelly Village, Whiteland, Piparo	\$75,000	May 15, 2001

These valuations were done under the former administration. Details relating to the location and valuation of these properties have also been lodged with the Clerk of the House for examination as considered necessary.

In order to ensure that the Government's interest remains paramount, WASA has been directed that no further actions are to be taken with respect to the sale of houses pending, and the conduct of a revaluation exercise to reflect current market prices and a review of the policy of this position by Cabinet.

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

Mr. Singh: Mr. Speaker, is the hon. Minister aware that the Chief Executive Officer, Mr. Errol Grimes, purchased one of those properties?

Hon. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, the Member should know because it was in his time.

Hon. R. Dumas: Mr. Speaker, this Minister is not aware.

Mr. Singh: Mr. Speaker, at the 522nd Board Meeting of WASA, a decision was made to dispose of certain properties and the CEO was one of those persons who purchased those properties, is the Minister aware of that?

Hon. R. Dumas: Mr. Speaker, the Minister is not aware.

Mr. Singh: Mr. Speaker, is the Minister aware that Wayne Joseph, one of the directors of operations at WASA is one of the purchasers of the property at Wainwright Street, St. Clair?

Hon. R. Dumas: Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member is aware that Mr. Wayne Joseph purchased a property at Rapsey Street, but I do not know if that is the same property.

Mr. Singh: Mr. Speaker, is the Minister aware that those valuations were not accepted by the Board of WASA in the previous administration?

Hon. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, why did the hon. Member not say so in the first place?

Hon. R. Dumas: According to the minutes of the meetings of WASA, the board approved those valuations.

Hon. Member: Your board. [*Desk thumping*]

[*Vide end of sitting for written part of the answer*]

**NEDCO
(Money Allocated)**

26. Mr. Harry Partap (*Nariva*) asked the Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development:

- (a) Would the Minister state how much money was made available by Government to establish the National Entrepreneurial Development Company (NEDCO) and how was this money sourced?
- (b) Can the Minister advise whether there is a specified time limit for the processing of a NEDCO loan application for a business project?

The Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development (Hon. Lawrence Achong): Mr. Speaker, a total of \$40.9 million has been made available to NEDCO of which the initial \$4.1 million was a transfer from the Unemployment Relief Fund. The remainder, \$36.8 million, was a loan supported by a Letter of Comfort from the Minister of Finance.

There is no specified time limit given for the processing of a NEDCO loan application for a business project. The period from first contact would vary depending on the level of preparedness of the applicant and the project. The documentation available to substantiate cost and estimates; the nature and complexity of the business proposal and how thorough is its related business plan. The application is complete once the required documentation is supplied and the application is signed. Subject to any further investigation or verification, which must be done, every effort is made to obtain an early decision on the application and disbursement within a four-week period from the date the application is submitted.

Mr. Partap: Mr. Speaker, could the hon. Minister say on what authority the funds from the unemployment levy was transferred to NEDCO? When, in fact, were the approved estimates for 2001/2002, the unemployment levy funds assigned to the Unemployment Relief Programme or what is now known as URP?

Hon. L. Achong: Mr. Speaker, the transfer of funds from the URP was based on a Cabinet decision.

Mr. Partap: Mr. Speaker, considering the procedures for processing applications for business project loans from NEDCO, would the hon. Minister explain how 826 loans were processed and approved in the sixth-week period to the general election 2002?

Hon. L. Achong: Mr. Speaker, that is a separate question.

Mr. Partap: Mr. Speaker, would the Minister state why some applicants for NEDCO funds did not meet the requirements set out in the prospectus, and yet these people were granted loans?

Hon. L. Achong: Mr. Speaker, I am unaware of any such transaction taking place.

**Director, Information Technology
(Advertisement of Post)**

- 28. Mr. Harry Partap** (*Nariva*) asked the Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development whether the contract post of Director, Information Technology in the Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development was advertised to the public and, if so, through what medium and on what dates?

The Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development (Hon. Lawrence Achong): Mr. Speaker, the position of Director, Information Technology in the Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development was advertised to the public through the following media on the dates indicated: the *Guardian* newspaper on March 22, 23, 26 and 27, 2002, and the *Newsday* newspaper on March 23, 24 and 25, 2002.

Mr. Partap: Mr. Speaker, a supplemental question. Would the hon. Minister state whether the position of Director, Information Technology in the Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development was a public service position converted into a contract position?

Hon. L. Achong: That is a separate question, Mr. Speaker.

**Community Based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme
(CEPEP)**

- 30. Dr. Adesh Nanan** (*Tabaquite*) asked the hon. Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment:
- (a) Would the Minister identify the source of funding for the Community Environment Protection and Enhancement Programme (CEPEP)?
 - (b) Would the Minister state the names, addresses and job responsibilities of all staff selected to administer, manage and implement the programme together with their respective salaries?
 - (c) Would the Minister indicate the recruitment process used to select the staff referred to in part (a) above, indicating the nature and dates of advertisements for the job positions, dates of interviews, ranking of applicants and reasons for selection of the persons chosen?

The Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment (Sen. The Hon. Rennie Dumas): Mr. Speaker, the Community-Based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme is being financed by a seven-year bond in the sum

of TT \$74,932,97 from the Royal Bank of Trinidad and Tobago, (RBTT). The loan was negotiated by the Ministry of Finance on behalf of the Trinidad and Tobago Solid Waste Management Company (SWMCOL), and is to be repaid over a period of seven years with an interest rate of 6.9 per cent. Sixteen persons were hired to administer the programme. Details relating to their names and job responsibilities have been lodged with the Clerk of the House for examination. These persons were selected from SWMCOL's existing database of applications on file as well as through advertisements. Twelve were selected from that database and four through external advertisements.

The selection of employees was based on interviews according to established procedures. It is to be noted that the implementation programme has resulted in the enhancement of the physical environment in the various environmental work areas in which the programme is being implemented, and has led to the creation of 110 new small businesses and has created an estimated 6,000 new jobs exclusive of indirect employment related to the manufacturing of uniforms, transportation and the provision of ancillary services.

Dr. Nanan: Mr. Speaker, I am not aware that the Clerk of the House has such listing.

Hon. R. Dumas: Mr. Speaker, my information is that the notes were lodged with the Clerk of the House. [*Crosstalk*] If the information is not yet with the Clerk of the House it would be in the next few minutes.

[*Vide end of sitting for written part of the answer.*]

Solid Waste Management Company Limited (SWMCOL)
(Contracts awarded for CEPEP)

31. Dr. Adesh Nanan asked the hon. Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development:

- (a) Would the Minister list the names and addresses of all the contractors who were awarded contracts by the Solid Waste Management Company Limited for the Community Based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme (CEPEP) and the payments made to each?
- (b) Would the Minister state whether these contracts were publicly advertised?
- (c) (i) If the answer to part (b) is in the affirmative, would the Minister list the names and addresses of all the contractors who responded to the advertisement(s)?

- (ii) Would the Minister provide the listing of contractors short-listed for CEPEP?

The Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development (Hon. Lawrence Achong): Mr. Speaker, the Solid Waste Management Company Limited is advised that of the 219 candidates shortlisted for interviews, 110 individual organizations or firms were eventually given contracts under the Community Based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme (CEPEP). The names and addresses of contractors who went into contractual relations with SWMCOL for the purpose of performing various works under CEPEP, and payments made would be lodged with the Clerk of the House for attention within the next five minutes.

In the search for small contractors to implement CEPEP, I have been advised by SWMCOL that advertisements were placed in the daily newspapers inviting individuals and groups, including community-based organizations who were desirous of being hired as small contractors to apply, in writing, to the SWMCOL offices at No. 34, Independence Square, Port of Spain. These advertisements were placed over the period June 26—30, 2002 in the *Express*, *Newsday* and the *Guardian*. A copy of one such advertisement would be lodged with the Clerk of the House in the next five minutes.

Four hundred and thirty-six parties expressed an interest in participating as contractors. A detailed listing of names and addresses of all individuals or organizations that responded to the advertisement would be lodged with the Clerk of the House shortly. From the original list of applications, 219 were shortlisted and interviewed. The names of all individuals, organizations or firms that were shortlisted for interviews to become contractors under CEPEP, would be lodged with the Clerk of the House in the next few minutes.

Dr. Khan: Mr. Speaker, a supplemental question. Could the hon. Minister inform this honourable House whether he is aware that one of the contractors is the relative of a PNM Deputy Political Leader and was given preference for one of the contracts, as a payback, for being a PNM witness in the Commission of Enquiry with respect to voter-padding?

Hon. Imbert: What?

Hon. R. Dumas: Mr. Speaker, I am not so aware.

Mr. Partap: Mr. Speaker, could the hon. Minister tell this honourable House whether the CEPEP contractors are members drawn from the PNM General Council?

Hon. R. Dumas: Mr. Speaker, I am not so aware, but I am sure that the number, 219, exceeds the number of members of the PNM General Council; certainly, I must include, maybe, members of the UNC's General Council.

[Vide end of sitting for written part of the answer]

JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE

Adoption

The Attorney General (Sen. The Hon. Glenda Morean): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the following Motion standing in my name:

Be it resolved that this House adopt the Special Report of the Joint Select Committee appointed to consider and report on the Bills entitled:

1. The Constitution (Amdt.) Bill, 2002;
2. The Police Service Bill, 2002;
3. The Police Complaints Authority Bill, 2002.

Mr. Speaker, Members would recall that on November 15, 2002, this House resolved to appoint the following five members to a committee: Mrs. Camille Robinson-Regis; Mr. Fitzgerald Hinds; Mr. Anthony Roberts; Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar and Miss Gillian Lucky to sit with an equal number from the Senate, as a Joint Select Committee to consider and report on the Bills to which I just referred.

On November 19, 2002, the Senate agreed to a similar resolution appointing myself, Ms. Christine Kangaloo, Mr. Rennie Dumas, Mr. Wade Mark, Prof. Ramesh Deosaran, as members of the committee. The committee held its first meeting on Wednesday, November 27, 2002, and it has since held a total of eight public meetings. In keeping with the terms of reference and having regard to the genesis of the Bills before it, the committee decided to co-opt the assistance of legal and technical expertise and obtain the services of Mr. Samraj Harripaul, Chief Parliamentary Counsel in the Ministry of the Attorney General, who assisted with the drafting of the Bills.

The public meetings were as follows:

Date of Meeting

Place Held

Wednesday November 27, 2002

Red House, Committee Room No.4;

Friday January 17, 2003

Red House, Committee Room No. 4;

Friday January 24, 2003

Red House, Committee Room No. 4;

Monday February 03, 2003

Council Chamber, City Hall, Harris Promenade, San Fernando;

Oral Answers to Questions

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Wednesday February 05, 2003	Borough Hall, Chaguanas
Monday February 10, 2003	Works Lecture Room, Scarborough, Tobago
Wednesday February 12, 2003	Parliament Chamber, Red House;
Thursday February 20, 2003	Red House, Committee Room No. 4.

Those were the meetings held by the committee so far.

Mr. Speaker, your Committee has received a total of 51 written submissions from various organizations and individuals. Many of these submissions are lengthy and several highly complex legal issues have surfaced, which require the consideration of your Committee. In addition, the technical team, to whom all written submissions were forwarded, has not yet completed their analysis of these submissions.

Accordingly, your Committee is regrettably unable to complete considerations of the Bill and report to the Parliament within the time frame given to it, that is, by February 21, 2003 which is today. In submitting this report, your Committee seeks an extension of eight weeks in order to fully complete consideration of the Bills before it.

I beg to move, Mr. Speaker.

Question proposed.

Question put and agreed to.

Report adopted.

REGISTRAR GENERAL (AMDT.) BILL

Senate Amendment

The Minister of Legal Affairs (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis): Mr. Speaker, I would like to present to this honourable House the Motion standing in my name:

Be it resolved that the Senate amendment to the Registrar General (Amdt.) Bill, 2002 listed in the Appendix, be now considered.

Question proposed.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 2.

Senate amendment read as follows:

In the proposed section 9(2)(a), delete the word “cash” and substitute the word “payment”.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the House doth agree with the Senate in the said amendment.

Question proposed.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar (*Siparia*): Mr. Speaker, on the amendment that is before us, I remember this Bill coming to this honourable House and it was being debated, but I would like to raise an objection to the manner in which this honourable House conducts its business. This is an amendment coming from the Senate, which must come to the honourable House before it can be made law, and the first time we are seeing it, on the Supplemental Order Paper, is when we arrive at the Parliament. If we are to conduct the people's business in a proper manner, there must be notice of the business that is to be conducted. I would like to lodge that objection, Mr. Speaker.

I thank you.

Question put and agreed to.

LEASES OF STATE LANDS (VALIDATION) BILL

[SECOND DAY]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question [February 07, 2003]:

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Question again proposed.

Dr. Roodal Moonilal (*Oropouche*): Mr. Speaker, the matters before us relate to two Bills which we all agree would be dealt with together, and it is really the continuation of a debate that was in progress a couple weeks ago. I would like at this time to join the debate to respond largely to some of the comments, observations and allegations made by those on the Government Benches and also to raise some matters pertaining to the objective of these Bills—matters relating to land policy, agriculture and governance.

Mr. Speaker, any time I am standing and contributing to any debate, I like first to refer to section 53 of the Constitution, which spells out the role of the Parliament and Members' role in debating and passing legislation. We are here to promote and pass legislation to cater for peace, order and good governance. That is what legislation-making is about, as stated in the Constitution. Those issues are central to any debate on any Bill, particularly the elements of good Government and governance as they relate to the work of the Government.

While on the surface, these two measures may appear simple—and with this Government nothing at all is simple. I must say that I am disappointed that during the presentation of the hon. Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West, the hon. Member came to this honourable House, and whilst speaking on these matters did not share with us any comprehensive policy relating to land use, land management and land distribution. Instead, the hon. Member came to the honourable House and outlined, briefly, the provisions in the Bills and used the opportunity as well, to play the politics and attack the UNC of course, and made statements to the effect that the UNC had no vision and we brought faulty legislation to the Parliament.

The hon. Member also stated that the UNC government did very little for agriculture, and did not take up the challenge of transforming the agricultural sector and Caroni (1975) Limited. The Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West—and I am very happy to see him here today. He was missing this morning on TV6, when they were looking for him, having confirmed his attendance there, to meet me to discuss some of these issues. But as his colleague said some time ago; you could run but you cannot hide.

Mr. Rahael: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, just to correct the hon. Member. The fact is that there was no arrangement for me to meet with the hon. Member for Oropouche.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, I apologize to the hon. Member. I was wrongly informed by the producer of the show and the host, that the hon. Member confirmed with them last evening that he would be on the show this morning. I would have to raise that with the producer and the host of the Morning Edition on TV6. I do not expect the hon. Member to be telling us anything other than the truth. Mr. Speaker, I am happy to see him. With respect to some of the issues I raised this morning I would be happy to raise them, again, for him, and this time we would have the benefit of his reply which, due to no fault of his own, we did not have this morning.

The Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West also raised certain fundamental issues dealing with access to the ownership of land; the history of land use and distribution. He also raised the issue about certain policy measures that the Government was implementing, as it relates to the more efficient use of land and the more efficient management of the resources of the country. He also dealt with issues pertaining to information technology infrastructure within the scope of the management of lands and, of course, could not resist, as I said before, making allegations against the former UNC government, with respect to land, agriculture and Caroni (1975) Limited.

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Mr. Speaker, sadly the Member of La Brea followed and he also brought another round of criticisms and allegations against hon. Members on this side of the House and against the government of the United National Congress. I am sorry he is not here this afternoon. The Member thundered with his normal style that the UNC did nothing for agriculture and that we had no plan and no vision. He went on in detail to criticize the Member for Princes Town and then he made a very provocative statement. He said Caroni (1975) Limited does not have lands; the lands really belong to the people of Trinidad and Tobago, and the people of La Brea should have the right to those lands. That is very important. Mr. Speaker, we can expect—[*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I am interested in hearing what the hon. Member has to say, and I am sure you are too, so, please, let us give him a chance.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am also disappointed that the parliamentary seminar did nothing for them. The Member for La Brea was talking about the houses and buildings of Caroni—they belong to everyone. It is very interesting that we are now hearing about the buildings and dwellings related to WASA; and who may have gotten those houses and who did not.

The Member for La Brea also raised the issue of the National Housing Authority, and he made the point that the lands are there not only for agricultural purposes but also commercial and industrial development, and the Bills that are before us are really meant to put mechanisms for efficiency in place, so that those persons in possession of lands would have their legal status ratified and would then be able to use that legal right to access credit and loans and so on, for the purposes of the development of agri-business and so on.

Of course, the Member for La Brea went on to talk about the PNM's vision. He said the UNC spent years in government and did nothing for agriculture. Mr. Speaker, these are the concerns that those of us on this side would like to raise, and I want to tell them that those allegations did not go unnoticed and, therefore, they will not go unchallenged.

Mr. Speaker, this week has been another week of violence in the country, as normal. Apart from that, this week has also seen massive protest activity taking place in Central and South Trinidad, where workers at the stated-owned Caroni (1975) Limited are protesting and are now up in arms; are now mobilizing against the Government as it relates to matters pertaining to agricultural policy and land. Those are the key issues there.

For the benefit, primarily, of the Member for La Brea and all the hon. Members on the other side, it is important for us to restate our position in terms of

agricultural policy and Caroni, (1975) Limited because they like to go around and shout that the UNC had no policy for Caroni (1975) Limited; no plan for agriculture and so on. But while they were happy to quote Cabinet documents dealing with the Bills before us, they would not quote other Cabinet documents that deal with the UNC's strategy for reversing the fortunes of Caroni (1975) Limited, and bringing it to a state of financial independence. They would not deal with that, Mr. Speaker,

It was in July 1999 that the Cabinet of the United National Congress agreed to a plan for Caroni (1975) Limited that involved the phased participation of the private sector in the operations of Caroni (1975) Limited. Before, there were several plans dealing with Caroni (1975) Limited dating back to 1978. In fact, it was in 1978 that the former Prime Minister of this country, Dr. Williams, said that Caroni (1975) Limited workers would not get an increase in their wage unless Caroni (1975) Limited made a profit. The history of discrimination, terror, victimization, vindictiveness and malice began 25 years ago, and it is culminating now. I will remind the hon. Prime Minister of the statement he made in Woodford Square in early 2002, when he told his fans that if the UNC did not come to the Parliament and vote for a Speaker, Caroni (1975) Limited would have to close down. When he was addressing the Convention of the PNM in 1999 he said that. Those of us who did the research would have it. He said not a cent for Caroni (1975) Limited.

Mr. Speaker, our plan was fundamentally different to any other plan dealing with Caroni (1975) Limited since 1978. Every other plan for agricultural development had to do with the reduction of the labour force in the agricultural sector. Our approach to Caroni (1975) Limited was one of expansion whereby in the different operations, we were going to invite participation from the private sector, so those private investors and entrepreneurs would get involved in agriculture and the diversification activities in the agricultural sector. That was our approach. We were well on the way to implementing that approach. When it was sabotaged by those on the other side, in collusion with dissident elements, we were about to divest the rum distillery. We had worked out, with an investor, a valuation for 49 per cent of the rum distillery, and they said that we were selling out to our friends.

More than that, somebody came up with a madcap plan that the distillery was worth \$1 billion. And the Member for San Fernando East believes that. Today, they cannot find the \$1 billion, of course. The French gentleman who did that evaluation was named Mr. Fuchs. I hope I pronounced his name correctly. I do

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not want to make a mistake with the name at all. They were quoting liberally, and today they cannot find the \$1 billion. I do not want to run the risk of pronouncing that name again, but it is spelt F-U-C-H-S.

Mr. Speaker, just recently Lennox Grant, a seasoned journalist, wrote in the *Trinidad Guardian* on February 14, 2003. He said that Caroni (1975) Limited was on the verge of a turnaround—the rum distillery—as a result of a partnership with Angostura. He said also that today, Angostura is sailing the high seas, marketing all types of blends: rums, whiskies, and so on—internationally progressive—making millions. Caroni (1975) Limited’s produce could have been on those ships sailing the high seas.

2.30 p.m.

I quote:

“But for the slashing attack on the deal by then Attorney General Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj in September 2001, Caroni’s rum division would have been sailing the world’s oceans with the Angostura flagship.”

CL World Brands. That was the loss, not to Caroni (1975) Limited and the agricultural sector, Mr. Speaker, but to this country and they sabotaged it, one billion dollars in rum assets. Where is it now? Where? Cannot find it, of course, but that was part of the political mischief and the conspiracy to remove the then government.

Mr. Speaker, while they accused us of that, we had this plan, well on the way, for turning around the fortunes of that flagship corporation in the agricultural sector. It was the then Prime Minister, the Member for Couva North, addressing the Caroni long service awards in 1999 who said, and I want to quote him.

“...your board...”

Meaning the board of Caroni (1975) Limited, has:

“...embarked on a new transformation plan destined to achieve financial independence by December 2002.”

Of course by December 2002 a conspiracy had led to undermining democracy, or the divinity, why they are sitting together. The Member for Couva North, the then Prime Minister, continued, and I quote:

“You would be justified in asking why this new plan will succeed when so many others have failed.

The reason is that all previous proposals for the rationalization of Caroni Ltd. were based on the premise that there will be a reduction in the labour force.

Not unnaturally, the workers and the unions resisted such a plan.”

As they are doing today.

“And without the co-operation of the workers and their representatives no plan for the transformation of Caroni...”

And, by extension, the agricultural sector:

“can succeed.

The new plan...”

The Prime Minister said, increased the labour force.

“There is no plan to privatise Caroni or sell it to anybody. The new plan speaks of private sector participation.

The idea is to identify certain areas of activity of Caroni, for example, rice, citrus, rum, and divest its assets.

We can then invite the private sector to participate in a joint venture with the subsidiary, on condition...”

Very critical, I repeat:

“on condition that production and, consequently, labour is expanded.”

That was the vision of the Member for Couva North regarding agriculture. [*Desk thumping*] I want to continue—very important for those who said we had no vision, no plan. The then Prime Minister continued:

“The new Caroni will see the emergence of a new type of employee.

Contrary to what some of your detractors will have you believe, this company is not for sale and there are no plans to arbitrarily reduce its labour force.”

[*Desk thumping*] Mr. Speaker, this was our vision. We began with the rum distillery which could have been now a world leader. Where is it now? Where? You are not hearing much about Mr. Fuchs. “Doh” know where he went. That was our vision. They attacked us at the time. Mr. Speaker, their relationship with the agricultural sector is a tale of terror, deceit, malice and vindictiveness. That is what it is. When they got into office by that constitutional—what was it—conspiracy, the first thing they did was tell Caroni (1975) Limited that if the Opposition, United National Congress, did not go to Parliament, “Caroni close down”. That is what they did, threatened the workers, immediately upon entering office.

Mr. Manning: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the hon. Member giving way. I just wonder if he will be kind enough to allow the distinguished Member for St. Augustine to outline, at an appropriate stage, to this honourable House the salient elements of the Dookeran Plan for Caroni (1975) Limited [*Interruption*] that was developed somewhere around 1988. [*Interruption*]

Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, with due respect to the Member for San Fernando East, these are questions he can ask the Member in the tearoom. [*Laughter*] Please direct questions to me. If I am on my feet, I would like the questions directed to me. He may find all the Members in the tearoom [*Interruption*] or the washroom, [*Laughter*] or wherever, but let me get back because this is a strategy, you know, Mr. Speaker.

So, they threatened the workers. They said, “You have to vote for Speaker, otherwise, no money for Caroni”. At the same time, at one of the regular press conferences after Cabinet, they said WASA was in a worse position than Caroni “buh dey increase everybody pay at WASA. Dey increase pay, reduce pay, give house, take back house, buh WASA in a worse financial position than Caroni; no VSEP there; no 9,000 must go.” When we raised the matter of Caroni (1975) Limited, they said they would not even divest Lake Asphalt. That is a national treasure. Caroni (1975) Limited is no national treasure. Lake Asphalt is. It is important to put on record this history. That is what will explain why sugar is on the boil today and why the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West is under some pressure in dealing with the sugar workers.

Mr. Speaker, they continued that reign of terror against the company. By May 2002 they were talking about VSEP. We are on record as warning this population by mid 2002 that they were not talking about VSEP. This was no voluntary separation of employment programme. This was retrenchment at the door. We told the country that by mid 2002. Today, very instructive, workers in the industry, their families, their communities, those people in the agricultural sector, the same sector to which these two Bills are meant to bring efficiency, are now in trauma. The people are sad. They are depressed. [*Interruption*] I am coming to the consultancy phase too—and the people are depressed and mourning. Mr. Speaker, there are villages and communities throughout South and Central Trinidad that depend on the sugar industry and, while they talk about the subsidy to Caroni and the money Caroni spent, they have not done any assessment of what their plan will do.

By the way, Mr. Speaker, let us say for the record now, this Government has not put forward to the population nor to this Parliament any plan to deal with

Caroni (1975) Limited and the agricultural sector. All we know is from what we read in the interview with Clevon Raphael. All we know is from what we read in press conferences and press releases. There is no plan and I challenge the responsible Minister to lay in this honourable House their plan as it relates to the agricultural sector and Caroni (1975) Limited. Put the plan so that we can look at it, but you do not have that. You have three and four ministers writing the sugar company, and I will read those letters into the record in a while. You have three and four writing on all different aspects and so on but this is their vision for the agricultural sector—close down. Ours was to expand.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to say that between the period 1995—2001 not one sugar worker lost his/her job as a result of government policy. [*Desk thumping*] We never talked about retrenchment and when we were transforming Caroni we brought on board the workers, the unions—

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, I would urge you to speak to the question. You are going on too much on Caroni, and perhaps you may want to consider a substantive motion on Caroni, but could you relate it to the Bill? [*Interruption*] Hon. Member for Couva North, I am on my feet and I would ask you to be silent.

Mr. B. Panday: Of course! But be fair!

Mr. Speaker: Please, if you can relate it, [*Interruption*] relate it to the Bill.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. [*Interruption*] That was one of the reasons, in the beginning of my contribution, why I was labouring to recap what those on the other side said before me. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker: I did not hear you. You are concentrating your entire presentation on Caroni. Please, move on.

Dr. R. Moonilal: I will now speak, Mr. Speaker, about land use and the agricultural sector. The matter deals with land as well so I will now address land. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker, they are now telling workers in the agricultural sector that, if they give up their jobs, land will be made available to them.

Mr. Ramnath: They are lying about it.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Now, a few weeks ago they produced a document which gave the list of names of persons who got jobs in the National Housing Authority refurbishing programme. In a fit of boredom, I took that list and I read it and I was waiting to tell the Minister to take back the list, he made a mistake. “That is

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not the list of the people who got jobs in the NHA, that is the PNM membership list.” It read like a membership list. Now, [*Interruption*] if they are going to distribute land in the same way they distributed the NHA jobs, then the Caroni workers have a different thing coming because, in the agreement with the workers, in that Voluntary Separation Employment Programme for workers in the agricultural sector, they said those workers will be considered for land [*Interruption*] but they also said in this document that priority in accessing lands for approved agricultural purposes will be afforded to them by the Estate Management and Business Development Company provided they meet the criteria set by the Estate Management and Business Development Company. So workers in the agricultural sector should go home and that, by itself, is a terror tactic and “We promise you that we will consider you for land if you meet the criteria set by the Estate Management Business Development Company”.

Mr. Speaker, no one knows what is the mandate or the terms of reference of this Estate Management Business Development Company, who is on the board. We know of somebody named Mr. Roe or Rawe (Phonetic), something like that. He is the CEO. We “doh” know where he is from. We “doh” know if he is from Grenada or Australia. We “doh” know where he is from. We “doh” know anything about this board that will now set criteria to offer lands to workers in the agricultural sector, who they are targeting to send home; and it is very interesting, this plan to send home. They are introducing VSEP for workers in this agricultural sector who they have said will be considered for land. They said that they will give them VSEP and they would enhance the VSEP but they are also on record as saying that “If you do not take VSEP, you will be retrenched”. How voluntary is that? That is not voluntary.

I want to put to the House the plight of a worker in the agricultural sector, a gentleman who might be applying for land. A worker came to see me in my office in Oropouche. He said, “Dr. Moonilal, I am 44 years old.” He has been working in Caroni in the agricultural sector for 26 years. The VSEP they are offering him is \$50,000. The enhancement is \$25,000. That would be \$75,000 enhanced VSEP. He said, “If I do not take this VSEP they will retrench me after and I will lose the \$25,000”. Mr. Speaker, at the age of 44, imagine this, this man has to maintain five children, has the wife at home, he has a mortgage on the house, for \$70,000, he then would have \$5,000 for five children and maintaining the home. At the age of 44 he has to get a job in the agricultural sector or maybe he has to get the land under the Estate Management Development Company, but this is one worker.

There are thousands of them in that industry, in that agricultural sector. Could we expect that they will be getting this land as they got NHA jobs? Or, what are

they supposed to do in the agricultural sector, get jobs with CEPEP? What is CEPEP? Community Environment something, something, something. Would they get jobs in CEPEP? When you work in CEPEP cutting grass, would you graduate to cutting cane? No; because that closed down too! In the agricultural sector they want to close the factory at Brechin Castle. They may want to divide that land to also distribute in accordance with the two Bills, so they may want to efficiently give out those lands on which Brechin Castle stands today. They want to close that factory. They want to produce 70,000 to 80,000 tonnes of sugar at Usine Ste. Madeleine. Usine Ste. Madeleine produced 56,000 tonnes last year. No way they could produce 70,000 to 80,000 so they are downscaling the agricultural sector!

Mr. Speaker, I am suggesting to you that those workers in the agricultural sector will not be treated fairly as it relates to getting land. They will not be treated fairly as it relates to benefiting from these Bills, whether lease or no lease, whether it is the Real Property Ordinance, State Lands Act, a Bill to amend the State Lands Act, validate anything. They will not get CEPEP work as well, so write that off. That CEPEP is their claim to fame, creating jobs, have people brush cut—and they made a point in their presentation, that is why I recap it, about the vision of PNM. Mr. Speaker, it was the vision of the Member for Couva North and the UNC that we put a computer in every home. [*Desk thumping*] It is the vision of the PNM that they put a brush cutter in every home. That is their vision, to put a brush cutter in every home. Mr. Speaker, that is the difference in vision we are talking about here.

The CEPEP programme—I want to draw to the attention of this House, there is a CEPEP gang operating at Friendship at the M2 Link Road and Friendship junction—how appropriate—in the constituency of San Fernando East, and there is a sign at the side of the road. The job is finished. They cut the grass over a month ago, I think. They took a month to cut some grass there. They put in stone, “CEPEP”. “Now, nothing wrong wid dat!” That is the state institution that is doing it. Mr. Speaker, I will not say the word but they put another sign there. What is that sign? The sign they put there in stone is the word that they shouted when they stormed this Parliament on Friday, July 27, 1990. [*Interruption*] Find it. Go and read it. In a secular society, a public works programme, run on taxpayers’ money the workers have put that sign at Friendship junction, appropriately in the constituency of San Fernando East. That is the road along which we are going. I encourage the media to go and take pictures of those signs. Those are the words they shouted when they stormed the Parliament—so appropriate, now that they have stormed the Government, they will write it on the road. [*Desk thumping*] Mr. Speaker, I have had the benefit of travelling all over the world in the Middle

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East, et cetera. You see that in those countries as well. I say no more on that matter and I invite the Minister and the Government to take a look unless somebody “go and dig up” the sign tonight. That is the CEPEP for you.

Mr. Speaker, managing our land resources is a critical challenge towards any vision to make Trinidad and Tobago a developed country. How are these lands to be managed? By “giving out” land; by taking control of lands from a parastatal company, a state enterprise, and putting it into the central control of the Cabinet. Interestingly, Mr. Speaker, there is a certain pattern here in Government and it is not just the arrogance of Ministers about which I am speaking. There is another pattern. You see it now with local government. Decisions to be made in local government are now being made by the Minister, at central government level because, as you know, there is a story associated with that. There are advisers, there are no counsellors, so the Minister makes the decision. [*Interruption*] The what per cent? I “doh know if is 10, 15 or nothing like that”.

Mr. Speaker, it is the same thing with the lands. When land is distributed by the parastatal, the state enterprise, on the board of that agricultural company, as their land policy they will have a subcommittee to deal with land policy, distribution, management, strategic plan and so on, but on that board, Mr. Speaker, would be representatives of the workers, of the farmers, so, when decisions are made, the workers and the farmers participate in making land policy, in distributing land and the efficient use of land. What they have done is remove that from the control of workers and farmers and put it into the central control of Cabinet. That is the plan. The Member for La Brea, maybe he was so excited it shot out his mouth when he said, “The land belongs to all of us”. That is what he said. [*Interruption*] Mr. Speaker, I do not want to be sidetracked by the Member—I will not be sidetracked by the Member for Diego Martin Central. I will tell him later about people who disrupt BWIA planes and embarrass the hostess and pilots and so on because “dey cyar get dey friend in first class”. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker—[*Interruption*] Well you know “he like plane”.

Mr. Speaker, the issue of the land use is a critical issue and there is no guarantee that, with this Government, those lands will be distributed according to merit, had it been distributed and managed by the state enterprise that is involved in the agricultural sector. So the notice to agricultural workers who are also laying a claim to lands is really a notice to force you into losing your job, to retrench, and it is very clear that was always the case. In letters sent from the Minister with responsibility for agriculture and land development to that state enterprise, they

outlined carefully that plan to reduce the number of agricultural workers in the country. How could you reduce the labour force and create poverty, destitute people, unemployment, and still expand the economy? I do not understand how.

When people lose their jobs in the agricultural sector, they cannot purchase from the shopkeeper, from the parlour, from the druggist or from the store. It affects everyone. There is a ripple effect of depression. Mr. Speaker, I want to draw to their attention, in case they did not know, the fact that in the mid 1980s, 1985 I think, under the then Prime Minister of Jamaica, Mr. Edward Seaga, they also embarked on a restructuring plan for agriculture and land. In Jamaica and in Belize, as they closed the factories and the fields and changed from cane cultivation people then started to produce marijuana—"weed". So it led to the escalation of drug trafficking and criminal activity. Maybe, I would not go so far, but, Mr. Speaker, this is an important point. Agricultural land—we are still on land—will now move from lawful use to illicit use. That is where they are taking us. That is another land policy we do not know about because, Mr. Speaker, when you abandon these fields and these agricultural lands, people have to live. They cannot now deal with the spate of crime that is in our school system.

Last evening I heard the Prime Minister at his press conference. He said that the crime did not occur in the school as anticipated as yet, and then he crossed his fingers nicely and said, "We must cross our fingers and hope". Now, that is planning and development for you. "That is 2020 vision, cross your finger and hope. That is planning." So crime is a big issue in the country and now you are going to put communities in a state of unemployment and destitution where young people will not have jobs. Young people in the agricultural sector will not have jobs. Many, out of necessity, may turn—not that we recommend this at all, not that we support that at all—to crime and you already cannot deal with the situation. So when we hear of the cost, as they always raise, Mr. Speaker, of maintaining agriculture and subsidy and so on, it is one thing to hear about the cost in dollars and cents—\$200 million, \$100 million and so on—but anybody ever did a study, an assessment, of how much more it will cost our society if the society itself continues in this state of decay with rampant crime.

Mr. Speaker, it is very interesting. If you are going to open a factory, a business place, they ask you to do what is called an Environmental Impact Assessment so that you know when a factory is coming on stream what are the effects on the waterways, on the air quality and the trees and so on, and socio-economic. They are taking a fundamental and dramatic step in the agricultural sector, but to this point they have shown no one that they have done a social

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impact analysis to tell us what will happen to these communities and these people. They do not care and they preach they care.

I saw on the newspaper this morning something that I consider disgusting. On the back page of the Express, the Ministry of Health has an ad, the crest of Trinidad and Tobago is there, the Ministry of Health pay for it, and under it they put, “The PNM promise this; the PNM government did this. We deliver because we care.” That is taxpayers’ money and “dey proud; dey happy”, this Minister, the Member for Diego Martin East. Mr. Speaker, it is a misnomer to call him the Minister of Health [*Interruption*] and “that is how they spend de money. Whether it is in health or agriculture, it is the same waste, corruption, mismanagement and lack of vision. So we would not be surprised that there is a “PNM—Ministry of Health” ad in the newspaper costing the taxpayer over \$7,000. That is a serious issue. Mr. Speaker, in their land distribution policy under the Estate Management Development Company we can expect massive corruption.

What is also another point of crisis, and I have to talk about crisis now, because, with the advent of this Government, there are two industries that are expanding rapidly. I mean, there are two growth sectors in the labour market. One is private security. Have you noticed that every private security company advertises now for more security? The other is called crisis management and crisis counselling, so anybody who wants to make a dollar now should get into crisis counselling because the whole society has to be counselled. It will be students in school who one day witness a murder and it will be workers who are retrenched the next day. Those are the growth sectors under this Government. Mr. Speaker, those workers in the agricultural sector, who we expect and who we wish would get priority consideration for land, when they claim their package—it is very interesting and this is a matter of national concern—we are not sure that the package being offered is authentic or accurate.

I have in my hand a letter from actuaries and consultants, Bacon Woodrow & de Souza writing to Caroni (1975) Limited, Manager, Administrative Services February 03, 2003, subject “Voluntary Severance Exercise—Benefit Statement”. Mr. Speaker, this letter states that the valuation of the old scheme and the new scheme, meaning pension and so on:

“...we have expressed serious concerns regarding the accuracy and completeness of the membership data held by the Company.”

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I jumped there. I thought it was a division again.

Mr. Speaker, I was reading from a letter from Bacon Woodrow & de Souza actuaries and consultants, where they write to Caroni (1975) Limited, this state owned company, informing it that these agricultural workers who we expect to benefit from land, their membership data held by the company are inaccurate and incomplete and so they cannot do a proper valuation of the benefits for those workers, yet they are busy sending letters out left, right and centre to workers telling them what is their benefit package and so on. Bacon Woodrow & de Souza continue:

“...we will still carry out the calculations and provide you with results...However, due to the concerns noted above we will not be responsible for any errors arising from data inaccuracies.”

This is the actuaries and consultants, Bacon Woodrow & de Souza telling the state owned corporation, “Listen, you do not have accurate data. You cannot do any calculation for severance benefits, therefore, if you cannot calculate properly and accurately, you cannot offer workers a package.” They have gone ahead. That is why I told you. After 26 years working in Caroni (1975) Limited, you get \$75,000. I hope that gentleman would get land. I hope he would benefit from land. I hope that the land use and the land distribution policy would accommodate him but not how they accommodate CEPEP and NHA. That is what I hope.

So, Mr. Speaker, this is the sorry state of affairs at the company. The Minister, of course, is not here. He was not there this morning when I wanted to raise it with him on television. He is not here now. I hope he reads the *Hansard* and takes this query and responds to it. This is serious. So how can you offer people a package if you cannot calculate it? [*Interruption*] What is that? You are deceiving the workers at every point. No wonder today, Mr. Speaker, if it is not in agriculture, it is a Petrotrin protest, it is a TCL protest, it is a BWIA protest, it is all-round protest facing them because of their inability to handle transformation.

No wonder the hon. Minister—you know, Mr. Speaker, the hon. Minister for Public Administration and Information pops up everywhere to handle the industrial relations mess at the Ministry of Health but he also wrote as well concerning the agricultural sector. He is now in that sector trying to ensure that

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the Minister there does not make a mess out of the industrial relations crisis. Outlining to the company the correct procedure for embarking upon the VSEP and the retrenchment, he said in a letter dated February 12, 2003 addressed to the chairman, that the board will be required, subsequent to the issue of letters of enhanced VSEP on February 17, and the preparation of a list of employees to be retrenched as a result of the acceptance of the VSEP offer—

Now, no mention is made in this document about land and now they are talking about efficient management and information technology on land. [Interruption] No mention is made about land, Mr. Speaker. It is made about retrenchment, getting people out, but not on land. This is their approach to the sector. This is the malice with which they approach, and now, in the agricultural sector, they are hiring consultancy firms for public relations to give us the spin so that people will accept their package and people will accept the slaughter of their jobs. Mr. Speaker, if it is one thing this Government has become known quickly for—it did not take long at all—whether it is in the distribution of land, in agriculture or elsewhere, it is rampant corruption.

In the agricultural sector there are several programmes geared towards creating jobs and we have heard about YAPA, the Youth Apprenticeship Programme in Agriculture. I think they stopped it now. There are other programmes for job creation. There are programmes as well that they will embark upon through the Estate Management Development Company to distribute lands. The Bills before us, while they speak about efficiency and reforming outmoded processes and amending the Act for land efficiency and so on, how would these Bills help us, Mr. Speaker, in dealing with the corruption that we expect in the distribution of land?

[*Mr. Valley rose*]

Every time I am speaking the Member for Diego Martin Central is like a pop-up Internet ad that just comes up on the screen, you know. [Interruption] [Laughter] You know an Internet pop-up ad that just comes up on the screen? Every time I am talking they disturb me this way.

Mr. Speaker, on corruption, they could write a book. Right now in Caroni East—warfare in their camp! There is a resolution from members of the PNM Caroni East constituency addressing allegations of corruption. They are threatening to kill a former candidate down there because she brought to light corruption, went to the Minister with responsibility for local government, and the Minister, the Member for Arouca North, will tell us at some time.

Mr. Sharma: [*Words expunged*]

Dr. R. Moonilal: What is his name? [*Words expunged*] No, I would not say that. No, I withdraw that.

Mr. Speaker: Withdraw that please?

Dr. R. Moonilal: I withdraw that.

Mr. Speaker: And expunge it from the record.

Dr. R. Moonilal: I would not say something like that, not here at least.

Mr. Speaker, this resolution addresses the issue of corruption in their distribution of land and in their distribution of jobs. A former candidate there, a defeated candidate, her life was threatened two weeks ago. It was on the back page of a newspaper. The matter was raised with the Minister of Local Government. What did he do? He informed the people against whom she was making the allegations. “Well dey threaten she a second time.” This is how they conducted their business. A resolution was passed. [*Interruption*] It is in their records. [*Interruption*] They will know about it, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, a pertinent matter here we are debating is land use and utilization but it is a former Sen. Prof. John Spence in a column on February 20, 2003 in the Express newspaper, who raised pertinent issues as they relate to land utilization. One of those issues dealt with a matter concerning drainage and irrigation systems on lands that they are preparing to give presumably to workers and that issue of drainage is also in a mess today. One of the biggest problems is in the constituency of Oropouche and that area has to do with drainage on agricultural land—access roads and drainage. We hear nothing about that. If they had come to the House with a land policy, we would have heard of that but there is nothing to that effect. Today the crisis that we face is one of confidence in this Government which is a few months old.

Already—I do not want to get into it—there are court matters all around, injunctions against the Government preventing them from taking assets—land. There is an injunction right now preventing the Government from giving out land. Is that part of the two Bills here? They are before the courts now. There are actions before the courts. I say no more on that. In fact, on another matter when they were before the court they lost. When they appointed members to the Cipriani Labour College board, the Prime Minister said in his press conference “We did no wrong. We acted lawfully.” On June 21, 2002 the High Court ruled that they acted unlawfully and their decisions were null and void in the appointment of those boards. You agree. They know that.

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So, Mr. Speaker, the point I make [*Interruption*] is of this history. They have this history of acting outside the law, whether it relates to appointments to the Cipriani Labour College or to the distribution of land, to the establishment of the Estate Management Development Company, whatever it may be. They have a history of unlawful behaviour and mismanagement of funds. In fact, in an article in the newspaper, the chairman of the NHA said, concerning the NHA corruption, “It is not a lot of money; it is just point seven million dollars they cannot account for.” We understand. It is not a lot. It is just point seven million dollars. While they are doing this, citizens of this country are suffering in the agricultural sector because they cannot get jobs. We have a crisis of employment in this country—unemployment. Mr. Speaker, a constituent in Oropouche in Diamond Village hung himself because he could not get a job. He was frustrated. This is the society we live in today and we can expect many citizens to take unusual and abnormal action when they are faced with the desperation and the destitution from being unemployed.

Mr. Speaker, as if that was not bad enough, there are voices in this society raising concerns about their treatment of workers. There is a spate of retrenchment in this country—BWIA, 600 workers gone; TCL, workers gone. Where? You think of it—Petrotrin, workers gone. At several enterprises—

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, I have indicated once before that you were straying and I am indicating again that you are straying.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, their claim—I am coming back to the Bill—is that when people lose their jobs and become retrenched they will have access to land. I am putting on record the spate of unemployment and retrenchment in Trinidad and Tobago [*Desk thumping*] and those persons will be claimants for land and these Acts, they are telling us, will make that process more efficient and so on. So I am giving the picture of employment in this country. I am giving this horrible picture of unemployment and retrenchment, those who they are promising will be considered for land. That is the connection; and they cannot escape it. At every turn workers are suffering in this country. When they speak, they are still in this mode. I refer to the contributions of the Member for Port of Spain South and the Member for La Brea. When they were speaking on this Bill, they were still in this mode of blaming the former administration. We want to tell them that laying blame is not a strategy for dealing with land distribution. Laying blame is not a strategy for fighting crime. Laying blame is not a strategy for dealing with the health sector. Laying blame is not a strategy at all for developing this country.

We hear about their vision. They were talking in their presentation about their great vision—2020. Mr. Speaker, this country cannot wait till 2020. By 2005 “everything collapse”, within their term of office. Take seriously that sign I alluded to earlier today. In the short term there will be nobody working. Prices are going up. The price of flour went up. The hon. Prime Minister said it will make better citizens of us. That was their response. That was cross your finger and hope. That is it. That is their governance. That is their vision. They raised the issue of vision, of they having a vision and we having none. They blamed us in their presentation for doing nothing about agriculture and so on. What vision? This is what I am asking and I hope that in their turn they will speak us to about this vision to which they alluded in their presentation on this Bill. What vision? A vision of unemployment? A vision of business collapsing?

Another story in the newspaper I do not want to quote at length, because I “doh” want to get sidetracked with that. The people closed down their shop and their store after murder. A gentleman from Grand Bazaar was robbed; his family was murdered. He migrated, left the country. Mr. Speaker, under this Government, the brain is leaving and criminal elements are coming back. It is a reverse of terms of trade here. The intelligentsia of the country is leaving and the criminal elements are coming back. That is vision 2020 for you. So how will you develop vision 2020 when over 50 communities and villages are in a state of depression akin to the depression of the 1930s? What vision is that? Vision what? We are on the road, Mr. Speaker, to Guyana and Zimbabwe when this type of thing happens. They are taking us there. [*Interruption*] Well he is on the road to Cuba, the Member for Diego Martin East. You could say what you want but “he going Cuba”. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker, this is the state of our nation today and to put this Bill in that context of governance, that is what we are here about, governance; we are mandated to be here, to debate and pass law as it relates to good order and governance, and I raise an issue of governance as it relates to the Bill before us. [*Interruption*] It is part of their vision to remain in office at all costs, at any cost. That is their vision. That is why they want to paint us in a particular way. That is why on Richmond Street they have Judge Judy operating. That is why they have a show, a soap opera running every day. They promised us local programming, we got it. [*Laughter*] That is why. So they will continue to attack us. This is their vision, local programming. They closed down Mastana Bahar and opened the Commission of Enquiry. This is their vision for you—2020 for you.

When we spoke about the agricultural sector in our manifesto, we spoke about expansion. Even companies in agriculture we were going to expand. We were

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about creating business—expansion. They always raise matters relating to InnCogen and so on and land use, but we created jobs. We created business. We created thrift. That is what we were about, creating jobs. So it was not surprising that, during the period 1995—2001, unemployment went down from 18 per cent to 10.9 per cent under the United National Congress [*Desk thumping*] and if today they want to claim that unemployment is still going down, I reminded them before, “Doh come wid dat”. “If unemployment figure down now it is because the labour market figure is decreasing.” The First Citizens Bank Economic Review stated that. It said that the number of unemployed persons stood at 58.4 thousand, representing unemployment of 10.1 per cent. This rate was the lowest recorded in 20 years. The main factor behind this decrease of the unemployment rate was the reduction in the labour force numbers from 582,000 to 577,000. So they will “close down” everything. The only thing left for them is to put a VSEP programme for the Cabinet now. [*Interruption*] That is the only thing we wait for now, VSEP for the Cabinet.

They have a lot to tell us, by way of agricultural policy, how they intend to develop this country, when, pretty soon we will have to import more sugar for local consumption. That is what will happen. We will have to import sugar. We will have to import food. Our food bill will go up under this administration. Where is their policy to deal with agriculture? Where is their policy to deal with land use? What policy is this? Have they done any assessment of what their current approach to the agricultural sector will entail? Have they done any social impact assessment? None.

Mr. Speaker, they do not care whether it is Friendship, Basta Hall, Balmain, Penal or Golconda. They “doh” know where Golconda is. They know anaconda. They do not know nothing about these people. These people can suffer and so on, “is no problem at all”. Once they save that money so it could go into URP and CEPEP and GAPP and HYPE and YAPA—and there is a new one now, but it slipped me, CAPA. Is that it? CAPA. I “doh” want to go further than that. I could mispronounce “dat” too.

So, Mr. Speaker, this is their vision. While our vision for the agricultural sector was to increase production and jobs it also entailed going into value added production processes, so that the new workers would be those who are using higher technologies, who are trained. That was our vision for the agricultural sector, to graduate workers from Caroni from cutting cane and grass to working in agribusiness factories. Under the UNC, Mr. Speaker, we had already attracted

investor interest in citrus, in dairy and in poultry. We had attracted investor interest and our plan was not one of labour force reduction, it was expansion. Today we hear nothing about that. They only tell us they “closing down BC factory”.

They tell us nothing about citrus, nothing about the poultry, nothing about dairy, nothing about rice cultivation and “dah is land”. All those things are on land. We do not know if this land use policy might entail chopping up those lands and giving them away to people “to open quarry”. We do not know. “That is” their policy, you know, to give people land for quarrying and so on so that people could bring in dynamite and experiment in “de bush”. “That” is their policy. That is land use for you, man! So we do not know. So maybe in Mora Valley or in Princes Town, St. Julien and so on there might be quarrying going on there as well. They may be legitimizing terrorist elements as they are doing. Maybe that is their land use policy. We do not know. That is the dangerous road on which they are taking this country.

While they are doing that, intelligent people, graduates, doctors, are leaving. Well, they have gone. You cannot find them now and those people in the agricultural sector—a critical point, Mr. Speaker—those people in agriculture and land use management, the critical skills we need, will also leave. That is the critical point, a massive brain drain. So how will you develop this agricultural sector? How will you manage all this land and so on, efficient distribution, information technology infrastructure, when the brains of our country, those trained and qualified, leave? They leave out of frustration, you know, with discrimination and victimization.

I hope that the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West who is here today will respond to some of these issues. Unfortunately, due to no fault of his, he was not at TV6. I thought he turned down the invitation but he assures me he did not turn down the invitation. I will be scared to issue any invitation myself to him but that was the situation this morning when we raised these matters.

So what we are calling for is your policy on agriculture and on land use and make a commitment now, tell this House whether or not workers who do not take VSEP will be retrenched. That is what is traumatizing the workers. Tell us whether this enhancement is bribery and terror in one. That is their modus operandi, you know, terror. That is how they go. Tell us in no uncertain terms what will be the priority in the distribution of land for agricultural workers and farmers.

Mr. Valley: First priority.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Like the NHA?

Mr. Valley: First priority.

Dr. R. Moonilal: We want to know the on-the-job training at the Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education and Ministry of Planning and Development, et cetera. We want to find out that as well, Mr. Speaker, but we will ask those questions in due course. Their pattern suggests that when they are not dining away in the night somewhere, they are really about mismanaging—*[Interruption]*—when they are conspiring and dining, they are about mismanaging, they are about waste, they are about corruption. I do not want to get carried away and give another presentation on corruption. Needless to say, we are still waiting for that report on the refurbishing project at the NHA where we were promised they were investigating and going to bring a report. We are still waiting on a report from the Agricultural Development Bank where there were serious allegations of corruption.

Mr. Valley: I will deal with that right now, Mr. Speaker. I will be happy to do it.

Dr. R. Moonilal: You are like an Internet pop-up ad. “Sit down, nah.” Pop-up! We are still waiting for that report on the URP where there were allegations of corruption. We were promised a report. We are still waiting. Maybe, Mr. Speaker, in the very near future when the United National Congress is returned to government, we will also commission an enquiry and we may put the same man to head that enquiry into their rampant corruption in every sector, including agriculture and land use. Maybe we will do that.

A question that begs itself, we heard previously about the sale of properties, of land and of houses at WASA and so on. Now we have the same issue of the sale of the property and houses at Caroni (1975) Limited. Important. We want to know “who and their family getting that”. Would it be the same people on the list of the NHA work? So they must be transparent. They must be clear in telling us what they are about and stop terrorizing the workers. Stop it. There is only so much that workers will take. Today they marched at Whitehall, tomorrow Parliament, next day we do not know. You can only push people to a certain extent. If you try to push further they will “explo” and, Mr. Speaker, I do not want to tell you. It is unparliamentary and I cannot say it. I do not want to tell you in the graphic terms Caroni workers have spoken to me and told me what they feel like doing. I told them no.

Mr. Ramnath: “I ent have no problem wid dat.”

Dr. R. Moonilal: I do not want to say that in this House what they feel like doing. Today they marched in the street, they “pong the pavement”; but the time is coming when “ponging the pavement” will not work because this is as if we are

having a dialogue with the deaf. They will not hear. They will not hear us and that is the crisis we face, the pattern of arrogance and of corruption on their part. That is what we face today, all around. Mr. Speaker, I am not holding my breath and waiting for the policy on land and agriculture and Caroni and so on because I think we can expect them to say that, as they did before, they are not wasting money, that they will “close down” everything, retrench everybody and send them home and now the new line they are using is Cuba, “Send home 100,000”. Well, I “doh” know if they want to look at where Cuba—Cuba is the favourite country of the Member for Diego Martin East. I do not know if they want to look at where Cuba is on the UNDP human development index and where Trinidad and Tobago is—they may not want to look at it that way—before they start comparing. You may not want to look at it this way.

So, Mr. Speaker, these are the pertinent issues—land use, the agricultural development plan and how you can develop that sector when your flagship state enterprise, your flagship corporation, is being dismantled. Those are the pertinent issues. I would humbly ask the Member with responsibility for agriculture and also the Member for La Brea—he is not here of course—to read the *Hansard* and respond to some of our claims, to respond to some of our observations and the points that I made here today. Thank you very much. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Hon. Kenneth Valley): Mr. Speaker, I have been following this issue about Caroni (1975) Limited silently with some amazement because, as Minister with responsibility for investment, I am involved in assisting in designing a plan for Caroni (1975) Limited. As you know, Caroni (1975) Limited is still a state enterprise. I want to let you know, Mr. Speaker, that my colleague, the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, and I, met with the union in December, I think it was somewhere around December 20, and subsequently I had the pleasure of travelling to the Rienzi Complex on December 30 when the union kindly invited me there to discuss the programme further.

3.30 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, I want to tell you on that day a good time was had by all. [*Interruption*] I am talking about the Indarsingh union. Although they had issues, as they would have, and although they sought clarification on some issues, at the end of the day I left there feeling that there was a good business for going forward. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, I left there after a good few drinks, because you know people in Central, including Mr. Indarsingh, we can handle our liquor quite well.

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So that when I listened to the Member from Oropouche talking about all of this concern and so on, I do not know from where he is getting it. Mr. Speaker; I know unions. You sit behind closed doors and unions are intelligent, amiable people. Then they get on a platform and then you are all types of things. That ought not to bother us. They believe that they have a constituency and they have to appeal to their constituency in a particular matter. I have had that on a number of occasions over the years, the latest being the TCL issue. I remember having lunch with the leader of OWTU, having a good lunch laughing and chatting away, and he left and went downstairs and Ken Valley was the worst person. But that is how it is played.

We ought not to be taken in by the type of divisiveness that the Member for Oropouche attempts to spread. Whenever he opens his mouth in this Parliament, quite often, I have to wonder whether, in fact, some university really blessed the hon. Member with a PhD. You listen to the Member and one has to wonder.

Mr. Speaker, what is the situation with Caroni (1975) Limited? I remember joining the Ministry of Finance in 1978 and shortly thereafter, when Caroni (1975) Limited was asking, yet again, for funding, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Finance, Mr. Barsotti, asked the Project Financing Unit to do a study of Caroni (1975) Limited. Of course, over the years, I do not think we need to go through that—I think my friend from St. Augustine was involved—we all know that we have to do something with Caroni (1975) Limited; let us not fool ourselves!

At the same time, however, as we go forward we would always take people into consideration. The PNM says: “We care.” That means, every citizen! Every citizen in Trinidad and Tobago! *[Interruption]* Everyone who wants to can come and share on the table. That is the reality, Mr. Speaker! In spite of their attempts to go throughout this country and cause all types of divisiveness, the PNM would stand strong at all times and ensure that there is equality for all. *[Desk thumping]* That is the basis on which we have operated since 1956 and we will continue to operate in that vein! *[Desk thumping]*

Since December we have been meeting with the unions. I am a member of the ministerial team. We have met with the board of Caroni (1975) Limited. As far as we are aware, unions, management and the board are comfortable with the direction. *[Interruption]* Of course, in any negotiations—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, Please! Would the Member for Couva South and Member for Arouca North, please—If you need to speak in the manner in which you are speaking, please exit the Chamber.

Hon. K. Valley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I was saying, in any negotiations people would try to get a bit more, and one understands that. We have attempted to meet the unions as far as we could. What is the current package? I am now talking from memory. The unions came to the table and they have asked to decrease the tax-exempt portion of severance. The Government has agreed to take that from the \$100,000 that it was, to \$300,000. We have agreed from day one that these are the people who know what is happening at Caroni (1975) Limited; that they would have a preference position with respect to land—those who wished to continue in agriculture.

There is the enhancement of the severance package, on average, a 30 per cent enhancement. With respect to those people who were living in homes, we have said they could purchase those homes and they would get a discount for every year that they have lived in the house or a similar house. I want you to know that this is quite different from what we met when we came in. Mr. Speaker, when they were in government—not the Member for St. Augustine, he was at the Central Bank, and he was doing a very good job there—they were going to close down Caroni (1975) Limited. *[Interruption]* I have sent for the document. I wish I had it! In 2001, the programme that was on the table was not to reduce to 75,000 or 80,000 you know; they were going to close down Caroni (1975) Limited.

Hon. Members: Lie! Lie! Lie!

Hon. K. Valley: Mr. Speaker, we have taken the position—

Mr. Speaker: Member for Nariva and Member for Oropouche, please, do not shout across the floor, lie, lie, lie; it is unparliamentary. Please continue, hon. Member.

Mr. Ramnath: Where is the evidence? *[Interruption]*

Hon. K. Valley: Mr. Speaker, they are asking that you adjourn the House so that I could produce the evidence. This is the report that was on the table! *[Interruption]*

Hon. Members: Bring the evidence!

Hon. K. Valley: I am saying that was the advice of the technicians. *[Interruption]* Yes, but not the Cabinet. *[Interruption]*

Our position is clear. We are saying even though we are talking about globalization, the energy sector is our main sector; that is where we have a comparative advantage. But we cannot all be employed in the energy sector! Mr. Speaker, while we attempt to make the other sectors of our economy efficient, we

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have to know that there are persons working in those sectors and we need to have a transition.

So that while this Government is saying we cannot guarantee any individual that he would be employed at all times in a particular industry, we are working to guarantee employability of all our people—meaning that there is a concentration on skills development; there is that concentration on what we call a trade assistance programme. *[Interruption]* I will deal with that. So unlike them saying that they would close the industry, we are saying we are going to bring it down to a size that we can service the local market and meet our requirements under the Lomé Agreement, now the Cotonou Agreement.

Mr. Speaker, they are talking about masons and so on from the islands. Anybody who is looking at what is happening in Trinidad and Tobago must see quite clearly that in a few years Trinidad and Tobago would require more skills. *[Interruption]* We are doing that! But even with that, there will be a demand! You do not know what is happening! *[Interruption]* I am telling you in three years you would be telling me: “You told us so!” *[Interruption]* We will be concentrating on training but there is a limit to the amount that can come in given what is happening.

I want to see whether I have here the document from 2001. *[Pause]* That one is coming. Mr. Speaker, let me just put on the record some of the decisions taken by the Cabinet with respect to Caroni (1975) Limited.

Mr. Sharma: What is the date of that Cabinet decision? *[Interruption]*

Hon. K. Valley: This is a Cabinet Note. A Cabinet decision is secret and confidential. A Cabinet Note is always allowed to—

Mr. Sharma: What is the date of the Cabinet Note? *[Interruption]*

Hon. K. Valley: February 14, 2003. This is a result of discussions with management, the board, and all the unions.

Mr. Ramnath: That is your conclusion. The union never agreed to that!

Hon. K. Valley: The union never agreed to this? On the pension issue—and I note that is an issue of an injunction. We are aware that the daily paid pension is under-funded by some \$235 million. The Government has taken this into consideration. The Government has a commitment to fund that \$235 million.

Mr. Sharma: Is that in the Note?

Hon. K. Valley: Of course that is in the Note? *[Interruption]* That is a fact! This Cabinet Note says:

“Cabinet is informed that the principal changes are therefore in the following areas:

Daily-paid Employees

(1) Pensions...”

We are making an adjustment to the pension here. The pension clause was already approved. [*Interruption*] The letter to the members spoke clearly about their pensions. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Sharma: Tell us from where you are getting the money!

Hon. K. Valley: I will put the whole Cabinet Note into the record. Mr. Speaker, this Note dealt with some changes to the original plan arising out of discussions with the union.

Mr. Ramnath: There were no discussions.

Hon. K. Valley: I will read the Note, Mr. Speaker.

“The matter for the consideration of Cabinet is the adoption of certain amendments to the letters which were issued on February 17 2003 to the daily and monthly-paid employees of Caroni (1975) Limited (Caroni) in respect of the offer of the enhanced Voluntary Separation of Employment Package (VSEP).

Cabinet is informed that on February 12 2003 the Ministerial Committee appointed by Cabinet to oversee and manage the restructuring of Caroni, met the Chairman of the Board of Caroni and agreed on a number of amendments to the letters which were approved by Cabinet on February 12 2003. The amendments were essentially of a drafting and informational nature. The principal amendments involved the issue of the interpretation of preferential treatment as well as the commitment to all employees who avail themselves of the enhanced VSEP to be paid all their cash benefits on their relevant dates of departure—June 10 2003 for daily-paid employees and August 2 2003 for monthly-paid employees.

To that end, the Ministerial Committee agreed that it was Cabinet’s intention that employees of Caroni who avail themselves of the enhanced VSEP would be given priority access to lands for agricultural purposes...”

Understand that, Member for Oropouche.

“...priority access to lands for agricultural purposes and to one (1) housing lot. As a result the letters have changed preferential treatment to priority.

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The Ministerial Committee also agreed that all employees who avail themselves of the enhanced VSEP should be paid all their cash benefits on their relevant dates of departure—July 10 2003 for daily-paid employees and August 2 2003 for monthly-paid employees. The Ministerial Committee recognized that under the present tax legislation severance payments are only made to separate employees when their tax status has been regularized with the Board of Inland Revenue. The Ministerial Committee is taking steps to ensure that the separated daily and monthly-paid employees receive their benefits on July 10 2003 and August 2 2003 respectively.”

Mr. Speaker, I can report that my people at the divestment secretariat had discussions with Inland Revenue. They are saying with respect to the daily-paid employees you could pay them because, as you know, Inland Revenue has this procedure where they have to check and see whether anybody owes tax before payment is made. They have given approval for the payment of severance to the daily-paid employees.

Mr. Sharma: Would the Minister please give way? Minister you indicated that for the daily-paid pensioners there would be a provision of \$235 million. You indicated that the Cabinet Note made that provision. Could you direct us to that paragraph?

Hon. K. Valley: Mr. Speaker, I made the point that this Cabinet Note talks of amendments to an earlier Cabinet decision. I am stating here as a fact that the pension plan is under-funded by \$235 million and that the Cabinet has taken a decision, as part of the overall severance package, which is now some \$89.3 million—the \$235 million is fundamental. I am not guessing. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker, in addition, to the under-funded pension, there is a provision of \$25 million for training and consultancy. [*Interruption*] The consultants are being appointed by the board of Caroni (1975) Limited. The board is dealing with those matters. [*Interruption*] I am making the central point that with respect to the Caroni (1975) Limited matter things are going quite well.

I want to make the other point about the foresight of this Government. We are saying that what we need to do is to provide alternatives to the people of that area. That is why the Estate Management Company was established. The Estate Management Company is charged with the responsibility of building, what I like to call as a “boy” from Couva, Central City. Mr. Speaker, you know the Caroni plains and the beauty that is Caroni. In a few years I feel certain that all my colleagues on the other side—they may not say it publicly, they will whisper

under their breaths. That is what they would do, as they did for Point Lisas. They made the same noise, Mr. Speaker.

I remember as an official at the Ministry of Finance coming here and listening to the Member for Couva South, as he was then and still is now, complaining about Point Lisas. I am sure we are all proud today of that growth pole. We are a Government with foresight! We are saying that in Central there would be another light industrial estate; there would be agro-processing and there would be housing. *[Interruption]*

The unions were talking about developing agro-processing industry there while they were here complaining and talking about discrimination. The unions are saying they want to take their severance and go into agro-processing. I told them that they would have my 100-per cent commitment.

Mr. Sharma: To process what?

Hon. K. Valley: They are talking about going into fruits, oranges and so on. So while the Members opposite come here and talk about discrimination, there is something else that is going on there.

Today's advertisement—I did not have to get Cabinet's decision to talk about the \$235 million. It is right there. It says:

“Speaking about the separation programme, in this regard we note the specific concern raised about the funding of the daily-paid pension plans. The actuarial firm of Bacon Woodrow & De Souza has conducted several actuarial reviews of our daily paid pension plans and the most recent review showed that an injection of \$235 million is required to fully fund pension payments to daily paid workers as they become due.

In early January 2003 the Government agreed to fund the deficit to the full extent as determined by the actuaries. This decision of Cabinet was communicated to all stakeholders and has been publicly stated by the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, the hon. John Rahael, who guaranteed Government's commitment to this arrangement.”

[Interruption] I have been in this Parliament for some 16 years and I understand the concept of privilege in the Parliament. I do not have to come and mislead the House. *[Interruption]* Mr. Speaker, as we move forward trying to integrate our economy with the world economy, we have certain decisions that must be taken. The assurance that the Government gave at all times is that those decisions would always be humane. We would always attempt to ensure that the medicine is sugarcoated because we know that is critical.

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The United States, Mr. Speaker, long ago had instituted a training assistance programme. In the reorganization of our institutions, Members would see that we have changed the Small Business Development Company to the Business Development Company for specific reasons. That organization is now geared to assist businesses to grow, especially businesses which may have to make transitions. I want to assure my colleagues on the other side that this Government would treat all employees of state companies and all citizens, for that matter, as fairly as we treat any other citizen.

Mr. Sharma: We do not trust you. [*Interruption*]

Hon. K. Valley: The facts would show it. This thing is, in fact, happening. Just sit back, watch and observe how the Government treats with this matter. That is all you have to do! And at the end of the day tell me about credibility.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Kelvin Ramnath (*Couva South*): Mr. Speaker, I do not plan to take all the time available to me because I have to speak elsewhere tonight on similar matters. Let me, first of all, congratulate the Member for Princes Town for a very laudable contribution on the Bill before the Parliament. [*Desk thumping*] If we return to the matter before the House as initiated by the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, we will see that what we are attempting to do is to validate certain acts which have taken place. The Member for Princes Town made a suggestion as to how we should approach this. He suggested that instead of going backwards, what was needed was an amendment to the Real Property Ordinance so that we could find a way forward instead of continuing the practice from the past.

It seems to me that that has not found favour; instead, the debate has been focusing on who are entitled to lands at Caroni (1975) Limited, as raised initially by the Member for La Brea. I did not know that lands of Caroni (1975) Limited are being offered to anybody. I did not know that lands at Caroni (1975) Limited are now on the open market. What I do know is that the Government has stated a position to the workers and it is being considered. But it is now clear to any observer that a plan has been hatched to alienate land from sugar production and other agricultural endeavours and to move those lands to people who feel they have a historical right to that land. I want to tell the Prime Minister that I have a historic right to that land as well. [*Desk thumping*]

I have listened to what the Minister in the Ministry of Finance and Member for Diego Martin Central has said. I want to let him know—I want to quote from a

letter sent by Caroni (1975) Limited to workers on February 17—typical letter. This letter tells one how they are negotiating in bad faith and why they cannot be trusted. They are talking about offering a Voluntary Separation Programme (VSEP) but are using the formula of severance as contained in an industrial agreement between the All Trinidad Workers Union and Caroni (1975) Limited.

When VSEP is offered, as had been done in other state enterprises, there is a special formula. If you use a formula that has been negotiated for severance that is a worse-case situation. If the Member for San Fernando does not know what takes place in Petrotrin and other places, he should find out from his close friends who would offer him that information.

If you are offered VSEP in Petrotrin, you get three months pay for every year of service that is left if you have crossed 50 years. If you are under 50 years, there is a special formula. In addition, there is an enhancement because what you are really trying to do is to encourage people to leave with a decent package at the end of the day. What they are doing is retrenching people in Caroni (1975) Limited. They are retrenching you and saying if you do not take the VSEP we are going to close down the company. That is the irresponsible statement that came from the Member for St. Ann's West—a public statement that Brechon Castle is going to be closed. All Caroni (1975) Limited lands under cultivation will be alienated from sugar and only farmers— Do you not know that, Mr. Prime Minister? You do not know what your Minister says? Do you not speak to him? The letter gives the formula as contained in the industrial agreement.

Mr. Speaker, a person with 24 years of service is offered \$40,000 and you have to wait, Minister of Finance, until you reach 65 years before you are entitled to pension. In Petrotrin you get pension from the day you retire and the company funds that liability associated with paying that early pension. Do you know that, Mr. Prime Minister? I was offered retrenchment and voluntary separation. I would not tell you what they offered me; it is rather embarrassing. For a man of the surveys I got only \$800,000 or something like that. The point I want to make is: How can you trust them?

In yesterday's newspaper, the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources is on record as saying that he is going to hire people to explain. You see, to them sugar workers are a bunch of dumb-driven cattle. That is their mentality! That is how they treat people who have come from the sugar industry! Who have had a history of indentureship, who do not belong, as far as they are concerned! That is how Williams treated agriculture in this country. They have continued! What Williams failed to do, the present Prime Minister is seeking to

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do it, including nonsense about political union with St. Vincent and some of those islands, when you cannot have political unity and national unity in your country.
[*Desk thumping*]

“Lands for agricultural purposes:

Priority

Priority would have been given to people in Central Trinidad to housing units that were constructed in Couva.”

Mr. Speaker, I told the Prime Minister, when he was in Opposition, that out of 1,007 units, they could not find seven people from Central Trinidad who looked like me. Who looked like me! We will deal with this matter in the public, I assure you, and on the streets, if we have to! Could they go to Laventille and do that to them! Could they go to Port of Spain and say that they are going to shut down the Port or that they are going to privatize it! Could they go and privatize the public service? Do you think they could do that? But what do you feel? You feel that you could do what you want, because you have historically done so!

“Lands for Agricultural Purposes: Priority in Accessing Lands for Approved Agriculture.”

Judging from their history you cannot believe a word that they say.

“Priority to lease one housing lot given to each employer who did not own a house.”

How are you going to identify that? How are you going to determine that? Are you going to carry out a socio-economic survey throughout the sugar belt to find out who is squatting and who is not squatting? I want to deal with the question of who owns Caroni (1975) Limited, and the Counselling and Advisory Service.

My friend who is getting \$40,000 at age 45, he is going to be afforded counselling service on how to utilize \$40,000 until he reaches 65 years of age when he would have been entitled to a pittance of a pension, based on the actual years he has worked. It would not be on the salary he would have gotten had he remained until he had reached 65 years of age. When he reaches 65 years of age, you can guarantee that the poor “fella” would be suffering from some chronic illness, which has characterized a lot of working-class people in the country.

Do not ever speak about agreement by the unions! The unions have agreed to nothing! It is a total untruth to say that the All Trinidad Union has agreed to anything with the PNM Government on this issue of separation in Caroni (1975)

Limited! The Minister came here and spoke about Indarsingh drinking rum. *[Interruption]* That is the level to which they descend! If he wants to go and have a good time at the Rienzi Complex, he could go and privately boast to the Prime Minister about the hospitality accorded to him! Let me make it clear that the All Trinidad Union has advised me, and they have advised the Member for Oropouche and almost everyone on this side, that they never entered into any agreement! You have to be mad to enter into any agreement to receive this kind of treatment from this Government that has a history of discrimination!

With respect to “Counseling and Financial Services Advice”.

They could advise anybody on financial services? They could advise sugar workers—people who have been downtrodden in the country and whose resilience has allowed them to rise to the highest position in the land? *[Desk thumping]* We could provide you with some advice! They have here: “Retraining centres have been established.” You cannot train masons, carpenters and bricklayers; you want to bring them from St. Vincent. They are looking to bring in votes! They want to bring plumbers and masons from St. Vincent! They do not even know the level of skills in those islands but they want to bring them into this country!

Mr. Speaker, “Those retraining centres will assess your training needs.” They cannot even train the unemployed in this society as it exists today but they want to train people who have been working for 30 years in Caroni (1975) Limited—retrain them. The point I want to underline here is that they have been negotiating in bad faith! They have not even been negotiating. It is Burnham-type politics entering into Trinidad and Tobago! *[Desk thumping]* That is what it is! It is the introduction of fascism in this country and you feel might is right! Let me tell you something. Your security cannot be guaranteed in the sugarbelt.

Hon. Member: What?

Mr. K. Ramnath: I do not threaten anybody. I am telling you that your security cannot be guaranteed! If you feel that you can use the power, the machinery of the State to intimidate people, I am telling you that! You cannot even control the spate of violence in the country—the kidnappings that have been encouraged by the PNM. The kidnappings which the PNM condoned when they told their supporters: Take back your country! Panday and them thieving! Panday and them thief the country! Everyone who looks like Panday is a thief! Take it back! They condoned the kidnapping! One set of people kidnapping another set of people in the country! We will reach the streets on this issue! I have not come back here to sit and dine and wine with you! *[Desk thumping]* I have not come back for that! *[Interruption]* You will be the first one we will deal with!

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The Minister has the nerve to come here and say: “Trust us.” “Give us a chance so we will show you in the next few years and we will whisper what a great job we have done.” [Interruption] Point Lisas, Mr. Speaker, was never opposed by anybody. The Minister was a junior civil servant in those days and he has now become a junior functionary in the Government. His job is just to stand and defend what his seniors have to say. So he does not acquaint himself; he left Couva far too long ago to understand the sociology of that part of the country!

Mr. Speaker, if you were to look at the practice of their hiring policies you would see—the Attorney General is reported to have made a statement about why there is so much crime in the country: “Because Panday did nothing for black people in this country.” [Interruption] Yes, if I am saying the wrong thing get up and say that I am saying the wrong thing!

Mrs. Morean: Mr. Speaker, on the point of order. The hon. Member is misquoting me. [Interruption] My statement was that: “One of the—not the major—but one of the contributors to the escalation of crime in the country was the fact that a certain sector of the society was neglected.” [Interruption] I said: “Sector”. I did not say black people or any type of people.” [Interruption]

Mr. Speaker: Member for Couva South.

Mr. K. Ramnath: The Attorney General, obviously, is not too sure about what she wanted to say. I want to make the point that at no time—this party to which I have the honour to belong, the former government, the United National Congress—made any proposition to any of the stakeholders, to shut down the industry. That point was made repeatedly by the Member for Oropouche. Their partners in the propaganda, Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj, the one whom I afforded the nine-year term here when I demitted office for I took a sabbatical—

Mr. Valley: Sabbatical? You were kicked out! Pushed out!

Hon. Member: Thrown out!

Mr. K. Ramnath: I do not want to remind the Member of what he said about his leader—about his leader being a dictator. Do you remember that?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: Resigned in the morning and begged back for his job in the night.

Mr. K. Ramnath: Resigned in the morning and begged back for his job, on his knees, in the evening.

Mr. Speaker, what they would have us and the population believe is that the UNC did nothing for Caroni (1975) Limited. The Member for Oropouche made it

clear that not a job was lost! The plans were expansionists in nature! Diversification the issue! When we were talking about participation of the private sector in the rum distillery, the Member for San Fernando East was shouting all over the place about giving away to Duprey. When he collected \$5 million from Duprey in the 1995 election, he kept quiet! The same Duprey! I have a copy of the cheque that was given to the PNM! *[Interruption]* You are denying that? I showed it to Padmore on television!

Hon. Member: You wrote that cheque yourself! *[Laughter]*

Mr. K. Ramnath: The whole nation saw it! Today, Mr. Speaker, you know Angostura is promoting a rum called 1919, which is being sold, which it purchases from Caroni (1975) Limited and blends—Old Cask Rum, a 7-year-old rum—an industry which would have flourished and which could flourish even today because of the love for the quality of rum. They sought to destroy it! You know who was outside of the distillery, a long lost politician who lives in antediluvian times; who preaches left-wing working-class politics; who is fighting old wars; a man who sold his soul for a position on the board of Plipdeco, Raffique Shah.

If you notice the kind of conspirators with this group—Pathetic cases of people! Political discards! They are now fighting the cause of the dying regime; a regime with no credibility whatsoever. No government, including the PNM, can isolate workers in the public service; in state enterprises; in any of the areas over which they have temporary control from an incoming government. No government could isolate Caroni (1975) Limited workers from the treachery and the betrayal of the PNM. They are, however, seeking to blame the UNC government for what they are doing to the people of Caroni (1975) Limited today.

I could imagine how Mr. Lionel Frank Seukeran must be rolling in his grave, when people connected to him are participating in this exercise of the destruction of the people for whom he once fought. I cannot understand how they could stand today and tell people that they are closing down an industry that is rooted in slavery and indentureship without having any discussion with people. The Parliament has not been afforded an opportunity to debate a proposal that is so historic as the change in Caroni (1975) Limited.

You know the former Prime Minister, Eric Williams, brought motions to this Parliament—and the Member for San Fernando East was in this Parliament—for the House to give support to the decision to build a steel mill in Trinidad and Tobago; for a decision to do several projects that the Government was undertaking at

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the time. The Member for San Fernando East was in the Parliament! He feels that he can do what Williams failed to do, what Chambers failed to do and what Robinson failed to do. He is now the man of the moment, the man in charge. He wants to make a decision for me to have political union with people from St. Vincent. Do you not see this is madness! The European Union is focusing on defence, trade and economic activity. They have not started any talk about political union. We are talking about countries with centuries of history. He on his own, without any respect for the people of Trinidad and Tobago, went to a meeting of Caricom leaders and said: "I am prepared, anyone of you willing to come? Anybody willing to come, come. "And some fella jumping up in some steelband in Trinidad, he said he is coming. But the Jamaicans are smart. They do not trust him! You do not have these types of discussions unless you raise it nationally; unless you debate it in Parliament; unless you debate it among the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. Shades of Burnham and Hoyte! Do not let anyone be carried away by that innocent looking gentleman who always has a most pleasant smile on his face but cutting hugs by day and stabs by night.

Hon. Member: Ask Mr. Robinson about that.

Mr. K. Ramnath: I have no reason to bring Robinson into anything. Do not get me angry here today about Robinson. Once you call that name, I get angry! Do not provoke me!

Mr. Speaker: Please, Member, I wish that you would desist from calling the President's name.

Mr. K. Ramnath: I was only responding to provocation, Mr. Speaker. *[Interruption]* Do you want me to read what you said about Robinson?

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: He was not the President at the time.

Mr. K. Ramnath: *[Interruption]* No, I have 75 minutes to speak today. I return to the Member for Diego Martin Central. I was trying to get my notes in order. What is interesting is that after the letter was sent to the workers of Caroni (1975) Limited, the Member for Diego Martin Central is saying that Cabinet met and revised certain provisions and one of those is the under-funding of the daily-paid pension plan. The other one is payment of severance to daily-paid workers.

The Board of Inland Revenue wrote to the board of Caroni (1975) Limited and said: "Do not pay anybody any money unless he can verify that he is not owing any taxes." Do you know what that means, Mr. Speaker? It means going back six years, filing returns where you have not filed. Not only that, if you did not file you are subject to penalties which could wipe away a large portion of your

money. Is the Minister of Finance saying that regardless of the tax liability position a taxpayer in Caroni (1975) Limited finds himself in, he is going to get his money? Is he going to get his money?

Caroni (1975) Limited has a history of not forwarding National Insurance money; they have a history of not forwarding taxes collected; they have a history of not paying money into the pension plan even though moneys have been deducted from the salaries? What guarantees do we have? *[Interruption]* But that is hardly the issue! The issue here is that we should settle provided that you arrange for easy payment. The issue here is, after the end of the sugar crop what are you going to do with 75,000 acres of land? Lands that have been abandoned by Caroni (1975) Limited because of soil conditions have been entered upon by squatters in almost every part of the country. Caroni (1975) Limited has not been able to remove those squatters from those abandoned lands.

I want the Members for Diego Martin West and Diego Martin Central who talk about land belonging to everybody—you know one of the things the UNC is accused of, and justifiably so—I imagine that if I were in the party at that time I might have raised my voice—is it never took any land and gave it away.

Hon. Members: What? What? *[Interruption]*

Mr. K. Ramnath: It never took any land and gave it away. No supporters of the UNC got land to build houses! *[Interruption]* Nobody was the recipient of any largesse from the UNC. Lands that were alienated from sugar went towards industrial production and industrial development. *[Desk thumping]* The same policy that the PNM carried on to make Plipdeco a success; that is, to sell those lands or lease them to Plipdeco was the same thing that was done to expand Point Lisas Industrial Estate northwards from Couva. *[Interruption]*

You are talking about InnCogen? InnCogen was a work, a futuristic design to deal with today's problems. You had to have a futuristic thinking Minister to have said: "Let us prepare the country for the demands for electricity." We do not do like them. When industrial activities come into the country they rush and they give it to Southern Electric Company because they have friends who are connected with Southern Electric Company; their super-technocrat friends who, we all know, are agents of Southern Electric in this country. What did the Minister of Public Utilities do in consultation with the technocrats in the country; with the planners in the country; in consultation with the board of T&TEC; people like Mansoor and Ottley and those people—*[Interruption]* You tell the House why he left, I would not tell— They recognized the demand for power was soon going to be upon us. We did not want to do like them and have blackouts

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throughout the country! We did not want to do like them and wait 20 years to conduct studies to determine that we needed another 25 million cubic metres of water per day. Futuristic thinking to solve today's problem was the success of the Desalination Plant! The success, in this global environment, of our postal system was as a result of the futuristic thinking of the Member for Caroni East. [*Desk thumping*] But they cannot handle success! They always want to find an excuse to gather a few of their friends to deal with a new project because they know what went on in Sodeteg. They know what went on in the Hall of Justice, the Twin Towers; Iscott; Eric Williams, Mt. Hope Medical Sciences Complex. We should have commissions of enquiries, headed by Mr. Bernard and supported by Guerra and these people, into all of these projects if one wants to establish transparency in this country.

Hon. Member: Why did you not do it when you were in Government?

Mr. K. Ramnath: You must do it! We do not waste time with commissions of enquiries! [*Interruption*] Our position has always been if you find anybody guilty—I am telling you, you are wasting a lot of time and you are paying Bernard a lot of money to campaign for you. The campaign is over! They are campaigning but they do not even know the election has gone and the campaign is over! But, Mr. Speaker, the campaign continues against Caroni (1975) Limited workers.

The subliminal message you are sending is splitting this country, pulverizing this nation! The subliminal message you send to those people about to whom the lands belong—I was making the point that I do not see any lands that have been taken away by UNC from Caroni (1975) Limited and given to our supporters. [*Interruption*] In fact, our supporters are today claiming we did not do enough for them with respect to giving them land! [*Interruption*] But you know what they did? At the back of my house in Couva they built 1,007 housing units and they imported their supporters from all over the country. Nobody from Couva got the lands! They are the ones who built Malabar! They are the ones who built La Horquetta! They are the ones who created ghettos in this country because they could not manage it!

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: You do not call the people's homes ghettos!

Mr. K. Ramnath: They want to create more ghettos in Chaguanas, Couva and in Barackpore! That is their objective in order to redress what they call the historical imbalance.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: You cannot call the people's homes ghettos! You are out of place! [*Interruption*]

Mr. K. Ramnath: I can give you the assurance that that is what they want, to create ghettos!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please!

Mr. K. Ramnath: I can handle them. I have no problem. I am long in this business. I could handle them at anytime! I am not afraid to speak my mind. This might be my last term in politics but I will make sure that I will not be party to any attempt to destroy the lives of so many people in Caroni and in the sugarbelt. [*Desk thumping*] Who wants to do that is a matter for them! They are the ones who have taken up lands willy-nilly and created the ghettos which they cannot control! If you want to build houses, let the people go through the process of applying!

Mr. Speaker: This sitting is suspended for tea. We will resume at 5.00 p.m.

4.30 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.00 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Mr. K. Ramnath: Mr. Speaker, one of the main issues that is before us, with respect to the Bill, is that the Minister claims that what is proposed will offer greater security of land tenure to those persons who are being regularized as a result of the passage of this Bill; that programmes to benefit development of farmers will be more easily accessed; that leases of agricultural lands owned by the State will be done in a more expeditious manner, if it is being done by the Director of Surveys; that there will be a reduction in the backlog under the accelerated Land Distribution Programme—a reduction of the waiting period.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at what is being proposed elsewhere, like in Caroni, against the background set by the Minister, it is quite easy to conclude that this is nothing short of hypocritical behaviour. Before the tea break, I was referring to the point made by the Member for Diego Martin Central about preferential treatment promised to retrenched Caroni workers with respect to the Land Distribution Programme. If the Parliament does not have a copy of their plan, if the trade union movement that represents workers at all levels does not have a copy of their plan, then they are really making promises that they will not be able to keep.

Nobody will sign on that dotted line and cooperate with the Government, the Ministry of Agriculture, Lands and Marine Resources and Caroni (1975) Limited under those conditions—conditions of uncertainty and conditions derived from promises. No one will accept the promise of the Minister in the Ministry of

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Finance, the Member for Diego Martin Central, because he says that. Many things are said here. The reputation of politicians, Mr. Speaker, has been tarnished by misunderstanding and misinterpretation of what we say. What we say is time related, but I am sure that the Member for Diego Martin Central will say that was then. What they want is a firm assurance and a negotiated acceptance, but we are not seeing an attempt to negotiate in good faith.

No number of meetings held with the Couva Chamber of Commerce or the All Trinidad Sugar Estate and Factory Workers Trade Union and the other unions will arrive at the consensus required to make what they have in mind work. I do not know what they have in mind. I thought that the Prime Minister would have called me and said: "This is what we have in mind. Will you support us?" All the communities I represent in Couva South are dependent directly on the sugar industry, either in cultivation, in the factory, in field engineering or working for transport contractors.

How can I accept what they are doing to the constituents, not only of Couva South, but also the workers of Caroni (1975) Limited, and accept it on the basis of a letter which the Minister himself cannot explain? How can they not pay these people their pension from the day they retire, once they cross the pensionable age of 50 years? We did it in Petrotrin.

We have an open VSEP programme in Petrotrin and at any time any worker can opt for it. That is how we have been able to reduce the labour force by about 600 persons in the last couple years. You know why people take it? They look at the economics; they look at their years of recreation; their years of spending time with their family; their income and investment opportunities. They spring this on them; they do not negotiate and then they say they will provide them with financial counselling.

The people who are very senior in Caroni (1975) Limited, who have very little time left, are walking away with relatively large sums of money—I do not want to call the figures—and the vast majority is going with nothing and have to wait.

I want the Minister in the Ministry of Finance, if he wants to talk about support for this measure, to listen to the points being raised. They must be able to go on pension. Do they know what is said in this letter? "Pension will be paid to you on the attainment of normal retirement age." Do they know what is the normal retirement age of a fellow who cuts two tonnes of cane?

I always remember my friend Boodram Jattan, a former Member for Naparima. He mispronounced a word in this House and was scolded by the then

Prime Minister, Dr. Eric Williams. Do you know what he told him? He said, “I have just come from cutting and loading a tractor of cane and taking it to the way station, and you are commenting on my English?” I do not know if they know what it is like for a frail woman or a man in his fifties having to cut two tonnes of cane, transport it by hand, put it on a train and leave it there—starting to work at 3.00 and 4.00 o'clock in the morning.

The price they pay for 30 and 40 years' work is \$40,000 and \$50,000 and they wait until age 62 for a woman and age 65 for a man. The highest rates of diabetes, high blood pressure and strokes exist in that part of the country. What will happen to the medical plan of these workers when they shut down Caroni (1975) Limited? Are they still going to have access to the dispensary? Are they still going to get their blood pressure and sugar tablets and their chronic disease medical provisions? No, Sir. They are saying to them: “Well done thou good and faithful servants! Get to hell out!” not “I have prepared a place for you”. So, in their fathers' houses, there are not many mansions.

The PNM has created barracks for them. We are back to the days when they created barracks—return them to the days of indentureship. They are asking them to wait until they reach 65 and they will pay. I do not want us to address this matter here today. I want discussion and dialogue to be opened up with the stakeholders.

Mr. Speaker: The speaking time of the hon. Member has expired.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. K. Ramnath: Thank you, hon. Member, for being so gracious. I was dealing with lands for agricultural purposes. What agricultural purposes? What are we going to do with all of the lands in Couva and Chaguanas and other places after the end of the crop? [*Interruption*] If anyone comes from the background of my friend, the Member for Diego Martin East, which I have described hitherto—rather colonial in nature—he will understand why he raises these frivolous issues.

There must be a transitional period. There must be a transition team. They cannot just alienate 65,000 acres of land and hope that some security force of Caroni will prevent people from putting up houses all over the place. They are not talking about lands that are used for anything else but growing sugar.

My friend, Dr. Kusha Haraksingh, passed on the Minister's letter. [*Interruption*] The Minister passed it to Dr. Kusha Harracksingh, who passed it on

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because really he is not allowed to think in matters of this kind. He actually said publicly that these decisions are political. He is actually crying out to high heaven, except that he does not have what it takes to say, "I quit and I am not going to participate in my own denigration and the denigration of others like me who served as a Senator in the United Labour Front". He sits there and takes instructions from his master, the Prime Minister.

The Minister's letter says that farmers will cultivate the sugar cane required to meet that target level of production in 2004, that is 75,000 to 80,000 tonnes. So, all of the lands will become abandoned. They have no proposal, no plan to say in the interim that this is what will happen. This is a high-handed, Mugabe approach. Mugabe has gone on record as alienating the lands to the extent that it has resulted in starvation of his own people. Is that what we are seeing in this country of ours?

Mr. Speaker, some of the 75,000 acres of land, could have been kept under cultivation if we had a transition period, but the attitude is: might is right. We are going to close down Caroni (1975) Limited, as the Minister for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West has openly said. Take the VSEP—

Mr. Rahael: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, the Member for Couva South has indicated that I said something I never said. I never said that we were going to close down Caroni (1975) Limited.

Mr. Speaker: Member, if you are rising on a point of order, you must quote the point of order. If you are asking for the Member to give way, that is a different matter. Member for Couva South, please continue.

Mr. K. Ramnath: In fairness to the Minister, let me state that what he intends to do is to discontinue cultivation and farming of sugar cane at Caroni. He intends to shut down the Brechin Castle factory. Let us interpret what we want, how we want, from those remarks contained in the letter sent to Caroni. That is not shutting down.

Remove 55,000 acres and 9,000 persons and you have a very viable company. I do not know in whose interest. Shut down the Brechin Castle factory, the Field Engineering Department and all the transport and you still have a viable company. Let the people interpret what he intends to do. I advise my friend that he should discontinue carrying the hatchet for others. Nobody will roll over and die. He has declared war on the people of South and Central and there will be a response in like manner by the people. I am making it very clear that I will lead a struggle to prevent this plan from being implemented. [*Crosstalk*]

I have no ambition to lead anything. I understand the difficulty with those who are so full of ambition that they become consumed by it, as the Member for San

Fernando East has become. Take back your country. If you have to kidnap them, go ahead—hugs by day and stabs by night.

The point is, let us know the plan for restructuring Caroni (1975) Limited. If they say they are not going to close it down, let them bring the plan to the Parliament and lay it. We have been elected by the people to discuss the issues that affect their lives. It is not because they won the election by 1,253 votes—for which they involved themselves in all kinds of illegal activities—that gives them the right to do what they want. Many times when persons take the law into their own hands, it is as a result of intense provocation and no amount of threats can do anything. They cannot even handle the persons who are roaming the streets and kidnapping people and stealing in broad daylight. They are totally incompetent in dealing with crime.

Cabinet has agreed to amend the relevant legislation to increase the tax exemption from \$100,000 to \$200,000. Tell us how many workers you are going to sever will earn in excess of \$300,000 as a result of this exercise. Let us find out how many persons will qualify for this benefit as a result of the formula that has been used to calculate and then you will realize that they are very few.

How will you calculate the value of the homes people are living in? Are you going to use the market value or the book value? So none of those provisions is definitive and everyone is saying they cannot trust what they have sent for them. So, they are going to counsel them and select one of their friends who campaigned for them during the last general election.

I conclude that they cannot be trusted. I think that the country, the workers and the Parliament are owed a comprehensive plan to handle the restructuring of such a major organization that has had its roots in slavery and indentureship. We cannot accept what the Minister in the Ministry of Finance has said—that we will be happy one day.

I am not going to be uncharitable about the Community Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme (CEPEP). I am quite satisfied with some of the work I see, but I am not satisfied that there is equality of treatment in the employment practices. I have raised this matter privately with the Prime Minister and across here. I know everybody wants to work. I know what the unemployment situation is. The Central Statistical Office and the former Governor of the Central Bank can tell me any number of figures, but there are many persons unaccounted for in terms of those who are out there looking for work. I do not know how they measure that. *[Interruption]*

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I would question it whether it was the UNC in power or the PNM, but I am saying that there are a limited number of jobs available. Can you imagine we have reached a stage in this country where persons want to cut grass? Nothing is wrong with that. They want to work and keep the environment clean. When you have a situation of a large number of persons who cannot even get that kind of work, what will happen when you throw 9,000 persons on the breadline?

I do not know that people understand the seriousness of entire communities being faced with this trauma, not knowing what the future holds for them. What are they going to do with this \$40,000, \$50,000 or \$100,000 between now and age 65? Where are they going to invest it? The bank rates now of 4 and 5 per cent do not even give a rate of return that will allow a person to put food on the table. Quite naturally much of that money will be eaten away in the shortest possible space of time. There already is high unemployment, particularly among people who do not have life skills that will give them the kind of jobs that will earn them a decent living. They are going to add to that 9,000 people.

The Minister is repeatedly saying—and he is supported by the Minister in the Ministry of Finance, the Member for Diego Martin Central—that we are going to have all kinds of programmes coming up. What agriculture are we going to produce? What is the plan? What kinds of crops will be produced on these 55 acres of lands? Who is going to organize the company? Is it going to allocate a certain amount of land to agriculture, a certain amount to housing and a certain amount to industry? When it comes to agriculture, is the Estate Management Company now involved in developing a plan or does it have a plan already? If so, why do we not have a copy of the plan, so that we can go to our constituents in Couva and the environs and say, “We are going to have foodcrop farming on 50 or 100 acres of land divided into 5 or 10-acre plots with National Agricultural Marketing and Development Corporation (NAMDEVCO) working in close collaboration”? [*Interruption*] Listen to the trivialities! He is the Minister and he does not have the decency to come to Parliament and elaborate on a plan and he is shouting across there.

Mr. Valley: I give the Member the assurance that in a couple of weeks, with Cabinet approval, we are going to lay a report on the work that the Estate Management Company would be doing in that regard.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: Is the Minister giving the workers that before he has the plan?

Mr. Ramsaran: They are putting the cart before the horse. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Valley: We have it. The Members asked for it and we will bring it to the Parliament, based on Cabinet approval; not the plan. [*Crosstalk*] You are a lawyer, are you?

Mr. K. Ramnath: Mr. Speaker, if he had remembered his youthful days in McBean, he would have known not to put the cart before the horse. He knows about horse carts. He used to ride horse carts on the old Penco estate. He knows what it is like. He lived there. He is retrenching people and then coming with the plan. He wants people to buy into his plan. He wants people to say they are going to take—

Mr. Valley: The Member should take the point that the Estate Management Company is the future. There is a problem in Caroni (1975) Limited. We are moving to the Estate Management Company. The plan is there. The Member has asked for information. I think it is a valid point and I am merely giving an undertaking that we are going to bring a document to the Parliament in due course.

Mr. K. Ramnath: It looks as though I had to come here and speak for 75 minutes for him to admit that he has a plan and he is going to bring it. The Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources has demonstrated that he is totally incompetent. I am sure he is competent in other areas. I would not be so uncharitable to define the areas, but any sensible person listening to what the Member for Diego Martin Central is saying today will understand our concerns on this side. Where is the plan?

I want to make it clear to the Prime Minister that he has given me the assurance that he has not heard a contribution of this nature for a long time and I am sure the Prime Minister will also agree. [*Interruption*] He has other matters to deal with.

I am a charitable man. I am not like the Member for Arouca South who wants to huddle people in some high-rise apartments and then admit they have many social problems—crime, AIDS—and she is counselling them. They have no respect for human beings. They put them in these high-rise apartments and abandon them. They should put people to live next to industry. They cannot put people in these buildings and hope industry will come. What kind of planning is that? Of course, with the current Minister of Planning and Development, I do not expect much.

I am saying to you that the Member cannot convince us that they have a plan and I would like him, as early as possible, to show us the details of the economic proposals that would make Caroni (1975) Limited viable and provide opportunities

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for those they are asking to be retrenched. My advice, therefore, to those persons required to sign this, is to wait until the Minister presents his plan and fleshes it out with respect to the provision of housing lots, opportunities for owning lands for agricultural purposes and the pension.

The Member for Diego Martin Central says he has no difficulty with persons getting an early pension. I want him to call the unions and tell them that Caroni (1975) Limited has also agreed to fund the liability arising out of an early pension. That is what they have done in Petrotrin and elsewhere. Let the company fund the liability arising out of retiring earlier than 65 and let people go home with a decent income. Let us make sure they do not add to the list of woes we currently have; that their children are given opportunities to be educated and so forth.

I do not want to get involved in any more controversy at this stage, but I must spend a couple minutes on this threat to import workers from the islands. I know prime ministers have little to say when they meet at these Caribbean conferences. Some choose to dance on stage and some choose to snipe at each other. I also feel obligated to be respectful to my Prime Minister on an international forum. *[Interruption]* I am a very cultured man, if you do not know; a good Presbyterian, a Christian. Here we have this big announcement of making jobs available in Trinidad and Tobago and free movement of people. This comes on the heel of a gas pipeline going up the islands. I want to ask my friend, a geologist and well-trained person, whether he is serious about going on an international plan.

I want to link it back to the Bill in case you are wondering how it relates. I am looking here at the use of gas for agricultural production and processing. That is an issue we have to address. Gas is being used today to air-condition Mount Hope Complex. Natural gas is used to air-condition the Maritime project. *[Interruption]* Perhaps the Member for Diego Martin East will want to use some of the gas that is coming from his mouth to do something constructive.

Gas is used in many of the developed countries in agro-processing, air-conditioning, heating, temperature and humidity control. It was the PNM in years gone by that talked about the best use of natural gas, at Chaguaramas, and how we can use that to enhance agriculture. Apart from bringing in skilled people from the islands to work here, I am also hearing about sending gas up the islands. I know the economics. Frank Look Kin and the NGC are too polite to tell the Prime Minister because they are obviously afraid they will be fired. If they give a technical opinion, I am quite sure that they will say that we cannot export gas to St. Vincent, Grenada and Barbados just to run one power plant and that the cost of

solar energy will be cheaper than paying for the capital cost of running a pipeline up the islands. *[Interruption]*

Solar energy is cheaper. It costs US 25 cents per kilowatt hour in those islands, compared to 3 cents or 5 cents in Trinidad and Tobago. If you look at the cost of generating power, you will see that it is minuscule in terms of the capital investment. Of course, that is a pie-in-the-sky type of approach by the Government.

The Member for San Fernando East promised this Parliament, over 20 years ago, that Pleasantville would be a pilot project for the gasification of homes. Twenty years later, I hear nothing coming from him with respect to—*[Interruption]* You respond to everything I say, because I am sure you are glad that I am raising it; that I am futuristic like my friend, the Member for Caroni East. *[Interruption]* I have no problem with him being my leader. I have no problem with anybody here being my leader—Moonilal, too.

When we hear Members talk about their thrust in agriculture and we are in a situation to do something, the real problem is that there is no plan for agriculture in the country. They can bring this Bill and remove the particular section that is offensive, according to the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, but that will not solve the problem

We used to go to La Brea to buy oranges. We had a Texaco Star Farm in those days. We acquired huge acreages in those days in Palo Seco, Chatham and in La Brea. If they had good representation, unlike the PNM, those arable lands could have been used for agricultural production. Do you know what they focus on? The lands at Caroni, Central Trinidad, belong to the people of La Brea, here and there, as though that is the debate.

That is not an issue. There is no direction in agriculture, and, as the Member for Oropouche said, “Where is your land policy?” Why not develop, under Palo Seco Agricultural Enterprises Limited—whose general manager is Mayor Bertrand, a good friend of yours and mine—those huge acreages of arable land and continue to expand the dairy and cattle herd that we have in those areas instead of worrying about those poor people in Basta Hall, Dow Village and Calcutta, who do not live on Caroni lands. They live on their own lands. There are no housing developments there. Those are lands they acquired through hard work over the years. Instead you come here and make it look as though you are trying to address a historical imbalance, as though someone has invaded the lands of Caroni and you want to take them back.

I thank you, Sir.

Mr. Winston Dookeran (*St. Augustine*): Mr. Speaker, I believe the debate which has emerged on this Bill is of such importance to the future of this nation that we should take note of what is really happening and what we need to do. It is an historic debate—and I agree with my friend, the Member for Couva South, when he said that there should be a proper document outlining the full details of this plan. I say that because, as I listened to the Member for Diego Martin Central discussing the elements of the plan, I could not help getting the distinct feeling that there was a marketing job at work here. There were many vague statements being made that would pander to the rationality of those who believe that these should be in the plan. In fact, one cannot have the assurance that they were.

So we are really in a debate about credibility—the credibility of the Government's programme against the credibility of those who will be affected by it. It is of such importance that the hon. Prime Minister should reflect very much. This is not a normal decision. This is a decision that has major implications, not only in economic terms but also sociological terms and could add cleavages to an already fragmented society. The Prime Minister of all people should ensure that his responsibility is beyond that of his party or his government and to the nation at large.

It is in this context that the debate cannot be dealt with in the way it has been. From time to time, we have made mention to the hon. Minister of Agriculture, Lands and Marine Resources that he has not conceptualized the problem of Caroni (1975) Limited properly. Little did we know that he had a one-track approach to dealing with this problem.

I have no doubt that collectively we know what has to be done and there is no doubt that the issues of Caroni (1975) Limited and the sugar industry are issues that must be handled. I myself got involved in the politics of this country through my involvement in the sugar industry. At that time, we were trying to search for a solution that would be national in scope. It is important that whatever you do in Caroni must fit the national framework. We cannot isolate Caroni (1975) Limited as an enterprise which has found itself in financial difficulties, and we will do the necessary surgery to deal with that enterprise. The sugar industry and Caroni (1975) Limited and its solution must fit the national framework for economic change and social stability.

I told the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources in a particular debate that he had misconceptualized the entire issue of agriculture and food policy. He told me that he was looking into it, but every time I hear the comments of the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West, I do not see any framework coming out of his

statements. I see a line that he intends to provide VSEP, voluntary or compulsory, depending on the reaction he gets. He intends to close the factory and, I believe, wait for the response. However, what is the framework within which this agricultural policy of the use of land will be put in place? Fortunately, the Minister in the Ministry of Finance tried to put some framework in place when he said that they were pointing towards preparing land for agricultural purposes.

Let us go further. Let us see what is the specific mechanism that is being proposed in public policy to translate that goal into action. I said that this is a debate about credibility and if we do not handle this debate properly, the cleavages in the society will be greater and the impact will not be only on the statement of losses in Caroni (1975) Limited. We can add them up.

Fortunately, a number of those statements got laid in Parliament today. The impact will be beyond that, so the Government will have to come with far more details of such an important decision that will affect the very fabric of social stability of this country. They cannot get consensus. If there was one thing I have noted during the debate—the Member for Couva North and earlier the Member for Oropouche said it—there is need for change. There is the consensus that there is need for change. That was not so in the 1980s, when we first began to tackle this problem.

The need for change was not there. There were those who wanted to preserve the old order and there were those who wanted to bring about a change. Now, there is recognition of the need for change. The Member for Oropouche made mention of the attitude and approach to it. I do not want to get there right now.

However we look at it, there are a number of components to the change. One is to deal with rationalization of the sugar production, and there is no doubt that we may need to reduce the production of sugar given world conditions in the market. There is no doubt that we may need to take appropriate action at the level of the refinery, but that is only one part of the solution. The issue of establishing satellite farms around agricultural production aimed at food security for the nation is an opportunity that is going abegging now. Consequently, the approach of Government of isolating the solution to the fiscal account without regard to the social account, is shortsighted, dangerous and clearly a situation that will provoke a reaction in this country.

I say to the hon. Prime Minister that he should reflect very carefully on seeking the necessary consensus and establishing the credibility of this programme. It is critical at this time. I do not want to talk about how fragmented

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we are. That is a separate issue. This is an opportunity to unite people. It is not unity of individuals we are talking about, we are talking about uniting the nation. That is one of the problems we have.

We could talk about development of satellite farms for food production, which is part of the original plan. We have had many plans in this area. If this had been put in a national framework, the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources would have come here and said that he had a plan for food production in the country and how he intended to transform Caroni (1975) Limited to perform that role. He would not have come here and said that he had a fiscal account of so much and that he intended to cut that down come hell or high water and that he was going to do it regardless of the consequences. That is not how sugar has to be dealt with. I have been giving this a lot of thought. I am glad for the opportunity. I did not realize that there would have been this debate today.

Mr. Speaker, I said that you need the first component, which is sugar production at the core and there is need to handle that. There is also need to look at the diversification programme. The hon. Prime Minister invited me earlier in this debate to explain some elements of the plan in which I was engaged, in the government of 1986—1991.

One of the essential premises of that plan on diversification—and I am pleased that the Minister of Planning and Development is here—is that we were then negotiating with the World Bank, which had insisted on restructuring Caroni (1975) Limited. We did not disagree, provided that they created a new set of opportunities for investing. In those days, we were talking about US \$100 million for the diversification company of Caroni (1975) Limited. That was what was being discussed.

You have to find the necessary funds to invest. The issue has always been whether to close Caroni or open it up and the strategy is either to move in the direction of closing it down or opening it up to something different. When they talk about reducing employment opportunities without creating new ones, we are really playing with a dangerous situation in terms of the sugar industry and the economy.

The hon. Minister of Planning and Development may wish to enter the debate and let us know exactly what he is thinking. In terms of the specifics, a fundamental point on the issue of credibility is that you cannot go ahead with one part of the plan and promise the other carrots, without giving credibility to it.

They talk about training, and I know I heard the Minister in the Ministry of Finance say he was allocating \$25 million to training and consultancy. That is

why I said it was a public relations job. There is absolutely no doubt that if you are going to transform an industry with 9,000 workers and near to 100,000 persons dependent on it—if not more—you can develop a training programme or consultancy programme with \$25 million. I could not help coming to the view that all these measures and training on agricultural development were in fact public relations responses to satisfy the general public of Trinidad and Tobago that we are going the deal with this problem, when in truth we do not have a detailed plan to deal with it. That is why it is a problem of credibility.

The Member for Couva South raised an important point when he said that there was no consultation. From my own interface with people in the industry at the board and union levels, they tell me they had no positive involvement in this plan. Maybe they had meetings, maybe persons sat together and decided to talk, but I want to ask a specific question: Did the board of Caroni (1975) Limited approve a plan? If there is such an approval, where are the minutes and what have they agreed to? When we suggest there is no consultation, there is a credibility issue again.

I do not understand how people can behave the way they do, if they have agreed. They came to Port of Spain and the Prime Minister said he is not going to add kerosene to the fire. That is his way of not getting involved. They were expressing their disappointment, not in the need for change—I think there are some elements that people have accepted—but in the security for the future, not only of the workers, but also of the industry at large. The distinction between sugar production and Caroni (1975) Limited and the industry as an entity has to be made. I told the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources that—when he talks about food security, he should talk about food production.

I remember, in the budget debate, I raised the issue and his response was that we had a food production plan for food security for this nation, but I do not see this plan coming in that national context. If he had come to the Parliament and said that he had decided to bring about the transformation of Caroni (1975) Limited by establishing a food production plan with satellite farms and that this was how they were going to fund and administer it; and that he was going to develop an industrial development plan with some of the land and what were the incentives that they would put in place to make sure that the industrial development takes place, then they would be dealing with the other aspects of the plan, not only the one which deals with fiscal measures.

We are making the mistake of not making it explicit and we could end up in a much more dangerous position because to try to change the tax exempt portion from \$100,000 to \$300,000 is not a concession. That is part of the formula. The

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enhancement of the severance, homes to be purchased, these are all good-sounding things, but they need to be placed into some kind of statement that is credible.

One of the points raised by the Minister in the Ministry of Finance is that he shall guarantee employability of persons. How could he make that as a statement of this plan? Where is the investment going to come from to generate those opportunities of employability? What the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources has said clearly has nothing to do with a plan. What the Minister in the Ministry of Finance said has come closer to giving us some guidelines, but it is a public relations job. It is trying to satisfy the national community that we are dealing with that problem in a humane way. Let us actually deal with it in a humane way.

They can create historical advantage to their Government if they tackle the thorny issue—and we know it is thorny and has been so for the last thirty years—in a manner that is totally credible. The workers are prepared for that change with the acceptance of their proposal. When they say they are prepared to accept, they are prepared for change. They have recognized the need for change and the Government have interpreted that recognition for change as if the workers are accepting their plan.

In that part of the society, when a minister comes down to Rienzi, they believe that every thing he says he has back-up for; that when he says he has access to agricultural farms and homes for them, training and consultancy, they say, “Fine!”

In public policy formulation, many of our words cannot be our bond because we may not even be there when these policies are implemented. We may go to higher offices. We cannot rely on our word. In public policy formulation, on an important matter like Caroni (1975) Limited and the sugar industry, we cannot rely on the word of the Member for Caroni East, the Member for St. Augustine or the Member for St. Joseph. I was asking the Member for St. Joseph what happened during the time he was Minister of Finance. He informed me that there was a technical team that had looked into the issues and raised a number of the points he had raised. They had not signed off it, because they realized that would have required a much deeper participation and involvement of the people.

6.00 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, I want to spend a few minutes on the issue of integration in the global economy. I want to warn the Government that they have to establish the rules very clearly; what they want in our country; rather than to become victims of the dictates of institutions. You can accept the jargon and talk about the international conditionalities, but what is happening in the world is very different.

I just want to quote—I brought this to read here today not necessarily for this debate but it turned out to be relevant. *Globalization and its Discontents*, a book that is written by Joseph Stiglitz, who is the former Chairman of the Council of Advisors to President Clinton and was also Chief Economist of the World Bank. This book has been published only a matter of months now. This is what it says:

“The critics of globalization accuse western countries of hypocrisy and the critics are right; the western countries have pushed poor countries to eliminate trade barriers but have kept up their own barriers, preventing developing countries from exporting their agricultural products and so depriving them of desperately needed export income.

United States was, of course, one of the prime culprits and this was an issue of which I felt intensely.”

That is why he resigned: a man of substance. The Member opposite has not reached this stage yet. He has not even reached the stage of developing his comprehensive plan for agricultural production in this country. Food security is the Member’s major responsibility. When his term is over people would say: “Did you bring about food security or did you make it less?” They will forget what John Rahael has done except if he did that, and he has to set the foundation. What a better foundation than to have Caroni (1975) Limited in a transformed role to do that job for you, but you are missing the boat.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources is wrong in his approach. He is wrong in his approach because he is not putting this in a national context. He is wrong in his approach because he is not putting the cost in the context of the opportunities. He is wrong in his approach because he is not carrying out very constructive detailed discussions with all the stakeholders who are involved in an important issue like this. Having met with them and having dialogue and consultations are two different things. The first thing the Minister needs to do in an issue like this is to prepare a very detailed comprehensive document. The Minister of Finance said he is going to give us something on the Estate Management Company; that is one component of it. They have to talk about the training programme and the housing programme, in a national context. This is their opportunity to put the solutions in a national context. The Minister of Planning and Development ought to know this, and by so doing he will win the support of the entire community; including those who have to be transformed. To take it in isolation and put it in a fiscal context is wrong. The reason I am talking today is because this is historically an important decision.

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The part of the country could move differently, because psychologically—
[*Interruption*]

Mr. Valley: If the Member would give way. If the Hon. Member were in fact the leader of that side, given his credibility, we would have been able to depend on it and work together on this matter. But, given existing circumstances, obviously, the Government had to go around that position and go directly to the people. I can tell you, we have had a number of consultations with all the unions and stake players. I am not giving another speech, I would really like to, because the debate is getting nice. Whenever he becomes leader, I hope it is very early, then we would have the discussion that he is asking for.

Mr. W. Dookeran: Mr. Speaker, we have to define what we mean by consultation; a meeting is not necessarily consultation; hospitality is not necessarily agreement. When the Chinese are negotiating they have a habit of nodding their heads. After they have negotiated with the Americans, the Americans thought they had a deal, because the Chinese were nodding their heads many times. When it was time to sign, the Chinese delegation said sign what? We did not agree on anything. The Americans said but you nodded your heads. They said: “By nodding our heads meant that we heard what you said.” So do not misunderstand a meeting with hospitality. I asked myself if there is agreement why are the unions behaving the way they are behaving?

One of the techniques I have noticed of the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources is to input sinister motives to those who oppose him. He thinks of the most sinister motives as when he says the unions believe they will lose their membership, that is why they are behaving the way they are behaving. [*Interruption*] What a shame? The issue is bigger than that. Even if that is so, public policy cannot be determined as a reaction to such motives.

Mr. Speaker, there are five basic elements of any plan for Caroni (1975) Limited. The first one is the rationalization of the core function, which is what we are dealing with. We are dealing with the production of sugar. The sugar industry is beyond the production of sugar: it involves the entire area.

The second part of it is the diversification strategy, and thirdly, I add to that the food security policy. What is that? Do you have a plan to deal with that? I am suggesting that, perhaps, the Minister, take up the old plan. Since the Spence Committee Report in 1978, he talked about satellite farms as the way to go around a certain set of productions and then you need to find ways by which people can acquire that.

Fourthly, we might need to look at the incentive structure for broadening the industrial base in the use of land. You cannot say you will just have an estate company and give it for industrial use. The Government must have an incentive programme.

Fifthly, the whole issue of training and social security: some of the points raised by the Member for Couva South. If you were to put that in this national context, Mr. Speaker—the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources seems to be getting annoyed, but has he done that?

Mr. Speaker, what we are facing is a clear case of market failure in the sugar industry, especially international market failure. We are facing an environment in which there is a cleavage in the society. We are therefore in search of a solution that will not point in the direction towards closure, but point in the direction towards the opening up.

I have not talked here about foreign exchange earnings, employment and fiscal support because we know that these are important considerations. Do you know if the exchange rate were to change in a certain direction you would find Caroni (1975) Limited could be in a different position? I do not want to get into that debate. I do not like to talk about that. I do not like to talk about exchange rate in public. [*Interruption*] It has a lot to do with the debate. The macro-framework within which you are going to find the solution is important. The Minister needs to come clean with a document which he can articulate which will outline these various components of the strategy for economic reform. This strategy for economic reform is a moral imperative. This is not an enterprise like any enterprise that is small and has little ripple effect on the economy. This is an enterprise that will generate emotive feelings. I am sorry the Prime Minister had to leave, he said he apologized, he had another engagement. I hope the Prime Minister reflects hard and long on this issue and change gears, even at this stage, because you have the basis for change. People have agreed that there is need for change. We have that basis but we need to put that in this context that I have been talking about.

The Minister in the Ministry of Finance said he was listening to this debate in silence for a long time and that he felt compelled to speak today, because the matter has suddenly come on the parliamentary agenda without planning. It is that silence I am asking that we open up with a comprehensive proposal. I believe the Minister of Planning and Development has a responsibility in this area, to put this in a national context, to put the details in place, to go to the people and say this is what we are doing, we cannot guarantee everything, but we certainly guarantee enough to ensure the security of your own livelihood and the future livelihood of

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those who are depending on it. We are talking about 100,000 people who are going to be affected. That figure might be conservative, I do not have the exact figures. Hon. Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources, the burden of office is on your shoulders, on a critical aspect of public policy in this country. Although you may not make the decision, you will be held responsible for that decision; as a matter of fact, the whole decision because you are responsible for Caroni (1975) Limited.

I am urging the Minister to think carefully. Let us not divide this country further. Let us not build more cleavages. Let us find this as an opportunity for economic transformation. Let us agree with what Prime Minister Chambers said to the sugar workers when he became Prime Minister. I was there when he came to Sevilla Club when he was appointed Prime Minister. He told the sugar workers: "You will not be discarded. You will not be treated as discarded newspaper." That was his statement. He graphically told them that after 150 years of struggling in the sugar industry, they would not simply be discarded as a piece of newspaper.

Mr. Rahael: We are not doing that.

Mr. W. Dookeran: I ask you to read what Prime Minister Chambers said. *[Interruption]* That is not what the Minister is saying. The Minister is telling me that, but I am telling him in a matter as big as this, his word is not as important as putting it in documentary form as a government statement. Tomorrow, as I said, he might be a different minister and his word means nothing. This is not a matter of word here. The Minister has said nothing to the press, at least, over the last six months. I have been following the debate, too, because I knew one day it would end up in Parliament. He has said nothing to the press or to the country at large that has suggested that he has a national framework. He has said nothing to the press to suggest that he has placed the cost in the context of opportunities or suggested that he has had agreement, although he said that here today. He has confirmed that he has had agreement. If he has had agreement, fine—*[Interruption]* that is what I am hearing from the Minister of Finance: you have had agreement with the unions, the board and all the stakeholders. I was making the point that you probably have met with them, but that does not mean you have had agreement with them.

My intervention is to bring a word of caution, to suggest to the Government of the day that this matter should be treated with great credibility and to try to devise a consensus. The Minister may not get everybody to support him, but what he has going for him is the recognition that the change will take place. What he has going for him is the economic situation in the country today. The broader

economic situation allows him to invest into that. When I talked about 1984—we were talking about US \$100 million to be invested in diversification companies of Caroni (1975) Limited, based on the Spence Committee Report. That did not come to pass, for various reasons. The Minister has to find ways and means to put the resources, not only the resources to pay retrenchment money: whether you call it voluntary, it does not matter.

I am urging the Government of the day to consider the seriousness of the exercise and the need to tackle this subject with a sense of history in mind so that its stewardship in office would not be stained in the history of the sugar industry of Trinidad and Tobago. It has served this country well for many years. It has contributed to this country's economic wealth. It has provided exchange when there were no sources of foreign exchange. It has generated economic activity throughout the land, and more specifically throughout Central Trinidad. It has brought about the mushrooming of many small enterprises, and it has been done at great cost to those who worked in it because they were never the beneficiaries. When we look at the health conditions and the social indicators we would recognize that they were not the chief beneficiaries of their work.

I have said they need to change, but I have said the Minister cannot call what he is doing change. I am making a passionate plea that the Minister rethinks his process and approach, so that—I see the Attorney General is smiling—

Hon. Morean-Phillips: I am always smiling.

Mr. W. Dookeran: —as if she is in disagreement. You never know the mind's construction in the face. You can take the other approach: the high-handed approach and say: "I am the elected government of this country and I can do what I wish". You can take that approach, but you will be incurring a big cost to the society.

I conclude, that having urged the Prime Minister in particular, to think very carefully about how this policy will be implemented in Trinidad and Tobago, I wanted to speak today, I told the Member for Caroni East because I felt it was necessary to make a call so that we can look at this issue in the context in which I have tried to outline.

I urge the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources in particular to get his government to agree on an approach that is credible, or else we will pay a big cost for faltering at this point in the decision-making on the sugar industry of Trinidad and Tobago. Thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Kenneth Valley (The Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of Finance): I beg to move that the debate on these Bills be adjourned at this time, and that we go to the next matter on the Order Paper in the order in which we do it; that is Bill No. 4; An Act to amend the Municipal Corporations Act, 1990.

Ascent indicated.

MUNICIPAL CORPORATIONS (AMDT.) BILL

Order for second reading read.

The Minister of Local Government (Hon. Jarrette Narine): Mr. Speaker, I beg to move,

That a Bill to amend the Municipal Corporations Act, 1990 be now read a second time.

Mr. Speaker, section 11(4) of the Municipal Corporations Act, 1990 specifies that the term of office of councillors and aldermen shall be three years. Additionally section 11(4)(a), as amended by Act No. 8 of 1992, further states that an election should be held within three months of the expiry of the term of office of councillors and aldermen comprising the council.

The primary objective of this Bill is to ask this honourable House for the extension of the period for holding elections under section 11 of the Municipal Corporations Act No. 21 of 1990 to be varied from the stipulated three months to within one year or the expiry date of the term of office of councillors and aldermen. Mr. Speaker, we seek for this amendment only for the purposes of the local government election due this year 2003.

This Government wishes to assure this Parliament and the nation at large that we subscribe to the rule of law and we are cognizant of our responsibilities under the Constitution. This Bill would not have had to be brought to this House today if Members of the Opposition had shown their commitment to the country and the Constitution.

Mr. Speaker, statutorily local government election was due by October 12, 2002 but, as you and hon. Members would recall, the Parliament was deadlocked by an 18/18 situation and the Government's legislative agenda was frustrated by the Opposition's sabotage of electing a speaker which would have enabled the House to convene and conduct the peoples' business. Added to that, the Members of the opposite side were constantly insisting that we should go back to the

population for a mandate through fresh general election. These factors, among others, made it difficult for us to call the local government election when it was due by October 12, 2002. The new budget had to be passed by October 31, 2002 for the fiscal year 2003, or else the country would have come to a financial standstill.

Putting the welfare of our country as a primary objective we shelved the local government election and called the general election on October 07, 2002. It is now history as to what was the result of that general election. It is clear for all to see that the Members opposite have gone into a state of disarray and, up to this time, have not come to terms with the country's rejection of their antics.

Mr. Speaker, bringing these amendments before this House in no way reflects our refusal to honour our duty to call the local government election at the appropriate time. Because the municipal councils expired on October 12, 2002, we had to go to the Cabinet for an extension of the life of these councils/corporations in order to have continuity in decision-making and delivery of services to the respective regions under their jurisdictions.

In so doing, we saw the necessity for proper administration of the municipal corporations and, as a result, advisory committees were established comprising all former councillors and aldermen of each corporation and chaired by individual mayors and chairmen. The members of these advisory committees made recommendations for running their corporations and enjoyed the same terms and conditions that they were entitled to before the expiry of the corporations.

Mr. Speaker, all local government representatives enjoy this facility whether they were on the Government's side, the Opposition's side, or any other party. There was no discrimination in any way. I am therefore asking this House, in the interest of good governance, to legalize this action and the amendment which is contained in clause 2(c) of this Bill.

In clause 2(b) of this Bill, we are asking for the period between the date of election of a councillor and the time of swearing in, to be amended from the present three days. You would understand that the Act has a three-day limit in order to elect mayors, chairmen, aldermen and councillors to various committees. We are asking at this time to limit within ten days from the date of election of councillors. We feel that the present three-day period does not give enough time for a proper selection of aldermen and consultation for appointment of mayors, chairmen and their deputies, as well as deciding membership on the various committees. Hon. Members would agree that this particular amendment would redound to the benefit of everyone concerned with the political structuring of the various councils.

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Mr. Speaker, clause 2(d) seeks to regularize the vacancy left by the former Chairman of the San Juan/Laventille Regional Corporation who is now a Member of this House. A similar situation occurred in 1995 with the Member of Parliament for Toco/Manzanilla who resigned as Chairman of the Sangre Grande Regional Corporation to contest national elections. The House then approved an amendment to allow the deputy chairman at that time to stay on as chairman. In that case, it was the Member of Parliament, Mr. Roger Boynes.

These are simple amendments designed to enable continued, smooth and efficient functioning of the local government system. This piece of legislation seeks in no way to interfere with the electoral process, nor to alter any of the principles presently governing local government. We have sought to empower the local representatives in a situation where it was not possible to conduct the required electoral process and where a vacuum existed. To do otherwise would have been to fail the population which Members opposite did by their subterfuge in this House in 2002.

We give the commitment that local government election is going to be held and, therefore, I am hoping that this Bill will get unanimous support.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move. [*Desk thumping*]

Question proposed.

Mr. Chandresh Sharma (*Fyzabad*): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I guess sometimes you wonder, like many of us; why are we being punished in this Parliament so often. It is very clear, having heard the Minister who had absolutely nothing to say, and to fully recognize that the Government's intention is to really do what they did in the last general election: to steal the election. This is the only reason this came to this Parliament today in the format in which it came.

It would also be instructive first to look at what obtained in this Parliament earlier today. During the question and answer period you would have noticed that the Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment, in attempting to answer, tried to hide by not presenting, as is required—also based on your ruling—the answers should be in the Chamber lodged with the Clerk, so that Members obtaining the answers can ask supplemental questions. If I do not know what the answer is, it would be difficult to obtain a supplemental question. It brings to the point that your ruling is not being considered in this House.

Before I develop that point, Mr. Speaker, I want to read from the *Guardian* of February 19, 2003. I quote:

“Local Govt Act for Parliament

An amendment to the Local Government Act is expected to be presented in Parliament on February 28, communications specialist in the Local Government Ministry, Deodath Ojar-Maharaj, said yesterday.”

This is a gentleman who is being paid more than \$100,000 of taxpayers’ money.

“The amendment, which seeks to have the Local Government advisors ratified in Parliament, was completed and reviewed by Attorney General...”

We are blessed to have her presence today. We are seeing the network: the Attorney General is involved in this. It goes further:

“...Government Minister Jarrette Narine...”

You see the shameful act this Parliament has come to? Glenda Morean, Attorney General of Trinidad and Tobago, Minister of Local Government, Jarrette Narine, and \$100,000 member paid for with taxpayers’ money: yours, mine and others, misleading the national community, and it is done with a purpose in mind: to hide their scheming and “tiefing” ways. That is what it boils down to. [*Interruption*] You can bawl it! An answer that was presented in this Parliament today, from September 27—

Hon. Morean-Phillips: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order; Standing Order 36(5).

Mr. C. Sharma: You may take your seat.

Hon. Morean-Phillips: “No Member shall impute improper motives to any other Member of either Chamber.”

The Hon. Member is imputing improper motives to the Attorney General, namely myself.

Mr. Speaker: No, Hon. Attorney General, but I would remind the Member that we are debating a Bill to amend the Municipal Corporations Act, 1990 and you are making references to a matter about questions which I think have gone long before. If you can come back to the Bill, please.

Mr. C. Sharma: Mr. Speaker, maybe I did not explain myself. Let me repeat it, a newspaper release sent from the office of the Minister of Local Government by the communications specialist who is being paid more than \$100,000 of taxpayers’ money was obtained in the *Guardian* of Wednesday 19, February, 2003;

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today is February 21, 2003. They are saying that this will come to the Parliament on 28th February. The reason they have done—the Attorney General’s name is called, no denial of it, and so is the Minister of Local Government. They have done this with a purpose in mind. [*Interruption*] I am explaining, sit and wait. Let me read the last two paragraphs:

“Narine said before an election date is called, the amendment to the Local Government Act first would have to become part of Parliament’s legislative agenda.

Asked if that decision could be the stepping stone for an announcement of Local Government election, Ojar-Maharaj said:

“Only Prime Minister Patrick Manning can make a final decision on that.”

After last year’s general election, Narine hinted that Local Government election will be held sometime this year.”

This is crystal clear: the Minister of Local Government, aided by the Attorney General, causes this to be published in the newspaper indicating that the debate will take place next week Friday. This appeared on Wednesday’s *Guardian*, there was no denial or retraction of it on Thursday. In presenting the Bill today, the Minister does not say anything as to why this appeared. The point is—[*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Order please! Hon. Member, I do not see what that article has to do with the Bill. Please get to the Bill.

Mr. C. Sharma: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, you will appreciate in two and a half minutes I will do so. I am making the introduction and I am not given an opportunity. Perhaps I should read something that was obtained from the Role of the Opposition in Parliament and the right of the Opposition Member to be given time and equal opportunity to present his case.

We are elected to represent Trinidad and Tobago. On the last occasion a Member of the Opposition was told to take his seat before concluding; if this is going to be the pattern, Members here would have great difficulty. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: I hope you are not questioning my ruling. I hope you are not doing that?

Mr. C. Sharma: Mr. Speaker, you can be assured as today is Friday afternoon that I am not questioning your ruling. I am saying that there is a pattern that Opposition Members—let me come to the point very quickly. Today in presenting what the Minister of Local Government has indicated is really a

furtherance of what obtained in the last general election which is to steal this upcoming local government election by using state resources.

I went on to qualify that earlier, when a Minister attempted to answer a question he indicated that the answers were lodged with the Clerk of the House when they were not. The reason for that was to make sure that Members opposite did not have those answers so that they could not ask supplemental questions.

I was making the point from September 27—even PNM Members would be scared by this—to January 31, less than three months, the total sum of \$44,282,000 plus was paid to persons working on that programme identified earlier, \$44 million. Let us hear some of the names; there are kickbacks from this to fight the local government election. I am going to qualify that. There are kickbacks from these payments to fight the local government election and I will qualify it.

Mr. Speaker, you and Members opposite will recall the name of Marva Bostick. This is a lady from San Fernando West who appeared as a witness for the PNM in the enquiry of the EBC. [*Interruption*]

Mrs. Job-Davis: So what!

Mr. C. Sharma: So what? You will hear for what. Shut up and listen!

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, please you will have to retract that statement.

Mr. C. Sharma: Which one?

Mr. Speaker: Shut up and listen!

Mr. C. Sharma: Retracted, listen only.

Mr. Speaker: I think you need to apologize too.

Mr. C. Sharma: I will apologize immediately, Mr. Speaker, but the rulings must go both sides, and I want to qualify. Often Members opposite, when you say “shut up”—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Order please!

Mr. C. Sharma: Let the Speaker run the House.

Mr. Speaker: I think the whole House heard you. You can rest assured if I hear any Member of the Government Benches say the same, I will call them to order too.

Mr. C. Sharma: Sometimes you have to sacrifice to earn. Marva Bostick appeared for the PNM, she has gotten \$542,173. 37 for three months of what? For

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appearing as a PNM witness—pay back time. This is the extension of what the Minister has raised today. Let us go further.

Mr. Valley: Mr Speaker, please—

Mr. Speaker: Are you on a point of order?

Mr. C. Sharma: What are you on?

Mr. Valley: He has given way, Mr. Speaker. Simply, I would like the Member to provide some evidence that Marva Bostick received \$542,000 for appearing as a witness.

Hon. Morean-Phillips: That is not correct at all!

Mr. C. Sharma: Thank you, Member for Diego Martin Central. I told you even Members opposite would be surprised. We have evidence. Shalina Butcher; Jameel Mustapha, do you know that name? He is the campaign manager for the candidate who went up for San Juan/Barataria; also appeared in the EBC enquiry as a witness for the PNM. What a shame! They robbed her, \$423,000—payback time. [*Interruption*] You do not know? Jameel Mustapha. [*Interruption*] What is he talking about? I will tell you what he is talking about. Mr. Speaker, coming from the Siparia Regional Corporation: Roopchan Balliram, Philip Salazar: two PNM councillors. Are you seeing the connection?

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, I am failing to see the connection.

Mr. C. Sharma: Mr. Speaker, how can I explain this even more? I have identified Roopchan Balliram and Philip Salazar, councillors—now advisory—of the Siparia Regional Corporation. The Minister is saying an election is to be held, I am identifying two sitting councillors now members of the advisory. Hear how much money they had gotten.

Mr. Speaker: I am missing something, did you say that these people got money for appearing as witnesses?

Mr. C. Sharma: I tell you we all will be confused. This PNM madness gone haywire: \$44 million in three months, from September 27 to January 31. Three months \$44 million? This has never yet obtained. This only obtains under the PNM. Roopchan Balliram and Philip Salazar are councillors of the Siparia Regional Corporation and members of the Advisory Council. The Minister has just raised an extension for the local government election to take place. They have obtained \$545,288.066, for what? A very good question from colleagues opposite: “For what?” To campaign the local government election.

The PNM Government is using state resources—may I appeal to Members on my side to look at this and tell me who are the councillors you can identify because I do not know all of them. A Butcher who happens to be a relative of a PNM candidate obtained \$409,000.

When the Minister says this is a simple amendment, simple for what? Simple for the PNM to steal the elections? I want to put the national community on watch. I want to advise the national community of Trinidad and Tobago that the only purpose of coming to the Parliament today—it is for that reason I read from the *Guardian* press release coming from the office of the Minister of Local Government where they attempted to mislead, so that this information will not surface. Unfortunately, we are way ahead of them.

The minister has not indicated what is going to happen—which is very important—during now and the next election. All the UNC controlled corporations have been discriminated against. Of course, I expect them to jump up and shout. There is total discrimination in the ones controlled by the UNC. The ones controlled by the PNM, free for all.

Let me tell you what obtained. In the Ortoire/Mayaro Regional Corporation, street lights were installed in a particular street, two days after, the street lights were taken down and installed elsewhere, discrimination. Why did this take place? Because somebody, perhaps the Member for Ortoire/Mayaro, discovered that those there were supporters of another party except the PNM. This is taxpayers' money; street lighting required in a particular area—Ortoire/Mayaro is not the only area, it has happened all over. In my own area in the Siparia Regional Corporation, street lights were put up and taken down immediately.

The Minister also sent a letter advising that employment should not take place at the regional corporations. That only applies—[*Interruption*] Do you want to say something?

Mr. Narine: I object to the statement made, Standing Order 36(5): imputing improper motives. I never sent any letter.

Mr. Speaker: No hon. Member, please continue.

Mr. C. Sharma: How did this Minister reach there, if for a suit? This was from the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Local Government. Who does the Permanent Secretary work under?

Mr. Narine: I am not the permanent secretary.

Mr. C. Sharma: You are under the permanent secretary? This is the only Minister of Government under a permanent secretary; all other permanent secretaries under the minister, this one under the permanent secretary.

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“All Chief Executive Officers

December 23

It has come to my attention that certain Chief Executive Officers continue to employ additional daily-rated workers in excess of their establishment...”

Do you see the relation/context: that certain chief executives officers—do you know who are these certain chief executive officers? In UNC corporations only. No such letter went to the PNM-run corporations. We see the levels of discrimination. [*Interruption*] This is not your letter, retract it!

“Chief Executive Officers who are in breach of my directive and Government’s standard employment practices are hereby requested to take immediate action to correct the situation.”

In the UNC-led corporations employment is at zero. In the PNM-controlled corporations, for example in Diego Martin Central and West—the Member for Diego Martin West pretends to be a saint here—there is endless employment. In the UNC-led corporations, the Minister is causing his permanent secretary to write letters. In the Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation there is employment. San Juan/Laventille—the Member for St. Anns’ East is very knowledgeable about it—employment. It is not being obtained in UNC corporations.

When the Minister makes his so-called simple amendments, he is not telling us, and he is obligated to say, what is going to happen over the next few months until the election is called.

Mr. Speaker, the minister made reference to Act No. 21 of 1990, and it is very clear he has no understanding of it: absolutely none. But part of that—[*Interruption*] Roberts knows, he will speak after—is to do surveys. Chaguanas Borough Council asked for money. All the other corporations are getting money, but Chaguanas is not getting any. Again discrimination. Why is this obtaining? Let me read the letter: Chief Executive Officer, Chaguanas Borough Corporation; To Permanent Secretary, 17th February.

This was a few days ago.

“Request for approval to implement the house rates survey in the borough of Chaguanas.

I refer to the subject at caption and hereby request ministerial approval...”

Notice “ministerial approval”. The minister has money to give to Arima, Point Fortin, San Fernando, Diego Martin and San Juan/Laventille, but Chaguanas

Borough, no money. Shame! [*Interruption*] Find out what? Act No. 21 of 1990 demands that these surveys take place so that the national community can be treated across the board. Why does the Chaguanas Borough Corporation have to apply for money? Long story short, discrimination.

The other area that the minister has to indicate to us is we are in the month of February and WASA has indicated that there is already a low water level, meaning that the supply of water is less at this point in time. As a result, many citizens across Trinidad and Tobago depend on truck-borne water: a responsibility of the different corporations.

Again, in the rural communities, it is much more difficult to get water for various reasons: some areas are without pipe-borne, and in addition to that there is more distance between homes. A mile of road in Tunapuna, for instance, may have 100 homes and a mile in Barrackpore—the Member for Ortoire/Mayaro will know—one will find four homes. There is endless truck-borne water in the PNM-controlled areas. Not only that, they are using other facilities: WASA, fire services and the army are delivering water. They are also using resources from other ministries. In the Barrackpore area, which is treated by the UNC-controlled Princes Town Regional Corporation on one side and the Penal/Debe Regional Corporation, there is no water supply. Why is this happening, is it the fault of the regional corporation? The minister is causing no moneys to be made available. In some instances there is very little money and, in other instances, is not causing the resources of the other agencies that obtain for water delivery in Diego Martin, Tunapuna, San Juan/Laventille, San Fernando and elsewhere made available. How else can we describe this? Again, it is discrimination. It is the PNM's way of punishing people who do not vote for PNM. We are talking about citizens.

In the debate earlier, we saw the discrimination of Caroni (1975) Limited workers. All that the national community is obtaining from this PNM Government is punishment, punishment, punishment.

Mr. Speaker, the other area that is becoming a joke in the Caribbean: in every one of the regional corporations, there are vacancies that exist now for skilled workers, among others. This laughing Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago is talking about bringing workers. There are many unemployed people: there are casual workers on waiting lists, and there is no employment for these people, but he wants to bring workers from the Caribbean. By the way, this obtained in the past. It is PNM's way of voter-padding. They would bring them in and in a few months give them Trinidad and Tobago identification card so that they can vote at the next election. That is historical.

Hon. Members: That is a good idea.

Mr. C. Sharma: That is a very good idea. The PNM has mastered it. Coming from the Member for Diego Martin Central, it is not by accident: that has been the practice of the PNM over the years.

Mr. Speaker, some of the regional corporations need masons, plumbers, electricians, carpenters and painters.

Mr. Narine: Why did you not hire them?

Mr. C. Sharma: Why we did not hire them? Very good point. In the PNM-controlled corporations they are being hired. In the UNC corporations the Minister causes his permanent secretary to write a letter stopping the employment, that is why we cannot hire them.

In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, we are seeing that the funding requested by corporations under the PNM is not being treated with. What do they do? For road repairs for instance, the UNC government had taken a policy position, that wherever there are roads to be repaired it would first treat with those roads by making sure there are water mains so that we will not have to dig up the road some time after and we would ensure that communities obtain water. When requests come from the UNC corporations, what the PNM government does by directive and making resources available from the head office, is to bypass the request of the corporations and fix the roads, again undermining, to a large extent, the work of the Advisory Committee that now sits to manage.

We have seen in many areas, for instance, there is this programme called National On-the-Job Training Programme: Trainee Placement Agreement with the public sector. In all the corporations persons are placed as trainees, I am not sure what they do. Some train in auto-mechanic and welding. In the PNM corporations the trainees are selected by the PNM Members. In UNC-controlled corporations, they are sent by the PNM. Again, discrimination. Let me repeat that because they pretend that these things are foreign. The Members are very good pretenders. *[Interruption]* You do not know? National On-the-Job Training Programme: Trainee Placement Agreement—*[Interruption]* not your ministry, but they are going into the corporations? Mr. Speaker, do you see how they hide? “That is not we own”. That Minister is separate from the Government. This Permanent Secretary runs the ministry’s On-the-Job Training Programme—in the PNM-led corporations the PNM Members choose the trainees to come in and they are paid. In the UNC corporations they are selected and sent by the PNM, no equality, no fairness. This has been going on and on.

Mr. Valley: Over the last six years—

Mr. C. Sharma: Shut up!

Mr. Speaker: No, hon. Member; I heard that too. I am appealing to you, please I do not want to have to tell you to take your seat. You know better than that. I am asking you to apologize and withdraw the statement.

Mr. C. Sharma: I withdraw it immediately, with apology.

7.00 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, we have also heard the Member speak about street lighting. During the last election, the PNM went into many areas where their vote bank is. I want to make this point very clear, because sometimes the question is asked: How do you know the vote areas? It is very easy. One could identify vote areas from the polling divisions, where a certain street may come from and the letters from that street, and this is how you identify it when you do the check at the end of the day. For instance, where the Government found that there were street lights installed they knew that these residents may not have voted for the PNM, and they took down those street lights and installed them in PNM areas, and the corporation was asked to pay the electricity bill and no money was made available for it in many of these corporations.

Suddenly, the corporation moves from an electricity bill of \$50,000 per month to \$100,000 plus, because the Minister is not releasing any money for it. So, the Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission (T&TEC) is in a situation where the corporation is unable to pay. Of course, T&TEC dare not take down these street lights anymore, because PNM is in Government. So, again, you are seeing the levels of discrimination. The corporation is forced to take money from Goods and Services to pay these bills. The corporation now has to sacrifice some of its goods and services and you are seeing a lot of that now.

We heard earlier today of workers from the Community Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme and the question is, what work are they doing and how is it in conjunction with the regional corporations? There is absolutely no consultation and no networking. Today, the blue-uniformed workers are cleaning around areas, and the corporations may not know, so they may go there tomorrow and discover them already cleaned, because there is absolutely no networking.

Mr. Speaker, more than that, there is a particular approach to doing things at the local government bodies, and that is in keeping with the requirements, to

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avoid flooding, to avoid land movement, et cetera. So since there are blue-unformed workers, there is absolutely none of that because there is no supervision, in terms of technical, engineering and public health. So, again, at the end of the day, it is putting the community at risk. Of course, late last year, on many occasions, one would have seen flooding in the country and, to date, those flood victims have not yet been compensated.

The Minister did not tell us what will obtain now and whenever local government election is called. What we have noticed—and the Minister must give us an undertaking—is that where there are community projects—for example, if there is a self-help project in the constituency of Fyzabad, or in the constituency of Oropouche, which is represented by UNC Members in Parliament, there will be almost zero help from the corporation and other agencies. In fact, in one of today's newspapers, I saw the Minister of Culture, Sen. Joan Yuille-Williams, identifying with a self-help project, and one would have seen four or five state agencies coming to lend their assistance to that project with money, equipment, et cetera, but in the UNC—controlled areas that does not happen. That is how PNM managed the resources. This is how PNM discriminates. This is how PNM treats with their people against others. So if you are not a PNM, you are in serious trouble in this country.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to the question of violence in schools, in the Rousillac Hindu School, there was an incident reported in the electronic and print media and no state resources were made available to the school. The Parent Teachers Association had to put in their own security and when it is in another school, in a PNM area, there is immediate security. Twenty-four hours a day! That is the level of discrimination. So all that is being obtained from this PNM Government, over the last year plus, is discrimination after discrimination; punishing the national community; and punishing those they think do not support them.

Mr. Speaker, I want to make some recommendations and I want to identify the recommendations that were obtained for some years and we gave serious consideration to them. It is time that the Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago represents the existence of local government. When that happens all the discriminations that were just identified will cease to exist or less of it will happen. Local government is not treated with under the Constitution and that is why the Member for Arouca North is the Minister—a nonentity at the end of the day. [*Interruption*] The Minister said that he did not send the letter it was the Permanent Secretary.

Mr. Speaker, recognizing that local government is at the lowest level of the Government ladder, the Government has to make sure that there is continued

discussions and negotiations so that at the end of the day, the citizens of a particular community will be treated with fair and square. The resources of the State and state agencies are also applicable to rural communities, and not only communities that are represented by PNM Members of Parliament. This is extremely important because too much of it is happening.

The Member for St. Augustine identified that if the Caroni (1975) Limited situation continues to obtain, then it will spell disaster and we may not be able to recover from it, and local government is being pushed in that direction by the PNM. In fact, it was the Member for Diego Martin Central, when he was the Minister responsible for local government, in a previous manifestation, who wanted to do away with local government and nothing has changed since then. It continues to operate in the same way.

The Minister has to indicate to us what steps will be taken to bring about a positive change in the perception of local government and its officials. That is very important. We find in many corporations, the Chief Executive Officers, who are appointed by the Ministry of Local Government, are not prepared because they are in consort with the Minister to treat with the advisors, in this present context, and they take their instructions directly to Port of Spain, and when the legal advisors place their concerns, the CEOs have the protection of the Minister in many of the corporations.

The issues of revenue and expenditure of local authorities must be treated with at the level of local government. You have heard from one of the letters that I have read that the chairman has to write the Minister in Port of Spain for the release of funds and that should not be. The local government corporations should be able to identify projects in their areas that need to be treated with and they should ask for the resources and then have the ability to spend it, but what they have to do, in every instance, is to obtain ministerial approval. More than that, the Minister will then choose—and of late they are getting very little—whether this project will go on or not.

Mr. Speaker, I will tell you how the Minister and the Ministry of Local Government operate. If, for example, there is a project in a UNC stronghold there would be frustration. There will be very little release of resources, meaning equipment, and very little release of money as well. For instance, oftentimes, the Minister would ask the corporations to identify roads to be paved—and this is a classic example under this particular Minister. The Minister causes a letter to be prepared and he will defend it and say the Permanent Secretary wrote the letter—asking to submit the roads that are to be paved. As soon as those roads go in from

a UNC corporation, the Minister will pave roads outside of that simply to frustrate the advisor but, more than that, to indicate that they are in control and to show that they are beating them with their own game. So they have asked to pave certain roads and they are paving roads outside of that.

Mr. Speaker, for instance, in the Ortoire/Mayaro constituency—and, perhaps, the Minister of Works and Transport may have influenced this in some ways—the Old Mayaro Road, the Poole Valley Road and Enaith Village Street—we are very happy on this side for any road that is being paved. The corporation has a priority because it represents the people. The Minister also has a priority because he is a Member of Parliament but the Government is eroding the local government authorities. If, for example, we identify roads and the Government chooses to pave different roads, then the Government owes the corporation the courtesy of communicating that to them. When one goes to choose these roads there should be consultation with the residents, school teachers, non-governmental organizations and community leaders and then the Government will choose to do it differently.

I was making the point earlier and I now remember the name of the road, it is Mahabalsingh Branch Trace, Navet. There were 15 street lights installed on that street and the 15 street lights were removed. Could the Minister, in his response, tell us why that has happened? Do not tell me that you do not work for T&TEC.

The other matter is, the Minister has an obligation to report to this House and state how the lists of casual workers are being treated by the corporations. For instance, in every corporation there is a list of persons who may have worked for short periods or persons who may have been registered for employment over a period of time. Under the PNM that list is not being treated with, so persons who have worked maybe for five or six years for short periods, or whose names may have appeared on a list for a number of years are suddenly by-passed and others are employed, because they are coming from the PNM party groups and with PNM recommendations. The Minister did not tell us and he did not tell us on purpose, because he is hiding that information.

The Unemployment Relief Fund under the local government bodies: In the PNM-controlled corporations it is run by the PNM councillors and advisors. They will choose who is going to work. They will choose the projects, checkers, foremen and so forth. In the UNC corporations, not a single name could come from a Member of Parliament as is required. When people go to the office of a Member of Parliament seeking employment, on the PNM side, they will make a list and send it to the URP office but UNC is not allowed to do that. Again, you are seeing the levels of the discrimination. The Government is choosing all the people

for employment. The Member for Couva South made that point earlier today, that it is not only in the URP but it exists in all the other programmes. We have heard of YAPA and HYPE and the next one to come is “TATA”, “take all take all.” That one will come soon.

Mr. Speaker, we have also seen the high level of what obtains under the Road Improvement Fund (RIF). Fifty per cent of the RIF should go to local government bodies however, unfortunately, the Minister does not even know that and this is obtained from taxes that are charged at fuel pumps at gas stations. It amounts to approximately \$50 million per annum and, in fact, it may have come from the PNM government from yesteryear—where they had agreed that it will go 50:50. I do not remember the exact percentage but the quantum does not matter. So the Ministry of Works and Transport will have “X” amount and the Ministry of Local Government will have “X” amount.

Under the present PNM administration, the Minister determines that 100 per cent of the RIF—in fact, it was under the UNC administration that we incorporated street lighting to be partially funded under the RIF. Mr. Speaker, you may be getting fed up of this discrimination that obtains in this country today, just like the national community. It is sad. It is very unfortunate. One can defend positions from time to time but one cannot defend every single position that is wrong, otherwise we will be going nowhere. The bottom line in everything is that the PNM Government, in the last general election, used state resources to the tune of close to half a billion dollars to win the election—having won the election with 1100 votes.

Mr. Narine: And that is hurting you.

Mr. C. Sharma: The Member for Arouca North says that is hurting. That is hurting the whole country. In the Caroni (1975) Limited Training Programme, the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources indicated that there is \$24 million for training and consultancy. Well, do you know what is going to happen with the training and consultancy programme? More than half of that will go to friends, family and PNM supporters.

The Government is making available \$12.5 million to retrain 9,000 Caroni (1975) Limited workers—per person that is less than \$150—but for the blue-uniformed workers the Government is making \$75 million available at the rate of 6 per cent per annum, over a period of seven years—that is 42 per cent of \$75 million—and that is in excess of the \$100 million for 5,000 Caroni (1975) Limited workers.

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Mr. Speaker, do you see the levels of discrimination? Where is the PNM leading this country? Do you think our sons and daughters are going to sit down and take this? Do you think the children of the cane—and the children of the cane are not East Indians only; they are “Trinis”, Tobagonians, Africans, “Douglas” and Chinese as well. They cannot take it! They will not take it!

Hon. Member: They will fight!

Mr. C. Sharma: That is a very good point. They will do the same thing that the Member for Tunapuna did, fight. [*Laughter*] Mr. Speaker, the oath taken by parliamentarians on both sides is to deliver without fear or favour. It will be a sad day when Members of the Opposition come here and have to think three, four or five times if they should speak the truth for fear of being victimized by the PNM; and for fear of the PNM using their contacts.

Mr. Speaker, I think I would be failing if I did not read some of the names of other persons who obtained large sums of money. Now, again, this is related to local government, because many of these people are doing what local government should be doing. Mr. Speaker, I do not know if you had a chance to look at the list of contractors who obtained this \$44 million. The names are: Kenneth Prescott & Winston Flament, a known PNM activist, \$368,000. The Member for Diego Martin Central knows of them. Renwick Campbell; Roopchand Balliram; Shalina Butcher, relative to Ken Butcher; Sirdar Greaves, \$632,000 plus; Samuel Lee, \$374,000. We saw Prakash Persad, brother of a PNM Senator—large sums of money. I will come to the quantum in a few minutes—\$320,000—all of this is for PNM supporters and not a single UNC councillor or advisor, but many PNM councillors and advisors. This is not by accident but by design.

The Members on the other side should feel ashamed of this information. Brian Lewis and Victor Charles, \$408,000; John Fortune, \$375,000; Kenwyn James, \$377,000; Kent Shields, \$416,000; June Le Rivears and June St. Louis, \$602,000, for three months of work. That is much more money than the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources earns. Joel West, PNM contact again, \$337,000; Mc Donald Padmore, PNM contact again, \$365,000; Marvin Payne — this is a real pain—\$463,177; Alston Hodge, \$316,000; Lyndon Mc Queen, \$423,000.

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

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

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. C. Sharma: Mr. Speaker, sometime ago a workshop was held on local government and this workshop was assisted by the United Nations and it said that local government must look like a government. This means establishing a structure that will ensure democratic representation over regulations and provisions of the full range of services that could treat and meet with the needs of the community, and not simply those services that are conveniently delivered at the local level such as roads and garbage disposal.

The point was made here that local government reaches the local people in the first instance and, as a result, they must at all times feel that they are part of the system and they must also benefit from what obtains in the system. What we are seeing under this PNM administration is that there is a concerted effort to reduce and erode the services and functions of the local government practitioner.

Mr. Speaker, I have identified a number of areas. At this particular time, I want to read from that same report and it says that it is essential to democracy and good governance that an opportunity is given to councillors and other partners to share common experiences and best practices policy.

Under the UNC administration there was a large measurable effort to make sure that there was partnership with state agencies and others. If one looks at what obtains under the PNM administration—and, again, I will share with Members my own experiences. The Siparia Regional Corporation, like all the other corporations in Trinidad and Tobago, is required under Act No. 21 of 1990, to lend support to the observations and celebrations of national festivals—all of them—carnival, Divali, Eid, Christmas and so forth. For instance, in the Siparia Regional Corporation, one would find that very little resources go to it from state organizations. For example, one will find very little money from the National Lotteries Control Board going to the Siparia Regional Corporation for any function, but in the North; Diego Martin, Tunapuna, San Juan and so on, lots of money is being made available from a number of state agencies.

Mr. Speaker, why is this happening? It is the policy of the Government. Do you think that the Member for Diego Martin Central will talk to any state agency, under his watch, to treat with the Penal/Debe Corporation as they will treat with Laventille? The answer is, no. In fact, there is no evidence to tell you where that instruction came from and whether it was in writing or by a telephone call.

With respect to the question of employment, PNM Members could submit a list of names for employment in many places such as the Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA); Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission (T&TEC);

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Maintenance Training and Security (MTS), regional corporations and the Regional Health Authorities. Now the PNM Member would say he could only make a recommendation—that might be correct—but the very same recommendation coming from a UNC Member is not being treated with. It is PNM discrimination. The Minister of Local Government has already instructed the UNC corporations not to hire anybody.

So if a person is coming from the Siparia Regional Corporation or the Penal/Debe Regional Corporation that person cannot obtain employment, so where will he go? He goes to MTS but he has no letter but if he has a letter from a UNC Member he is not employed. When one looks at the employment of these agencies over the last year-plus, one would see that a large number of employees came from the PNM-controlled constituencies. This could not have been by accident. So that partnerships must be encouraged and promoted and there must be equality in promoting those partnerships. Organizations must be made to feel that they are part of the system that obtains in local government and at the local level. The fear of the Opposition really is that having looked at the local government and how it was run by the PNM over the last year-plus, one would have seen the high level of inequality and discrimination. We are obligated on this side to make sure we raise those issues.

Mr. Speaker, in fact, I saw an article that appeared in the *Newsday* newspaper dated Sunday, February 16, 2003 on page 10 and it says: “The family Red House Welcome to Casa Manning.” Mr. Speaker, do you know what is a “Casa”? So it appears as if the PNM is running a casino because the article says, “Welcome to Casa Manning.” So “casa” is the main player. Why “Casa Manning”? Is it that the Members are making deals? I beg the question.

Information coming to us, and it is also public information, is that contractors have not been paid and the Government paid \$44 million for work that is not yet done from September to January to PNM-appointed friends and family under this particular programme. There are hundreds of millions of dollars owed to other contractors but the Government is looking for kickbacks. That is the only reason the contractors are not paid. Now, kickbacks could mean many things. The Member for Diego Martin Central is pretending that he does not know. Why are these contractors not paid? Everything they do not know! The contractors are not paid because some persons on the opposite side—Ministers might be included—are asking for kickbacks, commissions. They are making deals and in other Members’ of Parliament offices, contracts are awarded or negotiated. This is where this PNM Government is taking us in the year 2003. This is why this article

is very accurate. Casa Manning! So when “Casa Manning” failed to become “father of the nation” he became “Casa Manning” or as some would say, he became father in another nation, but that is another story.

Mr. Speaker, we saw an article: “PNM and UNC Councillors Unite for more Money”. Now it is also very instructive that this article gets the attention of both the print and electronic media. The Chairman of the Association of Local Government happens to be the Mayor of Point Fortin, who is a PNM member, Mayor Francis Bertrand. I want to make it clear that we on this side support increased resources for the councillors, advisors, et cetera. Only a short time ago, somebody was appointed—[*Interruption*] Mr. Speaker, would you allow the Members to go behind the Chair so that I would not be disturbed?

Mr. Speaker: The Member is asking for protection. I do not think he would need protection in the circumstances. Carry on.

Mr. C. Sharma: No. I am suggesting that the Members go behind the Chair so that we will not hear what they are saying. Mr. Speaker, I was making the point that only a short time ago, the Chairman of the Salaries Review Commission caused an increase to be paid to a number of people, including government Ministers and Members of Parliament. Soon after that matter took place that Chairman was no longer the Chairman of the Salaries Review Commission and the councillors were not treated with. Is it that something was communicated that the councillors should not be treated with?

If the Government is treating with Members of Parliament and they are at one level of governance, and there are also local government practitioners at another level, they are immediately under the first level, why are they discriminating against councillors? It begs the question and this takes me to the editorial in the *Newsday* newspaper dated Tuesday, February 18, 2003 headlined: “Giving unto himself” and it says:

“In less than a year, Prime Minister Patrick Manning and his PNM government have approved two large salary increases for themselves, parliamentarians, and other categories of public officers. Last March, when the Cabinet implemented recommendations of the Salaries Review Commission, Mr. Manning received a salary increase of 66 per cent, from \$15,000 to \$25,000...”

Mr. Speaker, to make a long story short, today, the salary of the hon. Prime Minister is close to \$40,000. Mr. Speaker, you would have heard from submissions made here today that a Caroni (1975) Limited worker, having served for more than 25 or 30 years, his final payment is going to be less than what the Prime Minister obtains in a month.

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We saw the Chief Executive Officer of WASA earning \$96,000 in one year, and somebody who served in Caroni (1975) Limited for 30 years cannot get \$96,000. Discrimination! This is what the PNM is all about. “Dig out dey eye!” There is nothing else to it. So the PNM can come here and hide it anyhow they want, but the truth is the truth. You and I subscribe that the truth shall set us free.

Mr. Speaker, I want to wish the Prime Minister of Dominica a quick recovery. I happen to know him and I met him before he became Prime Minister of Dominica. I want to congratulate the PNM government for agreeing, in principle—and I hope that they go through with it—to take up his medical bills. It is a very good thing to do.

Mr. Hart: Any good government will do that.

Mr. C. Sharma: Mr. Speaker, do you know what is very shameful? When a Member of this House on this side gets ill, he or she cannot have the privileges the Members have on the other side. We are both elected to the same House and it would be interesting to know—Mr. Speaker, and I do not want to get you involved in the debate—whether the Office of the Speaker is covered under that programme. When a Member of the Opposition becomes ill—even if I collapse in this Parliament now, I will have to be taken to a private institution. If I go to Mount Hope Hospital, I will have to pay my way, but if a Member on the opposite side gets ill, all of his bills will be paid, including if he has to be taken overseas. So you see the levels of discrimination.

What is very interesting is that the Member for Ortoire/Mayaro made a very fundamental revelation. The Member indicated—and it was reported in the print media and it came over the electronic media as well—that workers of CEPEP are to replace those workers at local government. So do you see where the Government is going? They are setting up a PNM vote bank using \$75 million, in the first instance, added to that is 6 per cent for seven years—that is for elections. They are removing the workers at the local government level. I want to appeal to all local government workers to note that and, again, it appeared on an editorial on today's newspaper. Again, the Government is revealing itself.

Hon. Member: I know who wrote the Probe now.

Mr. C. Sharma: I know who is writing the Probe. Anyway, I will have to visit the Member sometime soon. This is from an article in the *Guardian* newspaper dated February 21, 2003 headlined: “Win some, lose some: Govt labour policy risky”—everything that the Government is doing is risky. We are at risk as well.

“Righting the balance between job creation and job losses, and keeping the peace in industrial relations appear to top the list of challenges facing this administration...”

But I really want to come here:

“...Works Minister Franklin Khan was making noises to warn against premature celebration of new-found cordiality.”

The Minister was talking about the meeting with the President of the National Union of Government and Federated Workers and other union leaders when they met the Prime Minister and at the request of the Prime Minister he says, “do not celebrate that, cut throat coming next.”

“The Minister projected an expansion of the Community Enhancement and Empowerment Programme (CEPEP)...”

Now, Mr. Speaker, do you know enhancement and empowerment for who? The PNM. This is not for Trinidad and Tobago. This is enhancement and empowerment for PNM to the extent of replacing daily-paid workers in the Ministry of Works and Transport and regional corporations. Let me read that again.

“The Minister projected an expansion of the Community Enhancement and Empowerment Programme (CEPEP)...”

And they are talking here about Minister Franklin Khan, who happens to be a constituent of mine:

“The Minister projected an expansion of the Community Enhancement and Empowerment Programme (CEPEP), to the extent of displacing daily-paid workers in the Works Ministry and regional corporations.”

So one could see the political angle. The Minister of Local Government had very little to say and the Minister is asking for an extension today to do exactly that; displace local government workers to use state resources to win elections. “Win some, lose some:” This has to be the Government rationale.

“Promoting the CEPEP approach to job creation, it last year spent \$75 million to finance small-time contractors who hire blue-overalled workers to clear drains, weed highway verges, replant forests and provide neighbourhood facelifts.”

Mr. Speaker, what is the role of the regional corporations and their workers? Is it not to do some of these things? So the Government is spending \$75 million

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and the Minister said the money was borrowed from some bank at a rate of 6 per cent—I think it is Royal Bank—for a period of seven years. So it is 42 per cent added to \$75 million—excess of \$100 million—and when the regional corporations ask for money for water trucking, they cannot get it. Let me tell the national community that those who are not getting truck borne water, the PNM is punishing them. I hope the media reports that. Mr. Speaker, earlier I indicated that the next thing to come is “TATA” so it is coming. Take all, PNM style!

Mr. Speaker, I also wanted to read something that I obtained in the *Express* newspaper dated Sunday, February 16, 2003, in the opinion column and the headline says: “Now up to you Mr. President”. I think the President was making the point that one of the first things he has to treat with is uniting the nation and healing the nation. To my mind, the reason he sees that as a priority is because of PNM discrimination practices. It has to be that because soon after the President was elected he sees that as his No. 1 priority; healing and uniting the nation. It is instructive that we pay some attention to that because it is the practice that I have identified; it is the practices that were spoken about by my colleagues on the Caroni (1975) Limited issue which is leading to these situations.

Mr. Speaker, I made the point that those corporations controlled by the UNC—for example, the national festival of carnival is approaching us very quickly, and it is very strange—and not by accident but by design—that those corporations controlled by the UNC are getting the least amount of money from the National Carnival Commission for the observation of carnival. Why is that so?

Mr. Hart: How much money did Fyzabad get?

Mr. C. Sharma: And the Member is asking how much money did Fyzabad get and I will answer him. The group that kept the carnival celebrations in Fyzabad—in 1992, when I became the Member of Parliament, that was the first and last year. Under the PNM government no money was given to that group because that group identified with the Member of Parliament.

Again, the regional corporations are making no resources available. They have stage, trucks but they cannot get them; they go to others. This must be worrisome for all of us. Carnival must not be a “North thing” or a “PNM thing”. It must be for all of us. “Ramleela” no money! Five thousand dollars was given to 10 or 12 groups to celebrate but no money for “Ramleela”. Less than 15 groups celebrate “Phagwa”—very little money. For the last number of years these groups have been receiving \$5,000 but for carnival it is \$20 million.

Mr. Speaker, I am sure you are aware of “Ramleela”. It is run for 10 days—I am tempted to say that the House Committee should consider a sleeping room for

parliamentarians; I am sure that provisions could be made for that. I was making the point that “Ramleela” runs for 10 days. The PNM government gives no resources or very little resources to these celebrations, but carnival only runs for two or three days and millions of dollars are made available. Again, one could see the levels of discrimination and this goes for many other festivals such as Eid, Divali, et cetera.

Mr. Speaker, before I close, I would hope that the Minister, in his reply, would treat with all the issues raised and I would quickly put them into a nutshell. What is going to be obtained over the period between now and the election? We are demanding on this side, that fair play and equality be extended to all the regional corporations, and that advisors of the chairmen in the UNC-controlled corporations are treated with.

For instance, the Minister wrote a letter last year indicating that the Cabinet had agreed to an extension of whatever, and that the terms and conditions of the councillors who are now members of the advisory committee shall remain the same. That does not obtain. For instance, in the previous arrangement, members of the council would sit on the Tenders Committee, and today they are preventing them from sitting on the Tenders Committee to make sure that fair play and equality are observed.

In addition to that, Members of the Advisory Committee have not been compensated in the manner that they should be compensated. If the Minister’s letter says that the terms and conditions shall remain the same, those members who are chairmen of the Advisory Committee and chairmen of other committees should continue to be chairmen, according to his letter, but they are not paid. Where there is a vice-chairman of any committee he is not being paid. Mr. Speaker, strange enough in some of the PNM corporations they are being paid. I would like the Minister to respond and say why it is in the PNM-controlled corporations some chairmen and others are being paid and in other corporations they are not being paid.

The other matter is that we are in the dry season and already WASA has indicated that the water situation is critical, and in many areas the truck-borne water supply has not yet been started for whatever reason. More than that, the quantum of money being made available cannot suffice for the dry season. Again, the Minister would want to indicate to us what additional resources there are, in terms of money and, secondly, in the rural communities, are we going to see the trucking that obtains in Tunapuna, San Juan and Diego Martin areas? Trucks from other state agencies, including WASA, are being made available to those areas.

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The other area that we want to be certain of is that this Minister would not be involved. The Minister will have to tell us how it is that councillors and members of the Advisory Council became involved in this programme. Was it by design? I have identified councillors and members of the Advisory Committee obtaining large sums of money, crossing millions of dollars. I am saying that it appears that this money is for part of their campaign.

Mr. Speaker, the last point that I want to make, and it has come to my attention, and also Members on this side, is that in the PNM-controlled areas where they have employed persons—temporary workers and trainees—they are being used to start campaigning. They are already visiting homes under the pretext of collecting information. Of course, they will go with an identification card, from whichever corporation, and what they are soliciting is support for the PNM. So we want to be very careful and we want the Minister to tell us and give us the guarantee that this practice will stop immediately.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you very much.

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 Bill.

Question put and agreed to.

MUNICIPAL CORPORATIONS (AMDT.) BILL

Mr. Manohar Ramsaran (Chaguanas): Mr. Speaker, it is really a pleasure for me to join this debate this evening, at this very late hour, as we discuss a Bill to amend the Municipal Corporations Act of 1990. I would like to ask a few questions pertaining to the Bill itself and, maybe, in winding up, the Minister could explain to us what is really happening. I heard on a *Crosstalk* a while ago certain things and I want to, at least, have it cleared up. In clause 2(c) in this Bill it says:

“in section 273, by inserting after subsection (1A) the following subsections:

‘(1B) Subject to subsection (1C) the Councillors and Aldermen of each Corporation whose term of office expired on the 12th day of July, 2002 are deemed to have become an Advisory Committee of that Corporation from the 13th day of July, 2002 on the same terms and conditions of service that they enjoyed as Councillors and Aldermen, except that each Advisory Committee shall cease to exist upon the election of Councillors and the appointment of Aldermen in consequence of elections held under section 11(4C)’

Mr. Speaker, at the very beginning, I want to tell the hon. Minister that, in my opinion, this would ensure that the existing Advisory Committee be given the same salary and all the allowances that are due to them in accordance with the amendment that is before us here this afternoon.

This brings me to the point, after looking at the Government's performance over that last couple of months, and as was seen here today in answering questions, I feel, to my mind, the whole question of local government is in trouble. There are various committees and programmes coming to the fore to really compete with local government authority to deliver goods and services. If I remember correctly or words to the effect, the Vision Statement of the Ministry of Local Government is to empower communities and to ensure that goods and services and different amenities are given to the people in each corporation. Mr. Speaker, what do we have today?

If one looks quickly at this year's development programme, it is alarming. From October 01 to September 30, 2003, the total allocation for the Ministry of Local Government, Development Programme is \$24,230,000 which covers the programme for 14 municipal corporations. Mr. Speaker, what does this tell us? This tells me that with this document laid here this afternoon—I want to say that this is one of the biggest disgrace that I have seen in my short term as a parliamentarian, where \$44 million, which is more than the entire year's allocation of the local government bodies—all 14 municipal corporations would be given \$24 million to spend. The Community Environmental Protection Enhancement Programme (CEPEP) spent \$44 million in three months. Given the fact that the Government said that CEPEP was given \$74 or \$75 million; this, in my calculation, would last 5 months. What this really means is that at the end of this month, the money allocated to CEPEP would have been evaporated, if this trend continues and I am sure it has continued.

Then there is the dishonesty of Government coming to this Parliament and not telling us the truth of how they misspent or spent the money. Again, the last year comes into focus. The Member for Point Fortin came this morning and answered question No. 26 that my colleague asked and, in his answer, said something like \$3.4 million went towards the question of NEDCO. Mr. Speaker, I am sure that you would agree with me, when I tell you that this money should have been debated when we debated the Appropriation Bill a couple weeks ago.

The fact is that here we have another admission by the Minister that money was taken from one Ministry to another Ministry and that matter was not brought to the attention of this honourable House. Mr. Speaker, I consider that to be illegal

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spending. I am calling on the appropriate agency—whether it is the Speaker or whoever it is—to deal with what is happening in this Parliament; I consider that to be illegal. When one looks at the Exchequer and Audit Act one will realize that and that is why we have the Constitution of this country which tells us that any money that is to be appropriated or misappropriated or money that is short or over the budget must come to this Parliament with an explanation being given. Today, the Minister pleaded guilty to transferring \$4.3 million from one Head to another Head, without the approval of the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago. I consider this, by the Minister's own admission, to be illegal. I hope my friend will discuss this matter when we meet on the various committees.

Mr. Speaker, the whole question of local government is being undermined by this present administration. There are, of course, the various different agencies that have been set up—of course, we know that they are political, to ensure that they win the elections and so forth. There is CEPEP which I have mentioned before; there is YAPA, OJT and, of course, URP. When one looks at the URP, \$150 million was allocated which is more than the entire allocation given to the Ministry of Local Government. When one looks again, at the extension that is before us here this afternoon—one year from July—this means that by July we should have another election within that time.

Mr. Speaker, what is happening today is really the emergence of a dictator in the Ministry of Local Government, although the Minister has pittance to spend when it is compared with other small agencies. Now, here the Minister of Local Government is presiding as a Minister of Local Government and CEPEP has four times the money allocated to it than the Minister and this money was spent in five months' time—it would be \$75 million in five months. What is happening is that nothing is happening in any corporation without the approval of the Minister and I find this to be something—especially when we know the personality involved in this discrimination.

I asked a question recently and I want to put it on the record again and you will understand how we are treated in this honourable House. The question was a very simple question: ‘

Would the Minister of Local Government inform this House what is the total budget allocated to each of the 14 regional corporations in Trinidad and Tobago and the Tobago House of Assembly for the fiscal year 2001/2002 for the URP?

Could the Minister explain to this House why the Chaguanas URP office was removed from Chaguanas?

Would the Minister tell this House when will the Chaguanas URP office be returned to the Chaguanas Borough Corporation?

Mr. Speaker, this Minister who comes before us now asking for an extension of time for another few months, nine months have gone and in nine months many things could happen—gestation period and some of our destinies could be born and so forth. Mr. Speaker, I want you to listen to the answer carefully because when I rose to ask questions I was shouted out from the other side and called various names and so on. This was the Minister's reply.

“Mr. Speaker, for the fiscal year of 2001/2002 under the URP, there was no budgetary allocation to the 14 municipal corporations while a sum of \$11 million was allocated to the Tobago House of Assembly.”

Mr. Speaker, where did the Minister get that money from to run the URP in 2001/2002 if his answer here is correct? This is the *Hansard* copy I have in front of me, when the Minister said that there was no budgetary allocation to the 14 municipal corporations while the sum of \$11 million was allocated to the Tobago House of Assembly. The Minister was right this afternoon when he said that the Permanent Secretary would be running the Ministry. Perhaps, the Minister should ensure that he gets some money. The Permanent Secretary should collect 10 per cent of the Minister's salary. I think we have to be very careful. The Minister went on to tell this honourable House—that is why I feel that local government elections should be called now, because the Minister of Local Government is about destroying the local government bodies in Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Of course, with the administration giving other ministers—maybe whom they trust a little more and that may be rightly so—Ministers are receiving money in YAPA, NEDCO, YTEPP, OJT and so forth. [*Interruption*] Mr. Speaker, I will not listen to those people. The office of the URP was removed from the premises of the Chaguanas Borough Corporation owing to a request for its removal from the Council of the Chaguanas Borough in order to house the Borough's Municipal Police.

Mr. Speaker, I want to put on record and, again, the Minister misled us when he pretended to quote from the said minutes. The date of these minutes is March 5, 2002 and it says:

“The Mayor stated that the removal of the Unemployment Relief Programme Office goes back to when they were under the Ministry of Labour. Discussions for the removal of that office were held with the Minister of Labour, Mr. Arnim Smith, and the then Programme Manager. They had agreed to

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relocate to Ramsaran Street, Chaguanas. That arrangement was presented to the present Minister of Local Government and his Permanent Secretary when they visited the Corporation. The Honourable Minister had indicated that the Regional Corporations would be reduced from fourteen bodies [14] to ten [10] with Chaguanas and Couva being merged. He emphatically stated that at no time did the Council evict the Unemployment Relief Programme or forced them out.”

Mr. Speaker, is this the Minister we could trust for another six or seven months with the Ministry of Local Government? The high level of discrimination continues on a daily basis for example, the hiring—I almost said firing but that has not happened as yet—practice of the URP.

Mr. Speaker, I wrote a letter to the hon. Prime Minister and I want to read parts of that letter here this afternoon with your permission. This letter has to do with the power of the Minister and what is happening with our local government bodies and I quote:

“Dear Prime Minister,

I seek your intervention in the following matters concerning generally the people of Central Trinidad and Chaguanas Constituency in particular.

Well, I have something from the Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister, Sen. Christine Kangaloo, but she is not here and this has to do with the flooding with respect to the people of Chaguanas.

Mr. Speaker, in our presence, in this honourable House, the Minister came here and promised that compensation would be paid by mid-January 2003. To date, nothing has yet been paid to these people and they are still waiting on the money that they were promised by the Minister when she came to this honourable House on that day.

“The Unemployed people for the Constituency are treated like beggars, so far our plea for Equity and non-discrimination in the URP has fallen on deaf ears. I invite you to visit this office and see for yourself the discrimination in employment practice, Sir if the reverse of this would have happened when the UNC was in office, let's say in San Juan/Laventille—I would have heard your screams as far as in Chaguanas.”

Mr. Speaker, to explain, the Chaguanas URP office—I was reliably informed yesterday, that nobody from the Chaguanas area, except one person—and I understand that person has a very close relationship with the Minister—everybody else, I was told, does not belong to the Chaguanas Borough. This is something we have to treat with very seriously.

8.00 p.m.

We feel discriminated because there were people in Chaguanas who applied for the jobs and nothing happened. Mr. Speaker, when you visit that office—I invite you, too, to come to Chaguanas—the population would know that the balance is reversed when they talk about ethnicity. In the Chaguanas Borough Corporation there are two persons of East Indian origin. That could not have happened in Port of Spain; that could not have happened in San Juan/Laventille; that could not have even happened in San Fernando where it is at least 50:50. Mr. Speaker, this is discrimination to the highest level, and if this is done by equity, and interviews and so on, I would not have any problem with that, but these are political appointments, and the people of Trinidad and Tobago must not be treated as such because the resources of this country are put into our Treasury by all the people of Trinidad and Tobago by dint of their hard work and paying their taxes and so on.

So when moneys are allocated and jobs are given we must see that equity. This cannot go for too long because the people would see what is happening. That is why I am calling on the Government of the day to call elections now because we have no confidence in the Minister of Local Government. We wrote him many letters and I would read a few more before the evening is up. It continues:

“This discrimination trickles down to the people seeking a ‘lil 10 days’, single mothers, needy people and so on. Mr. Prime Minister you seek huge salary increase, you pay your CEO’s well, enriching yourself and yours—but what about the poor, must they form gangs to survive. Please investigate URP in Chaguanas before it is too late.”

Mr. Speaker, the rest of the quote concerns other matters within the Corporation so that I do not want to go out of the ambit of this debate. This is discrimination at all levels, and I want the hon. Minister to tell us why is this discrimination. Must politics be always in the fore of our minds? Should we not look at the needs of our people?

Mr. Speaker, poverty is such a wide term and we, in this country, fought poverty at all levels and today when we see the discrimination against people, this will lead to poverty. Poverty has many meanings; poverty has many parameters; poverty has many causes; and one of the causes I would not like to see in this country is the cause of discrimination, and we are experiencing political victimization in Chaguanas as never before in the history of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, I quote from today's *Newsday*, Friday 21, 2003; headlined: “Mayor: Local Government in peril”. It says:

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“Mayor of Chaguanas, Orlando Nagessar, is contending that judging from the manner that the Local Government Ministry was operating ‘it is quite clear that the authority of Municipal and Regional Corporations in the country is gradually being eroded.’”

That is a kind word, Mr. Speaker. When you look at the history of what has happened over the last few months, the question of local government is being dramatically eroded, because there are other agencies and ministries doing what the local government is doing. So then the time that we are seeking to hold election is a farce and a waste of time because when we elect mayors, councillors and aldermen they have nothing to do. We might as well come today and say, let us scrap local government because, as I mentioned before, the Ministry of Local Government received \$24 million for their total year’s budget for the Public Service Investment Programme (PSIP).

We have the Community Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme (CEPEP) which is a brainchild of somebody to win elections. They spent \$74 million in five months. I ask the question: What will happen after February? Where would the money come from? From which bank would they be guaranteed more money?

We have misspending in this country. My friend and colleague quoted the Minister of Works and Transport when he went to Fonrose Community Centre where he told the people that CEPEP—we are not children or babies of politics—is a political organization. This is a farce before us this evening of so many names being applied. Who chose them? How were they chosen? The Minister said that CEPEP would replace the daily-paid workers in the Ministry of Works and Transport and the Ministry of Local Government. What are we coming to? At least, by the Minister’s own admission that the permanent secretary has some authority in dealing with this question of employment, what will happen now? Is employment only patronizing their supporters at this time? We are treading on something and if we do not stop now, it would create problems for this country in time to come.

The Unemployment Relief Programme (URP), CEPEP and On-the-Job Training (OJT) are politically chosen. It is a fact. [*Interruption*] Thanks for the admission. Maybe it would help you to clear your soul. In light of what is happening in this country nobody could contest that the discrimination continues and it must be stopped now! It was used for the general election but now we know and we are going to ask more questions. We would get the information. I am calling on somebody to censure the Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise

Development who has been transferring money from one head to another by Cabinet's approval. Those transactions should have been brought to Parliament for approval.

Section 114 of our Constitution clearly states that any money spent by any Minister must be brought by the Minister of Finance to this House for approval.

If we go against that then we may as well burn our Constitution. Money has been one of the areas on which the framers of our Constitution and the whole Westminster system places special emphasis. That is why the Minister of Finance, in laying his Budget would have different books laid in this Parliament telling us about how money should be spent. I am very concerned about that.

Look at this anomaly; in each corporation there is an elected person. This evening the Minister said that we should extend the life of the corporations and give back the councillors, chairmen and mayors the authority to run their corporations. We would have supported that quite willingly because these people were elected. With respect to the San Fernando Borough Corporation, the Mayor was elected, not selected, to run the Borough Corporation; and Chaguanas. Name the corporation and they were elected. Today, they cannot do anything except maybe the recurrent expenditure, unless the Minister of Local Government approves that. That should not be the case; the Minister should have come to this honourable House seeking to extend the life of the local government authorities and allow the mayors, chairmen, councillors and aldermen to run the affairs of their corporations.

I know for a fact that discrimination continues and no work could be carried out because of the ineffective—not only that, he is corrupt—he cannot run the corporation. I cannot see one person trying to do the job of 14, especially when there are peculiar problems to each municipal corporation. Recently, I came to Parliament and asked about two roads which were to be paved and the reason I directed the question to the Ministry of Works and Transport was because they were dealing with that work before and the engineer was known to be handling the roads. The roads were almost ready for paving and when the government changed, because of the discrimination, now I understand why the roads were not paved.

The Minister of Local Government, in his self-proclaimed style of being a small dictator—because he is short—in dealing with all the money in our constituency—I want to put it on record that the people from the constituencies or the corporations which are controlled by the UNC, have problems in every aspect of local government. That is why I want to call on the hon. Prime Minister to call elections now because we cannot have this anomaly continue. *[Interruption]*

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We do not mind losing. That is okay. That is not the issue. Lose or win, it does not matter, but we cannot have the Member for Arouca North usurping the authority of 14 mayors and chairmen of corporations. This is something we have to be very careful about. Here we have the Government of the day spending money without approval, coming to Parliament and hoodwinking us and not giving us the facts. Mr. Speaker, you were not here for that debate. You should go through it and you would see where—and a glaring example today—the Minister admitted in this House that money was transferred from the Unemployment Relief Programme to NEDCO. With whose permission? Cabinet does not have that authority. That must be approved by Parliament. We have the Minister of Local Government controlling all our corporations. I think that much more could have been done this evening.

I want to continue with the discrimination and put this letter on record so we would understand what is happening. I am the Member of Parliament for Chaguanas and I work very closely with the Mayor of Chaguanas, and this is another letter written which reads as follows:

“The Honourable Patrick Manning,
Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago,
White Hall, Port of Spain,
January 22, 2003

Sir,

I hereby refer to our discussion in my office late last year, 2002 on the introduction of URP office in Chaguanas and other matters pertaining to the development of the borough. Our discussion centered around the employment practices as regards the fair distribution of labour in this thriving borough. My concerns were well received by you and we both agreed...”

Like my Friend, the Member for St. Augustine said this evening, not every time you do so [Member nods head] there is agreement. Maybe that was a classic example of the Prime Minister shaking his head but meaning something else. I continue:

“...that the URP Programme should be re-introduced into Chaguanas and there should also be equity in the employment practices to those persons who are unemployed and urgently need some sort of financial assistance. I since had a meeting with the present Minister of Local Government, the Hon. Jarrette

Narine, who agreed to reintroduce the office of Chaguanas under conditions of equity and equality in employment of office staff and labour in general.

I would like to draw your Honorable attention to the present disparity in employment practices at the office. Several names of persons who requested employment were submitted for consideration as regards daily and monthly staff at the URP office. It is very disheartening to report that no consideration was given to a single person submitted by the office for the monthly staff, and only one person was considered for the daily-paid position, although genuine promises were made to those who requested employment. They were turned away in dire frustration.

It is quite disturbing also to note that perceived supporters of the UNC are requested to form PNM party groups within the central constituency to access employment in the programme. This practice, I feel, is highly irregular and interferes with the fundamental rights of one's choice to support a particular party.

Your timely intervention and investigation can prevent this increasing frustration among many unemployed persons within the borough who are mainly single parents.

I thank you and look forward to some positive action.”

This was written on January 22, 2003. What would drive a mayor to write this letter? Yesterday we had a meeting—three Members of Parliament whose constituencies fall within the borough—and we discussed with five of our councillors present. I asked the question at that meeting: How much URP gangs did you see in your constituency? The answer from all Members of Parliament was none. I turned to the councillors and asked them: How many gangs did you see in your electoral district? The answer was, none. Yet we were told that there were 34 gangs in Chaguanas. I want the Minister to tell me where those gangs are. If they are ghosts, let us know, because he admitted there are less ghost gangs in the URP. I want to tell them something about Chaguanas; they could do all the research they want, but over the last six years when the UNC was in office, there were no such things as ghost gangs. I would not put my head on a block for it, but I would tell you that no reports came to me about ghost gangs.

This leads me to say that the present Minister of Local Government is not suited to handle the Ministry of Local Government. He does not have a clue of what is happening. Maybe his peers should tell him. He said, this evening, he does not know anything about that letter; it is the Permanent Secretary who wrote it.

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Mr. Speaker, this is something that I think we should really look into very carefully. What did the Prime Minister do? He wrote the Mayor as follows:

“I have been directed by the Honourable Prime Minister to acknowledge receipt of your letter dated January 22, 2003.

Please be advised that your letter has been forwarded to the Honourable Jarrette Narine, Minister of Local Government for his attention.”

Prime Minister does that; we know that. But that was an acknowledgment on January 31, 2003. To this date, the Minister never responded to the Mayor, which forced the Mayor to again write on February 11, 2003. Now he wrote the Minister of Local Government, which states:

“Sir,

I hereby respond to a letter dated 31/01/032 from the Prime Minister’s office re: your kind attention as regards employment practices at the Unemployment Relief Programme at both the Chaguanas and Couva offices. To date no positive considerations were given to those persons who have submitted their names through our offices for employment at the two venues. Even the unemployed in the constituency are finding it very difficult in obtaining employment in the fortnight programmes and are actually turned away in frustration.

The present employment practice creates a feeling of alienation among a certain section of our community. This does not augur well for our national development in a plural society like ours.

I will appreciate very much if you can use your esteemed office to ensure that there is some form of equity in the distribution of labour to the unemployed persons who are perceived to be supporters of a particular political party.

With thanks,

Orlando Nagessar

His Worship the Mayor

Chaguanas Borough Corporation.”

Mr. Speaker, I want to ask a question. Maybe the Minister would answer me. I know he would not. If you have a Minister of Local Government and, as was announced in this honourable House by the hon. Prime Minister that URP will now be returned to the folds of the local government ministry, what does this tell you? Does it not tell you that somebody must be in charge of it? Should it not fall

within the purview of the mayors, the chairmen, or somebody? What is happening today is that the mayor and chairmen of the UNC-controlled corporations have nothing to do with the URP despite the fact that in almost all the corporations the URP office is housed in the precincts of the Ministry of Local Government. As far as the public is concerned, the local government is responsible for URP, yet when it comes to the councillors and the mayors, they are told “we do not have a say in the URP”.

What are they telling the public of Trinidad and Tobago? Have they destroyed local government? If they want to destroy it, tell us. We would have—I am sure when the Independent Senators presented their paper to the President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, local government was not mentioned. So maybe we could go that way. Scrap local government! We have YAPA; we have CEPEP; we have TATA; we have every other thing.

Let us have these people run local government. People at community level expect certain things to be done by different ministries. Again, look at the Ministry of Community Development and Gender Affairs, what do we see? It is running in a manner that would only deal with party groups of the PNM. I have asked two questions. The first one was: How were people hired in the Best Village Division? You know quite well, Mr. Speaker, that answer was supposed to be lodged in the library of this Parliament and that has not been done. Do you know why? Let me tell you. The people were chosen by the Minister without any approval from Cabinet, without any advertisements. These people were appointed on a government position, spending taxpayers’ money. It is corruption at its highest level! The other question was No. 13 on the Order Paper, about the projects under the Community Action and Revival Empowerment (CARE). I asked what was CARE intended to do. The Minister did not answer it.

CARE really means to help communities, to have programmes to elevate our communities. Do you know why they cannot answer that question after three months? It is because that fund was used as a political weapon. When that list is published, I guarantee you and I could point it out to you: friends of the PNM and Minister were sent on trips abroad to Miami and elsewhere. Is this the way to spend our government money? Is this the way the local government and people who deal with the communities would treat our people?

So when the Minister comes today and asks this Parliament to extend the life of regional corporations by 12 months, I ask a question. Is that from the date that election is constitutionally due or does it mean after the three-month grace period? Maybe a simple answer could do. It could be confusing because we have an

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automatic three-month extension within which elections could be held. If it is beyond that three months, maybe the Minister could tell us, because this is what we are amending. It is a simple question. The answer could be straightforward, but yet it was not shown here. *[Interruption]* Sometimes when people are sleeping, you must let them sleep. When they awake, they talk so much foolishness, you cannot really understand.

Of course, we have no problem with the deputy Chairman of the San Juan/Laventille Regional Corporation and his chairman. Basically, my concern today is really the direction. I heard the junior Minister of Finance, the Member for Diego Martin Central, in many other places talking about local government and the devolution of powers to our local government authorities. What has happened in the last year is the total opposite. We have the Government of the day spending billions of dollars to make sure that the local government bodies are completely destroyed.

The sum of \$24 million has been allocated to 14 regional corporations for one year. This is only one of the programmes that we have today. Maybe more answers would come forward over the next couple weeks, to tell us the reckless spending of that Government. They talk about corruption, and here we have uncovered corruption today. When we were reading the names I heard the Member for Laventille West saying that is not one person. Mr. Speaker, we have one person's name before us. That is what we are talking about.

The Member for Diego Martin Central should get up and tell me if he has any confidence in the local government authority. *[Interruption]* I am here representing people. Mr. Speaker, we must deal with problems in a particular way. Here he is saying I fired his cousin. If he could prove that, I would plead guilty. No firing was done by this Member of Parliament when he was Minister. I can put that on any record. Do you know why? Perception and what you do is in your mind. Whatever you think other persons do, is what you are capable of doing. This is what is happening in this country.

The Minister of Local Government, after today's presentation, it is either he resigns, because he has nothing to do, as the whole question of local government has been destroyed, or he is fired for being ineffective. But, again, this is not a substantial motion so I would not go that road, but just to let you know that, as a Member of Parliament for my constituency, I feel the whole question of resources, of allocation of money, of goods and services, have been withheld by the Ministry of Local Government towards the regional corporations.

As regards the CEPEP, I said it to my colleagues yesterday at that same meeting, I saw CEPEP in my constituency but I did not see URP. So I want to congratulate the Minister of the Environment. CEPEP is there. They have to be with the money they are working for. Without them, no URP, no local government funding, the constituency would have been in a mess. But today, with the four gangs in the Chaguanas constituency, they have been doing a good job. When people are doing work, I will say so, but, of course, I would not justify the expenditure. Maybe we have to ask another question or have the Minister explain how people are employed; how contractors were chosen. Because we know in running a ministry there are various ways of selecting a contractor. We would have contractors applying for a particular job, posting bonds.

Mr. Speaker, you thought that CEPEP was a simple programme. Most of us thought so, meaning you would see some fellows in blue clothes. When you see the figures today, these are big contracts: \$500,000; \$300,000; \$400,000. How were these people chosen? Were they bonded? Does the Director of Contracts know about these contracts? When I was Minister and we wanted to have a simple contract given to somebody, that was under the \$100,000 which the Permanent Secretary would have the responsibility for—we had in the Ministry a contracting unit with three or four officers and there must be a representative of the Director of Contracts in that committee.

I am asking that question now. Does CEPEP have anybody from the Director of Contracts? I am asking the Director of Contracts who appears to be a person who would put her mouth where she is asked to put her mouth, were they represented in giving these contracts? If my memory serves me correctly, the fact that contracts are given and you use government money, the Director of Contracts must be responsible.

When we sit on this side and hear about allegations of corruption being thrown at us, here we have evidence of corruption. I want to let the country know—somebody said the media is not here. We do not only have to talk to the media; we have to debate what is before us. Maybe one of these days the media would be here all night to listen to what is being said. The question of the local government is one that we should look at seriously.

Look at the way they treat with us also. Elections were due in July 2002. We are at the end of February, nine months. As I said, nine months is a long time in the life of anybody. It is the gestation period. But this is the way they treat local government. It took them nine months to come to this House to seek an extension for holding elections. They could bring the records before us. When we were in

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office, we came within the three-month period to put off elections for a further three months. Granted, they said there was no Parliament before. But how long have we been in Parliament since elections were due? At least we had four months of Parliament. It is not what they do, you know; it is the intention. This is how they think about local government. That is why I said earlier and I will repeat, if they do not want local elections, scrap the local authorities because they have been eroded by this present administration.

Hon. Member: It coming.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: So they put a Minister there to scrap local government. Is that what they think of my Friend, the Member for Arouca North? Mr. Speaker, this is the nonsense that we hear from the other side. Tell us the policy. If they want to scrap local elections, as their colleague is saying, come and tell this honourable House that this is the last—

Mr. Speaker: The speaking time of the hon. Member for Chaguanas has expired.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: Mr. Speaker, when we come to this honorable House—and this is what begs the question of a creeping dictatorship, of a dictator in the Parliament. Here we have the hon. Member for Diego Martin Central always trying to shut us up on this side. Is this another creeping dictator in this Parliament? If that happens, we could come here and file a constitutional motion, because we cannot have this Member breaking all the traditions of Westminster. You feel threatened, and this is what is happening in this country, discrimination at all levels. Just imagine in Parliament your speaking time is threatened. What would happen outside?

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, let me assure you that as long as I am here, your speaking time would not be threatened, as long as you are relevant. So I ask you to continue in that vein.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

When we look at the daily newspaper, this whole question—I want to put this in its proper perspective. The present Government talks about 40 per cent poverty in this country. Of course, we have many other areas that would tell us prior to 2001 poverty was way below that. To justify this poverty, you start to interfere

with the powers of our delivery services. This could really lead to poverty. In today's *TnT Mirror*, it says: "I will kill myself".

I would not read the whole article into the record. It states:

"I will kill myself if PNM Government doesn't help."

This family is going through some difficult times, and when you read this article, what is happening in our country today, you wonder. With all the money that is passing around as programmes in our country and you could have somebody making a threat like this because of living in difficult times, I feel betrayed by the present Government. I am sure this lady felt the same way. Because here we have within a year two salary increases by our Prime Minister for his Members of Government and you have local government bodies, again, you want to understand: "Do we have any use for our councillors"?

I am saying this with all honesty. How do we treat with the people who deliver goods and services? We know that Ministers cannot deliver goods and services to all the people. That is why we have systems in place; that is why we have a permanent secretary, support staff, councillors, mayors, aldermen and chairmen. When you continue to take the power from them—I want the Minister to get up and deny today that he is interfering with the work of the mayors and chairmen of our corporations. It is very difficult to come to this Parliament and pretend. Sometimes when you come to this House, because of the Standing Orders, you cannot say what is really affecting us because for that particular time you cannot deal with the problems in our constituency. The local government authorities have a very important role to play in assisting the Government of the day, even the Opposition Members, because they are supposed to be at the ground.

When we talk to our councillors—especially now that they are advisors, and somebody would want a drain cleaned and that person comes to me and I refer him/her to the councillor who is now an advisor—they have no authority. They cannot request anything. They just go to meeting. So they would get their stipend. That is what it is. The mayor has no such authority. Every bit of money that is to be spent by the corporations must be approved by the Minister. I feel that our "poor" people who live in our community and want goods and services, cannot access them because the big bad wolf would not give them their equity.

People might feel I overdo it sometimes with the URP. The whole vision of URP is to assist those who are unemployed; those who want to make both ends meet, as maybe this lady in the newspaper would have to do. Mr. Speaker, just imagine yourself as a poor unemployed person going to your councillor, and

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where that person would read in the newspaper that URP is controlled by local government, he or she goes to the councillor and says, "Look, I am unemployed; I would like to get a 10-days." The councillor would tell the person, "I cannot give you a 10-days because this is controlled by Central Government and the URP."

Is this not a complexing issue? Is this not contradicting itself as to what it wants to achieve? You hear that there are 34 gangs, especially in my case in Chaguanas, and in Tunapuna you hear there are a certain number of gangs, but I could take the Minister on a tour tomorrow, or Monday if he wants to, when they are supposed to be working, and let us see any evidence of work done by the URP. I am willing to tour with him and even have a private wager with him as we go on. If he is scared to be with me, he could walk with his staff.

The fact is that my constituency starts from the Caroni River and ends at the Chaguanas Main Road. Part of it—as, indeed, my colleague, the Member for Caroni East and others—falls within the purview of other corporations, but the fact is, whatever corporation it falls under, there is discrimination and the people who live there are not being hired to work. Worse than that, there is evidence, or non-evidence, of gangs. I hear they call them ghost gangs. I want to take the Minister on this tour, if he wants to accept it, through you, Mr. Speaker. All arrangements would be made to ensure that this is done, because, you see, people talk about flooding and various other issues.

Today, I received a letter. It is not relevant to this debate, but the fact is that we feel that—maybe we are wrong and pray to God we are wrong—there is a plot to discriminate against our constituencies. I will just maybe hint at what is happening with Caroni (1975) Limited. Again, it is goods and services to our people. Maybe it is not local government, but it is Caroni (1975) Limited. I read a letter from Caroni (1975) Limited recently about charging \$60,000 for a lot of land without water, electricity, and so on, and today I received another letter from another constituent, from Lands and Surveys this time, charging \$2,700 for one plot of the land that the person used to pay \$7.00 before.

What is happening in this country? Is it only done to the UNC-controlled constituencies? I do not know. I would like to put on record that we feel this is a plot. I heard it said by the same Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West—I will say it on the record and he could deny it if he wants. I was talking in my last debate about party groups in WASA and the Port and he said just now there would be party groups in Caroni (1975) Limited. What are you telling the nation? You have to be a PNM or it is nothing for you?

I feel threatened as a Member of Parliament, for my constituents, when Members opposite could treat us like that. I am challenging any one of them to

tell us what they did for the last year for the people in the constituencies that we represent. Let them tell us. We have not seen anything. *[Interruption]* Did you hear that, Mr. Speaker? Is this what politics is? Is this what the framers of our Constitution were thinking when they framed our Constitution? If you look behind you, Mr. Speaker, you would see a scale of justice. That scale was not put there by accident. The people who framed the Westminster system talked about equity. When we come here and talk about it and you hear them on that side talking about conscience—*[Interruption]* The records are there for what we did as a government.

What is happening today is the perception, the feeling, the discrimination within their own hearts that something went wrong and they are looking for a ghost where there was none, looking for a devil where there was none. This will haunt, not us, but them. When a group from a particular area in my constituency came to me recently and complained about the URP, I told them, “keep being resilient; do not allow these jokers on that side to break your spirits. You were farmers before, go into your land”. But, of course, now we have the problem of no water. Maybe one of these days I will talk about the discrimination.

Imagine now, Mr. Speaker, WASA says no water for you for your plants because it is our water. This is discrimination and today we zero in on local government because it was designed to assist the people in our constituency. When this Bill came before us, I thought I would have heard some sort of apology from the Minister. Here we are four months late asking for an extension. I forgive the five months before—because I am a human being and I know the consequences of what happened—but tell us why the delay. You could have said that there was no Parliament. Instead, the hon. Member spoke of the general election being held.

What we should have heard is a policy because the other Members who would not get up and speak were talking about scrapping the local government. If that is the case let us hear it, because this is an important time to deal with these issues. As far as we are concerned, the local government is an important element in the governance of Trinidad and Tobago. The people depend on the local government bodies. They do not know what they know.

Even today we found out the amount of money being spent in CEPEP. Last week we saw the list of 47,000 persons being employed by the National Housing Authority. Mr. Speaker, if you go through the list you would see if anybody was employed from this UNC constituency.

Mr. Speaker: Extremely long line and great latitude; please come back on track.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: Mr. Speaker, as we debate this amendment to the Municipal Corporations Bill, 1990, I would like to ask the Minister of Local Government to try to deal—we have said it on more than one occasion, I do not like to use unparliamentary language—but the fact is that when he answered our questions they were not altogether true. I want to remind him that the Chaguanas Borough Corporation did not ask for the URP to be removed from Chaguanas to anywhere else. It was agreed by the former minister to be removed from the Chaguanas Borough building to Ramsaran Street, Chaguanas. [*Interruption*] Is it the only Government building used by Government agencies?

Mr. Narine: I “eh” paying no rent.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: Mr. Speaker, he said he “eh” paying no rent. This is what we call “dictator”. Why did he not say that the Ministry is not paying rent? Mr. Speaker, we know much money is passing through people's hands but at the same time the hon. Member cannot make a statement like that in this honourable House. We got to respect our Constitution. How a man could say, “he ‘eh’ paying rent”?

Mr. Narine: I have a responsibility to the people and I want to achieve that.

Mr. M. Ramsaran: This is what confuses me. Mr. Speaker, in winding up, I would like the Member to come to this honourable House and speak the truth. We are not demons on this side.

With respect to the second letter on discrimination—we wrote to the Prime Minister himself, and I ask him to furnish us with the date of advertisements of these jobs. He said that they were advertised in 2001 and these were the persons used. That is not good enough for us. We want to see the evidence of that. How could you tell me that the URP means Unemployment Relief Programme—and I know—and all Trinidadians and Tobagonians know that every year we start with a new slate? If you continue from year to year with the same persons you would have no choice but to employ them as permanent workers and the programme would be no longer URP.

For the hon. Minister to tell us in this honourable House—with you in the Chair—that those advertisements were done two years before is very misleading. That is why most of my speech today has to do with the non-performance and a Minister with no integrity. We have a Minister in this country who is supervising all 14 regional corporations. I am asking you to let him do this with some sort of integrity over the next couple of months or else call election now. If the UNC loses or wins that is not the matter but do what is constitutionally right. Call the election

and let us elect the mayors, chairmen, aldermen and councillors of our choice. If we cannot do this then it was evidence—starting today and even before, with all the various agencies created—to destroy the local government authority, and this means more control by the governing party. For example, if there are seven corporations run by the UNC and another seven maintained by the PNM, at least there would be some equity.

Once you, as the central government, could say CEPEP take charge of the \$75 million to run the local government, which includes cleaning peoples' yards and so on, where are we heading? I feel that we are treading on some dangerous grounds, and if we do not correct it as quickly as possible then we will be the laughing stock of the Caribbean or the world. We must treat our people with fairness, equity, and I am sure that when these elections are called and the people of this country would have seen the charade, the parade and the misspending of the Government over the last 15 months, UNC will be very victorious in the next election.

Thank you very much.

The Minister of Local Government (Hon. Jarrette Narine): Mr. Speaker, after two speakers and probably 150 minutes I have only one thing to answer on this Bill, and that is a question by the Member for Chaguanas asking about the councillors who were on committees at the various corporations.

Mr. Speaker, on July 12 last year, councillors went totally out of office. There were no councillors and aldermen and according to Act No. 90, the mayors and chairmen will stay on until elections. There was a situation last year where there was no Speaker in the House of Representatives, a government took charge and there was no Opposition, and we had to go to the Cabinet and ask that these councillors who were elected and the aldermen who were appointed be made advisors to the mayors and chairmen.

According to Act No. 21 of 1990—I forgive the two Members for Fyzabad and Chaguanas—because actually they were never councillors before and they do not know the Act, and they did not care to ask the councillors, they prefer to come here and give false information. That is all I can say.

Act No. 21 of 1990 spells it out clearly that if we had remained without going to Cabinet then we would have had only mayors and chairmen sitting in the corporations waiting for elections. We thought different to that. I went to the Cabinet and we were given authority to keep the councillors at their current rate of pay, not as chairmen of committees—because if one remembers from the

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12th—there were no councils, therefore, there were no committees. So the simple reason for going to Cabinet was for continuity and to keep the mayors and chairmen as advisors so that they could sit and advise the mayors and chairmen on the different aspects of the programme of works for the various times.

As a matter of fact, the Members for Chaguanas and Fyzabad spoke about the Road Improvement Fund. The Road Improvement Fund is administered by the Ministry. We ask for recommendations and then the technical staff in the ministry will determine whether the roads that are submitted have proper drainage; a good foundation and so forth, before roads are paved. So that we take their recommendation but the technical staff at the ministry makes the final decision.

As a matter of fact, I read before in Parliament the equitable treatment that was given by the UNC over the six years. Arima Borough Corporation got no funding for the entire six years. Nothing! Diego Martin Regional Corporation got nothing for six years. [*Interruption*] The document is here. This is from the Ministry of Local Government. You would remember your former colleague, Mr. Sherriff going about and doing things on his own. They had corporations that did not have elections. They had mayors, chairmen and aldermen and yet they went ahead and discriminated against councils that were run by the People's National Movement, but PNM was never about discrimination. Therefore, the PNM, under this Minister in the Ministry of Local Government, was very equitable in its distribution last year of the Road Improvement Fund.

As a matter of fact, I have some of the roads here that were done and you can tell me in one year, from 1999 to 2000, the Couva/Talparo/Tabaquite Regional Corporation, out of the \$25 million got \$17,176,000. So you are expecting the same treatment from the PNM that the UNC handed out to the PNM-controlled corporations. We are not going to allow that. The PNM has always been equitable in its treatment.

Today, you have heard many things about Caroni (1975) Limited, I would like to know how equitable it is. That is the same number of people who would go home and it would be equitably shared. From one side—half would be sent home and from the other side half would be sent home. You speak about local government but let me tell you something, ask your mayor to give you a list of the permanent employees in Chaguanas or in Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo. I have it. I have made my survey but I would say nothing here, because you speak of discrimination and inequitable treatment. I just want to read a letter from your Mayor in the Chaguanas Borough Corporation and this will prove what we are saying. The point is, the mayor wrote on January 10, 2003 to the Minister of Local Government. It states:

“I hereby submit the following names for your kind consideration for employment at the URP office in Cunupia. Most of them are single parents and unemployed and are having difficulties in making ends meet. Your assistance will certainly alleviate their daily financial problems. They are all residing within the Borough of Chaguanas”.

He sent a list of names and I would read them into the record. They are:

“Sherina Ramjattan

Indira Henry

Haroun Ali

Deonarine Ragoobar

Amelia Seenarine

Indra Harricharan

Ramawat Maraj.”

Equitable treatment. He is asking for these people to be employed. No address; no ID cards; no contact; nothing. This is what he did, and when I was asking people in Chaguanas to identify these persons only Indira Henry was identified. And the reason she was identified was because her husband works with the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force, and she is a UNC activist. I have no problem with that. Why did the Member send a list of seven persons with no form of contact and then talk about equitable treatment?

Mr. Speaker, much has been said here today, and I really should have only answered, as I said, one question on this Bill, but it is necessary for me to answer some of the other untruths that were told here today by two Members of Parliament, and we must recognize these things—because we, too, have debating skills here. It is not only one side and when we talk about equity, we are talking about the PNM’s policy; we are talking about a vision that PNM has for the year 2020, to make Trinidad and Tobago a better place for your children and grandchildren, not only mine.

This year the Member for Chaguanas said that they got \$24 million for the development of 14 regional corporations. That is \$10 million more than the last budget that the UNC placed here in Parliament. The Ministry of Works, Infrastructure and Local Government under Minister Carlos John got \$250 million and he gave approximately \$1 million to each corporation. Check that out! You got \$740,000 for San Juan/Laventille Regional Corporation for that fiscal year. So

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that you are just trying to mislead the population of Trinidad and Tobago. You are telling untruth. I am debating here. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Ramsaran: Point of Order, Standing Order 36(5), Mr. Speaker.

Hon. J. Narine: Please, Mr. Speaker, could you ask the hon. Member to take his seat? He had over 75 minutes in which to speak, I am ready to go home so allow me to speak now.

9.00 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Standing Order 36(5):

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

I do not think he is doing that.

Hon. J. Narine: Not at all. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*] The point is that we debated many budgets here and \$14 million was given to 14 corporations and San Juan/Laventille got seven—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Ramsaran: No, but you cannot do that, Mr. Chairman—a minister doing that, a minister lying to the House, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker: Excuse me, you are not giving way?

Hon. J. Narine: No discipline! No discipline! That is the type of people we had as ministers of this country.

Mr. Speaker: No, no, you either ask the Member to give way or you stand on a point of order. Now, you did stand on a point of order earlier and I overruled you, and apparently just now you attempted to ask the Member to give way and he is refusing.

Mr. Ramsaran: This is how we carry on a—

Hon. J. Narine: Mr. Speaker, I know for a fact that some of the corporations got more than others but it was \$14 million. Debe/Penal got money from the development funds to build the market in Debe, so when you come here and tell people untruths, the Speaker of this House must know better than that. I cannot pay for your political tabanca. [*Interruption*] You have it difficult being in Opposition [*Interruption*] but you will stay in Opposition for your lifetime. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, on the one hand, the Member for Chaguanas said that we did not give them sufficient money in the budget so that the 14 regional corporations are budgeted money in the national budget and they have to apply for the money through the ministry to the Ministry of Finance; yet the Member stood here today

and said that I am stifling their funding. The Member for Fyzabad does not know anything about local government, but, the point is, the minister is not the one in charge of dividing money to give to corporations. They must know. He was a Cabinet Minister. I will forgive the Member for Fyzabad because he never attained that height. They left him where he was for all his life and they will continue to leave him there, but you were a Cabinet minister and you do not know that your colleague had no authority to do what he did?

We come here and debated a budget. The Chaguanas corporation has all the funding. They have to apply for it. The Minister “doh” give. Act No. 21 of 1990 states clearly that, after July 12 last year, the minister was in charge of all the corporations. *[Interruption]* That is Act No. 21 of 1990. *[Interruption]* It is not the minister, it is the Act that gave the Minister the authority to approve the relevant corporation’s programme of works and that is what I do on the recommendation of the permanent secretary. *[Interruption]* I approve the programme of works for these corporations and they never had a problem before, but “local government coming”. *[Interruption]* I understand the cut and thrust of the politics and I say to you, Mr. Speaker, that I know the cut and thrust of Parliament. *[Interruption]*

I know local government is in the air. *[Interruption]* I know that some areas in your constituency are in difficulty and probably we may win some of those seats, but it is left to the election. *[Interruption]* So I know your sentiments. *[Interruption]* I know how you feel. *[Interruption]* You have to tell the national community that this minister is a dictator. *[Interruption]* I am not a dictator. *[Interruption]* I am only following the laws of Trinidad and Tobago according to Act No. 21 of 1990. *[Interruption]* I am only doing that. Let me say this. The unemployment—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member for Chaguanas, you are exactly opposite the Hansard reporter and she is having great difficulty. Please.

Mr. Ramsaran: Oh, I am sorry. While I am on my legs can I ask the Minister—

Mr. Speaker: No.

Hon. J. Narine: Yes, Mr. Speaker, thank you. Apparently the Member for Chaguanas still feels that the UNC is in government so he is suggesting to me that what the UNC had in place with the 14 regions in URP still stands. It is not like that. Last year the Unemployment Relief Programme was divided into 11 regions, Mr. Speaker, and I want the Member for Chaguanas to listen carefully. It was not 14 regions. It is 11 regions. Because of the representation that both the mayor and

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the Member for Chaguanas made to bring an office back to Chaguanas, because Couva was a bit too far, we admitted that yes, probably the people from that area, not the Chaguanas borough—he is mixing up the area for URP and the Chaguanas borough. We do not have a programme for the Chaguanas borough alone. It is an area—because it is 12 regions, not 14. We ran last year with 11 regions, not 14 regions. So you are getting mixed up with UNC policy as against PNM policy and no corporation has URP funding—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Ramsaran: Thank you for giving way. Could you tell us the PNM policy as far as Chaguanas URP is concerned?

Hon. J. Narine: I say to you—I heard that he had a nickname in school. They “had a right” to call him by that nickname. Last year—[*Interruption*] I would not say it here. It is unparliamentary. Mr. Speaker, I would simply tell the Member for Chaguanas that we had 11 regions last year, not 14, and since they wanted Chaguanas to have an office, we now have 11 regions. We do not have 14 regions. So that when he speaks about these regions, I have a problem in that he is still thinking way back in 1988 when his minister of local government gave it to 14 regions and after one year pulled it back to the ministry and started to do his own thing. We are not like that. We have a head office for URP and we had 11 regions last year with managers and we did work.

As a matter of fact, today, as I told you, the Unemployment Relief Programme, within five fortnights, was able to do some upgrading to the Wilson Road recreation ground, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Alloy Lequay, who is President of the Trinidad and Tobago Cricket Board of Control, was so pleased with the URP, he invited me to meet with the players of the India game that was started against Trinidad and Tobago today. I was pleased to go there because they were amazed to know that URP could do so much work in five weeks—two fortnights and a half. So when you visit this weekend, you would see the work which URP did, which would have cost the UNC, that same amount of work, about \$3 million. We did it for \$100,000. That is what is taking place and I am still to get a proper report from the ministry on the \$32 million that we are owing under the UNC for URP.

I went to Icacos village and, because I have family there, I just passed by the Fullerton fishing depot, and, let me tell you something about Fullerton fishing depot, which you do not know about. Over one million dollars was spent for a little fishing shed to mend some nets and they have some cubicles to put engines and fishing tackle. What is more, on investigation, Mr. Speaker, that fishing compound was built on private lands. Do you know that? It was built on private lands. [*Interruption*] Yes, “you all” come here and when the people who did not

get paid for not working and for—that Burkett corner, “ah coming to that now”. [Interruption] That one, “ah coming on that now” and it will be said in the courts, no doubt, but let me say this to you. Those persons who were hoping to get “million dollars for \$200,000 work”, this Minister is not going to allow that [*Desk thumping*] and this Government “not going to allow that”. So let them try to needle this ministry by saying, “We want 20 per cent and who want 10 per cent and all that”. This is not UNC, brother, “dey is PNM”, [*Desk thumping*] and this Minister is “ah” honest man. I am not going to pay people for not working. I came in the budget debate and told you bribes were offered but I say to you, if they genuinely worked they will get paid.

You know how much money was spent for the Honda River, work that we cannot see today and for which we may have to pay? You could have built another river in Chaguanas with the millions of dollars that they spent on the Honda River; and I will bring it here again. From time to time I am going to bring the figures and I am going to show them to you. Unfortunately I was not expecting, Mr. Speaker, that we were going to speak about all 12 ministries today—CEPEP, WASA, carnival, Tidco—I do not know.

I thought we only came here to do three simple things on local government, to extend the date to one year to have elections, to get the vice-chairman of the San Juan/Laventille Regional Corporation to take the place of my colleague who won the election in St. Ann’s East, and, instead of having three days to put in mayors, chairmen and aldermen, we now say, “Oh Lord, 10 days would not be too bad for us to sit down and get the right people for the job.” You understand? That is all we asked for today, you know, but “we start talking about CEPEP and all that”. However, I would not let it pass without saying something this evening. You confused the boundaries. I take note of what you said, that there are no URP gangs and there are ghost gangs. However, this week I have a report here of roads which were done by URP. The Ministry of Works and Transport, the paving programme, paved those roads because we had to put pitch there, and these are roads in your area.

Mr. Singh: What is the name of the programme?

Hon. J. Narine: NIPDEC’s Paving Programme under the Ministry of Works and Transport. I really do not know about any other things but let me call the names: Chrissy Terrace, Savannah Drive, Charles Street, Enterprise Street, School Street, Francois Street, Freedom Street, Emerald Drive, Armistice Drive, Diamond Boulevard, Constructive Avenue, Hospedales Avenue, Freedom Street Extension, Joseph Lane, Lamont Street Extension, Eagle Drive, Branch Trace and Branch Trace Extension, Richards Lane. This Government did all this.

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[*Interruption*] You are amazed? [*Interruption*] You did nothing for these people in six years! [*Desk thumping*] In one year we have been able to do all this and “leh” me tell you something, [*Desk thumping*] let me say this. Allow me. [*Interruption*] Six standpipes were also installed on the following streets and let me tell you—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker, I am going to be well prepared at all times. I did not have to bring this here. It was here because I keep these documents. Very soon, before the local government election, we are going to commission the 24 roads that we did in Central. [*Interruption*] The Minister of Works and Transport and I hope that the Prime Minister will be there [*Interruption*] but the Minister of Public Utilities has to be there because water was given to some of those people in Central Trinidad to whom you all gave nothing. [*Desk thumping*] They discriminated against those people in Enterprise! I say to you today, never again will Enterprise people suffer because of you; [*Desk thumping*] never!

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Fyzabad—oh, “he gone?” Oh, sorry. The two Members who remain in the House tonight, the Member for Caroni East and the Member for Chaguanas, all the rest are absent. I want to put that on the record in *Hansard*. This is where the Opposition of Trinidad and Tobago has reached with two Members [*Desk thumping*] sitting on that side listening to us on this side. Imagine that. This is what you “reach to”, [*Interruption*] a future political leader of the UNC and yourself, and then you would not even be deputy. If they remain with two persons, “you would not be deputy”. [*Laughter*] [*Desk thumping*] Mr. Speaker, if the Member for Chaguanas was a minister before and a member of Cabinet, he would understand that there is need for virements and so on. The problem with local government is that they take the money for goods and services and vire it and the Member for Chaguanas and the mayor sit there and they employ people. You understand? That is the order of the day. That is employment. Let me tell you, Mr. Speaker—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: The Member has raised a point of order that it imputes improper motives. No, he is not doing that.

Mr. Ramsaran: Standing Order 36(5).

Hon. J. Narine: It is not improper motives, Mr. Speaker. Let me say that is a fact. That it is not imputing improper motives.

Mr. Ramsaran: How can you sit here and allow that? How that could be a fact?

Mr. Speaker: You are again raising standing Order 36(5) and I say it does not really apply; but perhaps, Member, do not irritate him. I think he is being irritated by that, so maybe you can move on.

Hon. J. Narine: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, [*Laughter*] but he will understand that it is a normal thing to vire money from one subhead to another, then you vire money from goods and services to employ people and then you complain that you did not get money from the ministry. So what the permanent secretary did—why I stood here, Mr. Speaker, to tell the Member for Fyzabad that I did not write any letter, that did not mean that I did not have discussions with the Permanent Secretary. The Permanent Secretary had sent this circular not only to Chaguanas but also to all 14 regional corporations, everyone. The permanent secretary—[*Interruption*] “You lie on the permanent secretary” from your constituency in Lange Park, after 38 years’ service with the government? You understand? [*Interruption*] [*Laughter*] Let me say this. It is normal—[*Interruption*] “Yeah, only one remains.” Sorry.

The leader—he is the leader, he is the Chief Whip, he is the Member for all the constituencies. [*Interruption*] [*Laughter*] The Member for Caroni East alone remains in Parliament tonight. [*Desk thumping*] This is a great day for the PNM. [*Interruption*] [*Laughter*] However, Mr. Speaker, I am certain that the one person to whom I am speaking here, the Member for Caroni East, was a minister and he too understands that there are virements but sometimes it is difficult to take goods and services money and vire, to take labour on; they work only one hour a day, and the money is just spent on employment.

Every corporation has an industrial relations officer. According to Act No. 21, they have a personnel committee. Am I wrong or right? I do not employ. I do not ever send a letter for employment. I have documents there saying that the Chaguanas borough sent letters and Mr. Ishwar Mootoo, who was his personal aide, sent letters to the corporation too. I have all that here. “I doh know.” [*Interruption*] “What he was to you?” I would tell you because it is written here—personal assistant. It is a letter dated March 14, 2001 from Ishwar Mootoo, personal assistant to Minister Manohar Ramsaran, re request for employment for a checker on behalf of Fazir Ali. I will read one of them. [*Interruption*]

I did not say anything was wrong. I am saying what is the habit and what takes place. When they are saying that I did not know what was happening in the ministry, I should not write those circulars to the corporations. The Permanent Secretary has to do it. We had discussions and the Permanent Secretary did it because this is a wild time, local government coming up, so they have to employ plenty people.

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Both Members spoke about the \$50,000 to do surveys because the borough of Chaguanas is now collecting taxes. I am very much pleased with the amount of money that they have been collecting over the last few months because they have been able to increase the revenue, which was not there before, through the revenue department, Ministry of Finance and the local government is doing a fantastic job. Recently we filled a vacancy there for an assessor. He has trained persons. That \$50,000 about which the Member for Chaguanas spoke, that was approved this week and they took the persons who they trained to put them into the field for a couple weeks to see that they did this exercise so that more revenue can be collected for the State and we will have more revenue for CEPEP and other things. I thank the borough of Chaguanas for that because we need the money.

I must say something about CEPEP because a lot was said about it this afternoon, Mr. Speaker, although I am not the minister with responsibility for CEPEP. He is in the other place. *[Interruption]* While everybody spoke in high praise of this programme—obviously money has to be spent for these programmes—*[Interruption]* the funding that they spoke about, the Member for Fyzabad in particular, includes paying the workers, buying tools, providing transport and providing uniforms. *[Interruption]* They have to buy other things. They have to rent equipment to take away the stuff and all that.

So when you look at a piece of paper and see some money and you praise the CEPEP programme, you could not spend \$10 to do all that. I am sure that the Member for Caroni East knows that because, on his watch, “WASA spend real money, and what they did”? It was “water for all” but “he talking about truck water for local government. We ain’ gi’in’ dem money” and you said water for all by the year 2000. *[Interruption]* I mean, let us face the fact. *[Interruption]* What is going on here? *[Interruption]* Your colleague said water for all by the year 2000 and “you begging today” to get some truck-borne water. *[Laughter]* *[Interruption]*

Mr. Ramsaran: Me?

Hon. J. Narine: Yes. When you were making your contribution, you talked about truck-borne water, “we stifling funds” to give truck-borne water. *[Interruption]* No. Your colleague said water for all in 2000, only when rain falls, *[Interruption]* but I will tell you something. Before this term of office, *[Interruption]* the PNM will make sure that most of the people in Trinidad, 99 per cent, will have a water supply. *[Desk thumping]* I tell you that and I vouch for that.

Another matter raised here this evening, Mr. Speaker, is that I have the authority to put CEOs in office in the corporation. How sad. All the CEOs who work in local government are public servants; every one of them—I met them

there—and they talk about discrimination. How could it be discrimination? [Interruption] The last time the permanent secretary and I—[Interruption]

Mr. Ramsaran: “Who talk about CEOs?”

Hon. J. Narine: “Who talk about CEOs?” The Member for Fyzabad—discrimination with CEOs. This is what he talked about. I am not talking about you. Why do you not tell him to “keep his mouth quiet” when he does not know what he is saying? The point is that CEOs are public servants. Recently they wanted one CEO transferred. He came to the ministry with a solicitor’s letter stating that he was above class 41 and we could not transfer him, the Service Commission had to do it. Here comes the Member giving false information to this honourable House saying that the minister interferes with the appointment of CEOs. How crazy? We went to the Service Commission and they gave the authority to do it. No minister, no permanent secretary—the recommendation went from the PS and they accepted the recommendation and that is the only way we could have done it because one CEO decided to take us to court but “we say we not going to court because he is on his right” and we went to the Service Commission. So when they talk about CEOs—

I have already said that according to the Act, after the councils went out of existence, the minister was in total control and when you say total control, the CEOs and the mayors make recommendations to the ministry, Mr. Speaker. The way we did it in the ministry during this period is that we put a technical team together to look at these things because we are not able to read documents from all 14 corporations. So when they recommend to the Permanent Secretary and the Permanent Secretary recommends to me, I am certain that it never remained in our offices beyond two, three days. They get their approval and they keep working because they have approval to work. So I do not see what is this dictatorship they are talking about. However, it is easy to say that.

Mr. Ramsaran: You replied to two whole speeches.

Hon. J. Narine: Which one?

Mr. Ramsaran: You say you had one thing to reply to.

Hon. J. Narine: Only one was relevant but I cannot allow people to come here and give information that is not true and then sit here and go home and my conscience—I want to sleep tonight, Mr. Speaker. [Desk thumping] I want to sleep tonight because I want to answer all the questions that were asked here today.

Mr. Ramsaran: You are compounding the matter. You are telling more untruths.

Hon. J. Narine: Mr. Speaker, while there was nothing much said on the Bill, much was said about many different things; but when they asked what are we doing about the contractors, the Member for Fyzabad spoke about that—\$32 million owed for URP—I will say to you that, between last year and this year, we have given no contracts because the unemployment relief funding is for underprivileged people in Trinidad and Tobago and if you have 80,000 persons unemployed and we could only employ 6,000 a fortnight, obviously there will be some people who will complain to you and say they did not “get ah 10 days”. That will happen; that will always happen. It is survival of the fittest. That is what is taking place.

I would like it to be better than that or I would like us to get more programmes and take this same funding and put it in those areas; but at this present time it is the only place where someone could come off the street—we take recommendations from the prisons—people who leave the prison and come with the Prisons Welfare Committee letter are employed in URP. URP is a dynamic programme but we will always have problems. What they did was give contracts for more than half of the money every year and “racket most of it”—real corruption. You are talking about Burkett corner, what they call “Bucket corner”. It is one hard-surface court. The Member for Ortoire/Mayaro must know that it is one hard-surface court with one bleacher—\$1.4 million, Mr. Speaker! *[Interruption]*

No. When the chairman spoke about it—that is a court matter. I say no more. When you talk about the other areas where they did so much work, you should look at the figures, brother. However, we have two quantity surveyors in the ministry and that is not going to pass them before we pay. We can pay certain things because we cannot see them, but anything that we can see, a building, a bridge, Renaissance Park—“leh me eh” talk about Renaissance Park in Chaguanas. I “ain talking about”—*[Interruption]* “That is ah nice park” and because of the Member for Toco/Manzanilla, *[Interruption]* it was started in the first place “so leh me say that”. *[Interruption]* “Yeah, but the money—I send my people down there.” You would be surprised to know how much money.

“Doh talk about Honda River.” I said it before that—so I say to you—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Ramsaran: “Where Honda River is?”

Hon. J. Narine: I “doh” even know where it is *[Interruption]* *[Laughter]* “buh ah know dey coulda build a new Caroni river wid de amount ah money dey spend on dat ravine. De amount ah money dey spend on dat ravine, dey coulda build

another Caroni River in Chaguanas. [*Laughter*] I am telling you, millions ah dollars on a ravine called Honda. [*Interruption*] You feel I eh know where it is?" [*Interruption*] There is nothing in Trinidad that I "doh know where it is". [*Desk thumping*] [*Interruption*]

I am all over the country and I will find all those jobs that "you all say you do". The sports and cultural centre in Gurahoo Trace, which is a temple that was built, you know! Nobody could find it—[*Interruption*—no sports and cultural centre. "Dey fix kitchen for mosque and they buil' toilets and all kind ah thing—Mungal Patasar Centre." Mr. Speaker, that shed at the Couva South office in Balmain cost \$250,000—a garage to park two cars—\$250,000. The Government still owes that money.

Mr. Ramsaran: "Why you lying so much, boy?"

Hon. J. Narine: "I lying? I lying and dey say ah not paying the people?" We are not paying them because we are not certain that we "should pay dem dat kind ah money" for that work that was done. They could threaten, they could say anything about me, they could pass allegations on me, I am not going to budge.

Mr. Singh: I just wanted to clarify for my own thinking whether the Member has done an audit for value on those projects for which he does not want to pay?

Hon. J. Narine: We are going to come to that. The Ministry of Local Government has two quantity surveyors. [*Interruption*] I would like very much, Member for Caroni East, if our quantity surveyors go through it first. If we are not satisfied, we would bring an independent person and then, when that is done, the people will be paid. "Where we cyar see where the river was dredged because rain fall after that", we may have to pay. It is as simple as that. That is the advice I am getting from my technical people but when people come here and throw allegations against this Minister, I tell you I am not going to give in to that type of thing. I am going to stand my ground make sure that when taxpayers' money is spent it will be for doing something. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, the local government election will be held this year. I am sure that this Bill is a very simple one; to extend the life of the councils by making the council members—councillors and aldermen—advisors from July 12, 2002 to July 12, 2003. The next part of it is to legalize the post of deputy chairman of the San Juan/Laventille Regional Corporation as the chairman of the corporation. He has been acting in that position. He has not been paid up to this point in time. So that he will have additional funds to get because the former chairman is now a Member of this House. The other part of it is that election was held on Monday

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and by Thursday we had to install mayors, chairmen and aldermen. We say that we should have at least 10 days to do so, which is not asking for much.

I beg to move, Sir. [*Desk thumping*]

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.

Mr. Singh: Mr. Chairman, I just want clarification with respect to clause 2. With respect to the terms and conditions of those councilmen and aldermen, I notice that the law is very clear but my information is that they are not getting the same terms and conditions when they serve on the advisory body as when they were councillors and aldermen.

Mr. Narine: I explained that in the reply, that as of July 12, last year they ceased being a council. When they came back as advisors they came back with their stipend as councillors because we have no committees. So they cannot be chairmen of committees.

Mr. Ramsaran: No, but that was not their doing. That was because the term expired.

Mr. Narine: We are talking about the law, Sir.

Dr. Rowley: The law does not permit a council. So you cannot have a committee in a council. The law permits an advisor.

Mr. Ramsaran: No, but if you look at how that was framed—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Narine: No, you “doh” understand.

Mr. Ramsaran: No, no, if you read it the way it is framed—[*Interruption*]
No, no, no; read it; read it. When you pass a law here and somebody challenges it in court—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Sharma: Mr. Chairman, there are two concerns. One is that in the PNM controlled corporations the chairmen and others are paid differently from those paid in the UNC controlled corporations and the Minister is aware of that. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Chairman: That is not a matter for the committee stage.

Mr. Sharma: No, no, but the Minister is advancing the explanation that the law does not permit it. If we are to buy that, it has to obtain in both corporations, PNM and UNC.

Mr. Narine: Mr. Chairman, for the advice of the Member for Fyzabad, the Mayor of Port of Spain has a different salary from the Mayor of San Fernando and the Mayor of Pointe-a-Pierre and so on; and that has always been like that. The chairmen of corporations are at a different standard of salary. So there must be two different levels.

Mr. Sharma: Mr. Chairman, is the Minister saying that the—*[Interruption]* Mr. Chairman, the committees continue to exist. There is the health committee for instance.

Mr. Narine: No, no, there are no committees.

Mr. Sharma: Hold on, hold on, hold on.

Mr. Narine: The council went out of existence on July 12, 2002.

Mr. Sharma: Mr. Chairman, there seems to be a misunderstanding and it seems to be calculated in that the advisors are to advise the chairman where “chairman” applies and the mayor where “mayor” applies. The advisor advises the chairman or the mayor on health matters. He is chairman of the health committee. That continues to obtain.

Hon. Members: No. No.

Mr. Sharma: Hold on, hold on. That is what obtains now.

Dr. Rowley: No.

Mr. Narine: No.

Mr. Sharma: Now, it is not the fault—

Mr. Narine: Well, it is wrong.

Mr. Sharma:—of the chairman of the different committees to perform the function and not be paid because he was told by letter that the terms and conditions shall continue to obtain.

Mr. Narine: As a councillor.

Mr. Sharma: No, no, no; that was not said. It said the terms and conditions.

Mr. Narine: He was not elected as a chairman. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Sharma: It would be better if one is allowed to speak at any given time. The fact of the matter is that by letter the advisors were advised that the terms and conditions shall continue to obtain as obtained prior to July 13.

Mr. Narine: As councillors.

Mr. Sharma: So where there were chairmen, the chairmen continued and, as I have indicated, in the PNM controlled corporations they have been paid.

Mr. Valley: But they are no longer chairmen.

Mr. Sharma: They continue to be paid what obtained prior to July 13.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members I repeat, the question is that clause 2 stand part of the bill. All in favour say aye.

Hon. Members: Aye.

Mr. Chairman: Any against?

Mr. Sharma: Mr. Chairman, I have a second concern with clause 2. Where the Minister is moving that the aldermen shall, within 10 days, be elected or nominated, whichever, I think that is illegal since it will prevent the corporation from getting down to business in that if they are elected on Monday, by Tuesday or Wednesday they should be sworn in; but if the aldermen cease to be available for 10 days, then you cannot have the council functioning. Already they are going to be one year late, so this cannot be correct. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I have put the question before. It was voted on. I gave you a little leeway—

Mr. Sharma: No, no, I—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Chairman: No, no, I could have stopped you because I had put the question, it was voted on and concluded.

Mr. Sharma: Mr. Chairman, I put up my hand then and you acknowledged me after you put the vote.

Mr. Chairman: Are you proposing an amendment, or, what are you doing?

Mr. Sharma: Yes. I am saying that—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Chairman: What is the amendment?

Mr. Sharma: Before I bring the amendment I want to bring it to the Minister's attention and also to his legal advisor's that allowing this 10-day thing

is illegal because the council will not be able to function. What we are saying is that the council will come into being and, whenever you choose the aldermen, the law will apply?

Mr. Valley: Mr. Chairman, what is the reality? The old chairman remains in place until the new chairman takes office. I mean, the President was elected on February 16, but he is not taking office until a month afterwards.

Mr. Sharma: No, but the councillors will not be able to perform their duties because, how will you elect a new chairman? You are saying that the old chairman will continue.

Mr. Valley: Look, you have to balance things in life. I mean, the question is whether the three-day period was sufficient for the selection of aldermen as well as the election of a chairman and, you know, one could have gone to 14 days; one thought that the 10-day period—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Sharma: But you are denying electors the right to have the representative of their choice perform their duties for 10 days, which is two weeks.

Mr. Valley: We do not agree.

Dr. Rowley: But you did not have Parliament for eight months.

Mr. Narine: Mr. Chairman, as it exists—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Sharma: It is illegal. That is the bottom line.

Mr. Narine: —mayors and chairmen must be elected within a three-day period. So you have election on a Monday, by Thursday they have to be in office. All mayors and chairmen—because the Act states three days after elections. What we are saying is for either side, whether it is the Opposition or the Government, whosoever carries the corporation's majority, then—

Mr. Ramsaran: You are now confusing us. "How you could have elections without the aldermen?"

Mr. Narine: Then you would have—

Mr. Ramsaran: How could you have an election without the aldermen?

Mr. Narine: In one sense, you know, they appoint them the same day.

Mr. Ramsaran: How could you have an election without the aldermen?

Mr. Sharma: That is the dictator.

Mr. Partap: Because an alderman could be a chairman.

Hon. Member: Three of 10 is 10 per cent, you know.

Mr. Narine: We say that the three days is very close to having an election and then having to go to the 14 corporations to do that. So that, if we give a 10-day period, within 10 days, then a corporation—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Sharma: That cannot be correct.

Mr. Narine:—can go into existence within two, three days, but we will have up to 10 days to do all 14 corporations.

Mr. Sharma: Mr. Chairman, I beg to differ. That is totally illegal and it is wrong in principle. It is moving away from the process of an election. The alderman is part of the process. What the Minister is saying is that you can elect a chairman without the alderman, which is not correct.

Mr. Narine: No, no, no, no.

Mr. Sharma: In the 14 corporations it can all happen on the same day.

Mr. Valley: That is not what obtains now. After the legislation it is going to be within a 10-day period.

Mr. Sharma: No, but it cannot be within 10 days. You are denying those who elected the councillors to have the availability of their councilors or the chairman as the case might be.

Mr. Valley: “You serious about that argument?” Let us put the question, please? He is not serious.

Question put.

Mr. Sharma: Mr. Chairman, can we have a division on this? I think the record must reflect it.

The Committee divided. Ayes 15 Noes 6

AYES

Valley, K.

Narine, J.

Rowley, Dr. K.

Robinson-Regis, Mrs. C.

Williams, E.

Boynes, R.

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Beckles, P.
Achong, L.
Rahael, J.
Khan, F.
James, Mrs. E.
Hart, E.
Calendar, S.
Seukeran, Miss D.
Roberts, A.
NOES
Singh, G.
Ramsaran. M.
Rafeeq. Dr. H.
Sharma, C.
Partap, H.
Panday, S.

Question agreed to.

Clause 2 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, without 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, March 07, 2003 at 1.30 p.m.

That day will be Private Members' Day and, for the avoidance of doubt, Mr. Speaker, I inform this House that on the next day, the Government's day, the

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Government would be following the Order Paper, sequentially. [*Interruption*] Sequentially. The Order Paper would be adjusted by that time.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, before I put the question to the House for the adjournment, there is, in fact, one matter to be raised on the adjournment and I now call on the Member for Caroni East.

**External Law Students
(Hugh Wooding Law School Admission)**

Mr. Ganga Singh (*Caroni East*): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to congratulate the hon. Attorney General for spending this time with us because, on a previous occasion on a matter on the adjournment, we had some problems locating her.

Mrs. Morean: Well, again, Mr. Speaker, I am afraid I have to rise on a point of order. The hon. Member is misleading the House. I took that point on the last occasion when the hon. Member for Siparia tried to raise the same point by saying that I was not available when I was.

Mr. Speaker: Okay, please.

Mr. G. Singh: Very well, very well; I just—Mr. Speaker, it is not meant to score points. It is meant to really congratulate you for remaining here.

Mr. Speaker, perhaps the hon. Attorney General ought to have dealt with this matter during the period of her last year in office. It deals with the external law students who have graduated with their law degree and it is a matter of some history. It has been in gestation for quite some time. Her predecessor in office, the former Member for Couva South, attempted to deal with it by seeking to bring in another law school and, in 2001, when I had the responsibility for higher education in Trinidad and Tobago, I attempted to deal with it by finding a solution with the Council of Legal Education and the Sir Hugh Wooding Law School.

I think if I were to read a letter from the External Law Students' Association into the record, Mr. Speaker, it would encapsulate the points and the need to address this issue as a matter of urgency. It is dated January 29, 2002 to the Right Hon. Patrick Manning, Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. It says:

“Dear Sir,

Re: External Law Students Admission to the Hugh Wooding Law School

The External Law Students, who are holders of Bachelor of Law degrees obtained from Universities other than that of The University of the West

Indies, have not been able to gain admission to the Hugh Wooding Law School without first having to sit an entrance examination that was instituted by the Council of Legal Education in 1997. And then only a token few are admitted.

The Council's reason for the institution of this examination was due to the unavailability of places at the Hugh Wooding Law School. The Council thus maintained that some measure had to be instituted to deal with the number of graduates exceeding the number of available seats. The Council also maintains that the examination is not a 'pass or fail' exercise but one that is to be used as a determinant criterion for admissions due to the unavailability of spaces.

This examination soon created a greater malady. Over one hundred and thirteen (113) LLB graduates have found themselves not being able to gain entry to the Hugh Wooding Law School, some having graduated as far back as 1997.

In November 2001 the then Government of Trinidad and Tobago had set up a Task Force comprising of the Ministry of Education, The University of the West Indies, and the Council of Legal Education. The 'Task Force' was given the objective of increasing the number of seats at the Hugh Wooding Law School for External Law Students who were nationals of Trinidad and Tobago.

The then Government also proposed that a building adjacent to the Hugh Wooding Law School would be used for these additional students. This building is currently being used by the Creative Arts Students, and has the required space accommodation.

The Council of Legal Education was very receptive to this proposal, and embarked on a costing report that was to be completed by December 13th, 2001. This costing report was to indicate the cost for utilizing the said building for additional students, and any incidental costs attached. This costing report was to then advise the 'Task Force' in a meeting scheduled for January 15th, 2002.

The External Law Students' Association (E.L.S.A.) was asked by the Task Force to prepare a report outlining how many LLB graduates were seeking entry into the Hugh Wooding Law School, and how many students were currently enrolled in the programme at institutions in Trinidad and Tobago. This report was submitted to the Task Force on 26th November, 2001."

The letter goes on, Mr. Speaker, to deal with the question of the change in government and the fact that they were calling upon the Prime Minister to deal with this issue.

External Law Students
[MR. SINGH]

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Really, Mr. Speaker, the provision of these places must be looked at in the context of and the increase in the availability of tertiary education. The letter indicated that the hon. Attorney General was carbon copied a letter and I do not know whether the hon. Senator got a copy of that letter. What we were seeking to do in 2001 was to bring together the Council of Legal Education, the student customers, the clientele base and the Hugh Wooding Law School to maximize the space accommodation available next door to the law school; create greater investment for the Hugh Wooding Law School in terms of faculty and library facilities and give these 113 graduates and the further 406 students the opportunity to graduate as attorneys.

The Law Association was very supportive of this move. In the newspaper, the Law Association, through its secretary, Hendrickson Seunath, expressed approval for the then move. So you see, Mr. Speaker, clearly what we were seeking to do was find a solution to a problem that exists in the provision of higher educational opportunities for students who have, by dint of effort, graduated with external LLB degrees. I know within the current administration the hon. Ambassador, I think, Dr. Cuthbert Joseph, has a school. I do not know whether he still runs the school or is divorced from that, but certainly there are students registered from his school and certainly, being a former Minister of Education now holding high office in this regime, he too will be interested in the students moving forward.

Mr. Speaker, it is a question of placement, it is a question of funding and certainly, with a creative approach, a solution can be found to this malady that exists. It will assist in an increase in the availability of tertiary education opportunities. That is why we feel that the opportunity exists to find a solution and we felt that we were on our way. We call upon the hon. Attorney General to assist in the plight of these students who have graduated.

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

The Attorney General (Sen. The Hon. Glenda Morean): Mr. Speaker, the Motion filed by the Member for Caroni East was wrongly conceived and it is a display of the Member's lack of understanding of this Government's seriousness about its obligations at a national level to promote the welfare of its people and its seriousness at a regional level about its contribution to this process of regional integration.

Mr. Speaker, I make this statement because, as we all know, the Hugh Wooding Law School is not merely an institution, the role of which is to provide lawyers for the practice of law in Trinidad and Tobago, but it is also an important

institution in the scheme of legal education in the Caribbean. This institution was designed to develop a new and relevant jurisprudence for the region and to train its attorneys to meet the needs of the Caribbean peoples for legal services. It impacts, therefore, on the development of the people of this region.

In responding to this Motion, I emphasize firstly this Government's continuing commitment to education at all levels, including tertiary education and, secondly, that this Government is also committed to observing the law at all levels, whether local or regional. Our approach, therefore, to resolving the problems of the growing numbers of external students of the Hugh Wooding Law School, has been one which respects the relevant agreement establishing the Council of Legal Education and, consequently, one which respects our role and commitment to regional integration. I state categorically that this Government's response to the problem has been very prompt and under no circumstances can it be truthfully said that there has been a delay in dealing with this problem. Before detailing the initiatives taken so far to the resolution of this issue, I would give some background information for Members of this honourable House who may not be familiar with the nature of the problem.

The Hugh Wooding Law School is the professional stage of a two-tiered system of legal education, which has its genesis in the agreement establishing the Council of Legal Education executed by certain member states of the region. The Council of Legal Education Act brings the provision of the treaty into our domestic law. The external Faculty of Law at Cave Hill Campus, Barbados, is responsible for academic training of law students towards the Bachelor of Laws degree and has been allotted a quota of 34 students from Trinidad and Tobago. Therefore, only 34 of our students who may be qualified to enter the law faculty can do so in any given academic year.

10.00 p.m.

This has resulted in the use of foreign universities by students desirous of becoming attorneys-at-law. The numbers have grown over the years. Under Article 3 of the Agreement establishing the Council, holders of the LLB degree from the University of the West Indies, are entitled to automatic admission to the law school.

Non-UWI holders from universities recognized as equivalent to the UWI are eligible for admission subject, of course, to availability of space allocated as a result of an entrance examination as was referred to by the hon. Member. The first such examination was instituted by the Council in 1997 as a means of selecting

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the best among the external students to enter the law school. However, only a small number of these students can be admitted due to the limited capacity of the school, which was intended to accommodate an intake relative to the output of the law faculty.

When this examination was introduced, many of the external students had already been enrolled in external programmes and therefore continued to pursue their dream careers. In 1997, there were 462 students who were enrolled in overseas programmes and the numbers have increased over the years. The figures for those who have actually graduated and are entitled to apply for admission are not readily available but there are, I am sure, hundreds of such students. This Government has been, and continues to be, sympathetic to their plight.

Mr. Speaker, this problem is unique to Trinidad and Tobago. Our demand for legal education is the highest in the Caribbean and second in the world, after Singapore. Solutions to the problem must be framed in the context of the continuing demand in the future.

On December 26, 2001 I assumed office as Attorney General. Under Article I of the Agreement, the Attorney General of each participating territory is automatically a member of the Council. Trinidad and Tobago's problem has been of grave concern to the Council and I am required therefore to report progress on this issue.

In November 2001 discussions were initiated by the Chairman of the Council, Mr. Morrison QC, with the Member for Caroni East, who was then the responsible Minister. In view of the change of government, these discussions continued with me in February 2002. Within the two months that followed, representations were received from members of the External Law Students' Association. As a consequence of the representations, I established—[*Interruption*] Would you like me to give way? As a consequence of the representations I established, on June 08, 2002, a committee under the chairmanship of Mrs. Claire Blake SC, Chief Parliamentary Counsel and consisting of the Principal Registrar and other representatives of the Hugh Wooding Law School with a specific mandate to look into the plight of external law students and to recommend solutions to the problem.

A draft interim report dated August 23, 2002 was submitted to me on August 28, 2002 which recommended certain solutions, all of which appeared to be long term. In the meantime, students had written the examination for entry into the law school for 2002 and results were published. The Government of the Bahamas agreed that the Council could offer 33 vacant first-year places at the Eugene De Pouce Law School of which 30 were made available to Trinidad and Tobago nationals.

On account of this Government's commitment to its people; to their education, and having regard to our appreciation of the role the Caribbean legal education plays in regional integration, an approach was made to Cabinet in September 2002 to provide financial assistance for 30 of the 68 students who were successful at their entrance examination. The other thirty-eight students were absorbed at the Hugh Wooding Law School. The economic cost of legal education at the Eugene De Pouce Law School is much greater than it is at the Hugh Wooding Law School.

This Government, Mr. Speaker, agreed to pay the Council the full tuition costs of the programme in the Bahamas, in the light of the overall increased cost to the students for attendance at the Eugene De Pouce Law School. Not all successful students took advantage of the financial assistance. Some of them requested a deferral to the next academic year. The following persons are nationals and are at present registered and attending the Eugene De Pouce Law School:

Ali Hosein
Cathy-Ann Kirk-Hogan
Debra Jean Baptiste Samuel
Lindon Lue
Sunita Maharaj
Emmanuel Pierre
Keisha Prosper
Judy Ramsaroop
Palvin Sookai
Carla Soverall
Charmine Williams

The following persons requested deferral of their admission:

Lena Baboolal Sookbir
Junior Demming
Sandra Elcock
Evette Hall
Sheridom Hill

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Mohani Mohan

Cathy-Ann Mottley

Maria Pacheco

Mr. Speaker, I reiterate that the reaction time of this Government to this problem is a record.

The Government has enabled 30 students who obtained their LLB degrees through the non-UWI route to pursue their career within months of coming into office. All 30 students have not taken up the offer, as I have said, but the opportunity has been provided.

The Member for Caroni East, as former minister responsible for tertiary education, would know that there is no simple solution to this issue. The former attorney general had proposed the establishment of a law school for Trinidad and Tobago as an alternative to the Hugh Wooding Law School. This institution would have been outside the purview of the Council and its graduates would have been limited only to the practice of law in Trinidad and Tobago. Had the then government's proposal become a reality, Trinidad and Tobago would have been in breach of its obligations under the Treaty establishing the Council of Legal Education. We were on our way to becoming stigmatized; fortunately certain events overtook that decision.

Since the Fourteenth Intercessional Meeting of the Heads of Government of the region, this Government's commitment to the regional integration process is now well known. We have become the forerunners of the movement towards the full establishment of the Caribbean Single Market and Economy (CSME). We are committed to becoming CSME-ready within the shortest possible time. I can assure the people of Trinidad and Tobago that no initiatives would originate from this country to cause any damage to this country's excellent reputation among our regional colleagues and people.

Thank you.

Mr. Singh: Madam Attorney General, you said that 30 students are going to the Eugene De Pouce Law School in the Bahamas and an additional 38 students at the Hugh Wooding Law School, so is it that on an annual basis we would have 68 students entering the law school system through the external programme?

Hon. G. Morean: Mr. Speaker, I know it may not be allowed, but I will answer.

The fact is that it is all determined on space. If the space is available—

External Law Students

Friday, February 21, 2003

Mr. Singh: But there is that commitment.

Hon. G. Morean: —we would have that number again.

Mr. Singh: Okay. Thank you.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 10.08 p.m.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTION

**WASA Housing Quarters
(Ownership Disposition)**

- 23.** *Pursuant to his reply to question No. 23, earlier in the proceedings, the Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment (Sen. The Hon. Rennie Dumas) caused to be circulated to Members of the House the following:*

1	Glen Lane #4	Water Lane off Glen Lane, El Socorro
2	Freeport #4 or #55	Calcutta Road #2, Freeport
3	Granville #82	Coromandel Road, Granville
4	Granville #83	Coromandel Road, Granville
5	Granville #84	Granville Waterworks
6.	Point Fortin #2	Huberiton, Guapo
7.	Moruga #1	Prince Albert Street
8.	Cedros Area Office	Bonasse Hill, Cedros
9.	St. Ann's	St. Ann's Reservoir
10.	Tompson	Tompson Area Office
11.	Tompson	Tompson Area Office
12.	Rio Claro	Naparima Mayaro Road
13.	Freeport #5 or #54	Calcutta Road #2, Freeport
14.	Biche #1	Kowlessar Trace, Biche
15.	Diego Martin # 2	Four Roads Pumping Station

16.	Diego Martin # 3	Four Roads Pumping Station
17.	Diego Martin # 1	Four Roads Pumping Station
18.	Navet # 1	Tabaquite, Navet Waterworks
19.	Navet # 2	Tabaquite, Navet Waterworks
20.	Navet # 3	Tabaquite, Navet Waterworks
21.	Navet # 4	Tabaquite, Navet Waterworks
22.	Navet # 5	Tabaquite, Navet Waterworks
23.	Navet # 6	Tabaquite, Navet Waterworks
24.	Navet # 7	Tabaquite, Navet Waterworks
25.	Navet # 8	Tabaquite, Navet Waterworks
26.	Navet # 9	Tabaquite, Navet Waterworks
27.	Navet # 10	Tabaquite, Navet Waterworks
28.	Navet #11	Tabaquite, Navet Waterworks
29.	Hillsborough Supt.	Hillsborough Dam
30.	Hillsborough #67	Hillsborough Dam
31.	Hillsborough # 70	Hillsborough Dam
32.	Hillsborough # 68	Hillsborough Dam
33.	Hillsborough	Hillsborough Dam
34.	Carlsen Field Waterworks # 1	Carlsen Field
35.	Hollis Reservoir	Dam Site Hollis Reservoir, Valencia
36.	Cedar Grove	Cedar Grove Road, Mayaro
37.	Mayaro WTP	Pierreville, Mayaro
38.	Glen Lane # 1	Water Lane off Glen Lane, El Socorro
39.	Granville Waterworks	Syphoo Road, Granville
40.	Granville # 81	Granville Waterworks
41.	Point Fortin Supt.	Huberiton, Guapo

42.	Point Fortin # 1	Huberiton, Guapo
43.	Point Fortin # 3	Huberiton, Guapo
44.	Mayaro Area Office	Pierreville Street, Mayaro
45.	Penal # 3	Siparia Erin/San Fernando
46.	Syne Village Office	Siparia Erin/San Fernando
47.	Penal # 2	Siparia Erin/San Fernando
48.	Penal Maintenance	Siparia Erin/San Fernando
49.	Hart Street	#14 Hart Street, San Fernando
50.	Sangre Grande	Eastern Main Road, Sangre Grande
51.	St. Joseph # 3 or # 13	Eastern Main Road, St. Joseph
52.	Scarborough # 65	Ottley Street, Scarborough
53.	San Juan/St. Joseph Area Office	Eastern Main Road, St. Joseph
54.	Granville # 80	Coromandez Road, Granville
55.	Picton Road	Clifton Hill, Laventille
56.	Mayaro # 54	Pierreville Street, Mayaro
57.	St. Joseph # 4 or # 15	Eastern Main Road, St. Joseph
58.	Tunapuna Reservoir	Tunapuna Road, Tunapuna
59.	Chaguanas	Montrose Office, Compound
60.	Couva	Exchange Road, Couva
61.	Glen Lane # 2	Water Lane off Glen Lane, El Socorro
62.	Glen Lane # 3	Water Lane off Glen Lane, El Socorro
63.	Freeport # 1 or # 51	Calcutta Road #2, Freeport
64.	Freeport # 2 or # 52	Calcutta Road #2, Freeport
65.	Freeport # 3 or # 53	Calcutta Road #2, Freeport
66.	La Brea	Pierre Road, La Brea
67.	Seukeran's Street	# 26 Seukeran Street, San Fernando

68.	Ragbir Street	Ragbir Street, St. Augustine
69.	Warren Street	Warren Street, St. Augustine
70.	St. Clair	Rapsey Street, St. Clair
71.	Charlotte Street	Charlotte Street, St. Joseph
72.	Scarborough	Ottley Street, Scarborough
73.	Scarborough	Ottley Street, Scarborough
74.	Kelly Village Testing Facility	Whiteland, Piparo Road
75.	WASA Credit Union	Eastern Main Road, St. Joseph
76.	Mayaro # 2 or # 53	Pierreville Street, Mayaro

**Community-Based Environmental Protection
and Enhancement Programme (CEPEP)**

- 30.** Pursuant to his reply to question No. 30, earlier in the proceedings, the Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment (Sen. The Hon. Rennie Dumas) caused to be circulated to Members of the House the following:

NAMES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF PERSONS EMPLOYED FOR CEPEP

1	Atiba, Kwesi	To supervise and provide technical advice to groups of Contractors engaged in the implementation and execution of the government funded Community-based Environmental Protection Enhancement Programme (CEPEP)
2	Clarke, Carlston	To undertake feasibility studies and provide the management with reports, proposals and recommendations for the implementation of community based and business based environmental projects in keeping with the company's and the government's initiatives in the short-term.
3	Farfan, Darren	To supervise and provide technical advice to groups of Contractors engaged in the implementation and execution of the government funded Community-based Environmental Protection Enhancement Programme (CEPEP)

4	Frederick, Gillian	To provide routine clerical support to the Department in accordance with the plans for achieving the objectives and goals of the Unit.
5	Gobin, Melaine	To provide clerical and administrative support to the unit in accordance with the plans for achieving the objectives and goals of the Unit.
6	Jaggernauth, Michelle	To provide routine clerical support to the Department in accordance with the plans for achieving the goals and targets outlined as assigned.
7	John, Leslie-Anne	The compilation and production of finance and accounting reports and the administration and execution of the payrolls
8	Jones, Tricia	To implement to co-ordinate the day to day activities of the CEPEP
9	Les Pierre, Kwahabena	To provide routine clerical support to the Department in accordance with the plans for achieving the goals and targets outlined as assigned.
10	Mahabir Goberdhan	To competently drive and operate the Company's vehicles and equipment, ensuring that all assignments are completed efficiently and satisfactorily.
11	Pitt, Jill	To monitor the day to day activities of the CEPEP contractor within their Environmental Work Areas in keeping with established policies and objectives. Identify environmental issues and provide technical support and advice for their resolution. Develop operational activities for the contractors scope of works and ensure procedures are followed for optimum result.
12	Ramdeensingh	To provide routine clerical support to the Department in accordance with the plans for achieving the goals and targets outlined.
13	Russell, Neil	Responsible for the expansion, updating and maintenance of financial information, compilation and production of financial and accounting reports.

14	Sookhoo, Carol	To manage the administrative staff and lend professional support and assistance to other line manager and the Program Manager with respect to controlling, directing and developing Community-Based Environmental Protection Enhancement Protection (CEPEP) and related functions.
15	St. Rose, Adanna	To provide routine clerical support to the Department in accordance with the plans for achieving the goals and targets outlined.
16	Williams, Roger	To assist in the removal of dead animals from the roadways and other manual related duties that may be required.

**Solid Waste Management Company Limited
(Contracts awarded for CEPEP)**

31. Pursuant to his reply to question No. 31, earlier in the proceedings, the Minister of Public Utilities and the Environment (Sen. The Hon. Rennie Dumas) caused to be circulated to Members of the House the following:

MINISTRY OF PUBLIC UTILITIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT

COMPLETE LIST OF APPLICATIONS AS CONTRACTORS	FIRST NAME	LAST NAME	COMPANY NAME
			The South West Development Agency
	Kamalodeen	Abdool	
	Larry	Acosta	
	Gilbert	Agard and Grant	
	Suni	Ahmad	
	Shango A.	Alamu	
	Jean	Alexander	Cave Contractors
	Mathew	Alexander	Thew's Landscaping
	Oliver	Alexander	

FIRST NAME	LAST NAME	COMPANY NAME
Neal	Alexis	
Hassan	Ali	
Don	Alleyne	De Angelo & Associates General Construction
Gerard	Alleyne	
Desmond	Allum	The Cotton Tree Foundation
Ria John-	Andrews	Ria John Construction Co. Ltd
Keith	Anthony	Leaseholds Community Council
Oliver	Aqui	
Leonard	Archer	
Kwesi	Atiba	
Allison	Augustine	
	Augustine	Multy Purpose Facility Company Ltd.
Milton	Aussin	Fonclaire Steel Orchestra
Kathy Ann	Austin	
Shaun	Baal	
Gerald	Bacchus	
Clyde Colin Kelly	Baggan	
Mahabir	Baldeosingh	Trinidad Geophysical Enterprises
Kenrick	Baldwin	(D.J.B. & Co) Trinidad Geophysical Enterprises
Roopchand	Balliram	Roopy's Contracting Services Ltd
Angela	Baptiste	La Lune Development Committee
Kurtis	Baptiste	
Peter	Baptiste	Zince Limited

*Written Answers to Questions**Friday, February 21, 2003*

FIRST NAME	LAST NAME	COMPANY NAME
Nizam Stephen	Bassarath	
Lesia	Batchoo	
Brian	Beckles	
Lionel	Beckles	Contractor
Keith	Belfast	Global Enterprises Limited
Anthony	Belfon	
John	Belgrave	Recon Management Agency
David	Bethel	La Brea Youth Empowerment Committee
Malcolm	Bhagwandin	
Dean	Bhandoo	
Joseph Marius	Bhudi	
Mario	Bissessar	
Panalal	Bissoondial	
Erica	Blake	
Jason	Bobb	
Terrence Boissiere (C.E.O, Marabella Family Crisis Centre)	Boissiere	Marabella Family Crisis Centre
Lionel Boodlal		
Marva	Bostic	A.E. Rasolli Maintenance Services Limited
Khary	Bostock	
Patricia	Bourne	
Tessin	Boxer	
Owen	Boyce	Rake and Spade

*Written Answers to Questions**Friday, February 21, 2003*

FIRST NAME	LAST NAME	COMPANY NAME
Neil	Bridgelal	
Marion	Brizan	
Dean	Burgen	
Rhonda	Burnett	
Graham	Butcher	
Stanley	Butcher	
Shalina Ramdin	Butcher and Ramdin	
Joseph	Callender	JC Construction and Building Services
Randy	Callender	
Geralal	Cameroon	
Denise	Campbell	Healthy Environment and Landscaping Provider
Renwick	Campbell	Contractor
Jennifer	Campbell- Maryshow	
Anthony	Campo	Corner Stone Environmental Maintenance
Watson	Canning	
Joseph S.	Castillo	
Laurie	Celestine	
Kendall	Chai	
Boxil, Dominic /Charles	Charles	
Brian	Charles	
Prince Glenroy	Charles	

*Written Answers to Questions**Friday, February 21, 2003*

FIRST NAME	LAST NAME	COMPANY NAME
Theodore	Charles	
Victor	Charles	
Wade	Charles	
Wendell	Charles	Home Services & Maintenance Company Ltd.
Ian Charles/Curtis Bennett/Julien Gittens	Charles Bennett Gittens	Engine Room Enviromental Company Limited
J. B.	Charran	JB Construction Ltd
Dexter	Chedu	
Garth	Christopher	
Roger	Clark	E R T Systems Consulting Services
Simon	Clement	
Patrick	Clifford	Clifford Maintenance Services
Samuel	Colley	Samcoll Constructing Company Limited (General Contractors)
Kurt	Constantine	
Neville	Cooper	Neville Cooper Company Limited
Rodne	Cox	
Diana Craig	Craig and Greene	Power Struggle Movement
Anthony	Crichlow	
Charmaine	Cummings	
Curtis	Cyrus	
Brenda	D'Abreau	Palms Investment
Paul	Dallsingh	
Veronica	Dalzine	

*Written Answers to Questions**Friday, February 21, 2003*

FIRST NAME	LAST NAME	COMPANY NAME
Kip	Daniel	
	Dash and Castillo	
Winifred	David	Church of the Nazarene
Anthony	De Coteau	
Darren	De Silva	
Seloi	De Silva	
Victor	Delwyn	
Desmond	Derrick	
Mahabal	Dhansingh	Twin Air Refridgeration and Air Conditioning Services
Neil a	Dinno	
Peter	Dinzey	Northern Technology
David	Dookie	
Paula Winston John	Drakes Drayton Duncan	Terry Construction & Trading Limited
Melville	Dyer	
Wayne	Earle	Enviroflex
Perry	Eastman	
Edmund	Edwards	
Volton	Edwards	
Karlene Elliot	Elliot	Arc Angels L.T.D
Stephen	Emery	
David Darren	Farfan	
Oscar	Farnum	
Dave Granderson	Farrier	

*Written Answers to Questions**Friday, February 21, 2003*

FIRST NAME	LAST NAME	COMPANY NAME
Jeremiah	Farrier	
Sherry Ann Peters	Farrier	
Winston	Feeles	Trinidad Utility Contractors
Valentine	Ferdinand	Tap Roots General Contractor & Consultant Agency
Winston	Flement	Roy Joseph Scheme Development Community
John W	Fortune	John W. Fortune Enterprises
Calvin	Foster	
Glen	Fournillier	
Andre	Franco	
Herbert	Gabriel	
Nicole	Gajraj	
Basdeo Ganpat	Ganpat	
Elliston	Gardener	Savet Limited
Simeon	Garnes	Enviro Company Linted
Conan	George	
Brentis	George	
Lytton	George	
Pamela	George	
Aslam	Ghanny	Clausius.Asad.AsIam.Ghanny Construction Ltd
Michael	Gittens	
Beverly	Gonzales	2BU Incorporation Ltd
Heeralal	Gopie	
Horace	Gordon	

*Written Answers to Questions**Friday, February 21, 2003*

FIRST NAME	LAST NAME	COMPANY NAME
Lawton	Gordon	
Prakash	Gosine	Tracmac Engineering
Dave	Granderson	
Cary	Grant	Bravo Contracting Services
Franklyn	Grant	
Kenny	Grant	
Winthrop	Grant	
Ralph	Gray	
Dave	Greaves	
Sirdar	Greaves	SAS Agency
P.	Grennidge	
Ansen	Griffith	
Kenneth	Guerra	
Mark	Guerra	NAS Power Ltd
Jason & Jason	Guerra and Stowe	J&J Environmental Company
Alvarez Hackshaw	Hackshaw	
Desmond	Hamilton	
Mary	Hamilton	
Ann Marie	Hamlet	
	Hanif	
Chris	Harsingh	
Septimus	Harry	
Clevon	Haynes	
Ian A	Haynes	
Nashim	Haynes	

*Written Answers to Questions**Friday, February 21, 2003*

FIRST NAME	LAST NAME	COMPANY NAME
Karen	Hazard	
Anthony	Hepburn	Mayaro General Development Co. Ltd
Patricia	Herry	
Ms. Candy	Hill	St Joseph Rd Youth Movement
	Hodge	Alston Hodge Company
Shah	Hosein	Soverign Enterprises Limited
Kenneth	Hosten	Projex Ltd Contracting Services & Project Management
Dianne	Hudson	Asphalt Processors Company Ltd
Ronald	Huggins	The Underground Movement
Esmond	Hughes	
Nileung	Hypolite	
Junior	Jacky	JTJ Contractors Limited
Rhonda	Jacobs	
Nick	Jaggernaut	
Donald S.	Jagroop	
Franklyn	Jagroop	
Murphy	Jairam	Lawn Boys Limited
Clyde	James	Road Transport Engineering Ltd
Kewyn	James	
Martin	James	
Martin	James	
Sinetta	Janette-Hernandez	
Arthur	Janneir	
Nadine	Jeffery	Macro Business Pro

FIRST NAME	LAST NAME	COMPANY NAME
Barry	Joelfield	
Catherine	Joelfield	
Ria	John-Andrews	Ria John Construction Co. Ltd
Errol	Jones	Building Maintenance Services Ltd
Alexander	Joseph	
David	Joseph	Joseph Beautification Organization
Michael	Joseph	Southern Marines Steelband Foundation
Roger	Joseph	
Manuj	Kanick	
David	Kaylan	
Malcolm	Kernahan	Jubilange Peoples Community Cooperative Society Ltd
Parbati	Khallawan	
Reynard	Khan	
Rachel	La Borde	
Clyde	La Fortune	
Deonarine	Lackansingh	
Cindy	Lake	
Rishi	Lakhan	Sanitation Maintenance and Landscaping Limited
Balkaran	Lal	
Mary	Lalgee	
Narindra	Lalla	
Paul E.	Lara	
Peter	Lawerence	First Class Homes & Commercial Properties

*Written Answers to Questions**Friday, February 21, 2003*

FIRST NAME	LAST NAME	COMPANY NAME
Leon Lawson	Lawson	Tropical Fantasy
June	Le Rivears	
Brian	Leais	
Samuel J	Lee	
Kurt	Lee Wen	
Michael	Legerton	I
Daaga	Lessey	
Lawrence	Leveau	
Brian	Lewis	
Isaac I.	Lewis	Lewis Agency
Wayne	Lewis	
Dhaneswar	Looknauth	
Francis	Lum Yue	
Leslie	Lynch	
Roopchand	Mahabir	
Horace	Maharaj	Champ Fleurs Action Committee
Jaidath	Mahara	
Russel	Manswell	
Bhagwatee	Maraj	
Peter	Marine	Marine & Mc Intosh Company
Marvin	Mark	
Wayne	Martin	Wayne Martin Construction
Thomas Randolph	Mason	
Ainsley	Mathew	
Leo	Mathew	

*Written Answers to Questions**Friday, February 21, 2003*

FIRST NAME	LAST NAME	COMPANY NAME
Kelvin	Mathews	
Raymond	Mathews	
Mervyn	Mc Carthy	
Rickson	Mc Donald	Alson's Landscaping, Fabricating & Welding Contractor Ltd.
Victor	Mc Eachrane	Me Eachrane's Rental & Transport Service
Dan	Me Knight	
Earl	Mc Lean	
Lyndon	Mc Queen	Mc Queen Services Limited
Leslie	Melville Jr.	
Virgin	Miguel	
Cheryl	Miller	Miller's Landscaping Maintenance Contractors
Bernard	Millett	Heights of Ari o Community Council
Randall	Mitchell	Envirochem Ltd
Allistair	Mitchell and Dumonte	
Alicia	Mohammed	
Alvin Reeves	Mohammed	
Lalmanie	Mohammed	
Nazeer	Mohammed	
Raffie	Mohammed	
Mungal	Mohan	MGK Contractors Ltd
Wayne	Mollineau	Moruga 500 Committee
Bostan Ian	Monsegue	

*Written Answers to Questions**Friday, February 21, 2003*

FIRST NAME	LAST NAME	COMPANY NAME
Darryl	Monsegue	Blade Professional Landscaping
Harry Moonoo	Moonoo	Devon Enterprises Limited
Norris	Moses	
Deoraj	Motilal	
Asham Akiba	Muhammad	Barataria Unit Organization
Jameel	Mustapha	Sarah Agencies
Errol	Nagee	E.N. Contractors
Carlton	Naranjit	Caroni Association of Village & Community Councils
David	Naranjit	Lake Investments Limited
Ravi	Narine	
Rudranath	Narinesingh	
Arthur	Nelson	
Trevor	Nelson	
Shurland	Nicholas	Miracle Brite
Trevor/ Keith	Nicholas/ Anthony	
Shirlyn	Nickles	Miracle Brite Maintenance Company Limited
Gregory	Nurse	Ecoscope Consultants Ltd
Berverly	Nurse-Guerra	
Andrew	O'Brien	
Winfield	O'Garro	Shaw-Jer Enterprises Limited
Frank	Oliver	
Roy	Orr	
Mac Donald	Padmore	
Martin	Pantin	

*Written Answers to Questions**Friday, February 21, 2003*

FIRST NAME	LAST NAME	COMPANY NAME
Reynold	Pascal	
Edwin M.	Paul	EMP Entepprises
Marvin	Payne	
Joseph Hilton	Pennie	
Roland Keith	Perreira	
Dwain Perez	Persad	Perez General Contractors & Transport
Prakash	Persad	
Danny. A	Peters	
Errol Peters	Peters	Toylin Limited
Jacqueline	Peters	
Sherry Ann	Peters-Louison	
Irwin E.	Philander	Eco Clean Systems Ltd
Alvin	Phillip	
Dennis	Phillip	Birdsong Steel Orchestra
Barry	Phillips	Village Council ManagementCommiffee
Clement	Phillips	
Dawn	Phillips	Foster Solutions for Sustainable Ecosystem Development
Usamah	Phillips	NAHL Construction & General Contractors Limited
Vanda	Pierre	Bon Air Arouca Self Improvement Committee.
Leroy Gene	Porther	
Ann	Powder	La Folk Performers
Archibald E. G.	Prime	

*Written Answers to Questions**Friday, February 21, 2003*

FIRST NAME	LAST NAME	COMPANY NAME
Cornelius	Prince	C.P.'s Administrative & Management Services
Neil S.	Prout	
Lucille Tom	Ouong	
Lennox G. Radix	Radix	
Chris Arjoon	Ragoonanan	
Dave	Ra'kumar	
Harrilal -	Ramdeen	
Ronnie	Ramdeo	
Shermin	Ramdin	
Ahebal	Ramjattansingh	
Amar	Ramjitsingh	
Balliram	Ramkissoon	Ramkie General Contractors Cc
Bobby B.	Ramkissoon	
Roopnarine	Ramnanansingh	
Mr. H	Ramnarine	
Chris	Ramoutar	
Gaekwad	Ramoutar	
Lennox	Ramoutar	Lennox Ramoutar Hardware
Joram	Rampersad	
Dave	Ramroop	Carlsen Field Landscaping & Maintenance Services L.T.D
Steve A.	Ramsaran	
Steve A.	Ramsaran	
John	Ramsey	John Ramsey General Maintenance
Frederick	Ramsingh	

*Written Answers to Questions**Friday, February 21, 2003*

FIRST NAME	LAST NAME	COMPANY NAME
Glen	Ransome	G & L Partners
Esther	Rattansingh	
Heather	Reece	
Alvin	Reeves	
J.	Regrello	
Kevin	Reid	
John Reviero	Reviero	El Espanol Maintenance
Kern	Reyes	
Theophilus	Richards	
	Rigues	Vernon Rigues Company Limited
James	Rivas-Caesar	
Rodney	Roberts	
Kirton	Robertson	
Petra	Romain	G. R's Trucking and Contracting Company Limited
John	Ross	
Norman	Ross	
Wayne	Ruiz	J&R 2002 Company Limited
Philip R.	Salazar	Sa hire Environment Services
Andrew	Salina	Lopinot, La Pastora Community Council
Keith	Salina	
Nicholas	Salina	
	Salina	
Rooplal	Samaroo	
	Samaroo and Leon	Gonzales Community Council

*Written Answers to Questions**Friday, February 21, 2003*

FIRST NAME	LAST NAME	COMPANY NAME
Joanne Williams Sampson & Junior Williams	Sampson and Williams	W & S Company Limited
Ann Marie Samuel	Sealy	
Radica	Seecharan	St. Mary's Village
Suresh	Seecharan	
Randall	Seegobin	
Mary	Seegobinsingh	
Neil	Seepaul	
Kent	Shields	
Beville	Simonette	South West Development Agency
Jennifer Campbell	Simonette	
Krishna	Singh	
Denniston	Siomon	
Kevin	Slater	
Carlton	Smith	Boisselle Enterprises
Ramchand	Sookdeo	
Rudolph	Spencer Jr.	
Neil	Spooner	
Eugene	Hilare	
June	St. Louis	
Gary St. Rose	St. Rose	Paragon Sports & Culture Club
Wendell	Stephen	Darwen Ltd
Calvin	Stephens	
Keon	Stephenson	Prestige Pro Building Construction
Leopold	Stephenson	

*Written Answers to Questions**Friday, February 21, 2003*

FIRST NAME	LAST NAME	COMPANY NAME
Frankie	Stewart	Complete Construction & Maintenance Services
Leatte	Stewart	Scenery Beautification Management
Leo A.	Sullivan	
Ricky	Sydney	
Anthony	Sylvester	
Brian	Taitt	Insect Termination & Environmental Maintenance
Alisia	Taylor-Bonnette	
Bernard	Teedale	Powertech Petro Environment Co. Ltd.
Charles	Teloka	
Nigel	Tenia	
Nigel / Kirton	Tenia/Robertson	
Lloyd	Theodore	
Leroy	Thomas	
Sharon	Thomas- Loney	
Joanna	Thompson	
Lucille	Tom Ouong	
Jason/Jeffrey	Trotman	
Jason/Jeffrey	Trotman	
Hesma	Tyson	
McCrea	Valentine	
Derek	Valley	.
Mervyn	Vance	
Hamil	Vernon	Trinidad and Tobago L.T.D

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FIRST NAME	LAST NAME	COMPANY NAME
Raul	Villafana	
Mark	Walker	H2O Sewer and Electrical Consultants
Neil	Waterfield	
Marian Preudhomme	Watson	
Brian	Weekes	Megabrite Industries
Stephen	Wellington	Baseline Services Company Ltd.
Dianne	Wells	
Brandon	West	West & Associates
Joel	West	M.J.I. Landscaping
Christopher	Williams	
Horace	Williams	
Rudolph	Williams	WillventueEnterprises
St. Clair	Williams	G.P. Maintenance Limited
Joanna	Williams-Sampson	
Milton	Wilson	
Cudan	Worrel	C.W.A. Limited
Mervyn	Yeates	
Lerick	Young	EnvirofenCompany Limited
Andrew		
Crab Connection Sports Club		
Damani		Gifted Hands Environmental Maintenance
Jack & Associates		Jack & Associates
		Garcia Enterprises

Written Answers to Questions

Friday, February 21, 2003

FIRST NAME	LAST NAME	COMPANY NAME
		NRD General Contracting & Landscaping Company Limited
		S.E.S C.O.M.
		KAPS Enterprises Limited

TOTAL CONTRACTOR PAYMENTS & WAGES SUMMARY

CONTRACTOR'S NAME	PRINCIPAL	TOTAL PAYMENTS FROM 27 SEP'02 TO 31 JAN 2003
A.E. Rasolli Maintenance Services Limited	Marva Bostic	\$542,173.37
Agronomics Inc Limited	Shango Alamu	\$561,687.46
Allahu Enterprises Ltd	Suni Ahmad	\$267,672.71
Answer Maintenance Limited	Ainsley Matthews	\$404,606.29
Ant's Mole Construction Ltd	Oliver Aqui	\$358,188.06
Arc Angels Limited	Karlene Elliott	\$628,428.31
Beautification & Sanitation Co. Ltd	Suresh Seecharan	\$390,104.69
Beckles Company Limited	Lionel Beckles	\$503,688.76
Beckles Environmental Services Limited	Brian Beckles	\$490,616.95
Benchmark Environmental Services Ltd	Trevor Nicholas	\$388,016.48
Breeze Maintenance Services Ltd	Roy Orr	\$387,400.53
Chaitram and Company Limited	Satesh Chaitram	\$400,008.37

*Written Answers to Questions**Friday, February 21, 2003*

CONTRACTOR'S NAME	PRINCIPAL	TOTAL PAYMENTS FROM 27 SEP'02 TO 31 JAN 2003
Claudius.Asad.Aslam. Construction Ltd	Aslam Ghany	\$409,814.01
Cleanville Company Limited	Me Crea Valentine	\$325,736.35
Clear Cut Environmental Service Company Limited	La Lune Development Company Ltd.	\$538,248.43
Cornerstone Environmental Maintenance Company Limited	Anthony Campo	\$375,685.37
Crewcutters Maintenance Co. Ltd	Darren Da Silva	\$429,761.63
Cumana Engine Room Environmental co. Ltd	Julien Gittens & Ian Charles	\$391,728.78
Cut-Clean And Clear Maintenance Services Ltd	Kathy Ann Cardinal Austin	\$410,633.64
Daily Environmental Services Ltd	Ashley Clyne & Dennis Phillip	\$571,063.48
Danavin Company Limited	Alvin Reeves	\$427,149.17
DARWEN Ltd	Darian Marcelle & Wendell Stephens	\$551,664.47
Debut Cleaning company Limited	Alisia Taylor-Bonnette	\$379,484.62
Deep Maintenance Company Limited	Jean Alexander	\$548,588.73
Deep Root Environmental Company Limited	Andrew O'Brien	\$428,341.40
Development and Enhancement Services Limited	Barry Phillip	\$323,636.63

*Written Answers to Questions**Friday, February 21, 2003*

CONTRACTOR'S NAME	PRINCIPAL	TOTAL PAYMENTS FROM 27 SEP'02 TO 31 JAN 2003
Divya Enviro Ltd	Prakash Persad	\$320,824.85
Docland Services	Brian Taitt	\$406,162.38
Doolay Environmental Services Ltd	Glen FonMiller	\$391,412.41
Duncan Village Maintenance Company Ltd	Isaac Lewis	\$406,298.71
EDM Environmental Management Co. Ltd	Errol Nagee	\$1 59,813.57
Edpat Ltd	Edmund Edwards	\$366,475.54
Effective Environmental Systems Company Limited	Wayne Earle	\$396,390.57
Enviro Company Limited	Simeon Games	\$400,827.20
Envirochem Limited	Randall Mitchell	\$390,619.76
Environmental Alternatives Ltd	Randall Seegobin	\$409,652.86
Environmental Enhancers Ltd	Horace Gordon	\$332,890.21
Environmental Improvement company Limited	Charmaine Cummings	\$387,533.51
Enviropro Ltd	John Ross	\$314,742.85
Fabcon Ltd	Norman Ross	\$345,939.76
Famum Environmental Co. Ltd	Oscar Famutn	\$326,505.50
First Class Homes and Commercial Property Ltd	Peter Lawrence	\$499,558.64
Foster Solutions for Sustainable Ecosystem Development Ltd	Dawn Phillip	\$318,296.33

*Written Answers to Questions**Friday, February 21, 2003*

CONTRACTOR'S NAME	PRINCIPAL	TOTAL PAYMENTS FROM 27 SEP'02 TO 31 JAN 2003
G. Bacchus General Contractor Enterprise Ltd	Gerard Bacchus	\$371,693.23
G.P. Maintenance Limited	St. Clair Williams	\$401,691.18
Gap Environmental Experts Co. Ltd	Leroy Gene Porther	\$339,698.16
Gateway Environmental & Maintenance Services Ltd	John Mollineau	\$513,024.33
Global Enterprises Limited	Keith Belfast	\$348,107.63
Healthy Environment and Landscaping Providers Ltd	Denis Campbell & Denise Nurse	\$276,412.60
Heyman's Environmental Services Ltd	Deoraj Motilal	\$367,991.60
Hibiscus Services co. Ltd	James Rivas-Caesar	\$304,956.89
High Place Enterprises Limited	Stanley Butcher	\$569,500.40
High Road Maintenance Co. Ltd	Reynard Khan	\$329,538.42
Hinds Oliver Enterprises Company Limited	Shermin Hinds & Frank Oliver	\$603,852.43
Hylite Services Limited	Nileung Hypolite	\$452,247.24
Iardinus Limited	Perry Eastman	\$358,972.16
Jaisuree Enterprises Ltd	Rudolph Williams	\$295,474.18
JC Environmental Services Limited	Joseph Callender	\$529,064.94
Jenbri Enterprises Limited	Brian Lewis & Victor Charles	\$408,851.47
Jen-Cam Ltd	Jennifer Campbell-Simonette	\$386,222.15

Written Answers to Questions

Friday, February 21, 2003

CONTRACTOR'S NAME	PRINCIPAL	TOTAL PAYMENTS FROM 27 SEP'02 TO 31 JAN 2003
John Fortune Enterprises Ltd	John Fortune	\$375,333.07
K&R Contractors Company Limited	Kitten Robertson & Nigel Tenia	\$418,814.84
K&S Environmental Services Company Limited	Ahebal Ramjattansingh	\$419,562.24
K.G. Environmental Services Ltd	Kenny Grant	\$420,731.40
Kenwyn & Kyle Environmental Specialist	Kenwyn James	\$377,963.52
KFS Company Limited	Keith Salina	\$396,085.03
KS Environmental Maintenance Company Ltd	Kent Shields	\$416,785.20
Lee St. Louis Environmental Specialist Limited	June Le Rivears & June St. Louis	\$602,528.08
Lo Pari Landscaping Company Limited	Andrew Salina	\$352,952.39
M.J.I. Landscaping Limited	Joel West	\$337,674.25
M/S Community Maintenance Limited	Mac Donald Padmore	\$365,399.33
Mario Eco Co. Ltd	Marian Preudhomme-Watson	\$390,578.23
Marrvshow Maintenance Services Ltd	Jennifer Marnyshow	\$393,342.09
Maximum Environmental Services Co. Ltd	Marvin Payne	\$463,177.98

*Written Answers to Questions**Friday, February 21, 2003*

CONTRACTOR'S NAME	PRINCIPAL	TOTAL PAYMENTS FROM 27 SEP'02 TO 31 JAN 2003
Miracle Brite Maintenance Company Limited	Shirlyn Nickles	\$424,505.97
Mountain View Environmental Company Ltd	Mervyn Yeates	\$316,199.92
MPH Services Limited	Alston Hodge	\$408,819.82
N.B.C. Company Limited	Neville Cooper	\$309,696.29
Neighbourhood Maintenance Services Ltd	Michael Leggerton	\$313,267.24
Palladin's Company Limited	Martin Pantin	\$372,986.60
Patcliff Industrial Services	Patrick Clifford	\$349,168.55
Pica[Services Limited	Foster Cummings	\$342,053.41
Point fortin Environmental Services Limited	Paul Lora	\$415,818.16
Prim Clean Limited	Ronald Huggins	\$376,694.05
Pro Blade Company Limited	Darryl Monsegue	\$344,001.48
Prudent Construction Ltd	Jason Bobb (Crab Connections Sports Club)	\$379,626.61
Ality Environmental Services Ltd	Lyndon Mc Queen	\$423,441.94
R.J.S.D.C. Co. Ltd	Kenneth Prescott & Winston Flament	\$368,206.97
Real Maintenance Services Ltd		\$182,859.79

*Written Answers to Questions**Friday, February 21, 2003*

CONTRACTOR'S NAME	PRINCIPAL	TOTAL PAYMENTS FROM 27 SEP'02 TO 31 JAN 2003
Rencam Cleaning and landscaping Company Limited	Renwick Campbell	\$334,066.98
Roopy's Contracting Services Ltd	Roopchand Balliram & Phillip Salazar	\$545,288.66
S&G Maintenance Company Limited	Stephen Emery	\$360,423.58
S&S Environmental Services Company Limited	Shalina Butcher & Trevor Ramdin	\$409,524.15
S.A.S. Maintenance Company Limited	Sirdar Greaves	\$632,386.89
S.J.L. Environmental & Development Company Limited	Samuel Lee	\$374,606.94
SAMCOLL Construction Company Limited	Samuel Colley	\$385,951.40
Sarah Maintenance Company Limited	Jameel Mustapha	\$423,010.44
Silva Sands Ltd	Seloi De Silva & Sandra Pollanais-Medina	\$330,000.56
South East Maintenance Services Limited	Vernon Rigues	\$399,560.99
South West Development Agency	Beville Simonette	\$366,139.87
The Maintenance Advantage Co. Ltd	Peter Marine	\$366,007.63
Theodore Maintenance Company Ltd	Lloyd Theodore	\$316,854.97

CONTRACTOR'S NAME	PRINCIPAL	TOTAL PAYMENTS FROM 27 SEP'02 TO 31 JAN 2003
Thomas Loney Maintenance Services Ltd	Sharon Thomas-Loney	\$336,340.15
Time Environmental Services Ltd		\$66,510.62
Toncabeau Maintenance Company Ltd	Christopher Williams	\$409,425.23
Trinidad Bago & Sons Company Limited	Bhagwatee Maraj	\$563,173.71
Two J's Beautification Limited	David Joseph	\$394,422.63
Wells Maintenance Company Limited	Russell Manswell	\$437,022.99
West & Associates Co. Ltd	Brandon West	\$547,840.19
William & Sampson Co. Ltd	Joanne Williams Sampson & Junior Williams	\$539,826.05
		\$44,282,031.43

**Government's Policy on Housing
(Role and Function of Organizations)**

43. Mr. Ganga Singh asked the Minister of Housing:

Could the Minister indicate the role and function of the following organizations in the formulation and implementation of the Government's policy on Housing

- i. Ministry of Housing;
- ii. Home Mortgage Bank;
- iii. National Housing Authority;
- iv. Urban Development Corporation of Trinidad and Tobago (UDEcOTT);
- v. Trinidad and Tobago Mortgage Finance Company

The Minister of Housing (Sen. The Hon. Martin Joseph): The Ministry of Housing is charged with the responsibility for the implementation of Government's policy. It should be noted however, that having recognized the need for an integrated approach to facilitate achievement of the goals of the Policy, the Ministry of Housing employed a consultative approach with relevant agencies in the development of the policy document, with a view to devising strategies that would positively influence the total housing delivery process.

In keeping with this focus, the roles and functions of the Ministry of Housing and supporting agencies are as follows:

The general responsibilities of the Ministry of Housing will include, but are not limited to, the following:

- a) Monitoring international agencies loans and agreements—Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), World Bank, Canada Mortgage and Housing Company (CMHC), et cetera;
- b) Information technology platform;
- c) Communications;
- d) Strategic coordination;
- e) Housing allocation;
- f) Monitoring of contractors' adherence to employment programmes, namely:
 - Youth Trainee Programme
 - Small business set aside
- g) Value Added Tax (VAT) policy monitoring;
- h) Policy improvement and refinement;
- i) Land identification;
- j) Dealing with regulatory agencies.

To effectively meet its required responsibilities and operate more efficiently in the sector, the Ministry of Housing has re-aligned itself by adding four new units, namely:

- Information Technology Unit;
- Communications Unit;

- Project Coordinating Unit; and
- Housing Policy Facilitation and Enforcement Unit

The Ministry of Housing has identified the skills and competencies required to manage and ensure achievement of the Government's expressed goals, as well as for coordination of its agencies and is in the process of procuring the required skill sets.

The Home Mortgage Bank (HMB) will provide funding on a wholesale basis to the Urban Development Corporation of Trinidad and Tobago (UDEcOTT), the National Housing Authority (NHA) and the Trinidad and Tobago Mortgage Finance Company Limited (TTFM). This funding will be in respect to the financing of housing projects through mortgage, debenture or bond with the residential lands as security, both in respect to the construction financing required as well as the take out facilities on completion.

The National Housing Authority will be responsible for the following:

- Construction management
 - Contractor adherence to building and safety codes and standards
 - Quality assurance
 - Trainee programme and small business oversight
- Housing construction (rental and mortgage)
 - Planning and -coordination
 - Schedules
- Land Development
- Land Acquisition
- Property Management - the NHA will develop an effective and efficiently managed refurbishment and rehabilitation programme
- Research and Planning;

In this context, the authority has realigned its organizational structure to more effectively manage the sector and to ensure that mechanisms are implemented, which will allow it to:

- a) effectively manage the projected volume of NHA construction projects; and

- b) effectively utilize staff to facilitate the approval, planning, administration and distribution of housing units.

The Urban Development Corporation of Trinidad and Tobago (UDeCOTT) will continue to play a role in the development and delivery of a substantial level of new housing stock. The UDeCOTT will:

- a) produce housing in conjunction with the private sector on private sector lands with private contractors;
- b) integrate housing into its urban development plans; and
- c) be responsible for urban renewal and redevelopment.

The role of the Trinidad and Tobago Mortgage Finance Company Limited (TTFM) will be to finance the housing portfolio, with particular emphasis on the ownership market.

- a) On coming into office the Government moved swiftly to reduce interest rates on housing loans provided by government agencies and financial institutions involved in Government's lending programme. This is in keeping with the commitment we gave to the population in the last general election. Interest rates at TTFM are now:

Principal Amount	Mortgage Rate
200,000	6.0%
200,001 – 250,000	6.5%
250,001- 300,000	7.0%
300,001 – 350,000	7.5%
350,001 – 450,000	8.0%

It should be noted that mortgage rates on the open market are currently 9.0%;

- b) The loan amount has increased to 95% of value, from 90%;
- c) Equity of 5% can be made up of cash, sweat (labour) or land;
- d) TTFM will also finance UDeCOTT on its development of rental stock, temporary shelters and renewal activities. TTFM will take out a mortgage on the land and an assignment of the lease between UDeCOTT and NHA;
- e) The source of funding to the TTFM this year has only been the HMB, which has funded TTFM so far this year to the tune of \$97 million;

- f) Since the Housing Policy was articulated in September 2002:
- 2,788 families have been interviewed
 - 1,115 have been pre-approved
 - 328 loans have been granted
- g) TTMF will also finance innovative and demonstrative housing programmes to support the Government Housing Policy, e.g. Granny Suites, Senior Citizen Housing, etcetera.